

## **UNVEILING THE ESSENCE OF EUROPEAN ISLAM: A Critical Analysis of Abdennour Bidar's Concepts of Self Islam and Islamic Existentialism**

*Agus Riwanda<sup>1</sup> and Abd A'la<sup>2</sup>*

UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Jawa Timur

email: 02050122021@student.uinsby.ac.id

**Abstract:** *This article discusses the challenges of European Islam at the intersection of Islamic traditions and modern liberal democratic values and the urgency of bridging the two. European Islam is looking for a common ground that can combine reason and faith in harmony, integrate the values of modernity with the spiritual view of Islam, and identify the challenges and opportunities faced by European Islam in the context of Western liberal society. Bidar, in his contribution to the concept of European Islam, argues that religion is not only about rituals but also about profound spiritual experiences. He proposed the concept of Self Islam, which emphasizes individual freedom, personal responsibility, and spiritual connection with Allah. According to Bidar, individual freedom is the key to spiritual life. In addition, everyone can choose how to practice religion according to his spiritual needs. Bidar proposed Islamic reform, oriented towards the unification of religions and modernity, by prioritizing humanist values and human rights and reforming Islam in the light of modernity. According to him, humans become God's autonomous vicegerent on earth and have the right to manage it freely but responsibly. In addition, in harmony with Kantian, Bidar believes that human immortality can be achieved through piety and good deeds. According to him, humans become God's autonomous vicegerent on earth and have the right to manage it freely but responsibly. In addition, in harmony with Kantian, Bidar believes that human immortality can be achieved through piety and good deeds. According to him, humans become God's*

*autonomous vicegerent on earth and have the right to manage it freely but responsibly. In addition, in harmony with Kantian, Bidar believes that human immortality can be achieved through piety and good deeds.*

**المخلص:** يناقش هذا المقال تحديات الإسلام الأوروبي الذي يقع في تقاطع التقاليد الإسلامية والقيم الديمقراطية الليبرالية الحديثة، وضرورة ربط الاثنين معًا. الإسلام الأوروبي يبحث عن أرضية مشتركة يمكن أن تجمع بين العقل والإيمان بانسجام، وتدمج قيم الحداثة مع الرؤية الروحية للإسلام، وتحديد التحديات والفرص التي تواجهها الإسلام الأوروبي في سياق المجتمع الليبرالي الغربي. بيدار، في مساهمته في مفهوم الإسلام الأوروبي، يُجادل بأن الدين ليس مجرد طقوس، بل أيضًا تجارب روحية عميقة. وقد اقترح مفهوم الإسلام الذاتي الذي يؤكد على حرية الفرد، والمسؤولية الشخصية، والارتباط الروحي بالله. وفقًا لبیدار، الحرية الفردية هي مفتاح لحياة روحية، ولكل فرد الحق في اختيار كيفية ممارسة الدين وفقًا لاحتياجاته الروحية. اقترح بيدار إصلاحًا إسلاميًا موجهًا نحو توحيد الأديان والحداثة، من خلال التفضيل لقيم الإنسانية وحقوق الإنسان، وإصلاح الإسلام في ضوء الحداثة. وفقًا له، يصبح الإنسان نائب الله الذاتي على الأرض وله الحق في إدارتها بحرية ولكن بمسؤولية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، وفقًا للموافقة مع الفلسفة الكانطية، يعتقد بيدار أن الخلود البشري يمكن تحقيقه من خلال التقوى والأعمال الصالحة.

**Abstrak:** Artikel ini membahas tantangan Islam Eropa yang berada di persimpangan antara tradisi Islam dan nilai-nilai demokratis liberal modern, serta urgensi penyatuan keduanya. Islam Eropa mencari titik temu yang dapat menggabungkan akal dan iman secara harmonis, mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai modernitas dengan pandangan spiritual Islam, dan mengidentifikasi tantangan dan peluang yang dihadapi oleh Islam Eropa dalam konteks masyarakat liberal Barat. Bidar, dalam kontribusinya terhadap konsep Islam Eropa, berargumen bahwa agama tidak hanya tentang ritual, tetapi juga tentang pengalaman spiritual yang mendalam. Ia mengusulkan konsep Self Islam yang menekankan kebebasan individu, tanggung jawab pribadi, dan hubungan spiritual dengan Allah. Menurut Bidar, kebebasan individu adalah kunci untuk menjalani kehidupan spiritual, dan setiap individu memiliki hak untuk memilih bagaimana beragama sesuai dengan kebutuhan spiritualnya. Bidar mengusulkan reformasi Islam yang berorientasi pada penyatuan agama dan

*modernitas, dengan memprioritaskan nilai-nilai humanis dan hak asasi manusia, serta merombak Islam dalam cahaya modernitas. Menurutnya, manusia menjadi khalifah otonom Allah di bumi dan memiliki hak untuk mengelolanya secara bebas namun bertanggung jawab. Selain itu, sejalan dengan pemikiran Kant, Bidar meyakini bahwa keabadian manusia dapat dicapai melalui ketakwaan dan perbuatan baik.*

**Keywords:** Abdenmour Bidar, European Islam, Self-Islamic, Islamic Existentialism, Overcoming Religion.

## INTRODUCTION

The re-emergence of religion, especially Islam, in Western liberal societies has raised deep questions for scholars and policy makers. The multicultural nature of these societies has forced a re-examination of the foundations of the public sphere to accommodate diverse worldviews. Although sociological data indicate a certain degree of multiculturalism, the theoretical paradigm is still trying to adapt to this reality.

European Islam, which lies at the crossroads between the achievements and challenges of modern liberal democracy, faces a responsibility to bridge Islamic and Western traditions. The main challenge for European Islam lies in establishing an epistemological basis that upholds human reason while meeting the requirements of the modern state. European Islam is looking for a common ground that can harmonize reason and faith for the modern world in the future. Its aim is to reinterpret the classical ontological-epistemological bond between reason and revelation, advocating the values of modernity, ethics, and spirituality while avoiding a complete break with the divine.<sup>1</sup>

Islamic European thought is a dynamic and multifaceted field that exists at the intersection of Islamic and Western traditions. It reflects the experiences, perspectives, and debates of Muslims living in Europe, where they navigate their religious identities within the

---

<sup>1</sup> Erik Jones, "Identity, Solidarity, and Islam in Europe," in *Europe and Islam* (Routledge, 2018), 112–26.

context of modern liberal democracies.<sup>2</sup> This intellectual space is shaped by a myriad of complexities and debates, each contributing to the ongoing process of defining what it means to be a Muslim in Europe.

One of the central complexities in Islamic European thought is the question of identity and belonging. Muslims in Europe often grapple with their dual identities – their religious identity as Muslims and their national or cultural identity within European societies. This struggle is both individual and collective, as European Muslims seek to strike a balance between preserving their cultural and religious heritage while also integrating and participating in the broader social and political fabric of European countries. Europe is home to a diverse Muslim population, representing various ethnicities, sects, and cultural backgrounds. Islamic European thought grapples with the challenge of accommodating this diversity within a framework of pluralism, where different interpretations of Islam and approaches to religious practice coexist. Debates over issues such as religious authority, gender roles, and legal frameworks reflect this diversity and complexity.<sup>3</sup>

The relationship between Islam and secularism is a contentious topic within Islamic European thought<sup>4</sup>. European societies promote secular principles and religious freedom, but tensions arise when it comes to accommodating Islamic practices in the public sphere. Discussions revolve around the place of religious symbols, halal practices, and religious education within secular societies while respecting individual rights and freedoms.<sup>5</sup>

European Muslims face challenges in integrating into mainstream society while combating exclusion and Islamophobia.<sup>6</sup> Islamic European thought engages with these issues, examining the barriers that hinder full integration and advocating for equal opportunities and rights for Muslims. It also addresses concerns related to

---

<sup>2</sup> Amy Mills and Banu Gökarıksel, “Provincializing Geographies of Religion: Muslim Identities beyond the ‘West,’” *Geography Compass* 8, no. 12 (2014): 902–14.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Downing, *French Muslims in Perspective: Nationalism, Post-Colonialism and Marginalisation under the Republic* (Springer, 2019), 189.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>5</sup> Jocelyne Cesari, “Self, Islam and Secular Public Spaces,” in *Islam and Public Controversy in Europe* (Routledge, 2016), 174.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

discrimination and xenophobia,<sup>7</sup> seeking to promote social cohesion and inclusivity. European Muslims increasingly seek to participate actively in the political processes of their host countries. Discussions within Islamic European thought revolve around the compatibility of Islamic values with democratic principles, the role of Muslims in public life, and their contributions to shaping policy and governance.<sup>8</sup>

Islamic European thought navigates the application of Islamic law (Sharia) within the European legal framework.<sup>9</sup> Scholars and intellectuals debate how to contextualize Islamic jurisprudence in a way that aligns with European laws and values while respecting the core principles of Islam. This requires a delicate balance between maintaining religious authenticity and adapting to the evolving societal norms. The rise of extremist ideologies among some segments of European Muslim communities has sparked discussions on counter-radicalization efforts. Islamic European thought is engaged in finding ways to prevent radicalization while promoting a positive, inclusive understanding of Islam that counters extremist narratives.<sup>10</sup>

Abdenour Bidar, a French Muslim philosopher, has introduced new Islamic readings that aim to reduce the gaps between traditional Islamic thought and the modern era. His approach to European Islam is innovative and distinct from both Eurocentric and Islamocentric perspectives. Instead, Bidar seeks to transcend classical dichotomies and create a more harmonious and integrated understanding of religion, ethics, and reason. Bidar's revisionist-reformist approach acknowledges the inextricable relationship between religion, ethics, and reason. He recognizes that these aspects are interconnected and cannot be understood in isolation. His goal is to restore true communion between the divine and the secular world, recognizing the relevance of both within the context of modernity and multiculturalism.

Bidar's work on European Islam represents an attempt to bridge the gap between Islamic traditions and the demands of a

---

<sup>7</sup> Robert J Pauly, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization?* (Routledge, 2016), 84.

<sup>8</sup> Nilüfer Göle, *Islam and Secularity: The Future of Europe's Public Sphere* (Duke University Press, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Lyons-Padilla et al., "Belonging Nowhere: Marginalization & Radicalization Risk among Muslim Immigrants," *Behavioral Science & Policy* 1, no. 2 (2015): 1–12.

rapidly changing world. He strives to create a more inclusive and dynamic understanding of Islam that can resonate with Muslims living in Europe and beyond.<sup>11</sup> He tries to unify the two worldviews through his theosophical approach.<sup>12</sup> By adopting a critical-reformist perspective, Bidar aligns himself with the broader movement in contemporary Islamic scholarship that seeks to engage in dialogue and contribute to the ongoing development of Islamic thought. This approach emphasizes the need to reinterpret and update traditional Islamic teachings considering contemporary challenges and realities.

Bidar's work is divided into three stages. The first stage is the book *Self Islam*,<sup>13</sup> who developed an updated version of Islam in conditions of modernity and human rights. The second phase involves an existentialist reading of the Koran, with a focus on human eternal life. Bidar's magnum opus work, *L'islam sans soumission: pour un existentialisme Muslim*,<sup>14</sup> is considered the most important contribution in contemporary European Islamic studies. Bidar's third stage describes a shift from classical dichotomous thinking to an expanded view of the sacred. In the work *Comment sorti de la religion*,<sup>15</sup> Bidar combines criticism of Islamic and Western thought and seeks to overcome classical views on religion, secularism, and atheism.

Bidar's memoir, "Self-Islam," reflects his personal journey of reconciling his Islamic heritage with his engagement in philosophy and public intellectual life. He emphasizes the importance of integrating Western and Islamic philosophy and advocates for a nuanced understanding of Islam that transcends the barriers between Muslim life and French culture.

---

<sup>11</sup> Mohamed Amine Brahimi and Housseem Ben Lazreg, "Post-Islamism and Intellectual Production: A Bibliometric Analysis of the Evolution of Contemporary Islamic Thought," *Religions* 12, no. 1 (2021): 49.

<sup>12</sup> Mohammed Hashas, "Is European Islam Experiencing an Ontological Revolution for an Epistemological Awakening?" *American Journal of Social Sciences* 31, no. 4 (2014): 26.

<sup>13</sup> Abdennour Bidar, *Self-Islam: Histoire d'un Islam Personnel [Self Islam: The Story of a Personal Islam]* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Abdennour Bidar, *L'islam sans Soumission: Pour Un Existentialisme Musulman [Islam without Submission: For An Islamic Existentialism]* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Abdennour Bidar, *Comment Sortir de La Religion [How to Overcome Religion]* (Paris: La Découverte, 2012).

Abdenour Bidar's critique of Mohammed Arkoun and his own experiences as a prominent French Muslim intellectual offer profound insights into the challenges of engaging with pluralism within the context of Islam and French society. When reflecting on Mohammed Arkoun's work, Bidar acknowledges the significance of Arkoun's deconstruction of Islamic theology and his exposure of the harmful consequences of certain foundational myths. However, Bidar critiques Arkoun for not offering "positive" proposals for the reconstruction of Islam. This raises the fundamental question of whether Arkoun's approach ultimately leaves him outside or post-Islam, as it does not address the issue of transcendence and the core of religious experience.<sup>16</sup>

Bidar highlights Arkoun's failure to explicitly address the religious phenomenon itself and whether he acknowledges the believer's experience of transcendence. This omission is crucial as it has implications for understanding the spiritual life beyond the confines of organized religion. Bidar's own experiences lead him to believe that the desire for transcendence constitutes the essence of religious experience, which can manifest in various contemporary Islamic practices, even those often viewed as purely reactive or extreme.

The comparison between Arkoun and Bidar reveals the complexities of advocating for pluralism and inclusivity within the Islamic context. Bidar's involvement with France's official secularism watchdog, the Observatoire de la laïcité, further exemplifies the challenges he faces in navigating pluralism while being viewed as a representative of French efforts to control Islam.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the discussion of pluralism itself exposes the pitfalls of systematic or institutionalized pluralism, which may unintentionally exclude alternative perspectives. Arkoun's systematic rejection of authority and doctrinal truth can be seen as an example of this tendency. Pluralism, while aspiring to rise above ideological conflicts, remains rooted in the social and political context in which it operates, making it an intricate endeavour.

---

<sup>16</sup> Madeleine Dobie, "Politics and the Limits of Pluralism in Mohamed Arkoun and Abdenour Bidar," *Review of Middle East Studies* 54, no. 2 (2020): 252–68.

<sup>17</sup> Nadia Kiwan, "Secularism, Islam and Public Intellectuals in Contemporary France," *Secularism, Islam and Public Intellectuals in Contemporary France*, 2019, 12.

In grappling with the question of pluralism and Islam, Bidar's and Arkoun's experiences demonstrate that addressing religious diversity and promoting inclusivity is a complex and ongoing process. While their efforts to promote a more open and tolerant approach to Islam are commendable, both thinkers face challenges in effectively communicating their ideas to a broader audience, particularly to those outside their respective circles. Bidar's critique of Arkoun, and his own struggles, highlight the ongoing and multifaceted nature of pluralism in the context of Islam and French society. It underscores the need for continuous dialogue, empathy, and an understanding of the deep-rooted ideological conflicts that shape perspectives on religion, spirituality, and social dynamics. Only through such an approach can true progress be made towards a more inclusive and harmonious world where diverse religious and philosophical perspectives can coexist and flourish.

Bidar argues that religion will not be abandoned in the era of modernity, but the way in which religion is lived will be different.<sup>18</sup> He made important contributions to the debate on European Islam and the role of religion in modernity, with the aim of achieving a future civilization in which today's anxieties can be overcome. Bidar seeks to find a new phase in the religious experience.

### **RESPONSIBLE SELF-ISLAM AND SPIRITUALITY**

Abdenour Bidar has a complex background in terms of religious identity and spirituality. He grew up in an environment that mixed Christianity and Islam and spent time with his grandfather who was an atheist.<sup>19</sup> Bidar felt torn between two different and conflicting worlds in his life. While he was studying at the *École Normale Supérieure* in Paris, he felt that his peers were more interested in Western philosophy than spirituality and the existential questions raised by religion. At this time, Bidar felt an internal division that questioned his identity as a French Muslim. To find answers to these questions and dissatisfaction, Bidar decided to join the Sufi path in Morocco. For seven years, he lived a mystical life and spiritual

---

<sup>18</sup> Mohammed Hashas, "Reading Abdenour Bidar: New Pathways for European Islamic Thought," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 2, no. 1 (2013): 45–76.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



enlightenment. However, he also felt the limitations and divisions that existed within the Sufi spiritual environment.<sup>20</sup>

In his journey, Bidar came to understand that religion is not just about rituals, but about deep spiritual experiences. He realized that there is unity in diversity, that God is present in all things, both those that are considered holy and those that are considered profane. This view abolishes the separation between the sacred and the profane. Bidar concluded that his personal Islam was no longer related to rigid religious practices, but to a wider view and contemplation.

Bidar developed the concept of Self Islam which emphasizes individual independence and personal responsibility. He invites every Muslim to think autonomously and listen to each other's conscience, and place everything under the freedom of every Muslim.<sup>21</sup> In the concept of Self Islam, Bidar states that every Muslim has complete freedom to choose the way how they practice their religion and associate it with Islamic culture. He stressed the importance of personal responsibility and spirituality in practicing Islam. Religious practices such as praying, reading the Qur'an, and fasting are individual choices according to their spiritual needs.<sup>22</sup>

Self-Islam reflects an existentialist approach that emphasizes the importance of individual freedom, personal responsibility, and a spiritual connection with Allah. Bidar believes that individual freedom is the key to living a spiritual life, as stated in the verse of the Koran which says, "There is no compulsion in religion." Bidar believes that through this approach, every young conscience will gradually learn to make their own spiritual choices sovereignly and autonomously. They can define their own obligations but need not submit to coercion. The important difference between choosing freely or being forced is that in choosing yourself to practice a religion or follow a certain tradition.<sup>23</sup>

Abdenour Bidar defends the concept of Self Islam and criticizes two erroneous understandings: self-service-Islam and individualist

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Bidar, *Self-Islam: Histoire d'un Islam Personnel [Self Islam: The Story of a Personal Islam]*.

<sup>22</sup> Abdenour Bidar, *Un Islam Pour Notre Temps [For an Islam of Our Age]* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2004), 48.

<sup>23</sup> Abdenour Bidar, *LesCinq Piliers De L'Islam; et Leur Sens Initiatuque* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2023), 10.

Islam. Self-Islam is not an à la carte Islam in which individuals choose the teachings according to their own wishes. Bidar regards this as a tragic ignorance of the true meaning of freedom. Authentic self-Islam is an autonomous Islam that gives individuals the freedom to determine the meaning and form of Islam they want to adhere to, while adhering to the principles of justice and conformity directed by reason.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, Self-Islam is also not an individualist Islam in which individuals live in isolation and lose the meaning of membership in the community. Bidar suggests that membership in the community needs to become more critical, whereby individuals continue to share a collective identity while being enriched with other identities which are a condition of personal freedom. Self-Islam brings a new meaning to Islamic community and culture, where internal and external tolerance is emphasized, and not as a monolithic block following rituals and customs without critical thinking. Self-Islam creates a diverse community where a culture of freedom grows, and not a culture of judgment and censorship.

Bidar views Islam as a call to achieve self-perfection (Ihsan) and live life according to the deep nature of human beings. In Bidar's version of Ihsan, there is an emphasis on freedom and deep self-understanding as the basis for practicing religion according to individual spiritual needs. This can be considered as a contradiction to the concept of Ihsan in Islam in general, which places more emphasis on serving Allah with a deep conscience, without considering individual freedom and personal interpretation. Ihsan is the highest level of religious practice, where individuals worship with deep awareness, sincerity, and with the desire to achieve spiritual perfection.<sup>25</sup> This concept is often associated with the hadith of Gabriel which states that Ihsan is "worshiping Allah as if you see Him, if you do not see Him, then indeed He sees you."

Bidar's understanding of Ihsan can make individuals focus more on self-exploration and discovery to achieve spiritual perfection,

---

<sup>24</sup> Mohammed Hashas, *The Idea of European Islam: Religion, Ethics, Politics and Perpetual Modernity* (Routledge, 2018), 162.

<sup>25</sup> Umar F Moghul and Umar F Moghul, "Islamic Spirituality: An Impetus to Responsibility and Impact," *A Socially Responsible Islamic Finance: Character and the Common Good*, 2017, 1–37; Akbar Husain and Ruchi Singh, *Spirituality in Practice* (The Readers Paradise, 2020), 69.

without emphasizing adherence to established religious norms and rules. This can lead to differences in religious practices and interpretations of religious teachings, which can conflict with the general Islamic concept of Ihsan which emphasizes obedience and a deep awareness of Allah. This emphasis on individual freedom can raise questions about limits and authority in Islam, as well as the potential to ignore or belittle established Shari'a obligations.

### **ISLAMIC REFORMATION: Modernity as an Event of Spirituality**

Abdenmour Bidar proposed modernity-oriented Islamic reform as an unprecedented spiritual event.<sup>26</sup> He acknowledged that change in Islamic countries was slow and saw Europe as a suitable place to develop a profound and universal Islam. Bidar believes that the values of modernity, including human rights, are very important in living a more meaningful Islam.

Bidar proposes a marriage between modernity and Islam, in which modernity is accepted and its humanist values are adopted as tools for Islamic renaissance. He stressed the importance of sacrificing those aspects of Islam that are incompatible with human rights and contribute to solving modern human problems. Bidar argues that religion in its traditional form has not been affected theologically by the changes and secularization that have taken place. Therefore, he invites to see modernity as a spiritual moment that has never happened before and unites religion and modernity in one unit.<sup>27</sup>

In Bidar's view, modernity has the potential to build an ideal world which he calls super-civilization by bringing together human diversity. He invited Muslim reformers and adherents of religion to accept modernity as God's will and renew Islam in the light of modernity, with the values of modernity as a new foundation for Islam.<sup>28</sup> Bidar tries to build bridges between Islamic traditions and modern values. He identified challenges and opportunities in

---

<sup>26</sup> Hashas, "Is European Islam Experiencing an Ontological Revolution for an Epistemological Awakening?"

<sup>27</sup> Bidar, *L'islam sans Soumission: Pour Un Existentialisme Musulman [Islam without Submission: For An Islamic Existentialism]*, 9.

<sup>28</sup> Mohammed Hashas, "Pluralism within European Islam: Secularizing Theology, Sacralizing Modernity," in *The Legal Treatment of Religious Claims in Multicultural Societies* (LUISS University Press, 2014), 67–86.

combining the two and proposed the concept of Self Islam as a way to bring Islam into the modern era. Although his ideas are controversial, his approach of seeking harmony between religion and modern values offers an interesting perspective for thinking about the future of Islam in the context of an increasingly connected and complex world.

In his scientific work, Bidar argues that modern Islam which is in accordance with democratic individualism can be found in the Koran. He focuses on liberating the humanistic potential contained in the Koran from theological interpretations that have existed for centuries. Bidar argues that Islamic tradition has neglected or sidelined the resonance of certain Qur'anic terms, which in turn creates deficits in Islamic law and culture about the values of individual choice.<sup>29</sup>

In his book entitled *Islam sans soumission* (Islam Without Surrender), Bidar presents an exegesis (interpretation) of terms in the Koran that can be used to reconstruct an "internally and externally tolerant" Islam. He argued that by returning the focus to the humanistic values contained in the Koran, Islam could become more inclusive, allow room for individual choice, and be in harmony with democratic principles.<sup>30</sup>

Bidar proposed the concept of Self Islam which is based on an existentialist understanding of Islam through an anthropocentric reading of the Qur'an.<sup>31</sup> He considers the Qur'an as a tool of liberation that liberates humans from limitations and fear of life and death. In Bidar's perspective, the Qur'an views humans as the centre of His message, and these revelations were revealed in the early Meccan period to emphasize the importance of humans in the Islamic religion. Bidar argues that the concept of Allah in many classical interpretations keeps humans at a distance, so that what is sacred in Islam is not fully understood. However, through a modern

---

<sup>29</sup> Peter Baehr and Daniel Gordon, "From the Headscarf to the Burqa: The Role of Social Theorists in Shaping Laws against the Veil," *Economy and Society* 42, no. 2 (2013): 249–80.

<sup>30</sup> Bidar, *L'islam sans Soumission: Pour Un Existentialisme Musulman [Islam without Submission: For An Islamic Existentialism]*.

<sup>31</sup> Hashas, "Reading Abdennour Bidar: New Pathways for European Islamic Thought."

anthropological approach, humans can understand and live out the unlimited potential given by God.<sup>32</sup>

Bidar also presented the five main matrices (Allah, Creation, Prophet Muhammad, al-Qur'an and ummah) that humans must realize to manifest themselves. These matrices describe the relationship between man and God, and the Qur'an serves as a bridge that connects man to the substance of God.<sup>33</sup>

1. Allah's Matrix: The first matrix mentioned by Bidar is Allah, who is the Supreme Life. Allah is the Creator and Most Compassionate who sacrificed eternity and His attributes for human beings. Bidar uses Ibn 'Arabi's description that human beings are created as small, strong dots in His matrix. Allah is also considered as a woman who is full of affection (womb), like a mother towards her child. In man's relationship with God, man is expected to show that "enduring awe" that builds a good relationship.
2. The Matrix of Creation: The second matrix is Creation itself. Having been provided with unlimited energy in the matrix of Allah, this matrix of Creation is another space where humans can fulfil their needs. Bidar sees Creation as a sacred space. Humans are expected to use and respect this Creation in meeting needs and doing good.<sup>34</sup>
3. The Matrix of the Prophet Muhammad: The third matrix is the Prophet Muhammad, who is a symbol of a human being who carries a message and carries it out responsibly. Muhammad is a role model for humans who contemplated and realized Allah's message, so that humans can achieve their highest oneness and capacity. Bidar emphasized that anyone who contemplates and follows in the footsteps of Muhammad's life can become the "New Muhammad", that is, the lover and creator of life.<sup>35</sup>
4. The Matrix of the Qur'an: The fourth matrix is the Qur'an itself, which is considered as the umbilical cord of the divine matrix and as the link between God and man. Through the Qur'an, humans

---

<sup>32</sup> Abdennour Bidar, "The 'Outsiders of Islam,'" *Diogenes* 57, no. 2 (2010): 3–23.

<sup>33</sup> Hashas, *The Idea of European Islam: Religion, Ethics, Politics and Perpetual Modernity*.

<sup>34</sup> Bidar, *Self-Islam: Histoire d'un Islam Personnel [Self Islam: The Story of a Personal Islam]*, 195.

<sup>35</sup> Bidar, *Un Islam Pour Notre Temps [For an Islam of Our Age]*, 77.

gain an understanding of the substance of Allah and His attributes of being just, merciful, and infinite. The Qur'an serves as an ethical guide and a spiritual pedagogy that guides human beings in realizing their unlimited potential and preparing for immortality.

5. The umma matrix: According to Bidar, the umma matrix emphasizes brotherhood and equality as important principles in building an inclusive global community. In this context, fraternity is not only limited to individuals who share the same religious beliefs, but includes all human beings, regardless of their religion, ethnicity, race, or cultural background.<sup>36</sup> The global umma concept in this fifth matrix shows the need to transcend divisions and conflicts that often arise in religious contexts and build cooperation and mutual understanding among different individuals.<sup>37</sup>

Bidar also highlights the modern chaos in the contemporary world, and he relates it to the irregularities in the order of the Qur'an. For him, the principle of chaos in the Qur'an can help people to relativize their self-view and not be afraid of the diversity of life. Bidar seeks to align Islamic traditions with existentialist understandings and modern values. He proposes an innovative and challenging interpretation, by identifying the potential of Islam in bringing new meaning to humanity and liberating it from existing limitations. Although his thoughts are controversial, his approach which seeks harmony between religion and the value of modernity offers an interesting perspective on thinking about the role of Islam in an increasingly connected and complex world.<sup>38</sup>

Bidar's emphasis on human rights is an approach that reflects contemporary thinking which seeks to ensure that the universal values of human rights are respected and implemented. However, in the Islamic context, there is a traditional approach based on legal and ethical frameworks derived from the Qur'an and hadith. As a result, there is a potential for tension between secular interpretations of

---

<sup>36</sup> Abdessamad Belhaj, "Loyalty and Identity Formation: Muslim Perceptions of Loyalty in France," *Religions* 13, no. 11 (2022): 1060.

<sup>37</sup> Abdennour Bidar, *Plaidoyer Pour La Fraternité [The Case for Fraternity]* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> Abdennour Bidar, *Genie de La France* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2021).

human rights and traditional Islamic values.<sup>39</sup> It is important to strike a balance between these perspectives and seek a comprehensive and inclusive understanding.

Bidar's thinking emphasizes the importance of Islam in providing solutions to modern human problems. This reflects an effort to find the relevance of religion in the context of changing times. However, in pursuing modern solutions to problems, it is important not to neglect the traditional roots and values that exist in Islam. Modern problem solving must be based on solid principles and in accordance with the intact teachings of Islam.<sup>40</sup> Bidar's thoughts face challenges in achieving a balance between Islamic values originating from the main sources of religion and the changing demands of the times. It is important to avoid selective understanding or sacrificing fundamental Islamic values to keep up with social trends and changes. Harmonization between Islamic values and the demands of the times requires a careful and contextual understanding of the fundamental principles of Islam.

### **HEIR OF GOD AND HUMAN IMMORTALITY**

Bidar seeks to sanctify humans and place humans back into the world's central stage as God's heirs.<sup>41</sup> His concept of God is love and mercy, and God does not enjoy human bondage. According to Bidar, humans were created to be free. Traditional Muslim thought has viewed man as Allah's vicegerent who is subject to Him and must use reason to realize the divine and carry out His commands. However, Bidar proposed a different interpretation. He adopted the interpretation of *khilāfa* (*khilafah*) to mean the definitive successor of Allah. This indicates a shift from spatial succession to temporal or inherited succession. Bidar argues that this new interpretation liberates humans and gives them greater autonomy and freedom in their role as heirs of God.

In Bidar's interpretation, the inheritance of humans as caliphs does not mean God's incarnation in humans as in Christian teachings

---

<sup>39</sup> Ann Elizabeth Mayer, *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics* (Routledge, 2018).

<sup>40</sup> NA NA, *Contemporary Debates in Islam: An Anthology of Modernist and Fundamentalist Thought* (Springer, 2016), 12.

<sup>41</sup> Michael Louis Fitzgerald, *Praise the Name of the Lord: Meditations on the Names of God in the Qur'an and the Bible* (Liturgical Press, 2017).

or God's death. Rather, this inheritance refers to the sacrifices God wills of Allah. Humans have inherited the freedom and autonomy to manage the earth, and it is their duty to use this freedom wisely and responsibly. This inheritance also reflects Allah's love for humanity, which provides guidance and guidance through prophecies and books such as the Qur'an.<sup>42</sup>

Bidar argues that the universe is considered sacred like Heaven, and humans as caliphs are responsible for managing it. The understanding of Allah in this concept is even closer than in the classical interpretation. Bidar emphasized the importance of ethics in managing this inheritance. Humans must have spiritual maturity and be responsible in carrying out the role of God's heir. This inheritance requires great wisdom, great responsibility, and eternal gratitude.

Bidar argues that the paradigm of God's inheritance is historical, not metaphysical. Understanding of God is no longer centred on the perception that God is in Heaven and humans work for Him on earth. Humans are independent heirs and are responsible for managing the earth. According to Bidar, his idea of immortality is a peaceful metaphysical rebellion. Man is considered as a completely free individual and aware of the divine source within himself, which gives man unlimited energy and immortality.

In traditional Islamic thought, *khilāfa* refers to the role of humans as vicegerents of Allah in this world. Humans are given the responsibility to continue Adam's tasks in obedience to Allah and upholding justice on earth. In this context, the role of humans is as executors and keepers of the rules that have been determined by God. This includes moral and ethical responsibilities that involve submitting to Islamic teachings and following religious requirements. Bidar proposes an interpretation that focuses more on temporal succession or inheritance in understanding *khilāfa*. This approach views humans as the definitive successors of God, showing greater freedom and autonomy in their roles. Bidar argues that this new interpretation frees humans to live out their role as inheritors of Allah and relates this to a more complete self-understanding. This concept emphasizes individual autonomy and freedom in choosing a

---

<sup>42</sup> Marie Chabbert, "The Eternal Return of Religion: Jean-Luc Nancy on Faith in the Singular-Plural," *Angelaki* 26, no. 3-4 (2021): 207-24.



spiritual path and religious practice according to personal needs and understanding.<sup>43</sup>

Bidar's understanding of *khilāfa* which focuses on temporal succession or inheritance has significant implications for the relationship between humans and God, as well as human moral and ethical responsibilities in living a religious life. This understanding leads to individual freedom in choosing and interpreting religious teachings, which can result in a significant variety of interpretations. However, keep in mind that this concept can pose challenges in maintaining unity and consistency in Islamic teachings, as well as expanding the risk of understanding that is subjective and depends on individual interests.

## **HUMAN IMMORTALITY THROUGH PIETY AND GOOD DEEDS**

Bidar concluded that human immortality could be achieved through piety and good deeds.<sup>44</sup> He interpreted Judgment Day as a metaphor, considering it a spiritual metamorphosis that takes place in human history. According to Bidar, the encounter with Allah takes place in the present, and is no longer a distant event. He changed the concept of time, life, and death by assuming that God's presence can be felt in human life today. Piety and good deeds were the keys to attaining immortality, according to him.

Bidar quotes verses from the Koran that speak of individual responsibility, and explains that two kinds of action, namely piety and good deeds, can immortalize human beings. He also highlighted the Kantian view which explains that doing good is the answer to achieving immortality. Bidar asserts that by doing good deeds, humans free themselves from death, and death has no power over those who live in love and piety.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Hashas, *The Idea of European Islam: Religion, Ethics, Politics and Perpetual Modernity*.

<sup>44</sup> Hashas, "Is European Islam Experiencing an Ontological Revolution for an Epistemological Awakening?"

<sup>45</sup> Marcus Willaschek, *Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics: The Dialectic of Pure Reason* (Cambridge University Press, 2018); Benjamin J Bruxvoort Lipscomb and James Krueger, *Kant's Moral Metaphysics: God, Freedom, and Immortality* (Walter de Gruyter, 2010).

Bidar also suggests that terrestrial immortality is a rational theory of immortality, and that in the future, there may be no more deaths and resurrections. He uses the example of Jesus Christ to explain the symbol of death for a future human living forever through devotion to good. Additionally, he referred to prophets such as Moses and Muhammad as examples of uplifting humanity through piety and good works.

In Bidar's view, Self-Islam is a manifestation of a new existentialism, in which man builds himself with infinite energy of action and attains immortality. He argued that God was not dead, rejected, or killed, but was accepted as an evolutionary presence confronting humans in this sacred universe. This concept transcends traditional religions, spirituality, and atheism.<sup>46</sup>

Bidar offers a new perspective on human immortality through piety and good deeds, by interpreting religious teachings historically. He emphasized that humans could achieve immortality by living the teachings in daily life. Through piety and good works, humans free themselves from death and unite the physical and the metaphysical. This concept has something in common with Muhammad Iqbal's thoughts of seeking immortality and understanding God through piety and good deeds.<sup>47</sup>

Bidar's approach that connects Self-Islam with new existentialism offers an innovative perspective in understanding religion and spirituality. Prioritizing individual self-construction through unrestricted personal action and effort emphasizes human freedom to shape their own spiritual path. In the context of individual spiritual understanding, this approach can provide freedom of exploration and search for personal meaning. Individuals can explore the values, beliefs and practices that best suit their spiritual needs and experiences. By allowing space for creativity and personal interpretation, this approach can enrich individual spiritual understanding and enable the search for unique and meaningful paths. However, there is great potential for abuse of freedom and the impact of disproportionate social and ethical responsibilities. Unlimited freedom in shaping an individual's spiritual path can carry the risk of ignoring existing

---

<sup>46</sup> Bidar, "The 'Outsiders of Islam.'"

<sup>47</sup> Faisal Devji and Zaheer Kazmi, *Islam after Liberalism* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 105.

moral norms. Focusing too much on personal interests may overlook ethical considerations related to social interaction, balancing collective interests, and responsibility to the community. Moreover, the freedom of individuals to shape their own spiritual paths does not mean that they are independent from the influence of existing culture, history, or religious traditions. Social and cultural context continues to have a significant influence on shaping individual understanding and practice. Unlimited freedom in shaping an individual's spiritual path can carry the risk of ignoring existing moral norms. Focusing too much on personal interests may overlook ethical considerations related to social interaction, balancing collective interests, and responsibility to the community. Moreover, the freedom of individuals to shape their own spiritual paths does not mean that they are independent from the influence of existing culture, history, or religious traditions. Social and cultural context continues to have a significant influence on shaping individual understanding and practice. Unlimited freedom in shaping an individual's spiritual path can carry the risk of ignoring existing moral norms. Focusing too much on personal interests may overlook ethical considerations related to social interaction, balancing collective interests, and responsibility to the community. Moreover, the freedom of individuals to shape their own spiritual paths does not mean that they are independent from the influence of existing culture, history, or religious traditions. Social and cultural context continues to have a significant influence on shaping individual understanding and practice. and responsibility to the community. Moreover, the freedom of individuals to shape their own spiritual paths does not mean that they are independent from the influence of existing culture, history, or religious traditions. Social and cultural context continues to have a significant influence on shaping individual understanding and practice. and responsibility to the community. Moreover, the freedom of individuals to shape their own spiritual paths does not mean that they are independent from the influence of existing culture, history, or religious traditions. Social and cultural context continues to have a significant influence on shaping individual understanding and practice. and responsibility to the community. Moreover, the freedom of individuals to shape their own spiritual paths does not mean that they are independent from the influence of existing culture, history, or religious traditions. Social and cultural context continues to have a significant influence on shaping individual understanding and practice.

Bidar's statement that God is not dead, rejected, or killed, but is accepted as an evolutionary presence in the universe, does show a different view of God. This understanding offers a broader perspective

and is not limited to traditional concepts in religions or atheism. This approach reflects the idea that God is an ever-evolving presence in the universe. This can influence the understanding of the attributes and nature of God, and His role in creating and influencing this world. Consequently, this view can lead to a shift in understanding of how humans interact and relate to God.

In the context of existing religious teachings, Bidar's views may broaden understanding of God and provide new perspectives on human relationships with Him. However, it should be noted that this view may conflict with the traditional concept of God in some religions. Consequently, Bidar's views can lead to tension or even debate with the doctrines and beliefs held by members of certain religions. In the human relationship with God personally, this view can strengthen the idea of the search for meaning and individual spiritual experience. This approach emphasizes acceptance and direct experience of God, which allows individuals to develop a deeper, more personal relationship with Him. However, how does this view interact with understandings of obedience,

In a social context, this view is considered to influence the understanding of religion and its influence in society. A more inclusive and broader approach to God can promote a more tolerant understanding and mutual respect among religious believers. However, there is also the potential for conflict with traditional views rooted in certain religions, which may see these views as a challenge to their beliefs and practices. In-depth critical analysis is needed to understand the implications of Bidar's view of God in the context of existing religious teachings, individual relationships with God personally, and social dynamics in society.

Bidar's claim that the concept of Self Islam overcomes traditional religions, spirituality, and atheism can raise several questions and criticisms that need to be explored critically. In terms of relations with traditional religions, Bidar's view of Self Islam can be seen as a challenge to established frameworks of religious understanding and practice. This can raise questions about how the concept of the Islamic Self interacts with the teachings, rituals, and authorities of traditional religions. Does Self Islam substantially differ or broaden understanding of existing religions, or does it ignore or reject most

traditional teachings and practices? The implication is the potential for conflict with the views and practices of established religions.

### **OVERCOMING RELIGION: The Highest Stage of Islamic Existentialism**

Bidar proposes that the highest stage of Islamic existentialism is overcoming religion. He developed an approach that combines Western and Eastern/Islamic cultures in understanding questions of religion and modernity. Bidar argues that the Western project of replacing religion with secular or atheist ideas is not humanist enough and has only produced new mundane gods such as nationalism and capitalism.<sup>48</sup>

Abdenmour Bidar's intellectual journey delves deep into the complexities of European Islam and the notion of "overcoming religion." With his revisionist-reformist approach, Bidar seeks to bridge the gaps between traditional Islamic thought and the demands of the modern era, aiming for a harmonious coexistence between Islamic and Western traditions in contemporary European societies. Bidar's engagement with the ideas of Mohammed Iqbal emphasizes his commitment to exploring new pathways for spirituality and human infinitude. Drawing inspiration from Iqbal's reflections on modernity and a universal humanity, Bidar endeavours to lay a philosophical foundation for European Islam that surpasses mere religious adherence, embracing a broader sense of human identity and purpose.

The intention of Abdenmour Bidar's concept of "overcoming religion" is to go beyond traditional religious frameworks and move towards a more inclusive and transcendent understanding of spirituality and human existence. Bidar's approach is not about rejecting religion outright or promoting atheism; rather, it involves rethinking and reimagining the role of religion in the modern world. Bidar seeks to challenge the conventional understanding of religion as an inflexible and fixed belief system. He argues that religious discourse, at its core, contains the seeds of its own transformation and transcendence. By recognizing the fluid and dynamic nature of religious thought, Bidar proposes that humanity can move beyond

---

<sup>48</sup> Bidar, *Comment Sortir de La Religion [How to Overcome Religion]*, 16.

the limitations of traditional religious dogmas and embrace a more encompassing spirituality.

In doing so, Bidar does not advocate for a complete abandonment of religious traditions. Instead, he calls for a "de-westernization" of the exit from religion, emphasizing the need to develop a non-sacred spirituality that does not rely on traditional religious metaphors or concepts of the divine. This approach allows for a broader engagement with spiritual experiences that transcend religious boundaries and resonate with the diverse experiences of people living in modern societies. Bidar's intention is to liberate spirituality from the confines of religious institutions and dogmas, enabling individuals to explore their own spiritual paths while remaining open to the possibilities of transcendence. He emphasizes the importance of cultural translation, drawing on his dual Western and Islamic heritage, to create a universal understanding of the exit from religion that goes beyond historical and geographical distinctions.

Furthermore, Bidar's vision is not just about personal enlightenment; it also addresses broader existential concerns. He criticizes the current overemphasis on material wealth and consumerism, arguing that a focus on human well-being and ethical wealth is crucial for the future of humanity. Bidar's existential anti-globalism seeks to promote a deeper sense of purpose and meaning in a world increasingly dominated by superficial pursuits. As a cultural translator with a dual Western and Islamic heritage, Bidar strives to offer a universal understanding of the exit from religion. His call for a transcultural approach to spirituality recognizes that overcoming religion is not confined to a specific tradition or culture but holds relevance across different contexts.

He asserted that the West was mistaken in underestimating the power of religion which has contributed to human development over the centuries. Therefore, it is time to overcome these weak irreligious thoughts by carrying out a spiritual revolution or ontological revolution which revives fundamental questions and distances oneself from life which is only aligned horizontally without seeking unlimited vertical inspiration (towards the divine).

Bidar also criticized classical religious conceptions which were considered ancient and irrational, which were metaphysical in nature. According to him, religion must be something that lives in this world,

and is able to answer human existential and ontological questions.<sup>49</sup> Bidar's approach tries to encapsulate religion as a pre-modern phenomenon, at least in modern European thought, and draws lessons from the achievements of modernity.

To reach the human creator stage, Bidar proposes three main conditions. First, individuals must have access to basic needs in a decent life so that they have minimal means to develop their unlimited energy. Second, individuals must have important social and political rights, including freedom of religion and opinion. The most challenging condition is the third, namely imitating God in power, mercy, generosity, justice, and responsibility.<sup>50</sup> Bidar proposes that humans take back what was previously believed to be God's, namely the unlimited power that is ontologically given to humans. In this project of overcoming religion, Bidar maintains a sense of gratitude and acknowledgment to God by assuming that the soul of God has descended into the human soul. Thus, the relationship between man and the divine becomes inseparable. Bidar did not want to kill God, but instead gave Him a proper place by honouring and thanking Him.<sup>51</sup>

This presentation presents Bidar's ideas about overcoming religion as the highest stage of Islamic existentialism. He proposes an approach that attempts to dissolve the classical divide between the divine and the sacred and encapsulates the transcendent and spiritual aspects of religion in so far as it helps humans to actualize their limitless energies. By understanding and experiencing the unlimited power that is ontologically bestowed upon humans, Bidar argues that humans can reach the stage of becoming human creators without killing God.<sup>52</sup>

Bidar seeks to blend Western and Eastern/Islamic cultures in his understanding of religion and modernity but does not provide notes on how to strike a proper balance between the two sources of wisdom.

---

<sup>49</sup> Chabbert, "The Eternal Return of Religion: Jean-Luc Nancy on Faith in the Singular-Plural."

<sup>50</sup> Abdennour Bidar, *Quelles Valeurs; Partager et Transmettre Aujourd'hui?* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2016).

<sup>51</sup> Bidar, *Comment Sortir de La Religion [How to Overcome Religion]*, 103–6.

<sup>52</sup> Gözde Damla Çitler, "Islam and Existentialism in Turkey during the Cold War in the Works of Sezai Karakoç," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 1 (2022): 70–85.

In this case, it is necessary to consider the risk of domination of one culture over another or ignoring the values of different cultures. Therefore, it is important to build a respectful dialogue between Western and Eastern/Islamic traditions, in which the contributions and perspectives of both are recognized and integrated in a balanced way.<sup>53</sup>

### **SOME NOTES ON BIDAR'S THOUGHTS**

Bidar stated a criticism of the classical religious conception which was considered ancient and irrational, but this view ignored the complexity and philosophical depth that existed in classical religious thought. The implication is the need to acknowledge the philosophical and theological heritage of classical religions and encourage the exploration of dialogue between classical and modern thought. In doing so, this approach can avoid excessive rejection of classical religion, while renewing and enriching understanding of religion in a modern context.

Bidar suggests that humans imitate God in power, mercy, and responsibility, but does not provide an explanation as to whether humans are truly able to emulate these attributes perfectly or are simply aspirations that are completely impossible to achieve. The implication is that it is important to maintain a balance between human aspirations to be better with recognition of human limitations and weaknesses. This approach can spark personal growth and moral progress, but it also calls for a realistic understanding of the human limit to perfection. Bidar's standards of universal values are often ambiguous and can be interpreted differently. Although he emphasizes the importance of dialogue, he also seems to relativize moral and ethical principles.

One of the main criticisms of Bidar's thought is its tendency to essentialism and oversimplification of complex issues. For example, he often presents Islam as a monolithic entity with a single essence, ignoring the diversity of interpretations and practices within the Muslim world. This oversimplification can result in a distorted

---

<sup>53</sup> Bidar, *Comment Sortir de La Religion [How to Overcome Religion]*, 44.



understanding of Islam and failure to acknowledge the complexities and nuances within the religion.<sup>54</sup>

Bidar's focus on spirituality and individual transformation sometimes overlooks the role of power structures in shaping societal dynamics. While he recognizes the importance of dialogue and understanding, he does not delve deeply into the power imbalances that exist within religious institutions, social hierarchies, or political systems. Ignoring these power structures can lead to an incomplete analysis of the underlying causes of social challenges and hinder the development of effective strategies for social transformation.<sup>55</sup>

Another criticism of Bidar's thought is the lack of empirical basis in his argument. Although he presents both philosophical and abstract ideas, he often lacks concrete evidence or empirical research to back up his claims. This can weaken the persuasion power and credibility of the argument, especially when discussing complex social and political issues. Although Bidar offers inspiring analysis and critique of the challenges facing contemporary society, he often does not provide concrete solutions or practical steps to overcome these problems. His emphasis on spirituality and individual transformation as a path to social change can be considered idealistic and disconnected from the practical realities of social, political, and economic systems.

## CONCLUSION

Abdennour Bidar, among others, is influential thinker who has engaged with the issues of Islam, secularism, and cultural identity in France. He recognizes the potential compatibility between Islam and Republican values, emphasizing the need for a modern and reformed approach to religious practices. Bidar's distinctive thoughts compared to other French Muslim thinkers lie in his unique approach to reconciling Islam with modernity and spirituality. Bidar's concept of "Self-Islam" is a central and innovative aspect of his thought. He emphasizes the individual's personal responsibility and freedom in practicing Islam according to their own spiritual needs and understanding. This contrasts with more prescriptive or

---

<sup>54</sup> Jerusha Tanner Lamptey, *Never Wholly Other: A Muslima Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2014).

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Tufte, *Communication and Social Change: A Citizen Perspective* (John Wiley & Sons, 2017).

dogmatic interpretations of Islam present in some conservative or traditionalist circles. Bidar places a strong emphasis on spirituality and the quest for deeper meaning in life. He sees religion as a means of experiencing spirituality and finding God's presence in the present. His existentialist approach to Islam acknowledges the individual's role in shaping their spiritual journey and relationship with the divine. Bidar's ideas emphasize personal transformation and self-reflection as key to achieving spiritual growth and immortality. He sees piety and good deeds as pathways to human immortality, rather than a strict adherence to religious rituals.

Unlike some other French Muslim intellectuals who may view modernity as a threat to Islam, Bidar embraces modernity as a spiritual moment that can infuse humanist values and human rights into the faith. He calls for the integration of modern values while letting go of aspects of Islam that contradict human rights. Bidar is critical of rigid religious practices and literal interpretations of religious texts. He calls for a reformation of Islam that is adaptable to contemporary realities and conducive to individual growth and development.

A key aspect of his discourse is the notion of "le vivre ensemble" (living together) – the idea that Islam can be integrated within the French secular framework. However, his visions of this integration differ, with some advocating for an "Islam des Lumières" (Enlightened Islam) and others calling for a more profound transformation of religious practices. Despite his intellectual contributions and efforts to bridge the gap between Islam and the Republic, Bidar face criticism from both the wider French society and the Muslim community. Some argue that their views perpetuate colonial stereotypes and undermine the cultural heritage of Islam. He is also accused of conforming to cultural hegemony, aligning with the interests of the French state, and not challenging the Republic in a truly counter-hegemonic manner.

## REFERENCE

Baehr, Peter, and Daniel Gordon. "From the Headscarf to the Burqa: The Role of Social Theorists in Shaping Laws against the Veil." *Economy and Society* 42, no. 2 (2013): 249–80.

- Belhaj, Abdessamad. "Loyalty and Identity Formation: Muslim Perceptions of Loyalty in France." *Religions* 13, no. 11 (2022): 1060.
- Bidar, Abdenmour. *Comment Sortir de La Religion [How to Overcome Religion]*. Paris: La Découverte, 2012.
- . *Genie de La France*. Paris: Albin Michel, 2021.
- . *LesCinq Piliers De L'islam; et Leur Sens Initiatuque*. Paris: Albin Michel, 2023.
- . *L'islam sans Soumission: Pour Un Existentialisme Musulman [Islam without Submission: For An Islamic Existentialism]*. Paris: Albin Michel, 2008.
- . *Plaidoyer Pour La Fraternité [The Case for Fraternity]*. Paris: Albin Michel, 2015.
- . *Quelles Valeurs; Partager et Transmettre Aujourd'hui?* Paris: Albin Michel, 2016.
- . *Self Islam: Histoire d'un Islam Personnel [Self Islam: The Story of a Personal Islam]*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2006.
- . "The 'Outsiders of Islam.'" *Diogenes* 57, no. 2 (2010): 3–23.
- . *Un Islam Pour Notre Temps [For an Islam of Our Age]*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2004.
- Brahimi, Mohamed Amine, and Housseem Ben Lazreg. "Post-Islamism and Intellectual Production: A Bibliometric Analysis of the Evolution of Contemporary Islamic Thought." *Religions* 12, no. 1 (2021): 49.
- Cesari, Jocelyne. "Self, Islam and Secular Public Spaces." In *Islam and Public Controversy in Europe*, 47–56. Routledge, 2016.
- Chabbert, Marie. "The Eternal Return of Religion: Jean-Luc Nancy on Faith in the Singular-Plural." *Angelaki* 26, no. 3–4 (2021): 207–24.
- Çitler, Gözde Damla. "Islam and Existentialism in Turkey during the Cold War in the Works of Sezai Karakoç." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 1 (2022): 70–85.

- Devji, Faisal, and Zaheer Kazmi. *Islam after Liberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Dobie, Madeleine. "Politics and the Limits of Pluralism in Mohamed Arkoun and Abdenour Bidar." *Review of Middle East Studies* 54, no. 2 (2020): 252–68.
- Downing, Joseph. *French Muslims in Perspective: Nationalism, Post-Colonialism and Marginalisation under the Republic*. Springer, 2019.
- Fitzgerald, Michael Louis. *Praise the Name of the Lord: Meditations on the Names of God in the Qur'an and the Bible*. Liturgical Press, 2017.
- Göle, Nilüfer. *Islam and Secularity: The Future of Europe's Public Sphere*. Duke University Press, 2015.
- Hashas, Mohammed. "Is European Islam Experiencing an Ontological Revolution for an Epistemological Awakening?" *American Journal of Social Sciences* 31, no. 4 (2014): 14–49.
- . "Pluralism within European Islam: Secularizing Theology, Sacralizing Modernity." In *The Legal Treatment of Religious Claims in Multicultural Societies*, 67–86. LUISS University Press, 2014.
- . "Reading Abdenour Bidar: New Pathways for European Islamic Thought." *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 2, no. 1 (2013): 45–76.
- . *The Idea of European Islam: Religion, Ethics, Politics and Perpetual Modernity*. Routledge, 2018.
- Husain, Akbar, and Ruchi Singh. *Spirituality in Practice*. The Readers Paradise, 2020.
- Jones, Erik. "Identity, Solidarity, and Islam in Europe." In *Europe and Islam*, 112–26. Routledge, 2018.
- Kiwan, Nadia. "Secularism, Islam and Public Intellectuals in Contemporary France." *Secularism, Islam and Public Intellectuals in Contemporary France*, 2019, 1–256.

- Lampsey, Jerusha Tanner. *Never Wholly Other: A Muslima Theology of Religious Pluralism*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2014.
- Lipscomb, Benjamin J Bruxvoort, and James Krueger. *Kant's Moral Metaphysics: God, Freedom, and Immortality*. Walter de Gruyter, 2010.
- Lyons-Padilla, Sarah, Michele J Gelfand, Hedieh Mirahmadi, Mehreen Farooq, and Marieke Van Egmond. "Belonging Nowhere: Marginalization & Radicalization Risk among Muslim Immigrants." *Behavioral Science & Policy* 1, no. 2 (2015): 1–12.
- Mayer, Ann Elizabeth. *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics*. Routledge, 2018.
- Mills, Amy, and Banu Gökarişel. "Provincializing Geographies of Religion: Muslim Identities beyond the 'West.'" *Geography Compass* 8, no. 12 (2014): 902–14.
- Moghul, Umar F, and Umar F Moghul. "Islamic Spirituality: An Impetus to Responsibility and Impact." *A Socially Responsible Islamic Finance: Character and the Common Good*, 2017, 1–37.
- NA, NA. *Contemporary Debates in Islam: An Anthology of Modernist and Fundamentalist Thought*. Springer, 2016.
- Pauly, Robert J. *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization?* Routledge, 2016.
- Tufte, Thomas. *Communication and Social Change: A Citizen Perspective*. John Wiley & Sons, 2017.
- Willaschek, Marcus. *Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics: The Dialectic of Pure Reason*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.