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## THE HOLISM OF MORALITY IN TAHA ABDURRAHMAN'S WORK

*Taha Abdurrahman'da Ahlâkın Bütünselliği*

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## THE HOLİSM OF MORALİTY İN TAHA ABDURRAHMAN'S WORK

### Abstract

This study aims to examine Taha Abdurrahman's moral philosophy by synthesizing the concepts of human, reason, morality, religion, and modernity. In conducting this examination, special emphasis is placed on the interrelatedness of the aforementioned concepts, focusing on where Taha Abdurrahman's claims stand within the context of moral philosophy. The study distinguishes itself from other related works on Taha Abdurrahman's philosophy by firmly establishing his position in moral philosophy and elucidating his approach to moralization. Taha Abdurrahman offers an alternative understanding to the existing moralization by attempting to reestablish a holistic moral understanding akin to that of the Ancient and Medieval periods, in contrast to the fragmented moral understanding of the Modern Age, which centers the individual in moralization. In this regard, this study concludes that Taha Abdurrahman holds a position based on the concept of "metaphysical good" within the context of moral philosophy. Another fundamental result of this study is the demonstration that through the synthesis of the concepts used by Taha Abdurrahman, he approaches moralization by considering moral obligation and moral sustainability. The document analysis method, one of the qualitative research methods, was employed in this study.

**Keywords:** Philosophy of Religion, Moralisation (taħalluq), Taha Abdurrahman, Metaphysical Good.

### Taha Abdurrahman'da Ahlâkın Bütünselliği

#### Öz

Bu çalışma Taha Abdurrahman'ın ahlâk felsefesini insan, akıl, ahlâk, din, modernlik kavramları üzerinde sentez yaparak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu inceleme yapılırken özellikle yukarıda belirtilen kavramların birbiriyle ilişkiselliği göz önünde bulundurularak Taha Abdurrahman'ın iddiasının ahlâk felsefesi bağlamında nereye tekabül ettiğine odaklanılmıştır. Çalışma, Taha Abdurrahman'ın felsefesi üzerine ele alınmış ilgili çalışmalardan Taha Abdurrahman'ın ahlâk felsefesindeki pozisyonunu tespit etmesi ve onun ahlâklanmayı ele alış yöntemini ortaya koyması yönlerinden ayrılmaktadır. Taha Abdurrahman, Yeni Çağda var olan ve ahlâklanmada bireyi merkeze alan parçacı ahlâk anlayışına karşı İlk Çağ ve Orta Çağ ahlâklanmasına benzeyen bütüncül ahlâk anlayışını yeniden tesis etme girişiminde bulunarak mevcut ahlâklanmaya alternatif bir anlayış sunmuştur. Bu bakımdan ahlâk felsefesi bağlamında Taha Abdurrahman'ın "metafizik iyi" ye dayalı bir pozisyona sahip olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Taha Abdurrahman'ın kullandığı kavramların sentezi sonucunda onun ahlâklanmayı ahlâkî bağlayıcılık ve ahlâkî sürdürülebilirliği gözeterek ele aldığı ortamta konulması çalışmanın bir başka temel sonucudur. Bu çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden doküman analizi yöntemine başvurulmuştur.

**Keywords:** Din Felsefesi, Ahlâklanma (Tahalluk), Taha Abdurrahman, Metafizik İyi.

## INTRODUCTION

Taha Abdurrahman undertook a confident endeavour to construct an understanding of morality through the practices of the Islamic religion (te-davul/pragmatics) as an alternative to the general paradigm of the modern period in which he lived. In this endeavour to elucidate the interconnection

between religion and morality, he asserted that he was engaged in the field of philosophy of religion.<sup>1</sup> As a philosopher of religion, Taha Abdurrahman has put forth a novel system for addressing the challenges to practical morality that have arisen in the modern era and continue to evolve in its wake. This proposal is a necessary response to the crises of practical morality that have emerged in this age. Taha Abdurrahman was resolute in his determination to address these crises of practical morality. In his new system, he identified the key challenge as ensuring the better upholding of a person's morality (taḥalluq).

A substantial body of literature exists on the relationship between religion and morality as it pertains to Taha Abdurrahman. This literature has sought to analyse his ideas, and has been successful in doing so. Taha Abdurrahman has been discussed in the literature in terms of his attempts to establish a universal understanding of morality in collaboration with Putnam and Habermas.<sup>2</sup> Another study examines his perspectives on human beings and morality.<sup>3</sup> Theorizations concerning reason have been the subject of considerable academic scrutiny.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, a substantial body of research has been dedicated to examining his perspectives on modernity.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, some studies analyses Taha Abdurrahman's ideas on method and methodology, his thoughts on maqasid, the new moral perspective he constructed, and his thoughts on the Islamic epistemological method.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Taha Abdurrahman, *Ahlâk Sorunsalı Batı Modernitesinin Ahlâki Eleştirisine Bir Katkı*, çev. Tahir Uluç (İstanbul: Pınar Yayınları, 2021), 313-318.

<sup>2</sup> Abdelkader Mellouk, "fi'l-bahsi an Müşterekîn Ahlâkiyyîn Kevniyyin Putnam, Habermas, ve Taha Abdurrahman", *Tabayyun* 6/24 (2018), 97-120.

<sup>3</sup> Emrullah Kılıç, "Taha Abdurrahman Düşüncesinde İnsan ve Ahlâkın Yeniden Temellendirilmesi", *Beytülhikme* 2/11 (2021), 877-893.

<sup>4</sup> Abdurrahim Dursun, *Taha Abdurrahman'ın Düşüncesinde Ahlâkın Din ve Akılla İlişkisi* (Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2024); Hamidou Gamsore, *Çağdaş İslam Arap Düşüncesinde Aklın Problemleri, Taha Abdurrahman Örneği* (Konya: Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Monsef al-Hamedi, "Reason and Religion in Contemporary Arab Thought", *Al-Daleel* 4/4 (2022), 80-103; Muhammet Ateş, *Taha Abdurrahman'da Modernite Düşüncesi* (Bursa: Uludağ Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2017); Wael Hallaq, *Modernitenin Reformu Abdurrahman Taha'nın Felsefesinde Ahlâk ve Yeni İnsan*, çev. Tahir Uluç (İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınları, 2020); Mehmet Emin Maşalı, "Taha Abdurrahman'ın Modernite ve Modernist Kur'an Yorumlarına Yönelik Eleştirileri", *İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi* 34 (2015), 1-51.

<sup>6</sup> Yousef Alqurashi, "Is Taha Abdurrahman a Contractarian Philosopher?", *İslami Araştırmalar* 3/33 (2022), 704-717; Soner Gündüzöz, "Batı Kaynaklı Teorilerin Referans Değeri Bağlamında Faslı Filozof Taha Abdurrahman'ın Emanet Paradigması Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme", *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 25/1 (15 Haziran 2021), 139-155; Soner Gündüzöz - Güldane Gündüzöz, "İslami Bir Müzakere Etiğinin İmkânı Üzerine: Taha Abdurrahman'ın Şehadete Dayalı İletişim Teorisi", *Marife* 21/1 (2021), 105-129; Emrullah Kılıç, "Usûl ve Yöntem Arasında Modern İslam Düşüncesi: Benliğin İnşası Taha Abdurrahman ve Burhanettin Tatar Örneği", *Oku Okut Yayınları* 1 (2022), 1-20; Munteha Maşalı, "Makasid Konusu Bağlamında Fıkıh Usulü-Ahlâk Tedahülü Üzerinden Bütünlükcü Bir Gelenek Okuması: Taha Abdurrahman Örneği", *Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 39 (2015), 181-219.

The studies on Taha Abdurrahman adopt an analytical approach, with each study focusing on a single concept, akin to a concept study. While each of these studies is valuable in its own right, it is essential to examine the holistic nature of Taha Abdurrahman's thoughts, given that he is a system philosopher. The present study is primarily concerned with synthesis rather than analysis. This study examines how he has constructed a holistic system within the framework of his understanding of morality, centred on the concept of "metaphysical good". The concept of metaphysical good was selected for examination due to its prominence in Taha Abdurrahman's conceptual framework, particularly in relation to the concept of taḥalluq. The concept of taḥalluq can be understood as a process of moralisation, whereby individuals or entities acquire moral values and become morally constituted.<sup>7</sup> The concept of taḥalluq, or moralisation, is not a primary focus of moral philosophy. It was thus determined that it would be more appropriate to synthesise it under the concept of metaphysical good.

The metaphysical good can be defined as the inherent necessity to perform good actions in the world, from an essence-dependent perspective, while ensuring one's moralisation. The concept of "ethical good" or "personal good" can be defined as the realisation of moralisation through the actions that the individual himself constructs, rather than the binding of any essence or norm. In contrast, the moral good is a form of moralisation that is based solely on the norms that are adopted during a specific period. It is notable that Taha Abdurrahman did not utilise these three concepts (metaphysical good, ethical good, moral good) directly in his works. The aforementioned concepts are employed in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of Taha Abdurrahman's project in the name of moralisation and to unify his thoughts around certain concepts.

Upon reconsideration of Taha Abdurrahman's problematic within the conceptual framework, the following question arises: Taha Abdurrahman endeavoured to reinstate the metaphysical good within the framework of moralisation taḥalluq. What was the trajectory of his thought? By considering this question when reading Taha Abdurrahman's works, it becomes evident that his system is comprised of two fundamental infrastructures. The initial infrastructure is that of "dialogical rationality" within the field of epistemological methodology. The second is the infrastructure of "morality" in the field of moral philosophy. This article presents a synthesis of Taha Abdurrahman's philosophical system with his epistemology, his view of human beings, his view of reason, his view of religion and morality, and his view of modernity in the context of the postmodern era. Furthermore, it

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<sup>7</sup> Taha Abdurrahman, *Seküler Ahlâkın Sefaleti İlahi Emanet Paradigmasının Seküler Ahlâk Eleştirisi*, çev. Soner Gündüzöz (İstanbul: Pınar Yayınları, 2023), 333.

elucidates his endeavour to reconstruct the metaphysical concept of the good.

### 1. TAHA ABDURRAHMAN'S POSITION IN THE HISTORY OF MORALIZATION

A review of the history of moral philosophy reveals that during the First Age and the Middle Ages, values had a structure that originated from the sphere of existence. In both historical periods, the concept of value is inextricably linked to the notion of existence. It can therefore be argued that existing values are elements derived from a specific understanding of existence. In the modern age, values indicate a domain that originates not from existence but from the subject itself. The structure of good and evil has undergone a transformation. In the modern period, the focus shifts from an external, objective standard to an internal, subjective process of selfdevelopment. In the Early Ages and the Middle Ages, morality was based on an underlying essence and on revealed moral understandings that were rooted in metaphysical notions of good. The concept of the "personal good" or "ethical good" represents a shift in moral philosophy, whereby the subject's perspective becomes the primary determinant of morality, rather than an objective essence. This concept emerged in a structure established by Descartes and underwent further development until the advent of the postmodern period.<sup>8</sup>

It is evident that the fundamental concepts of morality and ethics held the same meaning in the Early Ages and the Middle Ages prior to the 18th century. From the eighteenth century onwards, morality became defined as a set of moral norms, while ethics came to be understood as a concept that questions and investigates morality. This conceptual transformation in Western thought constitutes the foundation for the emergence of individual moralisation (personal good/ethical good). The concept of ethical good is an clear expression of individual moralisation, which is independent of any kind of self. This distinction in moralisation essentially originated with the prioritisation of the epistemological over the metaphysical, as exemplified by Descartes, and the imposition of certain meanings on moral concepts such as ethos and morale.<sup>9</sup>

The moral individualisation that emerged in Western philosophy in the modern period is contextually parallel to the explanations provided by postmodern philosophers in response to the concept of nihilism. Indeed, the ideas of postmodern philosophers such as Lyotard, Baudrillard and

<sup>8</sup> Emrullah Kılıç, *Metafiziksel İyi'den Değer'e Ahlâkın Yolculuğu* (İstanbul: İlem Yay., 2022), 1-15.

<sup>9</sup> Celal Türer, *Etik ve Etik Sorunlar* (Ankara: Nobel Yayınları, 2019), 2.

Vattimo have been interpreted in the context of nihilism.<sup>10</sup> The individual moralisation or ethical good initiated by Descartes has been superseded by nihilism in the postmodern period. Some philosophers have identified the transformation of morality as having adverse consequences. In response to these criticisms, new moral systems have been put forth for consideration. MacIntyre categorically stated that the moral culture of the postmodern period was irreconcilable. He firmly argued that the modern period was incapable of producing moral discourse or providing a correct moralisation. Consequently, he was obliged to put forth a novel moral system founded upon virtuebased morality.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, Taha Abdurrahman is critical of the ethical good that locates the subject at the centre of the determination of good and evil, a concept that emerged with the modern period. Taha Abdurrahman's assertion that "being" precedes "good" in the domain of ethics, and that "being" provides the context for "good", unambiguously situates him within the framework of metaphysical good. Taha Abdurrahman did not differentiate between the terms "ethics" and "morality." This is contrary to the distinctions that emerged in the modern period and its aftermath. He was similarly critical of the concept of moral actions being subsumed within a system of duty ethics. However, he asserted that the fulfilment of moral actions on the basis of creation (fitrah) represents the pinnacle of morality, a perspective that diverges from MacIntyre's emphasis on virtue.

He strongly maintains that the concepts of ethics and morality, as understood in ancient and medieval times, reflect the totality of being. Taha Abdurrahman asserts that morality is an intrinsic human desire for virtuous action.<sup>12</sup> He is convinced that morality is an integral aspect of human nature and is closely intertwined with religious beliefs. Additionally, he delineates his moral theory in relation to an essence such as God. This is why his understanding of morality can be classified as a metaphysical one.

## 2. IN ONE OF HIS WORKS ON THE METHODOLOGY OF DIALOGUE

Taha Abdurrahman wrote a brief introduction, entitled "al-Munkizu min al-Hawd," which translates to "The Departure from the Minutiae," as a preface.<sup>13</sup> He firmly stated that to ascertain the truth, each subject must undergo individual examination, comprehensive analysis, and the concepts

<sup>10</sup> Ashley Dean Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity: Lyotard, Baudrillard, Vattimo* (Colorado: The Davies Group, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue a Study in Moral Theory* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Abdurrahman, *Ahlâk Sorunsalı*, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Taha Abdurrahman, *fî Usûl'ul-hıvar ve Tecdîdi 'İlm'il-kelâm* (Beirut: el-Merkez Segafî el-Arabî, 2000), 5.

leading to the core principle must be elucidated. Furthermore, comparisons must be made along the way in order to ascertain the truth. This emphasis is largely attributable to the fact that certain contemporary thinkers have been making sweeping generalisations about Arab-Islamic thought. Such generalisations can be dispensed with, a novel construction system proposed, and the Arab-Islamic tradition addressed anew. This is feasible through the utilisation of an alternative epistemological methodology. Taha Abdurrahman's capacity to present his ideas to his contemporaries and to offer an opportunity for re-examination of the Arab-Islamic tradition, which has been approached reductionistically with generalisations, is made possible by the alternative epistemological method.

Taha Abdurrahman has developed a conceptual framework, termed 'dialogical rationality' (al-aklaniyya al-khawariyya), which is anchored in the Islamic tradition of thought. This affords individuals the right to hold and express any belief they choose. Furthermore, this necessitates that individuals justify their beliefs and consider the arguments put forth by those with opposing beliefs. Dialogue with others facilitates the development of one's powers of reasoning and enables the individual to gain insight into their own beliefs or views through the reasoning they engage in. Dialogue can be conducted with any group and any view, provided that one condition is met. To guarantee a fruitful dialogue, it is imperative to adhere to the established rules of engagement.<sup>14</sup>

It is not sufficient to merely assert the opposite of a belief in order to engage in dialogical rationality. There are certain principles that must be taken into account in this context. One such principle is that of "evidentialisation (ihtijaj)". Taha Abdurrahman's use of the term "ihtijaji" in lieu of "burhani" when defending a belief or opinion in the dialogue serves to distinguish this as a practical, scholarly activity, as opposed to a theoretical one. In an ijtihād argumentation, it is incumbent upon the arguer to provide a rationale for why the opposing arguments are unsubstantiated. The tenets of dialogical rationality dictate that arguments must be presented in the form of an exchange and that evidence must be subjected to mutual examination.<sup>15</sup> This is in contrast to the burhani method, which is designed to present a case and conclude the discussion. The epistemological basis for defending a view of morality based on the "metaphysical good" is provided by dialogical rationality in an age where the "ethical good" is the dominant paradigm. This is because the discussion should continue in the form of an exchange following the presentation of evidence.

<sup>14</sup> Taha Abdurrahman, *Bilgi Ahlâktan Ayrıldığında*, çev. Muhammet Ateş (İstanbul: Pınar Yayınları, 2022), 30-32.

<sup>15</sup> Abdurrahman, *fî Usûl'ul-hıvar ve Tecdîdi 'İlm'il-keîâm*, 46.

Taha Abdurrahman forcefully emphasises the pivotal elements of dialogue, underscoring the striking absence of an ethics of dialogue and the paucity of knowledge about the science of dialogue.<sup>16</sup> He has proposed a number of explanations and principles pertaining to the moral rules of dialogue. He forcefully asserted the necessity of adherence to a set of fundamental moral principles in an ideal dialogue. These include allowing the other party sufficient time to express themselves, refraining from interrupting, and engaging in debate with all parties involved.<sup>17</sup> In this context, he posited that dialogue can be classified into three categories: *khwar*, *muhavara* and *tehavur*. He then proceeded to delineate the characteristics of a mature dialogue, which he defined as *tehavur*. Following an examination of the constituent elements and hierarchical structure of dialogue, the information is then organised in a tabular format.<sup>18</sup>

Taha Abdurrahman presents a novel approach to interpreting the tradition through his epistemological method. This method is exemplified by the concept of “*majal al-tadawul*”. The concept of *majal al-tadawul* has been translated into Turkish as “performative field” by Muhammet Ateş.<sup>19</sup> Taha Abdurrahman posits that when examining an idea, it is imperative to consider the tradition that underpins it, particularly in terms of language, faith and knowledge.<sup>20</sup> He asserted with conviction that every thought has a religious and linguistic substructure. It is not possible to approach a thought in an original way, independently of tradition. Taha Abdurrahman asserts that originality is unfeasible when one deviates from tradition, and imitation is inevitable.<sup>21</sup>

The dialogical method has its roots in the tradition of Islamic thought. However, Taha Abdurrahman posits that rationality, or the use of reason, is an expression of unlimited multiplicity. He substantiates this assertion by noting that what is deemed rational in a given historical period is not necessarily so in another, and that what is regarded as rational at a particular stage of an individual’s intellectual development may not be perceived as such at a later stage. Taha Abdurrahman conceptualised the infinite number of rationalities in human beings, just like the actions of human beings, as “*al-taqawsur al-‘aqlî*”.<sup>22</sup> It is necessary to accept the existence of a multitude

<sup>16</sup> Abdurrahman, *Bilgi Ahlâktan Ayrıldığında*, 36.

<sup>17</sup> Abdurrahman, *fî Usûl’ul-hıwar ve Tecdîdi ‘İlm’il-keîâm*, 75.

<sup>18</sup> Abdurrahman, *fî Usûl’ul-hıwar ve Tecdîdi ‘İlm’il-keîâm*, 57.

<sup>19</sup> Muhammet Ateş, “Taha Abdurrahman’ın Düşüncesinde Mecalü’t-Tedavül Kavramı”, *Kocatepe İslami İlimler Dergisi* 5/1 (2022), 40.

<sup>20</sup> Ateş, “Taha Abdurrahman’ın Düşüncesinde Mecalü’t-Tedavül Kavramı”, 40-43.

<sup>21</sup> Taha Abdurrahman, *al-mafâhîm al-ahlâqiyya’ I: bayna al-îtimâniyya’ wa al-‘almâniyya’* (Beirut: Merkez Nuhûd, 2021), 1/13.

<sup>22</sup> Taha Abdurrahman, *Hakikat Arayışı Geleceği İnşa Ufkunda Konuşmalar*, çev. Muhammet Ateş (İstanbul: Pınar Yayınları, 2023), 60.



of intellects that cannot be enumerated. However, the singularity of truth serves as the foundation for systems that mitigate the harms associated with multiplicity. In the context of the postmodern era, where multiplicity is a dominant perspective, his proposal of a moral understanding based on the metaphysical good is a significant factor in his acceptance of an underlying essence and truth.

### 3. HUMAN AND REASON IN TAHA ABDURRAHMAN

Taha Abdurrahman's philosophical system, which is rooted in tradition, radically alters the question of what it means to be human. In Aristotelian thought, the human being is defined as a "rational animal". In Taha Abdurrahman's philosophical system, the human being is regarded as a "moral creature." It is evident that Islamic thought employs the performative sphere by regarding man as a creature. However, human beings are a species that is distinct from other living beings in that they are capable of pursuing the good, that is, they possess the potential for morality. Taha Abdurrahman challenges the notion that human beings can be defined exclusively in terms of intellectual capacity. He posits that an intellect devoid of moral considerations (*mujarret al-rationality*) is also observed in animals.<sup>23</sup>

Taha Abdurrahman's thought posits that humanity is distinguished from other creatures by its moral capacity, rather than its intellectual capabilities. It can be reasonably deduced that the intellect, an essential attribute of the human condition, must also serve a moral purpose. In a bold assertion, states that no previous examination has been conducted on the rationality of individuals who adhere to religious morality and those who do not.<sup>24</sup> Taha Abdurrahman asserts with conviction that religion is the source of morality. It follows that reason must be linked to religion in order to have a moral use. He posits that reason can be classified into three categories based on its relationship with religion. Taha Abdurrahman classifies the types of intellect into three categories in relation to the adoption of religious morality. The three categories of intellect are as follows: "mujarret intellect" (abstract intellect), "musedded intellect" (guided intellect) and "muayyed intellect" (supported intellect).

Taha Abdurrahman's classification of the intellect is based on the extent to which it is intertwined with Sharī'ah deeds. He devised a tripartite classification system based on the relationship between Sharī'ah deeds and intellect: firstly, *mujarret intellect* is the abstract intellect, detached from the realm of Sharī'ah deeds. This understanding of the intellect leads to the conclusion that actions are entirely the result of the individual's own acti-

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<sup>23</sup> Abdurrahman, *Ahlāk Sorunsalı*, 23.

<sup>24</sup> Abdurrahman, *Ahlāk Sorunsalı*, 88.

ons. In this context, it is not possible to discuss the concept of benefit without simultaneously considering the concept of harm, or the concept of truth without simultaneously considering the concept of falsehood. Secondly, the Musaddad intellect is one that is oriented towards achieving the objectives set out in the Sharf'ah. In this context, it is possible to distinguish between good and bad deeds, and to discuss the benefits of good deeds with certainty. Thirdly, the muayyed intellect is one that is supported by the means of the Sharf'ah. This is the intellect that strives to enhance one's proximity to God and is oriented towards augmenting virtuous actions in both deed and thought.<sup>25</sup>

The immaterial mind is characterised by an objectifying and fragmenting conception.<sup>26</sup> It is inevitable that this intellect will create paradoxes when it engages in logical proof. Such processes will manifest as either an infinite regression or a return to the initial point of departure. This understanding of reason reduces every concept to the level of matter and fact. These and numerous additional characteristics of the immaterial intellect demonstrate that it is subject to a multitude of logical, phenomenological, and philosophical constraints.<sup>27</sup> This understanding of reason at the limits of the phenomenon is founded on the belief that all possibilities must be considered and that all possible actions must be taken.<sup>28</sup> This characteristic of the immaterial intellect inevitably leads to the conclusion that a reality based on it will result in catastrophic moral consequences. Taha Abdurrahman argues that the catastrophic consequences of Western modernity, which is predicated on the immaterial intellect, are manifest in a plethora of unforeseen diseases, the nightmare of nuclear radiation, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, population explosion, environmental pollution, and the depletion of the ozone layer.<sup>29</sup>

Taha Abdurrahman is clear that modernity, created with the understanding of abstract reason, has resulted in an attitude that separates morality and religion, employing a fragmented approach. Taha Abdurrahman defines the separation of morality and religion as "dehraniyya". The dehraniyya movement, which sought to separate religion and morality, continued to develop over time. It became rapidly apparent that the total separation of religion from morality provided the foundation for immorality. The concept

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<sup>25</sup> Taha Abdurrahman, *Amel Sorunsalı Bilim ve Düşüncenin Pratik Temelleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma*, çev. Tahir Uluç (İstanbul: Pınar Yayınları, 2021), 119-121.

<sup>26</sup> Taha Abdurrahman, *Dini Amel ve Aklın Yenilenmesi*, çev. Mehmet Emin Güleçyüz (İstanbul: Pınar Yayınları, 2021), 28.

<sup>27</sup> Abdurrahman, *Dini Amel ve Aklın Yenilenmesi*, 57-70.

<sup>28</sup> Abdurrahman, *Dini Amel ve Aklın Yenilenmesi*, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Taha Abdurrahman, *Modernlik Ruhü: İslami Bir Modernlik İnşasına Giriş*, çev. Mehmet Emin Maşalı (İstanbul: Pınar Yayınları, 2022), 35.

of ethical good provides a unifying framework for Taha Abdurrahman's disparate ideas. It encompasses both the *dehraniyya* and post-*dehraniyya* individualisation of moralisation. This is precisely why Taha Abdurrahman is so insistent on the process of moralisation. He is adamant in his assertion that individual moralisation, divorced from the influence of religion, tradition and culture, has adverse consequences.<sup>30</sup>

Additionally, Taha Abdurrahman criticised the concept of the "moral good" based on the "guided intellect", which is based solely on religious precepts. Furthermore, he opposed morality based on the ethical good constructed by pure reason. The concept of the moral good is based on the assertion that the distinction between good and evil is determined by a set of pre-established norms, which serve as the foundation for moralisation. Taha Abdurrahman was unambiguous in his condemnation of the jurists and Salafis who had incorporated religious morality into their moralising. Taha Abdurrahman was explicit and unwavering in his criticism of the jurists and Salafis for failing to acknowledge the practical nature of morality. The application of religious norms to actions through purely inductive methods was an erroneous approach. Taha Abdurrahman's critique of religion-based ethics is so comprehensive that it would be more accurate to categorise his ethical system as "metaphysical good-based" rather than "religion-based". Taha Abdurrahman's ethical perspective aligns with the traditional moral frameworks of the First Age and the Middle Ages, which perceive morality as a foundational and comprehensive structure that emerges from the very nature of existence. He subsequently advocated for the sanctioned intellect, which he regarded as the criterion for moralisation *taḥalluq*.

The *muayyed* reason is founded upon two fundamental principles. The first of these principles is the historical principle, which requires the consideration of the relevant narrations. The second is the evaluative principle, which requires the use of models from the Salafis.<sup>31</sup> The historical principle in the *muayyed* intellect offers an interpretation of rationality that is grounded in religious legal precedent. In contrast, the evaluative principle aims to provide an understanding of rationality that will inform the practical application of this *nass*. Taha Abdurrahman's philosophical stance on moralisation (*taḥalluq*) is clearly delineated in his remarks on "linking *nazar* and *amal*". These sentences unambiguously demonstrate the structure he intends to convey. He definitively establishes the religious *nass* as a fixed point in moralisation, with the modelling of practice as a variable point.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Taha Abdurrahman, *Şurûd mâ ba'de'd-dehrâniyye: en-nakdu'l-i'timanî li Ḥurûc min'el-aḥlâk* (Beyrut: İbda', 2016).

<sup>31</sup> Abdurrahman, *Dini Amel ve Akılın Yenilenmesi*, 244.

<sup>32</sup> Abdurrahman, *Dini Amel ve Akılın Yenilenmesi*, 252.

The application of reason in conjunction with the filters of reasoning and modelling offers a comprehensive understanding of rationality in relation to religious reasoning and practice. In conclusion, Taha Abdurrahman posits that humanity is defined by its moral conduct. Reason is an indispensable element of the human experience, and it plays a pivotal role in moral decision-making.

#### 4. METAPHYSICAL GOOD-BASED MORALITY

Taha Abdurrahman firmly stated that a philosophy grounded in Islamic tradition must be inextricably linked with morality. This is because, within the Islamic tradition, philosophy is understood as a love of wisdom, and wisdom is inherently associated with “deeds”. He has succeeded in establishing an indivisible nexus between theoretical and practical, intellect and morality.<sup>33</sup> Taha Abdurrahman’s holistic perspective aligns him with the metaphysical moralisation of the good in the Early and Middle Ages.

Taha Abdurrahman’s philosophy is characterised by a holistic approach. It encompasses the following four areas of philosophical inquiry: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and morality. These four subjects are related to the concept of God and the religious essence, as well as to the concept of morality, which is a necessary outcome of religion. From an ontological perspective, it is irrefutable that reason is subservient to morality, given that reason is the defining attribute of the human condition. He declared with certainty that although animals may possess the faculty of reason, they do not have the faculty of morality.<sup>34</sup>

Taha Abdurrahman proposed an alternative definition of the human being, positing that we are not simply intelligent beings, as is commonly held in Western thought, but are in fact moral creatures. Additionally, he critiqued the epistemological model of modern Western thought, attempting to define it in a manner consistent with his own perspective. He posits that the contemporary epistemological model may be applicable to the construction of Islamic epistemology, but that it is not wholly suitable for this purpose. The epistemological model of modern Western thought has resulted in crises of truth and purpose due to the separation of science from morality and reason from metaphysics, which is an untenable position. It is evident that the Islamic epistemological model is closely associated with the utilisation of reason by human beings. As previously stated, the sanctioned intellect requires the individual to associate with those who embody the values of righteousness, to emulate their conduct, and to adhere to their guidance. This stipulation furnishes the pragmatic aspect of religious cogni-

<sup>33</sup> Abdurrahman, *Bilgi Ahlâktan Ayrıldığıında*, 55.

<sup>34</sup> Abdurrahman, *Ahlâk Sorunsalı*, 284.

zance, linking knowledge to praxis and reason to metaphysics.<sup>35</sup>

Taha Abdurrahman's emphasis on the sanctioned intellect in the construction of the Islamic epistemological model suggests that he is striving to achieve a unified approach to action and thought. This is explicitly stated in the section of the text where he discusses the construction of an Islamic epistemological model. "The action should be aligned with the underlying rationale and even integrate with it seamlessly".<sup>36</sup> The Islamic epistemological stance is clearly indicated by the use of the term "deeds". An individual who has embraced the concept of the muayyed intellect is capable of conceptualising actions according to the categories of thought, and vice versa.<sup>37</sup> Taha Abdurrahman's epistemology is predicated on the notion that communication with knowledge is derived from an understanding of reason that is grounded in morality, practice, and, therefore, religion. This moral reasoning elucidates the epistemological aspect of the metaphysical good.

Morality represents the third principal area of philosophical inquiry, situated between ontology and epistemology. This illustrates the existence of the metaphysical good in Taha Abdurrahman's thought in terms of its relationality with the moral. Taha Abdurrahman developed a moral philosophy that is rooted in Islamic practices. In his philosophy, morality is inherently relational, as are other fields in relation to Islam. In this context, he definitively associated the three levels of religious behaviour in Islam with the ethics based on the classification of reason. It is evident that when the existing levels of Islamic morality are considered -that is to say, the morality of faith and the morality of ihsan- it becomes apparent that the immaterial morality cannot enter any of these levels. Nevertheless, permissible morality is capable of entering the domain of Islamic morality and faith, while mueyyed morality can enter the domain of ihsan.<sup>38</sup> It can be stated with certainty that the optimal morality for him is one that aligns perfectly with the model demanded by Islam.

Taha Abdurrahman is resolute in his assertion that Western thought is inadequate in the domain of ethics, openly critiquing it for this deficiency. He offers forthright criticism of four thinkers, whom he identifies as the touchstones of the "dehraniyya" movement, which he views as the separation of morality from religion. The four thinkers in question are J. J. Rousseau, I. Kant, E. Durkheim and L. Ferry. These thinkers accepted religion as a factual phenomenon but constructed a foundation for individual moralisation, which can be defined as ethical good, by defending the secular moral

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<sup>35</sup> Abdurrahman, *Ahlâk Sorunsalı*, 156-161.

<sup>36</sup> Abdurrahman, *Ahlâk Sorunsalı*, 159.

<sup>37</sup> Abdurrahman, *Ahlâk Sorunsalı*, 159.

<sup>38</sup> Abdurrahman, *Modernlik Ruhu*, 266.

paradigm. The four thinkers he criticises all had one thing in common: they replaced God's authority with human authority in their understanding of morality.<sup>39</sup>

Following the criticism of the foundations of ethical good-based morality with religious propositions in *The Misery of Secular Morality*, a sequel was subsequently published. In his subsequent work, entitled "Şurûd mâ Ba'de al-Dahraniyya", he makes it clear that fragmentary morality, detached from religion or an essence, is heading towards extinction in the hands of individuals. Taha Abdurrahman has stated that this work, which covers the moralisations realised through the ethical good, should be titled "Bu'su mâ Ba'de'd-Dahraniyya" (The misery of those after the dehraniyya). The rationale is evident: the term "bu'se", which denotes trouble, distress, pain, suffering, anguish, and misery, is frequently employed by secularists as it more accurately encapsulates their circumstances. In this context, the work of thinkers such as Freud, Lacan and Georges Bataille is employed to demonstrate how moralisation based on ethical goodness, including the concepts of hedonism and sadism, is itself open to criticism. Taha Abdurrahman's critique of morality can be summarised as follows: The act of disassociating oneself from religious beliefs entails the adoption of an alternative moral framework. Religion represents the ultimate context for moralisation. Consequently, alternative moral systems must be subjected to scrutiny by religious moral systems.<sup>40</sup>

Taha Abdurrahman's thought provides clear evidence of the existence of the metaphysical good in a number of fields, including aesthetics, political philosophy, and the philosophy of science, as well as ontology, epistemology, and ethics. It is not my intention to address each of these topics in isolation, as this would exceed the scope of the present article. Nevertheless, it can be stated with certainty that Taha Abdurrahman's views are ultimately connected to the other topics he discusses in a holistic manner within the essentialist metaphysical foundations of Islamic practices. His objections to the division and ordering of Sharia values within the concept of religion provide a clear example of this. Taha Abdurrahman stated that the categorisation of *necessiyyat*, *hajiyyat*, and *tahsiniyyat* in the science of *maqasasat* within the tradition of Islamic thought was unwarranted. He posits that the values in question constitute a unified whole and should not be treated as disparate parts.<sup>41</sup> To illustrate this, we may consider the example of the forbiddenness of adultery. Adultery is a necessity, both in

<sup>39</sup> Abdurrahman, *Seküler Ahlâkın Sefaleti*, 93-112.

<sup>40</sup> Abdurrahman, *Şurûd mâ ba'de'd-dehrâniyye: en-nakdu'l-i'timani li Hurûc min'el-ahlâk*, 542.

<sup>41</sup> Taha Abdurrahman, *Suâlu'l-Menhec fi Ufûku't-Te'sîsu'l-Unmûzec Fikri Cedîd*, muh. Rıdvan Merhum (Beirut: İbda', 2015).

the context of religious doctrine and in the broader social and moral order. Additionally, it is a hajjiyyah, impeding the perpetuation of the generation, and a tahsiniyyah, given that displaying the body is aesthetically displeasing. Taha Abdurrahman addresses even the classifications within the religious tradition by integrating values from a metaphysical perspective.

Taha Abdurrahman's approach to Islamic values as a unified whole in his philosophical system can be contrasted with the fragmentation that characterises Western thought. In this sense, he asserts with confidence that an understanding of morality based on Islamic principles can provide integrity despite the fragmentation of Western thought in this area. His approach to values as a complementary and integrative element (metaphysical good) offers a novel alternative to the fragmentation of values in Western thought, which is based on the individual (ethical good). In this context, trusteeship paradigm (al-I'timānī) he constructed provides an unquestionable ethical framework based on the metaphysical good. This necessitates the perception of the universe as a trust, which in turn requires the performance of moral actions in accordance with this perception.

### 5. AL-I'TIMĀNĪ AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF ISLAMIC MODERNITY

The trusteeship paradigm, or I'timānī, provides a solution to various practical moral problems and aims to create a new society with Islam as its core, based on morality founded on the metaphysical good. This paradigm will safeguard humans from malevolent influences through the natural inclinations inherent to the human condition. Taha Abdurrahman has correctly identified the shortcomings of the personal or ethical good that has emerged in modernity as a means of preventing evil. The ethical understandings that emerged in the wake of the modern period effectively removed an essential component of moral sustainability, namely the concept of God. Nevertheless, they proved incapable of eradicating evil.<sup>42</sup>

In response to the perceived lack of sustainability of ethical good in the domain of moralisation, Taha Abdurrahman proposed the concept of "inzi'âc". Inzi'âc represents the inner spiritual motivation that enables a moral ascent through the purifying practice of goodness and justice, which develops in one's own inner world.<sup>43</sup> It is evident that the development of moral motivation in his thought is contingent upon the level of purification practice attained by the individual. Purification (tazqiyya) is the process of cleansing the soul through a spiritual practice based on faith. It is achieved through a gradual and progressive approach, without the use of coercion. The

<sup>42</sup> Abdurrahman, *Şurûd mâ ba'de'd-dehrâniyye: en-nakdu'l-i'timani li Hurûc min'el-aĥlâk*, 37-38.

<sup>43</sup> Taha Abdurrahman, *Dinin Ruhü: Sekülerizmin Sıĥlıĥından İlahi Sözeşme ve Emanet Paradigmasının Enginliĥine*, çev. Soner Gündüzöz (İstanbul: Pınar Yayınları, 2021), 862.



practice of purification constitutes the path to moralisation (suluuq). It is a profound, pervasive, transformative, revolutionary, and continuous process. This practice will result in the formation of a love of servitude based on worship within the individual's heart.<sup>44</sup>

The individual who provides moral motivation and sustainability through the practice of purification is also the individual who employs the sanctioned intellect. Reason is a tool that is employed with a moral filter. It can therefore be argued that purificationist practice facilitates the filtering process, enabling the intellect to settle in the perspective of the individual. The individual's discipline of the nafs through Islamic practices and the understanding of rationality that is closely related to this will inevitably result in a definition of the human being that emphasises the feature of "morality". It is evident that the concepts of the purification of the soul, the rationality created with the purified soul, and the human being defined in relation to this rationality are all based on Islamic practices, as this network of relationality makes clear. This system, based on an essence, will establish the trusteeship paradigm (al-I'timānī), and the moral outputs of the human being equipped with this paradigm will be distinct.

Taha Abdurrahman's trusteeship paradigm based on Islamic essence, will engender novel outcomes of moral action and a novel outcome of modernity. He has addressed the concept of modernity from two distinct perspectives. The first is the "spirit of modernity", which provides the methodology for achieving modernity. The second is the "reality of modernity", which has acquired the spirit of modernity but has also incorporated elements from the practices of the religion, culture, tradition and language in which it is embedded. Taha Abdurrahman posits that the spirit and reality of modernity are inextricably linked. This is exemplified by the relationship between meaning and form, value and form.<sup>45</sup>

He clearly asserts that any reality of modernity must embody the principles of maturity, criticism and inclusiveness. The Western reality of modernity has embraced these three principles, yet it has also resulted in some detriment due to the implementation of these principles in certain practices. Taha Abdurrahman is convinced that the detrimental impact of Western thought on moral and political matters can be mitigated through a modernity based on Islamic principles. To this end, he has authored a comprehensive guide to Islamic modernity, entitled *The Spirit of Modernity*. In his book, *An Introduction to the Construction of an Islamic Modernity*<sup>46</sup> Taha Abdurrahman presents his vision for an Islamic modernity.

<sup>44</sup> Abdurrahman, *Dinin Ruhü*, 416-426.

<sup>45</sup> Hallaq, *Modernitenin Reformu Abdurrahman Taha'nın Felsefesinde Ahlâk ve Yeni İnsan*, 360-363.

<sup>46</sup> Abdurrahman, *Modernlik Ruhü*.



It is evident that Islamic modernity presents practices that are absent in Western modernity, based on the trusteeship paradigm. The concept of taḥalluq (moralisation) serves as an illustrative case in point. In the context of Islamic modernity, taḥalluq is defined as follows: "To be equipped with that state and attribute in proportion to one's power in relation to what the exemplar/kudweh is qualified for."<sup>47</sup> It is evident that the construction of Islamic modernity is a manifestation of its intertwining with Taha Abdurrahman's other concepts, including sanctioned reason, purifying practices, and Islamic circulation. This illustrates that the metaphysical concept of the good, which symbolises the unity of being and morality in the Middle Ages, is reflected even in the concept of modernity in Taha Abdurrahman's thought.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Taha Abdurrahman is explicit in his assertion that Islamic philosophy critiques existing philosophical thought not to disfigure it or take sides, but to avert disasters in the moral and spiritual sphere. He asserts that Islamic philosophy has the theoretical and practical foundations to prevent these disasters.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, he posits that the value of rationality in Western thought has been eroded by instrumentalism and the value of separation by fragmentation.<sup>49</sup> His comprehensive philosophical system will eradicate the other calamities caused by these disasters through an ethical framework grounded in the metaphysical good, as elucidated by Islamic practices. The findings of the study clearly indicate that in Taha Abdurrahman's thought, a reason based on Islamic practices must be subjected to a moral filter. Morality is a defining quality of the human essence. This must precede reason. Given the interrelated nature of Taha Abdurrahman's ideas, he was convinced that Islam could serve as an effective instrument for promoting moralisation and the sustainability of morality. It is evident that Taha Abdurrahman's moralisation, founded upon the integrity of the human being and his creation of morality based on the metaphysical good, represents an alternative to the moralisation based on the fragmentary ethical good that emerged in Western thought. Ultimately, Taha Abdurrahman's holistic understanding of morality presents a relational structure in which humans are created as moral beings, reason is positioned as an act subordinate to morality, morality finds its existence alongside religion, and modernity can be reconstructed in a better moral state with Islam.

<sup>47</sup> Abdurrahman, *Modernlik Ruhü*, 318.

<sup>48</sup> Taha Abdurrahman, *min'el-insân'il-ebter ila'l-insâni'l-kevser*, muh. Rıdvan Merhum (Beyrut: İbda', 2016), 86.


<sup>49</sup> Abdurrahman, *Bilgi Ahlâktan Ayrıldığında*, 136.

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