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Hamza Dudgeon
Emory University, hdudgeo@emory.edu

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***Islam and Anarchism: Relationships and Resonances.* Mohamed Abdou. London: Pluto Press, 2022, paperback, 333 pp., ISBN: 9780745341927**

Hamza Dudgeon

Emory University, hdudgeo@emory.edu

Mishkâh University hdudgeon@mishkahu.com

Islam and Anarchism – ostensibly based of Abdou’s (2009) masters dissertation – in its six chapters, proposes a new universal social theory to pursue research that is centered in “*indigeneity, decolonization, and reindigenization*” (83).¹ Drawing from Africana studies, Critical Theory, Leftist-Abolitionist thought, structuralism, gender theory, postcolonial studies, psychoanalysis, and more, Mohamed Abdou proposes a new way to study alterity, which aims to liberate itself from self-Orientalization, and neo-Orientalist scholarship in the age of the War on Terror, all while proposing a new “social justice framework” (vii, 223). His project aims at fulfilling Edward Said’s wish for “alternatives to Orientalism” that study alterity “from a libertarian, or nonrepressive and nonmanipulative, perspective” (1978, 24; 1997, 163, 167), “looking for alternative [uncoercive] relationships means looking for other interpretative situations; hence, a far more scrupulous methodological sense is developed” (1997, 168).

Part of popular Orientalism’s paranoiac projection onto the “Oriental” are tropes of the “fundamentalist Muslim” (79):

“Anarcho-Islam is about the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard of. Islam is about submission. Slave to Allah and all that crap. It has an extremely rigid set of rules and conduct and, while more enlightened than other monotheistic religions in a number of important ways, it never quite went through anything like the Reformation. It is reactionary, pro-capitalist, pro-slavery, imperialist and misogynist to the core. Just read the fucking Qur’ân” (Chris R. 2003)

In response, Abdou goes through great lengths to demonstrate that Islam is indeed compatible with traditional “Occidental” Anarchist morals (i.e. antifascism, 41, 49-50), and also that “Islam is incompatible with modern capitalist-state frameworks” (72). Surely, it takes only a cursory reading of basic surveys of Islamic political history (Hodgson 1977; Kennedy 2022; Lapidus 2014) to know that the overwhelming vast majority of premodern Muslim polities were much more libertarian & socialist than any contemporary nation-state, which is based on capitalism (Laurent 2018; Marable 2016); hence, the Prison-Industrial & Military-Industrial complexes (Anthony 2009; Davis 2003, 86); surveillance (Foucault 1975); policing (Harring 2017; Maher 2021; Vitale 2018); virtue-signaling, yet defunct, ‘reforms’ of various institutions (Foucault 1975, 236; Kropotkin 1887, 304); “colossal environmental destruction; massive colonialist and imperialist atrocities and dehumanization; unprecedented forms of political and social violence; the construction of lethal political identities; the poisoning of food and water; the extermination of alarming numbers of species; increasingly worrying health threats; indecent disparity between rich and poor; social and communal disintegration; the rise of narcissistic sovereign individualism and sociopathology; a dramatic increase in individual and corporate psychopathologies; an alarming spread of mental health disorders; a ‘growing epidemic’ of suicide, and much more (the list is long enough to require, literally, an entire ledger) – all of which aggregately constituting a phenomenon that calls attention to a reevaluation of modernist, industrial, capitalist, and chiefly (though not exclusively) liberal values” (Hallaq 2018, 232-233). In other words, *Anarcha-Islām* should be the self-intuitive

dominant approach to understanding Islamic historiography, ethics & moral philosophy, but unfortunately, many Muslims qua alienated, barred, self-Orientalized subjects of Modernity (Lacanian \$; Heideggerian “being”) view Islam through a colonizing, racial-capitalist, statist, queerphobic, anti-Black, settler-colonial, militarized homonationalist, pinkwashing, cisheteropatriarchal, rightist, self-victimizationalist, sexist, lens, not to mention actual Orientalists (Abdou 2022, 223; Adorno & Horkheimer 1947, 100-103; Lacan 1966, 805; Žižek 1989, 112).

Inspired by the counter-Enlightenment Critical Theory tradition of the Frankfurt school, Mohamed Abdou states that we need to first become aware of our ideological subjugation, then break free via “self-determination” which means “the ability to choose how to identify one’s experience,” (240). In other words, we chose another Ideology, another self-alienation, reminiscent of Foucauldian self-experimentation (O’Leary 2003), which is “a madness of our own inner unsettling and undoing, indeed our own becoming. Affirm your nonbeing then, and *become*... there is no other way out” (240). According to the Frankfurt School, even ‘objective’ knowledge about the other cannot be changed the prejudiced paranoid subject, “because there is no absolutely compelling argument against materially false judgements, the distorted perception in which they lurk cannot be healed” (Adorno & Horkheimer 1947, 227).

Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan pointed out (Mills 2003) that all knowledge is ‘paranoic knowledge,’ but especially when it is mixed with coercion, power, delusions, mendacity, statism, antisemitism or anti-Blackness, cisheteropatriarchy, and other types of hegemony, can knowledge be especially pathologically paranoic (Meissner 1978, 84). In other words, how can we prevent the sadistic side of paranoic knowledge? “Anarcha-Islām,” in contradistinction, “offers a decolonial, social justice framework that elides the prevalent Orientalist and Fundamentalist tropes of Muslims and Islām and seeks to interweave Indigenous, Black and People of Colors’ lives and narratives together” (vii). To solve the ‘knowledge qua power’ dilemma, Abdou suggests entwining together disparate discourses in the struggle against settler-colonization, neo-colonial imposition of nationstatehood, police brutality, queerphobia, American imperialism (such as the United States Africa Command), and so on, in order to create a “pluriversal world, premised on the knowing and acceptance of each other as opposed to the mere toleration of each other,” which requires “a *biodiverse strategy of resistance*” (237-238).

In chapter 3, Abdou draws on the Islamic tradition (i.e. indigenous epistemologies – ‘biodiverse strategies of resistance’) to bring to our moral consciousnesses the concept of *Uṣūl al-Ikhtilāf* (ethics of differing), which Abdou considers “an ethics of conflict resolution” (90, 238). He also conceptualizes an ethics of hospitality (*Uṣūl al-Diyāfa*) to create a bridge between Muslims and activists of various other backgrounds to create “hope in Islamically transcending modern identity politics and the unequal power distributions that inform our relations...” (91). *Anarcha-Islām*, Abdou derives from what he calls “Anarchic Ijtihād” (lit. anarchic-‘exertion of jurisprudential effort,’ *ibid.*), which affirms “Anarcha-Islām’s non-authoritarian commitments by demonstrating that Islam is incompatible with modern capitalist-state frameworks” (72).

In chapter 4, using ‘Anarchic Ijtihād,’ Abdou argues that Islam provides all the tools for resistance to “racial capitalism through non-capitalist concepts and practices” (147). He first conceptualizes property in Islam (*mulk*) “as belonging solely to God, with human beings acting as mere *Caretakers* of God’s property” (*ibid.*), which negates capitalism’s notion “of an absolute owner” (148). On the same note, Abdou argues that if a segment of society is without basic necessities like food, clothing, water, “adequate economic opportunity,” etc., then the

“Individual Caretaker’s” rights are nullified as the needy person(s) takes priority (148). *Anarcha-Islām*, in other words, simultaneously refutes Orientalist interpretations of Islam as pro-state or pro-capitalist and proposes a new way to become “de-Oedipalized” from the statist capitalist system (175-176). In order to oppose “globally oppressive and engrained structural, systematic, and systemic forms of violence,” we need to know that “mass mobilizations” are often “merely symbolic,” and do not break free from “the mass psychology of fascism” by virtue they are riots, but rather, we must have a clear vision of “decolonial alternatives and the willingness of a people to take up their own mantle of responsibilities” (176; cf. the Qur’ān 13:11).

Despite this very efficacious method proposed by *Islam and Anarchism*, there is a neglect of engagement with the premodern Islamic tradition, particularly the legal corpus of Islam in non-Western languages, which would further elucidate Islamic legal theory’s technical jargon. There is only given a very non-technical surface-level engagement of Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). Notably, the term *al-istihsān* is mischaracterized, where it is defined as “the degree to which there is preference for interpretation or rules in other schools of law that seem more in line with considerations of equity” (49) without consulting important monographs on Islamic legal theory (or primary sources in their original languages for that matter), which define *istihsān* as “juristic preference,” but at the same time acknowledging that there were multiple different definitions according to the Islamic jurists themselves, such as “departure,” “abandonment,” “particularization,” and so on (Bergsträsser 1935, 22-23; Hallaq 1997, 19-20 & 2020, 50; Kayadibi 2010, 114-236; Schacht 1950, 98-99 & 1964, 37; Shahawy 2019; Wymann-Landgraf 2013, 4). By not engaging with premodern Islamic legal theory’s (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) epistemologies, one could argue that Abdou repeats the classic Orientalist form of domination, that is, *Epistemic Injustice* (Fricker 2007, 17), where the lacuna represents the Orientalists’ *credibility excess* and the *credibility deficit* of the “Oriental” subject. Lacking in precision, Abdou (49) fails to mention the concept *istishāb* and how it interacts vis-à-vis *istihsān* or *istiṣlāh*, which are all important theoretical tools from premodern Islamic legal epistemologies for conceiving an *Anarcha-Islām* that is based in indigeneity, rather than self-Orientalization. On the same note, despite perfunctorily mentioning “*ḥukm waq’iy*,” which he translates as “practical Islamic laws,” Abdou (49) fails to engage monographs written by Muslim scholars on the topic of *fiqh al-wāqi’* (the ethics of social reality; Bayya 2018), which is arguably the best indigenous mechanism of creative legio-ethical change (Dudgeon 2022).

Interestingly enough, despite writing, “socialism — in its broadest of historical interpretations that would include anarchism and that distinguishes the former from the term Communism,” Abdou does not engage socialist Muslim thinkers (Misbach 1925; Rodinson 1972; Shari’ati 1980; Tripp 2006), non-Muslim decolonial socialist thinkers (Bey 2020; McLemee & Le Blanc 2018; Robinson 1983, 2001, 2019), or non-Muslims who purport Anarcha-Islam (Barnes 2009) — let alone contemporary primary sources or secondary sources on Islamic *responsa* regarding finance (ex. Bashir 2020). This is a fertile area in need of additional methodological theorization, which — despite its shortcomings — makes Abdou’s theory of *Anarcha-Islām* all the more inspiring for future theoretical work.

Because there is not a deep engagement with indigenous premodern Islamic epistemologies, such as Islamic psychology or Islamic legal theory, Mohamed Abdou never breaks free from modern Occidental epistemologies, which was the grand critique Wael Hallaq (2018 & 2019) makes of Edward Said’s (1978) *Orientalism*. What Mohamed Abdou does well with *Islam and Anarchism* is provide a new universal social theory that gives students the tools to “feel that he or she is answerable to and in uncoercive contact with the culture and people being studied,”

(Said 1997, 163), “looking for alternative relationships means looking for other interpretative situations; hence, a far more scrupulous methodological sense is developed” (168). Then we can move to a nonpathological discourse answerable to the ‘other,’ freeing ourselves and ‘others’ (in solidarity) from oppressive systems and imaginaries.

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¹ Cf. M. Abdou (2019). *Islam and Queer Muslims: Identity and Sexuality in the Contemporary World* [Ph.D. Thesis, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada]. https://www.academia.edu/38647128/Ph_D_Thesis_Islam_and_Queer_Muslims_Identity_and_Sexuality_in_the_Contemporary_CH2