

LEARNING *TAQWA*: A MOTHER'S SEARCH FOR STORIES FOR HER DAUGHTER

by

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to answer a deceptively simple question: Which stories can I share with my daughter? Stories that do not reproduce the alienation of my formal education, nor the fear and prescriptiveness of my informal education, nor the desires of wealth accumulation that end up defining all relationships. I analyze my formal education through the lens of epistemic coloniality in order to investigate the sense of inferiority it perpetuated in me. I also delve into various scholarly perspectives of Islamic liberation theology (ILT) and how it differs from traditional theology. ILT allows religious education to move beyond the realm of fear of hell and the incentives of heaven. ILT proposes a praxis for social and political change.

I propose *taqwa* as a grounding framework for my stories. *Taqwa*, which means God consciousness, proposes an orientation in consciousness that decenters one's ego. *Taqwa* allows for a starkly different relationship than the relationship that is embedded in our current education system. It expands the purview of religious accountability by bringing in matters of structural harm. It also demands an evaluation of the desires of one's own heart. In this thesis I critically examine the desire for wealth accumulation in our lives.

Taqwa allows for a space for continuous struggle. This continuous struggle challenges complacency and sedentary thinking. *Taqwa* does not allow for the prescriptiveness endemic in the religious and non-religious education that I received. *Taqwa* is not a prescriptive solution for social maladies, but rather a tool for embedding humility, enabling radical love, and steering oneself in a socio-political emancipatory practice.

Lay Summary

This thesis attempts to answer a deceptively simple question: Which stories can I share with my daughter? Stories that do not reproduce the alienation of my formal education, nor the fear and prescriptiveness of my informal education, nor the desires of wealth accumulation that end up defining all relationships. I critically analyze both my formal, non-religious education and my informal, religious education.

I propose *taqwa* as a grounding framework for my stories. *Taqwa*, which means God consciousness, proposes an orientation in consciousness that decenters one's ego. This allows for a starkly different relationship than what is embedded in our current education system. It expands the purview of religious accountability by bringing in matters of structural harm, and shapes theology into a praxis for social and political change. It also demands an evaluation of what we desire. In this thesis I critically examine the desire for wealth accumulation in our lives and relationships.

Preface

The following thesis is comprised of original and independent work that has not been previously published.

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Dedication

To our children

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis attempts to answer a deceptively simple question: What can I teach my daughter? In order to answer this question, I reflect on what I have been taught. The course of my education ran on two parallel lines. These lines existed together in time and space but have had negligible engagement with one another. One was a formal, secular education and the other was an informal, religious education. What I remember most were the stories I was told. Which stories should I share with my daughter?

My formal education started with schooling in Pakistan, followed by an International Baccalaureate in the UK, and an undergraduate education in the USA. Throughout my education, the language of instruction was English. The language itself and the geographies where it is predominantly spoken became an emblem of intellect for me. This was especially true in my elementary education when students were fined for speaking Urdu or any language other than English. Reciting “Daffodils” by William Wordsworth, I felt alienated from the texts that surrounded me.¹ This continued well beyond early schooling. I reflect on my own education to assess which lessons I carry into the stories for my daughter. I did not want to transfer a sense of inferiority and alienation to my stories.

In the sphere of informal education, I was encouraged to maintain an unquestioning faith. I learnt to read the Qur’an and recite prayers in Arabic without comprehending what it is that I

¹ I had never actually seen a daffodil since they did not grow where I lived. It was not the unfamiliarity of the subject that was alienating, but the assumption of which experiences are worth being studied and which are not.

was reciting.² A sense of fear guided this process of learning, fear from hell's fire. Theology was presented outside the realm of history, geography, and social context. I was also presented with a prescriptive path, *an* answer, and a checklist of what was good and what was bad. I did not want to transfer the fear or the ahistorical prescriptions to stories for my daughter.

I did, however, want to create the cherished stories of growing up Muslim. What are these stories and what is Muslim about them? Allow me to narrate one. One day, Rabia Basri, a 9th century Muslim ascetic was found walking the streets of Basra carrying a torch in one hand and a bucket of water in the other. When asked what she was doing, she said, "I want to put out the fire of hell and burn down paradise. They block the way to God. I do not want to worship from fear of punishment or for the promise of rewards, but simply for the love of God."

Listening to this story, I had wondered, what does it mean to love God?

The Qur'an, which Muslims believe to be the word of God, is stylistically written as a collection of non-chronological stories with some directives. However, the meaning, and lessons drawn from these stories is deeply contested among Muslims. Children in Muslim households are often surrounded by Muslim stories. There is, however, a distinction between the stories in the Qur'an and the Muslim stories. The stories of the Qur'an are in text of the book, and these stories are often dense and ambiguous. On the other hand, Muslim stories are stories within families, cultures and traditions that are inspired by the text of the Qur'an, or stories that are an attempt to convey a "lesson," or a message for children and adults. For example, the story of Rabia Basri encourages the listener to evaluate their relationship with the Divine³. There are

² It was not until my undergraduate years that I had formal training in the Arabic language that went beyond the capacity to read and memorise passages from the Qur'an.

³ Within the Islamic tradition, God is referred to by 99 names. In this text I used a few of those names, such as Creator, Provider and Divine. When referring to God the noun will be capitalized.

stories that speak about the value of compassion, forgiveness, and community. Or, depending on the views of the storyteller, stories might center on heroic tales of early Muslim warriors or the scientific nature of Islam. Not all Muslims' stories are theological in nature, but they do speak to morality, ethics, and a way to relate to others around us. Growing up in a Muslim family, my sense of morality, of right and wrong, is deeply informed by these stories. As I endeavor to make Rabia Basri's story intelligible, I do so both for myself and for my young child, for whom I have become a storyteller. With this new responsibility of being a storyteller, I contemplate which lessons I would like to pass on in my stories. Equally important, I contemplate which aspects of my own education should not make their way to the stories.

This study is by a Muslim, but it is not singularly for Muslims. Through this study, I intend to speak to whomever has thought about self-accountability and the world we will leave behind. I have struggled to write from the Islamic tradition for a predominantly non-Muslim audience. Trying to articulate concepts and connections that seem self-evident to me has been challenging. I am still trying to process what this struggle in communication means. I am still unsure of the best manner to write, one that communicates clearly to someone outside of the tradition but does not do so at the expense of losing a reader from the tradition.

1.1 Alienation Felt During Formal Education

In order to reflect on my formal education, I explore the alienation I have felt from the texts of my curriculum, and the sense of intellectual inferiority I have felt in comparison to the producers of those texts. Whether it was learning verses of William Wordsworth's poems in elementary school or studying Habermas in undergraduate years, it seemed that my life

experiences and the experiences of those around me were not worthy of making it into school curricula. The following passage may explain why this was the case.

I felt with them that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions of whom we govern—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialect with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.

The preceding excerpt is from Lord Thomas Macaulay's address to the British Parliament on Feb. 2, 1835. Lord Thomas Macaulay was the architect of the education system in colonial India. Upon reading it I wondered, am I such an Indian? That is, am I Indian⁴ in blood and color but colonial English in morals? Is the color of my skin a measure of my intellect? Macaulay had defined the architecture of my education more than a century and half before I even became a student. In this study, I ground the critique of my formal education in epistemic decoloniality. It explains the drive I felt to study my way out of intellectual inferiority. It explains the need to compensate for my unsophisticated heritage.

Coloniality of power, as described by Quijano (1999), theorizes about the practices and legacies of European colonialism that are transferred into social orders and knowledge systems of geographies around the world. Coloniality is kept alive “in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations

⁴ Before August 14, 1947, Indian referred to what would now be divided into Bangladeshi, Indian, Kashmiri, Pakistani.

of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243). My own education was proof that coloniality outlives colonialism by far. It is held up by those who are convinced of the mediocrity of their skin color, language, and philosophy.

1.2 Centering Praxis Over Fear

The third chapter of this thesis turns to my informal religious education. It goes back to Rabia Basri’s story by trying to understand what it means to love God. It challenges the ahistorical nature of theology in two ways, first by historicizing the making of religious authority in Islam (mainly within the South Asian context), and second by engaging with Islamic Liberation Theology (ILT). ILT claims that one cannot deny their own reality plays a role in the theological conclusions one reaches. It provides a framework to understand the inseparability of the sacred from the mundane. Theology is not only an ideology but is in continuous reflective dialogue with action.

In the third chapter, I elucidate a *Weltanschauung* that redefines my relationship with Creator and creation. *Taqwa*, which means God consciousness, allows an understanding of inseparability of Creator and creation. *Taqwa* proposes an orientation in consciousness that decenters one’s ego. It expands the purview of religious accountability by bringing in matters of structural harm. *Taqwa* extends Islam beyond the realm of fear of hell or the incentives of heaven. Instead it shapes it into a praxis for social and political change.

It is not only ILT that allows an alternate understanding of *taqwa*. This project is deeply inspired by my daughter. Holding her as an infant, I was in complete awe of her sheer existence. The love I felt for her guided my consciousness. It was in those moments that I truly *felt* what *taqwa* could mean. My daughter, in her existence, had taught me what I had been unable to learn.

In her presence I learnt the pleasure of decentering one's own ego for love. So how do I teach her about taqwa? How can I create an understanding of the world that is not prescriptive? How do I create stories that provide tools for embedding humility and enabling radical love?⁵ What I hope to practice is not an act of knowing but of being. It is an ontological need to create stories that emphasize lessons about the connectivity among creation rather than isolation and prioritization of individual desires.⁶

1.3 Critiquing Desires of My Heart

Chapter Four reflects inward, to critique the desires of my own heart. What has guided my educational goals, measures of success, and value of nature? I find that the issue is not that a consciousness of something omnipresent and omnipotent does not exist, but that consciousness is aligned with the desires of wealth accumulation. “No indeed! You do not honor orphans, you do not urge one another to feed the poor, you consume inheritance greedily, and you love wealth with a passion” (Qur’an 89:19-20).⁷ Chapter Four proposes that I, and the world I live in, hold a consciousness of a deity/system/power bigger than any individual. This consciousness inexplicably guides decisions and our relationships with each other. The “invisible hand” (Smith, 1904) of the market replaces a transcendental Divine. Our hearts desire more, a consumption driven by the need for consuming for its own sake, whether it be land, resources, or relationships.

⁵ “Radical love” in this thesis is used as it is taught within many Sufi traditions. It is the concept of loving creation as an expression of loving Creator. For more details see Safi, 2018.

⁶ The concept of ontological need is inspired by Paulo Freire’s idea of hope being an ontological need to achieve liberation (Freire, 1994).

⁷ Unless stated otherwise, all translations of the Qur’an are by Abdel Haleem (2004).

1.4 Muslim on Unceded Territory

This thesis is both theological and political and it would be hypocritical to ignore the political, theological, and geographical backdrop against which this work has taken place. It has become customary within University of British Columbia to begin meetings and events with a land acknowledgment. This is an acknowledgment of the rights of the *hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓* speaking Musqueam people on their traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory. Rocha (2019a; b) reminds us of the rejection of a political theology within the word “unceded.” The political theology that gives the British monarch divine rights and makes the Crown both a monarch and a Defender of Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church of England. One can see the divine right inscribed on Canadian coins that state, “Elizabeth II Dei Gratia Regina” [By the grace of God, Queen]. This divine right entitles the monarch to land in their empire. The status of unceded rejects the monarch’s divine rights over Indigenous lands.⁸ It is emblematic of the continued resistance and rejection of the political ideology that leads to the Crown’s rights (Rocha 2019a). What does it mean to be Muslim on unceded territory?

Louis Butcher Jr. (Lakota of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe) demonstrates a harmonious relationship between Islam and his local traditions. In describing his conversion to Islam, he stressed the commonality he felt between Islam and the traditional values he grew up with. For him, Islam allowed for an embodiment of *Mitakuye Oyasin*, meaning “we are all related” in Lakota (Ali, 2011). Though I am ecstatic that the two customs come together in Basheer’s life (the name Louis Butcher took post conversion), I doubt the relationship is always mutually beneficial. Chief Robert Joseph of the Gwawaenuk Nation speaks of a motto in

⁸ Interestingly, in 1911 the inscription “Dei Gratia Regina” was removed from Canadian coins. The inscribed coins were brought back due to public outrage about the “Godless coins” (Canadian Coin News, 2018).

Kwakwakáwakw that is *Nmwa-yut* [we are all one] and has an extremely generous proposition for immigrants to Canada. The proposition is for immigrants to keep their culture and language and to allow Indigenous people to do the same. He thinks the problem arises when newcomers, with their eagerness to succeed, “just accept the racism and discrimination against Aboriginal peoples and pretty soon they are just as harsh and judgmental of us as the rest of the Canadians” (Daigle, 2015).⁹

Though there is much speculation about the first Muslims in Canada, the first documented evidence is of James and Agnes Love who migrated from Scotland to Canada in 1851 (Hamdani, 1992).¹⁰ Muslims have immigrated to seek economic opportunity, have been forcibly brought to Turtle Island as slaves, and have arrived fleeing persecution and other conditions. These histories, and the conversations with Basheer and Chief Robert Joseph, are just the first steps in starting a conversation about what it means to be Muslim on unceded land. Needless to say, this is a difficult and complex question that requires thought, care, and rigor to address. Though it is not the main objective of my study, I wanted to acknowledge the rights and struggle of the Indigenous nations of the land I reside in.

I am not offering this acknowledgment as a confession to absolve myself but as an understanding that there is no pretense of innocence at my end. I understand that questions of consciousness, epistemic coloniality, and critiques of capitalism are not solely theological, nor

⁹ Thobani (2007) writes about a Canadian national imaginary in which “Indians are presented as making imposing and unending demands for special treatment and their claims to land and state fund” (p. 12). In order to provide a generous review of the immigrated Other, the national imaginary demands denial of “distinctive racialized experiences...and the political claims arising from such experiences” (p. 13). To make claims as beneficiaries of the nation’s largesse, the nation’s Other partakes in the master narrative of Canada that positions “Indians,” immigrants and refugees as outsiders who threaten Canada’s prosperity.

¹⁰ In the US, the first records reveal Muslims enslaved from West Africa and brought to the USA (Gomez, 1994).

do I claim them to be. However, I claim that these topics are *also* theological and, in the case of Islam, have been for 1400 years. The conversation about the relationship between Islamic theology and the harms of capitalism is often neglected, but if Islam informs my gauge of right and wrong, then such conversations become essential. I do not want stories for my daughter that position religion outside the context of time and space, but stories that engage with Islam in the context of the structural issues that surround us. However, the praxis of this engagement is religious (at least for me) because it demands repeated self-evaluation. This is also why the critique presented in Chapter Four is important. The critiques of my education do not absolve me from any participation in structural harm. I do not want to pass on desires that portray the accumulation of wealth as a measure of success, achievement, or self-worth.

1.5 What Comes Next?

This study is about recognizing some of the structural failures of my own religious and non-religious education. The second chapter discusses the damage of epistemic coloniality and how it is embedded within educational systems to uphold Western knowledge tradition over others. “West,” as used in this work, is not solely a geographical term circumscribed to Western Europe and North America and neither is it static. For example, is Arastu (Aristotle) Western or Islamic? Is Ibn Rushd (Averroes) Spanish or Arab? Is Derrida Algerian or French? These questions do not have a simple answer which shows that categories pitted against one another with strict boundaries are often fluid. Issues arise with the denial of this fluidity and the purposing of knowledge that leads to the West being the producers of knowledge and The Rest as consumers. It is important to examine this denial of fluidity, as it is essential for maintaining hierarchies on two fronts: 1) The West as the arbitrators of civilization, intellectuality, and

modernity, and 2) The political or religious leaders whose rhetoric of spiritual superiority relies on supposedly antithetical claims of all things deemed Western.

In order to provide clarity I use the term “West” to denote the epistemological traditions of the colonial powers present at the Berlin Conference (1884–1885) and the economic gain from the perpetual exploitation of their now ex-colonies. It also relates to the denial of systemic harm committed in settler colonies that are now part of the Global North.¹¹ However, I am not proposing an oppressor/oppressed binary, as it would be arrogant and self-righteous to assume that those who are reading this chapter, and I as the author, do not in any way benefit from the colonial machinery of the West/Global North.¹² My proposal is not to rid us of the Western tradition. Rather I propose to question its hegemony and to contextualize it historically, without any assumption of superiority in comparison with other traditions and epistemologies.

Bringing scholars into the conversation who highlight issues of orientalism (Said, 1978) adds to Mignolo’s (2002) theory of epistemic coloniality and the problematic binary of secularism and religion. The intersecting discourse on epistemic coloniality, orientalism, and secularism particularly speaks to my formal educational experience. This understanding is essential in order for one to emerge from a sense of intellectual inferiority. It is after such understanding that I can engage with a conceptualization of Islam that provides agency to every individual to engage with religion within the social context. Without the understanding, I had

¹¹ Global North is geographically defined by the Brandt line, with the more economically powerful and less populated countries of the North versus the more populated South (barring settler colonies). The concept emerged out of the Brandt Report published in April 1980 by the Independent Commission on International Development Issues chaired by former German Chancellor Willy Brandt. This has influenced the discourse on economic development and aid where the benevolent Global North provides aid and guidance to the Global South, without any acknowledgment of exploitation of economic structures that were in place since colonial times, as the colonies were considered peripheries to support the colonial centre. It also ignores the harmful effects on the planet with mass consumerism (more information on www.footprintnetwork.org).

¹² For a deeper discussion into defining terms such as West, modernity, Enlightenment, see Mignolo, 2013.

confined religion to matters of the metaphysical, which in practice were outside the intellectual realm.

The third chapter historicizes the making of religious authority to be able to critique the harms it has produced. It allows for an understanding of the following verse of the Qur'an:

There are some people who twist the Scripture with their tongues to make you [people] think that what they say is part of the Scripture when it is not; they say it is from God when it is not; they attribute lies to God and they know it. (Qur'an 3:78)

ILT conceptualizes a praxis that expands the application of Islamic theology to an individual's social context rather than an ahistoric prescription removed from social context. I discuss four scholars within the tradition of ILT whose work allowed for my renewed understanding of taqwa. An understanding that shifts taqwa's purpose from instilling fear of God to questioning what it means to be conscious of God in all thought and action.

The fourth chapter assesses my orientation towards wealth accumulation that centers consumption. A reverse transubstantiation where what was once sacred can now become a commodity. This self-accountability is essential to developing a dynamic praxis rather than a static one. It is essential developing a praxis that creates an engagement with the social context but then also reflects on one's own desires. This praxis exists at the *dihliz*.

Moosa (2005) in his explanation of Ghazali's works writes about the concept of *dihliz*, which refers to threshold position in Arabic and Farsi. For Ghazali the *dihliz* is "the spaces in which texts and narratives are engendered, then the interactive and reflexive Ricoeurian narrative resolves the tension between stories and life, between fiction and history, through either concordance or discordance" (Moosa, 2005, p. 70). For Ghazali, operating from the *dihliz* is not middle-of-the-road thinking, but agonizing and negotiating antimonies (Moosa, 2005).

Taking Ghazali's dihliz-ian metaphor a step further, one could argue that taqwa gives us ways of existing in that space in a continuous struggle that turns us outside and then brings us inside for reflection. Standing at the dihliz challenges complacency and sedentary thinking. It does not allow for the prescriptiveness endemic in this religious and non-religious education I had received. It denies the expectation of closure, an ultimate answer, inevitably a checklist.

This study is ultimately about a search for stories for my daughter. Stories that do not reproduce the alienation of my formal education, the fear and prescriptiveness of my informal education, or the desires of wealth accumulation that end up defining all relationships. It is in totality still just a beginning, a lifelong search for stories for my daughter.

Bismillah¹³

¹³ Translation: Begin in the name of Allah. Said at beginnings, openings, introduction, first steps, etc.

Chapter 2: Challenging the Colonial Legacy of My Education

The vanquished always want to imitate the victor in his [*sic*] distinctive characteristics, his dress, his occupation, all his other conditions and customs. The reason for this is that the soul always sees perfection in the person who is superior to it and to whom it is subservient. It considers him perfect, either because it is impressed by the respect it has for him, or because it erroneously assumes that its own subservience to him is not due to the nature of the defeat but to the perfection of the victor. (Ibn Khaldun, 1978, p. 116)

Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) described an essential element of a colonial subject, a colonized mind, and psyche. A colonial subject “erroneously assumes” that their subservience is due to their own inferiority. In the society I live in, one can be systematically discriminated against due to multiple reasons: race, class, gender, sexual orientation, citizenship, religion, and immigration status are some examples. I could easily see the injustice of such discrimination, especially if I was at the receiving end. However, I had “erroneously assumed” that the subservience embedded within my formal education was due to intellectual inferiority of the culture to which I belonged. Mignolo theorizes a reason for this assumption of epistemic inferiority:

The main thrust of my argument has been to highlight the colonial different, first as a consequence of the coloniality of power (in the making of it) and second as an epistemic location beyond right and left as articulated in the second modernity (i.e. liberal, neoliberal, socialism, neosocialism). The world became unthinkable beyond European (and, later, North Atlantic) epistemology. The colonial difference marked the limits of thinking and theorizing, unless modern epistemology (philosophy, social sciences, natural sciences) was exported/imported to those places where thinking was impossible (because it was folklore, magic, wisdom and the like). (Mignolo, 2002, p. 90)

While reading works about epistemic coloniality, I began to realize the intentionality in constructing and maintaining a sense of inferiority through education. Even with the exit of colonial administration, ex-colonies continue to maintain their subservience. We (Pakistanis) continue to uphold Macaulay's legacy and the superiority of an English education.

I have conversed, both here and at home, with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the orientalist themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is indeed fully admitted by those members of the committee who support the oriental plan of education. . . We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother tongue. . . Whoever knows that language (English) has ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations. (Macaulay, 1835)

The fear mongering, racism, and discrimination against Muslims that exists today (Mir, 2017 and 2018) adds dimensions of orientalism (Said, 1978) to epistemic coloniality. Orientalism as not only the “biases and prejudice to which the critique of Orientalism is so often reduced but that which opens the possibility of enquiries that understand the complex constitutive interplay between power and knowledge between the ‘Orient’ orientalising, and the Occident” (ReOrient, 2015, p. 6).

2.1 Epistemic Decoloniality from a Muslim Perspective

For Sayyid (2014), coloniality is not reducible to colonialism but to the “logic of governmentality that underpins specific forms of historical colonialism and continues to structure

a planetary hierarchy in terms of West and non-West (and its various cognates) beyond the formal institutionalization of colonialism” (p. 38).¹⁴ In this form of decolonial thinking, Sayyid employs Mignolo’s (2009) definition of epistemic disobedience which “means to de-link from the illusion of zero-point knowledge” (Sayyid, 2014, p. 160). *ReOrient: A Journal of Critical Muslims Studies* (2015) expands the notion of epistemic coloniality from a Muslim perspective. It adds three thematic critiques along with epistemic coloniality:

- 1) Critique of Eurocentrism
- 2) Critique of orientalism
- 3) Suspicion of positivism (where positivism is described as any and all investigations “that implicitly or explicitly hold on to the dream of producing neutral, transparent and predictive knowledge” (p. 6))

Sayyid employs these critical themes in his work, *Recalling the Caliphate* (2014). For him, “The Muslim question (with its echoes of the Jewish question and the Eastern question before it) refers to a series of interrogations and speculation in which Islam and/or Muslims exist as a difficulty that needs to be addressed” (p. 3). Sayyid differentiates a decolonial project from the Islamisation of knowledge projects such as the one initiated by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas in Malaysia. The goal of Attas’ project was to curtail the damages of modernity by applying Islamic principles. For example, the capitalist economy would be just if it followed Islamic economic principles. Sayyid differentiates his critique by being skeptical that a change in normative practices, without addressing hegemonic and epistemological practices, would be effective in restricting harms of modernity.

¹⁴ Sayyid’s work focuses on Muslims while acknowledging that there are differing experiences of coloniality among “the Rest” as well as within the Rest (2014, p. 68). His work is cognizant of the plurality among Muslims (p. 181) and therefore proposes an engagement rather than a solution.

The decolonial refers to neither an erasure of all power relations (whatever they may mean), nor is it an attempt to found a utopia beyond all possible camps, but rather has the more limited aim of rejecting the continuity of the founding axiom of coloniality/modernity: the violent hierarchy between the West and non-West. (Sayyid, 2014, p. 13)

Sayyid argues that what is often presented as clash of civilizations is actually a reflection of the hegemony of liberalism (1997, 2014). Liberal philosophy is based on “the primacy of the rational individual and sees conflicts as being the result of the failure to find apodic solutions, a failure that is temporary and that can be defeated by the exercise of goodwill and reason. According to this view, the existence of difference in the world reflects an empirical rather than an ontological limit” (Sayyid, 2014, p. 20).¹⁵

Irfan Ahmad provides ethnographic insight into some of the traditions of critique within Muslim communities in India (2017). His work challenges the notions of Islam being a static tradition and of Muslims being incapable of self-critique. He delves into a context-specific genealogy of critique within the Islamic tradition through the work of Abul Ala Maududi (1903-1979), the founder of Jamat-e-Islami in colonial India, and of Maududi’s critics.¹⁶

Ahmad’s work refutes claims that the tradition of critique does not exist within Islam. He examines critique within Islam in varying degrees, forms, and modalities within the geographical

¹⁵ Bazian (2014) and Grosfoguel (2012) further engage with Mignolo’s concept of coloniality and the Islamic epistemology. They critique a world system that is based on a capitalist wealth accumulation structure with racial, gender, religious, linguistic, and epistemic hierarchies. They explore how Muslims and the study of Islam have been at a disadvantage in such hierarchies. Though Bazian and Grosfoguel present these hierarchies in the context of decoloniality, Abu-Lughod (2013), Mamdani (2004), Sayyid & Vakil (2010), and Dabashi (2015) have written about it extensively as well.

¹⁶ See Zaman (2012) for discussion on religious authority and internal criticism within orthodoxy on various issues.

context of South Asia and the linguist context of Urdu (Ahmad, 2017). He makes an argument that reason, critique, and reflexivity, although considered hallmarks of Enlightenment, existed long before that in various traditions (Ahmad, 2017). Ahmad also argues that “in and of itself reason is neither sufficient nor autonomous in arriving at judgments. Reason — unaided, delinked, unhooked, isolated, detached, autonomous, sovereign — doesn’t exist; at best it is a mythology that, on close scrutiny, is unable to sustain itself” (2017, p. 16). He therefore also rejects the dualism between heart and reason. His rejection follows from a tradition of Muslim scholars and poets¹⁷ who have seen both *‘aql* (reason) and *qalb* (heart)/ *viđdān* (intuition) not as antithetical to one another but as coexisting in the pursuit of knowledge (2017). Rahman (1980) would agree, as he argues that while the Qur’an discusses uses of empirical knowledge¹⁸, it is of little benefit unless it awakens the inner perception of a human to her own situation, and destiny.

Have these people [of Mecca] not travelled through the land with hearts to understand and ears to hear? It is not people’s eyes that are blind, but their hearts within their breasts.
(Qur’an, 22:46)

2.2 Secularism and Islam

Secularism as a political doctrine is often simplified as the separation of religion, and religious influence, from secular institutions, especially in government. If secularism was just that separation, then the separation has existed in Islamic empires for centuries. The Ottomans, for example, had a parallel legal system that dealt with administrative matters, taxations, etc.

¹⁷ Notably Maulana Rumi (1207-1273), Shah Waliullah (1703-1763), and Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938)

¹⁸ Rahman (1980) lists passages of the Qur’an that discuss three types of knowledge: physical sciences, history and geography, and knowledge of self that is both empirical and moral.

called *qanun*, and they had religious law. The lawyers, judges, and bureaucrats came under the grand vizier (second in command to the sultan) while Sheikh-ul-Islam was the head of judges judging cases per Islamic law (Ansary, 2009). Religious scholars such as, Adulkarim Souroush of Iran and Nucholish Madjid of Indonesia, believed that the most compelling reason for the separation of political and religious authority is to protect the integrity of religious ideals from corrupt rulers and political manipulations (Hefner, 2000).

Charles Taylor in “Modes of Secularism” (1998) argues that the emergence of secularism is closely connected to the rise of the modern nation state, a connection that the modern democratic state cannot do without. He states, “a healthy degree of what used to be called patriotism, a strong sense of identification with the polity, and a willingness to give of oneself for its sake” (p. 4). According to Taylor, the modern state needs to replace different identities (race, class, and religion) with the unifying experience of citizenship. Here secularism is not only about social cohesion and tolerance, but a political medium (through citizenship) that redefines and transcends the articulation of differences (Asad, 2003). We see this played out differently in what are deemed to be secular states around the world. The first chapter discussed the Canadian context; other examples include France where the centralized state is secular, UK where the head of state and head of the Church of England are the same, and the US where the federal state is secular but allegiance to it comes with a recognition of God.

Asad also complicates the idea of how standards of morality are interlinked with the political. He argues that Clifford Geertz’s work in “Religion as a Cultural System” postulates a transcultural and transhistorical essence of religion, which removed religion from power (Asad, 1993). Asad draws on St. Augustine’s concept of *disciplina*, an active process of corrective punishment, a *per molestias eruditio*, to argue that “it is not mere symbols that implant true

Christian dispositions, but power” (Asad, 2003, p. 35). Today the secular state defines religion, and *a religion* is normalized over others. We can most easily observe this in the phenomenon of state-sanctioned holidays whether it be Christmas in North America and Western Europe, or Eid in Muslim-majority countries.

Saba Mahmood in *Religious Difference in a Secular Age* (2015) examines the secularization of Egyptian national life and law by looking at the issue of religious minorities (mainly Coptic Christians and Baha’i) residing in Egypt. Through a genealogical study of the concept and its introduction into law, Mahmood argues that Egypt’s path to secularism is similar to that of other nation states like France, Germany, and Turkey. The concept of “minority” within secularism, while promising to safeguard civic and political equality, has, in reality, exacerbated religious differences in Egypt. In the case of Egypt, Islamic family law (which is in the private realm) constitutes majoritarian norms of national identity, while Coptic family law is not subject to the nation state but to the Coptic Orthodox Church. However, as the Baha’i Faith is not recognized by the state as religion, its followers find themselves treated differently than the majority and minorities such as Coptic Christians. The issue then, as exemplified through the holiday example above, is that while secularism claims to be neutral toward all religions within the nation state, it paradoxically embodies majoritarian norms in state institutions that result in civil and political inequalities for the religious minority (Mahmood, 2015). Through examining several court cases tried by the European Court of Human Rights involving religious minorities, Mahmood argues that secularism in Egypt works similarly to secularism in Western European countries. This supports Asad’s (1993) argument that separating issues of morality into secular issues and religious ones has been of disservice to Muslim communities.

Ahmed (2016), like Asad, challenges notions of what religion means. He argues that *dīn*, what Islam is called in the Qur'an and by Muslims, is more pervasive than the category of religion. Before the 1925 Law on Headdress in Turkey, the *kulāh* had neither been religious nor secular. However, as nation states tried to reconstitute within the religious-secular binary, the *kulāh* became religious and the Western brimmed hats secular. "To conceptualize Islam in terms of the religious/sacred versus secular binary is both an anachronism and an epistemological error the effect of which is to *remake* the historical object-phenomenon in the terms of Western modernity...a reconstitution largely carried out by the modern (colonial or nationalist) state *via* interventionary legal acts of epistemological coercion" (Ahmed, 2016, pp. 210-211).¹⁹ Therefore, stories of struggle toward an equitable society cannot be bifurcated into secular stories or religious stories. This also speaks to the claim I stated in the first chapter, namely that though issues of epistemic coloniality, structural social harm, and consumerism are not solely theological issues, they are *also* theological issues in the case of Islam.

2.3 What is Islam?

In the first chapter, I distinguished between what I called Muslims' stories and the stories of the Qur'an. However, Ahmed (2017) provides us a framework to conceptualize the discourse on Islam holistically. He aims to conceptualize (not just enumerate) all the diversity within Islam and the 1.8 billion Muslims of today.

What is Islam? Ahmed (2016) frames the question at hand beginning with the cover of the book. On the cover is a picture of a coin minted in celebration of Emperor Jahangir, a 16th

¹⁹ All italics quoted in Ahmed works are the author's.

century Mughal emperor of pre-colonial India. He was a Muslim emperor who had a formidable council of ulema²⁰ to advise him and took great care in legitimizing his many legal proclamations. What is striking is that in the picture on the coin, Jahangir is holding a wine cup. This coin not only summarizes the contradictions held within Muslim practices but also makes us wonder what makes anything Islamic. What is coherently Islamic about art, philosophy, legal texts, and Sufi practices?

Ibn Sina, an Islamic philosopher, claims, that the highest truths of Unseen may be ascertained via rational reflection outside of revelation, were called heretical by another scholar (turned mystic) Al-Ghazali²¹. Hafez, a much-revered Muslim poet, laments religious hypocrisy and scoffs at legal obligations within religion. For him *madhhab-i- 'ishq*, an all-consuming path of love, with its intoxications as well as homoeroticism but the sole purpose is to reflect on the Truth.

Wine in my glass, and roses in my arms,
My lover near me-
On such a day the world's great kind would be
My slave and dear me.
No need to bring a candle to
Our meeting place tonight;
My friend is there, the full moon of his face will be our light.
Though wine in our religion's not forbidden
(never think it!),
If you're not there, my cypress-slender love,
How can I drink it?

²⁰ Ulema is the plural of *alim* which literally translates to someone with '*ilm* (knowledge/education). In modern use it refers to scholars (who are predominantly male and focus largely on Islamic legal matters) and clerics who have gone through the traditional *madrassa* system. *Madrassa* literally means place of study and is most easily translated to 'school' in the US connotation of the word which can denote pre-school all the way to graduate school. *Madaris* (plural of *madrassa*) exist in both formal and informal settings. In the context of the ulema, *madrassa* training refers to something similar to seminary training.

²¹ Moosa (2005) presents a multi-faceted and complex analysis of Al-Ghazali's views which are often strongly blamed for the downfall of philosophy within the Islamic world.

We drink our wine, we flirt, and we're
Licentious – yes, but who
Is in this city where we live
Of whom this isn't true?

And don't go to the morals officer
To make a fuss-
He's on the constant lookout too for pleasure,
Just like us. (Hafez).²²

Ahmed (2016) argues that neither Ibn Sina nor Hafez present anomalous or alternative ways of thinking about Islam. He critiques two types of privileging in what constitutes as proper Islam. Firstly, Ahmed reorients methodologically to enfranchise chronological and geographic evidence that has been ignored in order to identify what is Islam. Scholars have been prone to focus on the formative and classical period of Islam's development and within the caliphate empire. Ahmed looks to the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries (Ottoman-Safavid-Mughal empires), and calls it the Balkan-to-Bengal complex.²³ Secondly, there has been an acute focus by both scholars and ulema²⁴ on relegating anything as Islamic that does not lie within the domain of legal-prescriptive discourse.²⁵ The madrasa curriculum defined what was Islam within

²² As translated in Davis, 2013, pp.16-17.

²³ African Muslim communities still seem absent from this geographic conceptualisation.

²⁴ The distinction between ulema and scholars, for the purpose of this work, is between traditional modes of training versus Western-style academic training. However, one can admit that the line between the two is blurry, and it is made increasingly blurry by universities teaching theology and by female jurists who do not have access to the traditional ulema training.

²⁵ Ebrahim Moosa, who calls himself a "critical traditionalist," has written about the genealogy of the traditions of learnings within madaris and the legal-prescriptive discourse in present-day India (2015).

the Balkan-to-Bengal complex but so did Sufi brotherhoods (with large followings) as well as fraternities of philosophers and poets.²⁶

Ahmed draws on Asad's (1993) insight on Islam as "processual" but does not agree with Asad's notion of an essential Islamic orthodoxy.²⁷ Ahmed proposes to consider Islam as a hermeneutical engagement which, for him, is not the same as Qur'anic hermeneutics or exegesis. "Hermeneutical engagement—that is, as engagement by an agent with a source or object of (potential) meaning in a way that ultimately *produces meaning for the actor* by way of the source" according to Ahmed (2016, p. 345). If Islam cannot have universally accepted paraxial elements, then Islam *is* the language through which Muslims posit practices that can be contradictory from other Muslims, but one is not any more Islamic than another.²⁸

Starting with the profession of faith within Islam, "I bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God," Ahmed argues, the "fact of God's Revelation to Muhammad means that the historical engagement of Muslims with the Truth of the

²⁶ It is important to note that madrasa curriculum of the time was far more diverse than its present-day articulation and would have included philosophical and Sufi texts rather than solely the juridical and exegetical texts. So, the spheres are congruent, not separate. Historically, legal scholars and Sufis were mutually exclusive categories. Coleman Barks's translations brought Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi to an English-speaking audience and in the method of translation eliminated all signs of Islam from Mawlana's poetry (Ali, 2017). Mawlana was an esteemed legal scholar as well as Sufi.

²⁷ He also offhandedly rejects works by two of Asad's most prominent students, Saba Mahmood and Charles Hirschkind (they only get a footnote, 2016, p. 284, n.84). This is rather perplexing as Mahmood's work (2005) has drawn on Butler's work (1993) on gender as performative by looking at women mosque circles in Egypt and the agency of their decisions and the performativity of being pious Muslims. This is analogous to Ahmed's descriptions of semiotic and discursive aspects of Muslim meaning-making. Ahmed's work, like those by many other male scholars, is oblivious to the scholarship by women. Kecia Ali (2013) has presented a comprehensive analysis of the absence of female scholars' work by male counterparts, even when the former's work ties in directly to the latter's study.

²⁸ This is not the same concept of *islams* as posited by scholars in Safi (2003). As Ahmed states, "Out there in the world beyond the individual Muslim is something that this Muslim recognizes as Islam, and to do islam—to make him/herself a Muslim—the individual must engage with the received external something that s/he recognizes as Islam" (Ahmed, 2016, pp.102-103).

Divine necessarily constitutes/indicates a *this-worldly* engagement with *other-worldly* Truth” (Ahmed, 2016, p. 344). He categorizes the hermeneutic engagement into three parts: Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text. Though the jurists focused solely on the Text, the philosophers and Sufis found that to be an insufficient path towards *al-haqq* (The Truth).²⁹ Philosophers have tried to engage with Pre-Text through rational contemplation while Sufis attempt to access it experientially. Some would even argue that it is Pre-Text and not Text itself that is foundational to understanding The Truth. “The Pre-Text of Revelation is Pre-Text both in the sense *that it is ontologically and alethically prior to the Text and is upon which the Truth of the Text is contingent.*” (Ahmed, 2016, p. 347). I would argue that the Qur’an as well speaks of the Pre-Text in the Text, for example:

In the creation of the heavens and earth; in the alternation of night and day; in the ships that sail the seas with goods for people; in the water which God sends down from the sky to give life to earth when it have been barren, scattering all kinds of creatures over it; in the changing of the winds and clouds that run their appointed courses between the sky and the earth: there are signs in all these for those who use their minds. (Qur’an, 2:164)

Signs that exist outside of Text are Pre-Text. As for Con-Text it “*is, ultimately, genealogically traceable and semantically attributable to Text and/or Pre-Text* whence Con-Text has been elaborated. However, it is equally important to be aware of the concomitant fact, in any given instance or locus of hermeneutical engagement, *Text and Pre-Text are part of Con-Text* since it is only in the *received* terms and vocabulary on Con-Text that the *meanings* of Text and Pre-Text *reach* and are operational in a given Muslim or society of Muslims” (Ahmed, 2016, p. 358).

²⁹ Moosa (1998) has further complicated this binary distinction by insisting on a cosmology underlying the juristic theology which allows us to bridge the discursive divide between the empirical and transcendental realms.

2.4 Conclusion

Considering Ahmed's conceptualization of Islam as a hermeneutical engagement, are the critiques by scholars like Sayyid, Ahmad, Asad, and Mahmood Islam inherently Islamic? This question is not intended to provide a normative finality to the discourses mentioned. That would be impossible due to the heterogenous intentions (only some of which are disclosed) of the authors. It is, however, an attempt to bring in conversation claims and analysis that currently exist in silos. Islamic practices for Ahmed are not only engagement with Text, which might be more overtly described as theological, but also engagement with Pro-Text and Con-Text. That challenges any unyielding distinctions between the transcendent world of abstract concepts and the material reality of this world. Mahmood (Asad et al., 2009) reminds us of the confusion and unintelligible experience by the proselytizing Protestant missionaries when they encountered non-Christian natives (which included Muslims) who "attributed divine agency to material signs, . . . as an ontological extension of themselves" (p. 72). It therefore became a pedagogical project for the missionaries to teach how to "distinguish properly between inanimate objects, humans and divinity" (ibid, p. 73). These material signs were not necessarily material in the sense of an object or image, but a relationality that binds the object (i.e. believer) to a shared imaginary, "to allow an individual (or a community) to find oneself in a structure that influences how one conducts oneself in this world" (ibid, p. 74). Exploring, articulating, and challenging this relationality gives rise to decolonial epistemic practices. However, one would argue that without praxis it is not necessarily Islamic, an argument explored in the next chapter.

In love, the Sufi meeting house
And wine-shop are one place;
As are all places where we find
The loved one's radiant face.

And what the Sufis make a show of
Can be found equally
Among the monks, before their cross,
Within a monastery.

Hafez's cry is not mere nonsense,
When all is said and done;
Though it's a strangely curious tale,
And a perplexing one.
-Hafez³⁰

Hafez places the love of Divine in Sufi meeting houses, wine shops, and monasteries. I would assume that this is not to enumerate the places for the expression of love for the Beloved, but to speak to the unity among the diversity of traditions and their expression of such love. What would praxis of such love entail, especially for the non-ascetic seekers of Truth?

³⁰ As translated in Davis, 2013, pp.12-13.

Chapter 3: Islamic Liberation Theology

Beware of a day when you will be returned to God, every soul will be paid in full for what it has earned, and no one will be wronged. (Qur'an 2:281)

Why is it that all Islamic theology is not liberation theology?³¹ What adds the liberative component? Is the purpose of Islam personal salvation³² alone? These are important questions to ask if one is trying to teach Islam. The *shahdah* (Islamic profession of faith) translates as, “There is no god but God and Muhammad is His Messenger.” On the surface this profession of faith demands little, a belief in monotheism and Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) to be *a* messenger of the Divine. Is belief in monotheism reducible to the worship of an omnipresent and omnipotent authority separate from all other beings? Do all beings have their own individual relationship with God or is there Divinity in all of creation? These are questions of theology, as well as liberation theology, though the latter has a stronger focus on praxis.

As mentioned in the second chapter, it is praxis that makes the connection between Con-Text, Text and Pre-Text (Ahmed, 2016), and allows for the connections between the abstract concepts of the transcendental world and the material reality of this world. It is this praxis that is focused upon within Islamic liberation theology (ILT) and will be explored through the works of a few formative scholars in the field including Farid Esack, Asghar Ali Engineer, Ali Shariati, and Amina Wadud. ILT is not limited to these four scholars. A fair analysis of all scholarship in

³¹ In the English language, among others, the term liberation theology has a history of Christian theology that carries the legacy of the works of Gustavo Gutiérrez, James Hal Cone, Naim Ateek, and others. The discipline is diverse and though I will not be engaging in Christian liberation theology, I wanted to acknowledge the rich tradition that exists.

³² Salvation in Islamic context refers to an afterlife free from pain and suffering, or is simply explained as entering into heaven. Some mystical interpretations would lead to different forms of salvation, for example, losing ego centrality. These will be discussed later in this thesis.

this subject would be a self-standing project of its own. These scholars are chosen as samples of varied perspectives of liberation theology and its application within the lives of Muslims. Ali Shariati, an intellectual of the Iranian revolution wrote about the role of theology in political struggle. Like Shariati, Esack wrote from a political perspective in apartheid South Africa, he however emphasizes the centrality of *context* for praxis. Engineer's major resistance was against the oppression of religious authority, within Daudi Bohra sect of Islam. Wadud focused on a liberative hermeneutics and offers a re-reading of the Qur'an from a woman's perspective. Wadud was instrumental in giving rise to feminist hermeneutics from within Islam and offers hermeneutics as a liberatory practice. Though Engineer stressed the importance of challenging religious authority, there is a critical commentary embedded in all ILT scholars. That critical commentary highlights the dissatisfaction, and/or the oppression from traditional theologians.

Before I explore ILT further, I would like to contextualize the making of religious authority within Islam. All of the scholars mentioned in this research are outside of the "traditional" training of religious scholarship, except two, Farid Esack and Ebrahim Moosa. ILT posits a significant challenge to traditional theology by religious authority; therefore, it is essential to understand the institutional making of that authority. The traditional *ulema* (scholars) are like the scholars discussed in this work. They are academics, albeit of a different academic institute than universities, i.e. the *madrassa*.

3.1 Making of Religious Authority

3.1.1 Madrasa: A Brief history

Madrasa is an Arabic word that literally translates to place of study. Education within *madaris* (plural of *madrasa*) encompasses a spectrum including primary and secondary curriculum, Sunday school-type programs for children, and institutes of Islamic higher learning (undergraduate and post graduate). Madaris exist within the Islamic and non-Islamic world and the pedagogical practices and experiences are culturally different in each country. The curriculum and texts taught within madaris change based on the country as well as sect within Islam. As shown in the table below, there is no one form of madrasa or one curriculum across the Muslim world. Therefore, to draw out any observations on form I will focus in *form* on Pakistan. I chose Pakistan due to my familiarity with context, culture, and history that allows for a deeper analysis. The specificity of context in form allows us to draw implications for a contextualizing making of religious authority.

Country	Madrasa Model	Percent of world's Muslim population in 2010 ³³
Turkey	Called Imam Hatip Schools. Start at the high school level and are classified as vocational training schools. They come under the Ministry of Education (Ozgur, 2012). ³⁴	4.5%
Bangladesh	90,000 'Aliya (reformed) madaris come under Ministry of Education and represent over 30% of the total secondary school enrollment. 10,000 qaumi (traditional) madaris do not come under government control (Bano, 2012).	8.4%
Pakistan	All are independent of Ministry of Education though tertiary level degrees offered by madaris and are recognized by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (Zaman, 2002).	10.5%

Table 1. Diversity in madrasa models: Examples from three Muslim majority countries

³³ Pew Research Center, 2009.

³⁴ Current Prime Minister Erdogan is an alumni of an Imam Hatib school.

In the beginning of the twelfth century, saints and scholars of Persia and Arabia were gravitating toward Hind (present-day South Asia) to spread the teachings of Islam (Bano, 2012, p. 12). These migratory scholars led to the rise of theological pedagogy and acquired international reputation for their expertise in interpreting religious texts. Madaris had two categories of subjects: *maqulat* (rational subjects) and *manqulat* (transmitted subjects). The former included subjects based on reason such as *mantaq* (logic), *hikmat* (philosophy), *tibb* (medicine), *riyazi* (mathematics), and *ha'ait* (astronomy). The latter focused on theology such as *tafsir* (exegesis), *sunnah* (tradition of the Prophet), and *fiqh* (jurisprudence). The scholarship in rational subjects was not ancillary to madaris but one of their core functions. For example, scholars at Farangi Mahal, one of the leading madaris of Delhi, translated Newton's *Principia* into Persian. Robinson comments on the balance of rational and transmitted subjects when studying Ottoman and Safavid empires (Robinson, 1997). According to Robinson, the rationalist subjects tended to flourish when Muslims were confidently in power, and the transmitted subjects flourished when Muslims, as the upholder of Islamic society, felt that Muslim state power was threatened or destroyed.

The basis of this pedagogical model was an informal organization of students around a teacher, a model that existed until the nineteenth century. This model was not very different from the early models of Western colleges (Bano, 2012, pp. 23-25). All madaris of higher learning covered certain core texts but the teaching was highly personalized. There was no set curriculum and no system for awarding degrees. Students sought eminent scholars who were known for their expertise in teaching certain core subjects or books. Upon completion of the study of specific texts, students were issued a certificate (*Ijaza*) stating the subjects/books studied and the name of the teacher. What was relevant was the teacher, not the name of the madrasa where the education

took place. This informality remained the hallmark of the madrasa education system in South Asia until the rise of Darul Uloom Deoband, in 1866, in present-day India.

3.1.2 Madaris: Colonial Encounter in India

In India, the British encountered institutions with no clear distinctions between the secular and religious. This situation for the British was reminiscent of Europe's own medieval history. This dominance of religion made Indians not only different from the post-Enlightenment Europeans, but also inferior to their colonial rulers and therefore in need of their governance and liberating reform (Zaman, 2002, pp. 62-63). The madaris were one such religious institute and, for that reason, especially after the 1857 mutiny, many were abolished. The first Director of Public Instruction in Punjab began the project of relegating religion outside the education sphere, stating, "I (have) ordered all village schools to be removed from the precincts of mosques and other buildings of a religious character. Native subordinates informed me that no other buildings were available. I then ordered that the schools should be closed rather than held in such buildings" (Zaman, 2002, p. 63).

A fundamental theme of colonial analysis of education was the criteria of what counted as "useful" knowledge. During the colonial rule, Muslim elite were marginalized. Madrasa education under Mughal rule was a way to educate nobility but the education became irrelevant for securing positions within the colonial government. Islamic law within Mughal courts was replaced by Anglo law (Robinson, 2007). This led to a dramatic reduction in financial resources available to the madaris under the colonial rule. For Islamic scholars, any strategy aimed at competing with Western educational institutions would be financially and practically unviable. Therefore, in the shape of Darul Uloom Deoband, they consolidated and expanded what they

uniquely knew best, i.e. teaching of Islamic texts, focusing on transmitted subjects (Bano, 2012, pp. 36-39). When modernism was equated to colonial pressures, Islamic scholars stressed *tagadum* (authenticity) over *tajaddud* (modernism) (Zaman, 1999, p. 318). Darul Uloom Deoband, in certain ways, was an answer to the pressures put on madaris by the colonial British. Unlike its predecessor model, which was informal and teacher-centric, Darul Uloom Deoband set a curriculum, formal classes, an examination, and degree-awarding system. This model replicated the colonial schooling structure. When the state could no longer guarantee safeguarding Islamic principles, madaris' function in society was focused on addressing that. Therefore, the structure and role of madaris shifted within colonial control. There was greater emphasis on transmitted subjects and in rigidity of structure and curriculum.

Form of education	Governing body or affiliation	Number of students
Registered madaris	1 of 5 wafaqs	1.5 million (Bano, 2012)
Unregistered madaris	Local mosque or organization	Unknown
Home schooling	Through a local imam or madrasa graduate	Unknown
Islamiyat (Islamic Studies)	Taught as a compulsory subject for all Muslim students from Grade I-X for students undergoing GCSE system and I-XII for those going through the local education system ³⁵	15 million children enrolled in primary education as of 2014, not exclusive of children who might be studying concurrently at an unregistered madrasa or be home-schooled. This number also does not reflect all those who complete schooling until Grade XII. About 48.5% of the population has completed primary education (World Bank, 2014).

Table 2. Complexity of religious education within Pakistan

³⁵ The local education system is divided among 1 Federal Board, 10 boards in the province of Punjab, 6 boards in province of Sindh, 8 boards in the province of KPK, 3 boards in the province of Balochistan, and 1 board for Pakistan-administered Kashmir (locally referred to Azad Kashmir).

3.1.3 Madaris in Islamic Republic of Pakistan

After the departure of the colonial British, the position of Islam was central to the state discourse within Pakistan. However, the rulers were educated in secular colonial universities with English as their predominant medium of education. They had little in common with the Islamic scholars that headed madaris and saw the education madaris imparted as inadequate. In the country's first electoral register, only literate adults could register. The state's disregard for madrasa education was prominent when madrasa graduates were classified as illiterate and excluded from the electoral register (Bano, 2012, p. 45).

In both the early 1960s and 1970s the government formed committees to address madrasa reform in Pakistan and bring it in line with the needs of the newly-formed country. While both these committees included prominent religious scholars, they were outnumbered by bureaucrats. Unlike the colonial rulers, the Pakistani government officials did not doubt the importance of religion to the state of Pakistan. However, instilled within the discussion was a dichotomy of *deeni uloom* (religious education) and *dunyawi uloom* (worldly education). This distinction is not different from a religious and secular division. This divide assumes that what students learn in school is necessary for earning an income, and what students might learn in madaris is for the Hereafter.

The Report of 1962 produced by the state-sanctioned reform committee does not deny that the religious disciplines are *useful*, *but* recommends that logic and philosophy be “drastically cut down” for “frankly speaking these are not essential in achieving the objective of religious education” (Zaman, 2002, p. 76). The 1962 committee therefore abandons the tradition of madaris teaching rational subjects because they are deemed unnecessary in the teaching of transmitted subjects. To the ulema, the Islamic tradition was not just about the religious texts but

a broad spectrum of texts, techniques, and sciences that collectively compromise the heritage of Islamic pedagogy (ibid).

The second reform-related report was published in 1979 under General Zia-ul-Haq who became the sixth president and, after declaring martial law in 1977, the longest-reigning head of state in Pakistan (1978-1988). Haq began a widespread Islamization process within Pakistan and used that as a means to garner popularity and legitimacy. The report of 1979 praises the work of madaris in Pakistan but, much like the report of 1962, it also proposes to bring madaris under state control. The madaris have historically and, up to present-day, rejected being part of state control in any form, including being part of the Education Ministry portfolio. The ulema disagreed with the loss of their autonomy from the state, as explained by the religious scholar Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Ludhianvi (d. 2000) in his critique of the 1979 report. For Ludhianvi the madaris were the “defenders of religious sciences.” The independence of madaris, in his opinion, was vital to its existence.

Ludhianvi's critique of the Report of 1979 makes explicit an issue that is central to all discussion of madrasa reform: the question of *religious authority*. Any attempt at reform that is perceived to threaten the identity and authority of the ‘ulama is by definition suspect. The Report of 1979 had attempted to devise a curriculum that would be acceptable equally to all sectarian affiliations . . . But if the authority of a religious scholar is based, in part at least, on his sectarian identity and on his ability to appeal to (and foster) that identity in his audience, then a “mixed” or hybrid curriculum can scarcely be accepted (Zaman, 2002, p. 79).

Ludhianvi thought that a mix of religious and secular subjects as proposed by the Report of 1979 would not combine the medieval and the modern, but produce a system which would be useless

for religious and worldly education. For him, the proposed system did not seek to create ulema but “only loyal government servants” (ibid). He further argued that the British education system in India was a means to undermine Muslim culture and identity. He argued that to integrate madaris within the colonial education system would destroy the system, and thus fulfil the British colonial education project in postcolonial Pakistan.

The rhetoric of the madrasa reform by the Pakistani government was couched within concern for graduates, specifically concern that they would be able to secure employment with the modern economy (Bano, 2012, p. 45). The solution was to include ‘secular’ subjects within the curriculum. However, little financial incentive was provided to do so. During President Haq’s regime, the state offered to pay the fees of the teachers teaching secular subjects, but not religious ones. The state also promised to cover the initial cost of purchasing science kits for madaris. However, there was little motivation for the religious scholars to accept these conditions as they would not have personally benefited from them, and they would have appeared to be cooperating with the government. There was also a belief among ulema that if the madaris got used to a regular state income, the madaris might compromise on religious ideals in order to ensure that stream of income. Therefore, it was seen as best not to get used to the comfort (Zaman, 1999).

In contrast to state-proposed reforms, the ulema were interested in investment to broaden the religious horizons of the graduates within madaris. It is through resisting government-prescribed reform that the ulema claim to play their part as religious authority. This argument is not unique to Pakistan. Shaykh Abd al-Rahman al-Shirbini, the rector of Egypt’s Al-Azhar University (1905-1909), had argued similarly for the independence of Al-Azhar but was unsuccessful as Egyptian government introduced large-scale reforms and undertook all formal

religious education within state control (Mahmood, 2005). To the madrasa, the Pakistani ulema pointed out to the reform efforts in other Muslim countries as a reason for decline in Islamic scholarship and independence.

It is important to separate political Islamic parties from the ulema as they have two distinct motives. In many Muslim countries, including Pakistan, Egypt, and Turkey, there are political parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami, Muslim Brotherhood, and AKP that have promoted Islamic values as a counter to the Western values and systems. The ulema are distinct in their purpose for maintaining madaris and traditional modes of pedagogy in order to establish religious authority and not political authority. Their role is to guide the society in morality and guide the state in matters of Islamic jurisprudence. Though scholars educated by madaris have become members of political parties within Pakistan, the madaris themselves do not support political parties. Certain secular universities, such as Karachi University, have stronger student political parties than the madaris. The space of theology is not apolitical and yet it is often portrayed to be. The traditional ulema in Pakistan have not enjoyed state support and yet have continued to thrive among the communities in which they are embedded. Therefore, going against their authority makes one a critic of a non-state resistance.

3.2 Challenging Traditional Authority: Islamic Liberation Theology

Esack (who studied in a Deobandi madrasa) describes praxis as an essential element of “doing theology,” “an Islamic liberation theology derives its inspiration from the Qur’an . . . It does so by engaging the Qur’an and the struggles of all the prophets in a process of shared and ongoing theological reflection for ever-increasing liberative praxis” (2006, p. 85). There is inseparability between the sacred and the mundane when theology is not only an ideology but rather in continuous reflective dialogue with action. This challenges the bifurcation between

religious and worldly education, as well as action. To allow this dialogue as the basis of liberative praxis assumes the following:

- 1) There is no theological “given” which exists ahistorically and cannot be questioned. One cannot deny their own realities playing a role in the theological conclusions.
- 2) There is no end nor certainty to the theology-praxis dialogue.

For students of *tafsir* the first assumption is a significant one. *Tafsir* comes from the Arabic word root of *fassara*, which means to elucidate. It began to be used as a term for Qur’anic exegesis, i.e. *tafsir*, in the fifth Hijri century (Esack, 2005). There are three broad categories of *tafsir*: 1) *tafsir bi’l-ilm* (exegesis based on knowledge), 2) *tafsir bi’l-ra’y* (exegesis by opinion/reason), and 3) *tafsir bi’l-isharah* (exegesis by indication). Exegesis by knowledge has the most acceptance among “orthodoxy” and is based on a significant assumption, i.e. the scholars were objective in their interpretation of the body of knowledge. This knowledge consists of the text of the Qur’an, Hadith, and any accounts by the Prophet’s contemporaries that could provide further information on the meaning of text. The body of knowledge is based on epistemological limitations of what accounts as authentic versus non-authentic narrations of the Prophet’s sayings, as well as the sayings of his contemporaries. It assumes a line of narrators and transmitters who do not interject their own personal bias or circumstance into the transmission. This assumes an almost unimaginable objectivity from the interpreter who exists beyond time and space and has no interest nor biases driven from the political, social, nor the theological issues of the time (Esack, 2005). *Tafsir-bi’l ilm*’s legitimacy relies on the claims to objectivity and objectivity is the only way it differentiates from exegesis by opinion (*tafsir bi’l ra’y*).

The second assumption is an easier one (at least theoretically speaking) as the Qur’an states:

وَأَعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ

“Worship your Lord, until what is certain comes to you,” (Qur’an 15:99).

The word ‘ibada³⁶ literally means “worship,” but scholars also translate it to “Serve your Lord” which includes prayer and service in a broader context, i.e. the dialogue of theology and praxis. The word *yaqin* means “certain,” but is often used as a metonym for death (Asad, 1980). As mentioned earlier for Esack, the liberative praxis is integral, not complimentary, to liberation theology. Engineer borrows a term from Marxism to stress on the praxis element, referring to it as “revolutionary praxis” (1989). Engineer separates liberation theology from traditional theology; in traditional theology, liberation is presented “purely in the metaphysical sense and outside the process of history” (1990, p. 11). This makes traditional theology an ally of the religious establishment. Therefore, ILT can provide a tool to challenge the status quo. Engineer’s strong rejection of the religious authoritarianism was specially directed towards the Daudi Bohra³⁷ leadership (which he himself was born into). For this rejection he suffered ostracization from his community. However, for Engineer, Prophet Muhammad’s goal was essentially revolutionary in nature: to challenge the status quo in Mecca and beyond (Engineer, 1989).

Ali Shari’ati, a leading intellectual of Iran’s Islamic Revolution, spoke from the experience of two seemingly different worlds i.e. Shi’ite Islam and the Global South philosophy of Frantz Fanon, Patrice Lumumba and others. Like Engineer, Shariati maintained that the *zeitgeist* of Islam was a demand for social justice. For Shariati, Islam was a guide of the people,

³⁶ The second word in the Arabic text of the verse.

³⁷ The Bohras are a branch of the Shi’ite Ismaili sect who are then further divided into subsects. Daudi Bohra is one of these subsects.

not a manager. Much like Engineer, Shariati wanted to transform religion from a code of jurisprudence and rituals to a revolutionary program. This transformation was rooted in Shari'ati's interpretation of the concept of *tawhid*.

Tauhid.³⁸ in the sense of oneness of God is of course accepted by all monotheists. But *tauhid* as a worldview in the sense I intend . . . regarding the whole universe as a unity, instead of dividing it into this world and the hereafter, the natural and the supernatural, substance and meaning, spirit and body. It means regarding the whole of existence as a single form, a single living and conscious organism, possessing will, intelligence, feeling and purpose. (Shari'ati, 1979, p. 82)

Shari'ati is not alone in proposing a liberation theology through concepts deemed essential by the theologians in understanding Qur'an's *Weltenshauung*. For Rahman and Wadud it is *taqwa*, for Shari'ati and Barlas its *tawhid*, for Esack it is *taqwa* and *tawhid*. Wadud and Barlas employ these concepts to a liberative hermeneutics to reading the Qur'an. Wadud uses the hermeneutical method proposed by Rahman (1965) who argues that all Qur'anic verses were revealed specific to time and the circumstances of revelation. While the message is not limited to that time historically, one must also understand the implications that the message had at the time. Rahman terms it a "double movement" from the present times to the Qur'anic times and then back to the present (1982, p. 5). Fourteen centuries of interpretive readings of the Qur'an have been predominantly written by men. Wadud brings liberative hermeneutics from a woman's perspective to a fundamental discipline in Islamic thought, i.e. Qur'anic exegesis. In the first chapter of her work, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's*

³⁸ Like the word "tawhid," there is some inconsistency in English translation. In quotations the spelling used by the author is kept even if it is different from the convention I use.

Perspective (1999), Wadud examines the creation of humankind through the language of the Qur'an. She states *nafs* (soul/self) as the common origin of human kind (1999). While *nafs* in Arabic is grammatically feminine, conceptually it is neither masculine nor feminine. Wadud argues for an equality in the creation of humans and presents that the distinction among them lies within the following verse:

People, we created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should get to know one another. In God's eyes, the most honored of you are the ones with most *taqwa*: God is all knowing, all aware. (Qur'an, 49:13)

This term *taqwa*, one of the most essential in the Qur'anic *Weltanschauung*, has various translations and definitions. Wadud consider it to mean "piety," that is comprised of (1) a pious manner of behavior in which the actor observes constraints appropriate to a social-moral system, and (2) "consciousness of Allah," that is, observing that manner of behaviour because of one's reverence towards Allah. In the Qur'anic *Weltanschauung*, this term always reflects both the action and the attitude (Wadud, 1999, pp. 36-37).

Wadud argues that there is equality in human creation and distinction among individuals lies on the basis of *taqwa*. Barlas, like Wadud, engages in feminist hermeneutics. She interprets the concept of *tawhid* as essential to feminist hermeneutics.³⁹

In its simplest form, *Tawhid* symbolises the idea of God's Indivisibility, hence also the indivisibility of God's Sovereignty; thus, no theory of male (or popular) sovereignty that

³⁹ Those interested in feminist scholarship would benefit from the significant contributions of scholars such as Leila Ahmed, Kecia Ali, Karen Bauer, Asma Lambaret, Fatima Mernissi, and Sadiyya Shaikh, among many others.

pretends to be an extension of God's Rule/Sovereignty. . . can be considered compatible with the doctrine of Tawhid. (Barlas, 2002, p. 13).

3.3 Conclusion

In *Islam and Modernity* (1982) Fazlur Rahman tries to directly address the question of Islam in the modern world. Mignolo considered modernity and coloniality as two sides of the same coin (1999). However, Rahman's project was not for Muslims and Islam to modernize in the same manner that Mignolo and other decolonial scholars have used (and critiqued) the term. He was asking for Muslims to examine their own methods of interpreting the Qur'an to meet the challenges of the world in which they currently live. Rahman's work urges Muslims to focus on their own weaknesses rather than to blame their current situation on the colonial legacy alone.

According to Rahman, the decline in the Muslim world was due to the intellectual ossification that occurred after the Abbasid era, not Western influence or coercion (1982). Rahman believes that the ulema played a critical role in this ossification. As early as the 11th century, the ulema were arguing for closing the gates of *ijtihad* and relying solely on *taqlid*. This made Islamic education a glib process of memorizing and regurgitating the rules and conclusions of works by earlier scholars without re-thinking the implication in the modern world (Rahman, 1965, pp. 170-174).

For many revivalists of religion at that time and today, what was wrong with Muslim societies was that they had abandoned the true spirit of the religion. The true spirit harkened to an Islam of the past, practiced by the early Muslim societies, in a way that was static rather than dynamic in time and space. These revivalists argued that the practice of *taqlid* (imitation) and not

*ijtihad*⁴⁰ was needed for Muslims, if they wanted to return to the glories that were lost since the fall of the Abbasid caliphate in the thirteenth century. Rahman, on the other hand, argued, “To insist on a literal implementation of the rules of the Qur’an, shutting one’s eyes to the social change that has occurred and that is palpably occurring before our eyes, is tantamount to deliberately defeating its moral-social purposes and objectives” (1982, p. 19).

For Rahman, Islam’s main mission was to establish a just society. He stated, “The early Sura[h]s of the Qur’an make it abundantly clear that the acute problems in the society were polytheism⁴¹, exploitation of the poor, malpractice in trade and general irresponsibility towards society” (1982, p 5). In his view, monotheism⁴² was strongly linked with “a humanism and a sense of social and economic justice” (1982, p. 12).

As seen in the historic context of Pakistan, education with madaris during and after the colonial period focused on upholding tradition rather than engaging with it. After colonial exit, the Pakistani government was concerned with increasing the employability of the students of madaris rather than a dialogue between what religious education could entail in a post-colonial era. It is important to note that, in Pakistan, it is the ulema that control the narrative of religion and not the government. People turn to their local alim for advice on a wide range of matters, for example, business dealings, divorce, travel, and food. The person seeking advice often is unaware that strictly prescriptive advice which creates strong binaries of *halal* (permissible) and

⁴⁰ *Ijtihad* literally means effort/struggle (from the same etymological root as *jihad*). It is used for interpretation of issues not covered by the Qur’an, Hadith, or *ijma* (scholarly consensus).

⁴¹ In the tradition in which Rahman is writing, the word “polytheism” is not about worshiping multiple deities nor patronizing the beliefs of those that do. It is about denying the connection between Creator and creation in a manner that holds other loyalties superior. This concept will be further explored in Chapter Four: Muslims can be polytheists as well.

⁴² Speaks to the earlier note about polytheism.

haram (non-permissible) comes from a broken pedagogical system. The prescriptiveness is equated to religion and any challenge to it is suspected to be heretical in nature.

Scholars engaged in ILT therefore pose a significant challenge to the traditional religious authority. They interpret the Qur'an and Islamic concepts considering their social and historic context. Some focus on praxis while others situate themselves in hermeneutics. This does not mean that hermeneutics and praxis are mutually exclusive, but that they both stress different aspects of a unified whole.

ILT lays the groundwork for an Islamic approach to finding solutions to modern challenges. It makes the process of creating law dynamic and discursive. It also looks inwards within Muslim societies both for self-critique and for self-rejuvenation rather than positioning oneself to the center of Western epistemology. ILT is arguing for an Islamic methodology that reads the Qur'an as a revelation for "a practical and political aspiration" and not a "mere devotional or personal pietistic text" (Rahman, 1982, p. 28). This methodology provides inspirations for my stories as it provides a framework to engage Islam with my social, political, and historic context.

Chapter 4: Consciousness

Goodness does not consist in turning your face towards East or West. The truly good are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels, the Scripture, and the prophets; who give away some of their wealth, however much they cherish it, to their relatives, to orphans, the needy, travelers and beggars, and to liberate those in bondage; those who keep up the prayer and pay the prescribed alms; who keep pledges whenever they make them; who are steadfast in misfortune, adversity and times of danger. These are the ones who are true and it is they who are aware of God. (Qur'an 2:177)

The concept of *taqw*, was taught to me as 'fear of God.' As Rabia Basri argued, the relationship becomes a transactional one, out of fear of hell's fire or the desire for heaven's bounties. This transactional relationship overtakes any other relationship with one's Provider. If one believes that they have more debits than credits in their after-life account, it can cultivate an arrogance of self-righteousness (and the sins of arrogance are worth being fearful of).

I could never understand why stories of burning flesh would be motivation for doing good. However, there is a deeper meaning for *taqwa*, "God consciousness," i.e. to be consciousness of God in all aspects of being. There is a memory in my life that is preserved like an experience from a few moments ago. The memory is of holding my daughter as a newborn, while the world dissipated around me. It reminds me of pilgrims circumambulating around that Ka'aba in Mecca, as millions move in unison with the absolute centrality of the Creator. One can mechanically perform the ritual, or can take it as a nudge towards evaluating one's relationship with Creator and creation. That memory is a learning tool for me as it allowed me to *feel* rather than simply articulate *taqwa*. The experience allowed me to be mindful of a being, all beings, and The Being in all thoughts and actions. In the centrality of my daughter's existence I, for the first time, could discern how one's consciousness can be oriented towards more than one's ego.

Your wealth and your children are only a test for you. There is great reward with God: be mindful of God as much as you can; hear and obey and give—it is for your own good.

Those who are saved from their own meanness will be the prosperous ones. (Qur'an 64: 15-17)

These verses are not condemnation of bearing children or earning wealth, but they do highlight the enticing nature of both, as wealth and/or children becomes the orientation of one's consciousness. Reflecting on my own priorities, I can see how accountability to the measures of capitalism took over an accountability to Creator and creation. Relationships, measure of success, values, aspirations, desires, and work were guided by wealth consciousness.

I am certainly not the first one making this claim, others have made similar ones about the deification of the market. Before I proceed in highlighting those claims I will admit to a lack of continuity in sources here. The scholars mentioned below do not come from an Islamic tradition. This is where I am most acutely aware that English has been my academic language since the onset of schooling. To remain solely within Islamic sources is outside my linguistic capacity. This is because the literature that explores taqwa and the polytheism⁴³ within it is predominantly within the medium of poetry. Poignant critique on falling to the charms of consumerism is present in works of Jalal al Din Rumi (1207-1273), Mulla Sadra (1571-1640), and Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), to name a few. Though I can access that medium in Urdu, Punjabi, and Farsi, I do not possess the skills to translate it to intelligible in English. I want to stress that the issue is not that there are no Islamic sources for this discussion, but I have struggled with making it intelligible for an audience that is predominantly unfamiliar with

⁴³ As a reminder to the reader, here the meaning of polytheism is similar to the one used in preceding chapters.

Islamic tradition. To make the poetry accessible in English, as well as provide the required detail to understand the historical, legal, and theological context of that text, would be a project of its own.⁴⁴

4.1 The Divine Market

A religion is (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive and long lasting moods and motivation in men [*sic*] by (3) formulating conceptions of general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. (Geertz, 1977, p. 90)

Scholars such as Goodchild (2002), Cox (2016), and others have written about how the market or capitalism functions like a religion, employing frameworks such as the one Geertz refers to above. Tillich (1948; 1966; 1967; 1971; 1988; 1989; 1990), while presenting a theological critique on capitalism, also draws on similarities. The purpose of this section is not to claim whether the above or any other definition of religion fits capitalism, nor is it to explain how the language of capitalism or its culture is theologized. The goal is to discuss an orientation in consciousness that holds market dearer than the Divine.⁴⁵

The scholars discussed in this chapter name what I have termed as Wealth Consciousness differently. Weber (1992), Benjamin (1996) and Tillich (1948; 1967) discuss capitalism while Pope Francis (2013; 2015) and Cox (2016) critique the market. However, I will be using the terms wealth, market and capitalism interchangeably, and focusing on the

⁴⁴ Omid Safi has described the complexity of this issue and why he chose to focus on a project that allows for intelligible English translations that are true to the text in an interview. For more details see Khan (2018) and Safi (2018).

⁴⁵ As I stated earlier, the question of consciousness and orientation is not theological for everyone. However, it is from my perspective, and for the Muslim stories I am trying to create.

orientation needed for the praxis of taqwa. Following is an example of how a change in orientation and consciousness informs one worldview.

The Wintu use of left and right, as compares to ours, shows the difference in orientation.

When we go for a walk, the hills are to our right, the river to our left; when we return, the hills change and the river, while we remain the same, since we are the pivot, the focus.

Now the hills have pivoted to the left of me . . . When the Wintu goes up the river, the hills are to the west, the river to the east; and a mosquito bites him on the west arm.

When he returns, the hills are still to the west, but when he scratches his mosquito bite, he scratches his east arm. The geography has remained unchanged, and the self has had to be reoriented in relation to it. (Lee, 1950, p.53)

For the Wintu self is a smaller part of the whole, and therefore one centers nature. With a wealth-accumulating agenda, the existence of the world is not connected through an immanent Divine (tauhid, as Shariati would describe it) but is reduced to commodities for one's use. The section on "relating with market consciousness" further examines this commodification from a theological point of view and discusses the works of Tillich in relation to that. However, before we get to Tillich, the following two sections introduce two thoughts on the link between theology and capitalism. The first is of Weber who embeds the germination of capitalism within Protestant ethics, and the second is of Pope Francis who warns against the deification of capitalism.

4.2 Weber and the Protestant Ethic

Within the academic tradition that I am embedded, it would be considered an oversight not to discuss Weber's influence on the topic of the intersection of religion and capitalism. I have some clarifications to make before discussing Weber, mainly from a Critical Muslim Studies

perspective. I approach Weber more as a case study than description of universal values. I approach Weber as a case study in how some values of Protestantism contributed to the spirit of capitalism in Western Europe and, more specifically, in Germany. The empirical evidence Weber proposes is devoid of regions of the most religious diversity in the world, i.e. East Asia and West Africa (Fisher, 2015). Weber admits that he has no significant knowledge in other cultures and religions, but his study nevertheless proceeds to make generalized claims about other geographical regions and their lack of rationality. Rationality for Weber implies systemization, consistency, logic, calculation, and efficiency. Weber is making links between Protestant values with the *spirit* of capitalism. A “philosophy of avarice” that makes accumulation of wealth an individual’s calling and religious duty.

... in the English calling, a religious conception, that of a task set by God . . . And if we trace the history of the word through the civilized languages. . . , it appears that neither the Catholic peoples nor those of classical antiquity have possessed any expression of similar connotation for we know as calling (in the sense of a life-task, a definite field in which to work), while one has existed for all predominantly Protestant people. (Weber, 1992, p. 82)

This calling rejects the traditionalism of backward pre-capitalistic societies that are more concerned about earning just enough for their needs rather than trying to earn the most that they can (ibid, p. 24). The calling (or *Beur* in German) mentioned earlier was conducive to the growth of capitalism. However, once a capitalistic society emerged, the Protestant values were no longer crucial as the “spirit” took a life of its own. This is a monumental shift in economic activity as religious duty became economic activity for the sake of wealth accumulation alone. Therefore, with hard work and determination anyone could achieve great wealth, a.k.a. the American

Dream. This psyche makes individuals responsible for their poverty rather than systemic failures. The trajectory of this wealth accumulation is also ahistorical as harms of colonialism, slavery, and natural resource exploitation are unaccounted for. The rich are therefore entitled to their wealth and there is no moral outrage when one percent of the world's population owns half of the world's wealth (Neate, 2017).

4.3 Pope Francis on the Deified Market

We have created new idols. The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. *Ex* 32:1-35) has returned in a worldwide crisis affecting finance and the economy lays bare their imbalances and, above all, their lack of real concern for human beings; man is reduced to one of his needs alone: consumption. . . The thirst for power and possessions knows no limits. In this system, which tends to devour everything which stands in the way of increased profits, whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule. (Francis, 2013, p. 84)

Those who opposed the Pope's views claimed that that the Pope's description of an unequal and unjust world was not backed by statistics, and that capitalism has been successful globally in to get people out of poverty (e.g. Tupy, 2013).⁴⁶ That is interesting as there also exists statistics supporting the Pope's claim of increasing inequality, injustice, and wealth accumulation by a few (World Inequality Lab, 2017). Much like the debates following Picketty's work (2014), there are arguments both that economic inequality is increasing and decreasing in the world (Nelson,

⁴⁶ It is interesting to note that the critiques focus on the economic aspect of the Pope's argument rather than questioning the wealth of the Catholic Church itself. Much like myself, identifying the harm of the deification of the market does not automatically translate into action to address it. It is a constant struggle to decenter one's own wants over others needs.

2017; Summers 2014). However, these arguments miss several elements of Pope Francis's potential intent. His claims went beyond a moral outrage at the injustices of the world. I would argue that in using religious language to critique the deified market, the Pope is making a theological argument.

Just as the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say "thou shalt not" to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion... Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless.

As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape. (Francis, 2013, p.82)

The market offers constant display of reverse transubstantiation where what was once sacred can now be offered as a commodity (Cox, 2016, pp. 10-11). Land, places of worship, tradition, and humans are all commodities.⁴⁷ Why commit to the rituals of ancient theologies or ascetic discipline when one can experience serenity at a weekend "spiritual" getaway? The market's omniscience is built through its mediums where desires of one's heart are tracked and collected through web searches, correspondence and financial transactions. This leads to personalized marketing campaigns to convince the believer in doing what pleases the market the most, i.e. to consume, consume, and consume.

⁴⁷ This is similar to Mahmood's (Asad et al, 2009) critique discussed in Chapter Two.

To blame population growth instead of extreme and selective consumerism⁴⁸ on the part of some, is one way of refusing to face the issues. It is an attempt to legitimize the present model of distribution, where a minority believes that it has the right to consume in a way which can never be universalized, since the planet could not even contain the waste products of such consumption. (Francis, 2015)

The faith of the believers in the workings of the “invisible hand” is rooted deeply. Alan Greenspan, who led the US Federal Reserve for 18 years, stepped down after the financial crisis of 2007. When testifying before the Congress in 2008, he admitted that he might have been wrong about resisting calls for tighter regulations for subprime mortgages. Greenspan stated that he felt distraught that his faith in the market was shaken. However, he added, “Whatever regulatory changes are made, they will pale in comparison to the exchange already evident in today’s markets. Those markets for an indefinite future will be far more restrained than with any currently contemporary new regulatory regime” (HGO297, *Financial Crisis*, 2008). The markets in his opinion would self-correct to find the right price. The Qur’an often speaks of the trials and hardships testing the faith of the believers. The market despite all its upheavals has repeatedly gained a following of staunch believers.

. . . some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bring about greater justice . . . This opinion, which have never been confirmed by the facts, express a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system. (Francis, 2013, p. 82)

⁴⁸ This sentence can be read as the Catholic Church promoting its view on abortion. However, in reading the letter by the Pope, I believe that it speaks to wealthier nations/societies blaming poorer nations/societies for their poverty due to their population growth.

4.4 Market-Friendly Modernity

Telomeres are repeating segments of non-coding DNA that live at the end of chromosomes. Think of them like the ends of shoelaces that protect the laces from getting frayed too quickly. Scientific research has empirically shown that a lack of social cohesion and mindfulness physiologically harms the body by shortening our telomeres (Blackburn and Epel, 2017). This scientific “discovery” now convinces audiences that value empirical evidence of something that has been taught and practiced for centuries. Meditation, prayers, and pipe ceremonies have existed across the world in many traditions and have been cornerstones of spiritual practice.

The world became unthinkable beyond European (and, later, North Atlantic) epistemology. The colonial difference marked the limits of thinking and theorizing, unless modern epistemology (philosophy, social sciences, natural sciences) was exported/imported to those places where thinking was impossible (because it was folklore, magic, wisdom and the like). (Mignolo, 2002, p. 90)

I would argue that even with the scientific stamp of approval over traditional practices, the main benefactor has been capitalism. The ancient practices that were considered “worthless or inexistent” (de Sousa Santos, 2007) have now been commercialized for capital gain. Allow me to illustrate with two examples: yoga and Sufism. Yogic practice can be dated to the Indus civilization in present-day India and Pakistan over 5,000 years ago. The most widely-known text of scriptures about such practices is Bhagavad-Gita which dates around 500 B.C.E. The Gita builds on much older sacred texts of the Vedas and the concept of ritual sacrifice. Within the Gita, the concept of sacrifice is internalized to teach sacrifice of the ego, *karma yoga* (literally yoga of action, referring to selfless action as a way to perfection), and *jnana yoga* (literally yoga

of knowledge, refers to knowledge of the unity of *Brahman* and *Aatman*, i.e. Ultimate Reality underlying all phenomenon and individual soul, where one uses the power of the mind to affirm the Truth). The practice of yoga within traditional teachings is broken down into the roots of the word in Sanskrit: *yuj* and *yoke*, meaning “to control” and “to unite.” It is a practice of self-discipline on the path of realizing one’s own relationship with Creator and creation. There is no similarity in the traditional spirit of yoga to the commercial lifestyle commodity it has become globally. The intended beneficiary of which is not earth, living beings, or even human societies, but rather individuals, corporations, shareholders, industries, and employers. Without the aspect of God Consciousness, yoga becomes *asana* (pose) and neither *yuj* nor *yoke*.

Rumi is a poet and a name most easily associated with Sufism around the world. Maulana Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi (1207-1273) was a Muslim jurist, Islamic scholar, and philosopher. His name *Jalaluddin* means glory of the faith, and yet, his faith (Islam) has been erased from popular English translations of his work to sell millions of copies worldwide. The Rumi who is quoted in recounting spiritual journeys of celebrities like Madonna and Chris Martin is unrecognizable to the Farsi, Turkish, Arabic, or Cappadocian Greek readers of the poet. Maulana (as Rumi is referred to in Farsi and Urdu which literally means “master” and is most commonly used for religious teachers) drew extensively from references, symbols, and stories of the Qur’an. All of these were removed from the most widely read translation, that is the translation by Coleman Barks (Ali, 2017). Barks has no knowledge or training in Islamic theology nor in Farsi! Maulana wrote about the purification of the soul and Immanence which is a far cry from the “mystical practices” the translations sell to inspire today. Poets like Hafez and Rumi are mystics, yes, but not Muslim mystics because the commercial image of Islam is not conducive of a profitable image of Sufism. Yoga and Sufism is modernized and commercialized.

Modernity's shine is grounded on modernity's "grammar" (interlinked ontology, epistemology and metaphysics) of universal reason and history, seamless progress, teleological, dialectical, totalizing and anthropocentric thinking, allochronism and Cartesian selfhoods who see themselves as "heading humanity." (Andreotti, 2014, p. 5)

I would argue that modernity in general, and reason specifically, can be understood differently from an Islamic perspective. "The worst creatures in God's eyes are those who are [willfully] deaf and dumb, who do not reason" (Qur'an, 8:22). On numerous occasions, the Qur'an states reason as a method to get closer to the Creator. Here reason's purpose is to understand one's relationship to the Creator and all creation. That said, many in the Western scholarly/media/political world would argue that Islam has no reason nor sense of critique. This is because the aims of reason, teleological, and dialectic thinking that serve a purpose other than economic gain is unintelligible. Is reason inherently colonial or is reason (and only a very specific type of reason) used as a means to establish superiority of one group of people over another? This superiority leads to entitlement over resources (natural, human, economic, social, and political, among others) for a minority population of the world.

The intent of this section is not intended to argue against harms of modernity or to measure it against the harms of capitalism; the purpose is to highlight a specific form of critique, which is auto-critique. It is within our own consciousness and in our hearts that we can judge and calibrate our consciousness. Is it to Creator or wealth or power in another form?

4.5 Relating with Market Consciousness

An'a al-haqq (I am the Truth). These are the words of Mansur al-Hallaj (c. 858-922), a Muslim mystic who was tortured and decapitated for heresy by the Abbasid Empire's courts.

However, historians (e.g., Ernst, 2018) debate whether the true reason for the capital punishment was a blasphemous act committed by Hallaj or his support of the Zanj rebellion (869-883).⁴⁹ Hallaj's statement was not to proclaim himself as the Divine, but to express annihilation of his ego. Hallaj, like Rabia Basri, preached an intimate relationship with the Beloved. Hallaj's public execution is memorialized in Islamic history as a grave injustice. He is remembered to have endured gruesome torture calmly and to have uttered words of forgiveness for his accusers and torturers. Through this act Hallaj elucidates annihilation of individual ego in recognition of the Truth which according to him is present in all. Apart from being a claim to an immanent relationship with the Divine, it also illustrates the relationship one holds with creation. Consciousness of the Creator in all thought and action, therefore, indubitably becomes consciousness of creation.

This relationship is very different than one emboldened by the market, a relationship that encourages unhampered wealth accumulation, and a relationship in which wealth becomes a sign of hard work, intelligence, talent, and superiority. Celebrities are lauded as idols and devout followers imitate their fashion style to exhibit veneration. Loyalty is less defined in relationship with fellow humans or even states but rather in relation to brands and companies, and consumption becomes curative through retail therapy. When we support those less fortunate, our benevolence is equated to giving up a cup of coffee and to donating the cost instead. What is not questioned is the cost of the cup of coffee. Extrinsic to that cost is the role ex-colonies play in exporting raw goods to richer nations. The benefits of value addition are therefore enjoyed by the more "developed" countries. The cost is ahistorical in nature because it does not account for the

⁴⁹ A rebellion against the Abbasid empire by East African blacks (Zanj) who were brought to Basra as slaves

exploitation of resources (human and land) for the benefit of a few. It also does not include the cost of damage to the earth in making and discarding a single-use cup of coffee. The labor and resources are not included in the price, and are not only just excluded from the system, but considered nonexistent. Our relationships are defined by what can be priced, including human lives.

Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else's responsibility and not our own. The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are if the market offers us something new to purchase. In the meantime, all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us. (Francis, 2013)

Paul Tillich has described capitalism to be demonic. For Tillich, "demonic" involves two characteristics. First, it subjects all spheres of life to itself and deprives things of their independent meaning. Second, it causes class struggle and destructive divisions in society (Tillich, 1990, pp. 48-76). It affects relationships among people, as well as between humans and non-humans. When things lose their independent meaning, they become a commodity. "The more a thing becomes a mere commodity, the less it exists in an eros-relation to the possessor and the less intrinsic power it possesses" (Tillich, 1988, pp. 54-55). The relationship is based on a desire for pleasure and it *eroslos* (without love), *gemeinschaftlos* (without community) and *herrschaftlich* (dominating) (ibid). The relationship capitalism defines is not one based on love but one of domination. "The infinite drive to dominate things, supported by the subjective eros of every individual, leads to an endless conflict of all against all" (Tillich, 1971, p. 77). This conflict is necessary for the maintenance of the capitalist economic system itself (Yip, 2004, p.

43). According to Tillich, a demonic power is “creative and destructive at the same time” (1966, pp. 79-80). This is a more complex relationship than merely labelling capitalism as bad or evil. It assumes the quality of holiness and demands religious commitment as it is “antidivine” (Yip, 2004, p. 58). “The demonic, like the divine, is perceptible in the ecstatic, the overwhelming, and the dreadful. But whereas the ecstatic element of the divine affirms the unconditioned form and therefore creates forms, the ecstatic element of the demonic destroys form” (Tillich, 1971, p. 66).

This complexity in relationship gives rise to a “structure of evil beyond the moral power of good will, producing social and individual tragedy precisely through the inseparable mixture of good and evil in every human act.” (Tillich, 1948, pp. xx-xxi) Therefore, it is not an action nor even a collection of actions that can challenge such a structure, but a continuous liberative praxis that is conscious of the Beloved and Creator and does not succumb to the power of the anti-divine. No one is innocent in this structure, and there is no finality to the struggle against demonic powers. “The struggle against the demonaries of an era become an unavoidable religious-political duty” (Tillich, 1988, p. 120).

This certainly does not mean that we can simply label one thing as purely demonic and another as purely divine. The contradiction of the two thoroughly penetrates every person and every appearance. Any institution or community that ignores this will degenerate into demonic pharisaism. (Tillich, 1989, p. 87)

Tillich describes capitalism as “infinite finitude” that is always “restless but never self-transcendent” (Yip, 2004, p. 64). People try to satisfy their insatiable appetite for accumulation. This brings with it a very different relationship to Being and beings, certainly not one that would lead to *ana al-haqq*, nor to *cogito ergo sum*, but rather to “I shop, therefore I am” (Kruger, 1990).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined consciousness in measures of success, in creating sacrality, within loyalties, and in employing faculties of meditation and reason. Such consciousness when oriented toward wealth accumulation produces relationships devoid of love. The kind of love Rabia Basri lived. Contrary to taqwa, a market-based consciousness demands ego centrality due to an absence of relationality with creation and Creator. As the Wintu example illustrates, a market-centric orientation demands nature to serve oneself.

However, any single project on coloniality or capitalism will not completely encapsulate all forms of injustice and hatred in the world, consider for example a Pakistani Punjabi Sunni Hanafi Deobandi group killing Pakistani Punjabi Sunni Hanafi Deobandi people. I could provide five other adjectives only to highlight the similarity in the perceived title of the sub-groups, and yet once dehumanization is the goal, differences can always materialize. The praxis of the taqwa can make the individual the center of accountability while simultaneously decentering the ego. Its purport is deeply personal with profound social and political outcomes.⁵⁰ Taqwa demands humility, accountability and radical love. It asks us to turn inward to reflect on the desires of the ego to sustainably address the malice to which it contributes, to ask ourselves the question, *Qabeel (Cain) where is your brother?*

⁵⁰ Taqwa as a concept is a measure of self evaluation. Though one can aspire that a group of people would have a common praxis of taqwa to work toward social and political liberation, the lack of it is not a reason to discard self-evaluation. Only an individual can evaluate the desires of their own heart.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Speaking to scholars in Calcutta, India, Chatterjee (1996) argued not for the rejection of modernity but for creating “our own modernity” (p. 162). He argued that true modernity consists of “determining the particular forms of modernity that are suitable in particular circumstances” (p. 157). For him the issue was not that reason is used to identify or invent “specific technologies of modernity” (ibid), but that there is a claim of *the* universal reason that is not applicable for all.

Chatterjee presents an inherent tension and mistrust with modernity as it has been intertwined with the history of colonialism, “. . . there was a time when modernity was put forward as the strongest argument in favor of the continued colonial subjugation of India: foreign rule was necessary, we were told, because Indians must first be enlightened” (1996, p. 165).

Ours is the modernity of the once-colonized. The same historical process that has taught us the value of modernity has also made us the victims of modernity. Our attitude to modernity, therefore, cannot but be deeply ambiguous. . . But this ambiguity does not stem from any uncertainty about whether to be for or against modernity. Rather, the uncertainty is because we know that to fashion the forms of our own modernity, we need to have the courage at times to reject the modernities established by others. (Chatterjee , 1996, p. 166)

For Chatterjee, modernity is not a post-Enlightenment phase nor a post- Renaissance phase. Rather, modernity is about examining what it might mean for the post-colonial phase and whether it can also be a decolonial phase.

Mignolo (2007) states that the colonial matrix operates at four interrelated domains (p. 49). These include management and control of subjectivities, authority, economy, and knowledge. I would argue that the economy is embedded much deeper in our consciousness than

Mignolo's argument gives it credit for. It is a driving principle, an orientation that guides intent and action. Maldonado-Torres (2007) writes about the colonality of being, which is characterized by a "racist/imperial misanthropic skepticism" on the part of the colonial conquerors (p. 245). He extends Lévinas' critique of Heidegger in arguing that,

. . . *ego cogito* was built upon the foundations of the *ego conquiro*, the "I think, therefore I am" presupposed two unacknowledged dimensions. Beneath the "I think" we can read "others do not think," and behind the "I am" it is possible to locate the philosophical justification for the idea that "others are not" or do not have being. (p. 252)

For Maldonado-Torres, the concept "coloniality of Being" was responding to the "need to thematize the question of the effects of coloniality in lived experience and not only in the mind" (p. 242). He takes further the critique of Heidegger presented by Lévinas, who survived the Holocaust. It is possible that the "denial of being" (as described by Maldonado-Torres) in Heidegger's "being" is linked to Lévinas' experience. An experience in which Heidegger's philosophy (i.e. mind) cannot be separated from his support of Nazism (i.e. experience).

Fanon, in describing a colonial experience, focuses on the experience of the racial bodies in the "disinherited all over the world" that live within a struggle of "omnipresent death" (1965, p. 128).

This ever-menacing death is experienced as endemic, famine, unemployment, a high death rate, an inferiority complex and the absence of any hope for the future. All this gnawing at the existence of the colonized tends to make of life something resembling an incomplete death. (ibid)

Readers of Chatterjee, Maldonado-Torres, Lévinas, Heidegger, and Fanon could possibly be perturbed by my superficial account of their philosophies, and rightfully so. The aim is solely to

illustrate the diversity in the concept of coloniality and to acknowledge that this study barely engages with one form, that is, epistemic coloniality.

I have travelled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief, such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such caliber, that I do not think that we could ever conquer this country unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage and therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for in the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation.

(Macaulay, 1835)

Macaulay aimed to break the existential backbone of the pre-colonial Indian nations by using an education system that forever alienates them from their spiritual and cultural heritage. The purpose of this study was not to assign value to the amount of damage caused by epistemic coloniality but to understand my own education within its context. Alienation from education occurs for many reasons, including gender, class, and sexual orientation. What compelled me toward epistemic coloniality is that I myself, for a long time, was convinced of the intellectual inferiority it propagates. In order to seek stories that do not reproduce such hierarchies, I had to scrutinize my own complexes rather than ignore them. This contextualization is also essential for the praxis of Islamic liberation theology (ILT), to evaluate the desires of one's heart.

The discussion of ILT aimed to present a diversity of views by engaging with different scholars, including Rahman, Shariati, Esack, Wadud, and Engineer. That said, there are three notable engagements missing from that discussion. First, a deeper conversation about the

gendered experience within Islam, such as the work by scholars like Keci Ali, Asma Lambaret, Karen Bauer, Fatima Mernissi, Sa'diyya Shaikh, Asma Barlas, Scott Siraj-al- Haqq Kugle, and others, is missing. Second, struggles of minority black Muslims (especially in the North American context) as pioneered by Sherman Jackson is missing. Third, the differences in ILT and what is defined as Progressive Islam by scholars like Omid Safi, Adis Duderija, and others is missing.

In this study, there are also limitations of geography and language which affect accessibility, intelligibility, and expression of different forms of knowledge. The strongest claim of this study might be accepting its many limitations and flaws!

بُرے نوں میں لبھن تُریا ، پر برا لبھا نہ کوئی
اندر میں جد چہاتی پائی تے میں توں برا نہ کوئی

I went out to look for bad/evil and found no one,

Then I peeked within me and found the worst.

- Baba Bulleh Shah⁵¹

In his poetry above, Baba Bulleh Shah (1680-1757) has summarized the realization of a self-reflective journey. This study is at best a beginning. It is a path to ILT in general, and to taqwa specifically. Taqwa is not a prescriptive solution for social maladies, but a tool for embedding humility, enabling radical love, and steering oneself in an emancipatory practice. As a Muslim, my sense of morality and “doing good” is fundamentally driven by the hope for a better Afterlife. On a superficial level my religious and non-religious educational spheres trained me

⁵¹ The translation provided is mine.

for different goals, however, upon close examination both curricula independently inflamed the zeal to accumulate wealth and self-righteous good deeds. An American dream realized on earth and in the heavens.

Both systems prescribe regimented education that creates a class of knowledge producers and another of knowledge consumers. Yet, the applicability of their prescriptions to our all situations is never questioned. Therefore, when one is confused about the application, it becomes an issue of intellect or faith rather than a question of faulty prescription. I do not wish to reproduce an education for my child that cultivates subservience and fear.

This study was only possible because of a relationship between a mother and her child. That relationship became the teacher and made intelligible and articulatable a way of being which was earlier incomprehensible and non-affective. This has been a project in unearthing layers of methodology and epistemology in order to reach queries of ontology and consciousness. It resulted in humbling findings and opportunities to learn again, and an engagement with taqwa and orienting one's thoughts and actions to the Creator. It revealed a starkly different relationship with creation from what is engrained within our education systems. An attempt to find stories to tell my daughter, to share with her the treasures grounded in learning and in renewing, in decentering and the possibilities of love.

Epilogue

Dear daughter,

I am not sure if you will ever read this but in case you do, I wanted to add a few lines. I don't know if my stories have made sense, but this document might explain where they were coming from. There are likely oversights and flaws in my analysis and hopefully I have learnt better. If not, please let me know. Thank you for being my teacher and my student and for keeping me accountable. I pray that your path in learning is an easier one and that you found me an eager audience to the tales of your journey.

I will always love you,

Mama

PS I wish you had known your grandmother. She had better stories than I did.

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