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Islam between Inclusion and Exclusion:

A (Decolonial) Frame Problem

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In this paper, the ‘Frame Problem’ in AI is mobilized as a trope in order to engage the ‘question’ concerning the inclusion and/or exclusion of Islam (and Muslims) from European – and, more broadly, ‘Western’ – society. Adopting a decolonial perspective, wherein body-political, geo-political and theo-political concerns are centered, the meaning and applicability of categorical dichotomies such as ‘religion’ and ‘politics’ and their relationship to the historical entanglement of ‘religion’ and ‘race’ in the formation of the modern world are interrogated in the context of understanding the nature of the relationship between Islam and Europe / ‘the West’. It is argued that the tendency within Western liberal democratic discourses to (1) frame the problem of Islamophobia and ‘the Muslim question’ in terms of misrepresentation – that is, misinformation, disinformation and ‘distortion’ of the flow of information – and (2) frame the issue of “Islam and Europe / ‘the West’” in terms of inclusion and/or exclusion of the members of a ‘religious’ minority into a post-modern, post-Christian / ‘secular’ polity circumvents disclosure of the violent historically-constituted structural background or ‘horizon’ against which such ‘options’ are generated. The essay concludes by sketching some possible decolonial responses to this critical and existentially-problematic state of affairs.

1. Introduction

In the field of artificial intelligence (AI), the Frame Problem refers to the problem of ‘knowing what stays the same as actions occur in a changing world’. According to Lormand [1999],

The original frame problem appears within the situational calculus [a logical formalism wherein] there are “axioms” about changes conditional on prior occurrences ... Unfortunately, because inferences are to be made solely by deduction, axioms are needed for purported *nonchanges* ... Without such “frame axioms”, a system is unable strictly to deduce that any states *persist*. The resulting problem is to do without huge numbers of frame axioms potentially relating *each* representable occurrence to *each* representable nonchange. (p.326)

Some philosophers of mind have argued that the scope of the frame problem is broader than that of a specific formalism or representation: for example, according to Daniel Dennett, it relates to the problem of knowing “how to ignore information *obviously irrelevant to one’s goals*”, while John Haugeland understand it as the problem of “how to keep track of *salient side effects* without constantly checking for them.” [Lormand 1999, p.326]

Another way of thinking about why the frame problem arises draws on phenomenological insights into the relationship between formal representations and a non-representational *background* of embodied and situated knowledge about the natural world and cultural practices against which such representations are interpretable – a ‘horizon’ which provides “the condition of the possibility of determining relevant facts and features” [Dreyfus 1992, p.36]. I want to suggest that this line of thinking is fruitful for thinking about contemporary social problems including issues of social inclusion and exclusion.

It is my contention that ‘frame problems’ of a similar nature – that is, those having to do with the persistence of a tacit background or ‘horizon’ against which phenomena become interpretable – are ubiquitous in spheres of human action – social, political, economic, ethical, cultural, religious and otherwise – when viewed from a critical perspective, that is, in terms of a consideration of power relationships. By adopting a decolonial perspective wherein body-political (who is speaking), geo-political (from where) and theo-political (to what end) concerns are centered, and informed by a recognition of what Heidegger

referred to as the ‘ontological difference’ between beings (things, phenomena etc.) and being as a ‘horizon’ for understanding (or making intelligible) such beings, it becomes possible to expose and thereby interrogate the historical structure of the tacit systemic background which provides the condition of the possibility of understanding how and why ‘the Muslim question’ is – must be – framed as a choice between inclusion and exclusion.

I begin by sketching the political ontology of the modern world – *what* it is and *how* it came to be – from a decolonial perspective. Traveling backwards in time (and space), I draw attention to the historical entanglement of ‘race’ and ‘religion’ in the violent constitution of modernity, and the formative role and historical sedimentation of structural anti-Islamism in the constitution of European identity. I then go on to briefly comment on the relationship between the modern world and the Islamicate – that is, the social and cultural complex historically-tied to Islam as a civilizational matrix – in terms of how the colonial and imperialist discourse of Orientalism, the contemporary phenomenon of Islamophobia, and recurrent debates over a purported ‘Clash of Civilizations’ can be understood as ontic manifestations of anti-Islamism.

I maintain that framing the ‘question’ concerning the inclusion and/or exclusion of Islam (and Muslims) from European – and, more broadly, ‘Western’ – society in such terms masks (occludes, conceals) the ontology – nature, structure, boundaries etc. – and historicity of the systemic background or ‘horizon’ against which the binary ‘options’ of inclusion *into* and exclusion *from* Europe / ‘the West’ emerge; rather than focusing on how the demarcating boundary between European / Western identity (‘self’) and non-European / non-Western – specifically, Islamic / Muslim – difference (‘other’) is historically co-constituted and reproduced by power-relationally differentiated actors, the issue is framed in terms of a choice of where to position – or be positioned – in relation to this boundary, the ontology of the latter having been tacitly naturalized, that is, de-politicized.

I conclude by briefly sketching some possible decolonial responses to this critical and existentially-problematic state of affairs.

2. World-Making

My point of departure in exploring the ‘frame problem’ associated with questions of inclusion and inclusion vis-à-vis Islam and Europe (or, more broadly, ‘the West’) is a consideration of how the modern world came to be. These two terms – ‘modern’ and ‘world’ – necessitate a certain amount of unpacking. Drawing upon a sociological and phenomenological account such as that presented by Berger and Luckmann [1966], it might be argued that a ‘world’ is a socially-constructed reality into which people find themselves ‘thrown’ and which they shape through various kinds of action, both individual and collective. However, this way of thinking about ‘world’ tends to obscure certain fundamental considerations relating to the site and operation of power and its role in bringing forth such a reality – that is, ‘poietically’ constituting the being (or ontology) of a world. Heidegger [1995] might have been correct in asserting that the stone is world-less, the animal is poor in world, and the human is world-forming, yet what such an articulation omits to consider – intentionally or otherwise – is the asymmetric wielding of power by different agents (bodies), differently located in time (history) and space (geography), in relation to such world-forming action; in short, Heidegger’s world-forming ‘human’ is a universalizing abstraction that masks differential power relationships. Furthermore, and central to my argument, it is a levelling abstraction that masks (conceals, occludes) a tacit Eurocentrism.

Following the lead of psychiatrist, phenomenologist and seminal decolonial thinker, Frantz Fanon [1986], I want to argue that when thinking about, speaking of, and acting in the ‘modern world’, we need to understand the latter as ‘The World’ – that is, *the* global hierarchical system of domination, whose dominant core lies in ‘the West’ and whose subaltern periphery is constituted by ‘the Rest’ [Hall 1992], which emerged as a historically-unprecedented phenomenon during what has come to be known as the long *durée* of the 16th century. While broadly concurring with the claims of decolonial scholarship vis-à-vis the uniqueness and historical onset of ‘The World’, I shall attempt to nuance its genealogy and ontology with a view to informing the central issue at

hand, viz. the question of inclusion and exclusion of Islam (and Muslims) in relation to Europe (and ‘the West’).

2.1. Naming ‘The World’

In addition to ‘the West’ and ‘the Rest’– and the ‘West’ can include ‘Eastern’ constituents such as Japan (a case of the exception *confirming* the rule) – ‘The World’ goes by many other names articulated with increasing intensity, clarity and visibility in the contemporary era: coloniality of power [Quijano 1992], racist culture [Goldberg 1993], global white supremacy [Mills 1997], the modern racial world system [Winant 2004], the Orientalist world system [Samman 2008] and the colonial matrix of power or modernity/coloniality [Mignolo 2011] among others. What is common to all such ‘namings’, if only in terms of a Wittgensteinian shared family resemblance, is the centrality of *race* as a unifying principle in their articulation. Before proceeding, it is necessary to briefly clarify what I mean by race / racism.

2.2. Two Conceptions of Race / Racism

While it is beyond the scope of this essay to review the different ways in which race / racism can be and has been conceptualized, two formulations can be usefully contrasted, both of which frame race / racism as real yet not natural (in the sense of biologically ‘given’) and as involving naturalization (in the sense of depoliticisation) of systemic hierarchical exclusion. Where they differ is in terms of their range of applicability: the first, due to Mills [1997], is analytical in orientation and views race / racism as a socially-constructed reality that can, in principle, be trans-historically (and trans-geographically) located; the second, due to Hesse [2004, 2007], is postcolonial/decolonial in orientation and views race / racism as a series of Eurocentric material assemblages that emerge in a specific context, viz. European colonial expansion during the long *durée* of the 16th century. While Mills’ framework appears less parochial, arguably this is at the expense of its conceptual abstractness. This point is significant since some commentators such as Hobson [2012] insist that a distinction can and

should be made between racism and Eurocentrism, including the latter in its colonial and imperial manifestations, and that racism should be tied to its ‘scientific’ conceptualization in late 19th century Europe, its historical origin as a term in the 1930s, and its material expression in the Jewish Holocaust under Nazi Germany. However, Hesse [2004][2011] contests this move, arguing that conceptualizing race in biological terms and in an exclusively *European* context results in anti-Semitism being placed in the analytical foreground of race discourse, while non-European – that is, colonial – formations of race are tacitly moved into the background. In what follows, I have recourse to a decolonial conception of race / racism.

2.3. Decoloniality Basics

According to Wallerstein [2006], “the history of the modern world-system has been in large part a history of the expansion of European states and peoples into the rest of the world” (p.1), commencing with the so-called Columbian “voyages of discovery” in 1492 CE which resulted in the emergence of a capitalist world-economy.

Decolonial thinking takes its lead from Wallerstein's world-systems theory yet modifies it by re-conceptualizing analysis of the world system from the (Southern/Non-European) margins / periphery rather than the (Northern/European) core. Crucially, however, this decolonial ‘shift’ retains the centrality of the long *durée* of the 16th century in conceiving the formation of this system, but frames it as a ‘colonial matrix of power’ in which race, rather than capital, functions as an organizing principle structuring a number of entangled hierarchies including, but not limited to, the epistemic, spatial, sexual, economic, ecological, political, spiritual and aesthetic [Grosfoguel 2011].

2.4. The Architecture of Modernity/Coloniality

Decolonial interrogation of the contemporary world system readily exposes the ‘dark underside’ [Mignolo 2011] of Western modernity as a racist colonial order. One way of conceptualizing the architecture of this system is in terms of the “three pillars of white supremacy”, viz. (1) slaveability / anti-Black racism, which anchors capitalism; (2) genocide,

which anchors colonialism; and (3) Orientalism, which anchors war – pillars which are held to be “separate and distinct, but still interrelated” – more specifically, intersecting [Smith 2010]. While useful as a way of exploring the entangled logics constitutive of the modern/colonial world, Smith’s framework is problematic insofar as positing each of these sub-systemic phenomena as co-constitutive ‘pillars’ points to a tacit assumption of synchrony and ontological parity / structural isomorphism which is contradicted by appeal to the historical record; in addition, and as I will later argue, Smith’s identification of the third pillar as ‘Orientalism’ is inaccurate as a term designating the paradigmatically antagonistic nature of Western engagement with the Islamicate world. (Hodgson [1974, p.59] defines ‘the Islamicate’ as that which is associated with the ‘civilizational complex’ grounded in and emerging from Islam, yet not necessarily characterized by fidelity to Islam in any doctrinal or ‘confessional’ sense; it should be noted, however, that Hodgson’s characterization of Islam as a ‘religion’ is problematic insofar as the latter has a European genealogy and generalizing it so as to apply it to non-European traditions points to a certain Eurocentric universalism at work [Asad 1993] [Cavanaugh 2014].)

Against Smith, I want to argue that a more accurate depiction of the architecture of modernity/coloniality conceives it in terms of the temporally-hierarchical ‘sedimentation’ and/or ‘nesting’ of various forms of structural violence; such hierarchy is non-reductive in the sense that ‘lower level’ – that is, historically earlier – phenomena inform and limit, but do not determine those at ‘higher’ levels – that is, historically later. (I should like to suggest that such ‘nesting’ and ‘informing’ points to computational or *algorithmic*, and informational conceptions of systemic racism as explored in [Ali 2013, 2015, 2016].) This position resembles that of Hesse [2007] who maintains that rather than being necessarily correlated with the presence (or absence) of material markers on the body,

Racialization [is] embodied in a series of onto-colonial taxonomies of land, climate, history, bodies, customs, language, all of which became *sedimented* metonymically, metaphorically, and normatively, as the assembled attributions of race [emphasis added]. (pp.658-659)

In short, while embodiment, in the broad sense of materiality (or physicality), is a necessary condition for race, such embodiment can assume – and, historically, *has* assumed – different forms including – and crucially, for my argument – forms that are religious, philosophical, ‘scientific’ and cultural or civilizational [Blaut 1992].

2.5. Entanglements of ‘Race’ and ‘Religion’

Granted the racial constitution of the modern world – or rather, modernity/coloniality – what bearing does this have on the ‘question’ concerning Islam (and Muslims)? While Islam is only problematically construed as a ‘religion’, is it perhaps not even more problematic to consider Islam in terms of race / racism? Against this view, a critical race theoretical tendency within an emerging body of scholarship associated with critical approaches to the study of religion insists that ‘race’ and ‘religion’ are structurally intertwined. According to Lloyd [2013],

Race and religion are thoroughly entangled, perhaps starting with a shared point of origin in modernity, or in the colonial encounter. If this is the case, religion and race is not just another token of the type ‘religion and,’ not just one approach to the study of religion among many. Rather, every study of religion would need to be a study of religion and race. (p.80)

Crucially, recent decolonial scholarship, for example, that of Maldonado-Torres [2014a, 2014b] building on the work of Wynter [2003] and others, has begun to engage such considerations, pointing to the decisive role played by ‘religion’ in lead up to the ‘Big Bang of Race’ – that is, the emergence of world-systemic modernity/coloniality – commencing with the Columbian voyages of European expansion in 1492 CE.

2.6. Decoloniality Otherwise

While endorsing the overall thrust of an approach that considers ‘race’ and ‘religion’ as entangled, and while broadly concurring with the decolonial framing of this entanglement as presented by Wynter, Maldonado-Torres and others, I suggest that this account needs modifying along at least three lines.

Firstly, it must interrogate more thoroughly how the entanglement of ‘race’ and religion is informed by distinctions such as that between ‘the religious’ and ‘the secular’ or ‘the political’, and the Eurocentric nature of the genealogies of such binaries by engaging with and incorporating the insights of other critical approaches to the study of religion including those of Asad [1993, 2003], Casanova [2008] and Cavanaugh [2014]. In this connection, consider the following statement by Cavanaugh in the context of discussing “the myth of religious violence”:

The idea that religion has a peculiar tendency to promote violence depends on the ability to distinguish religion from what is not religion – the secular, in other words. [However,] there is no *essential* difference between religious and secular ... These are invented categories, not simply the way things are [and] these categories were invented in the modern West ... The myth of religious violence promotes a dichotomy between *us* in the secular West who are rational and peacemaking, and *them*, the hordes of violent religious fanatics in the Muslim world. *Their* violence is religious, and therefore irrational and divisive. *Our* violence, on the other hand, is secular, rational, and peacemaking. And so we find ourselves regrettably forced to bomb them into the higher rationality. (p.487)

Which points to the second modification based on the question of the relative significance of the anti-Islamic component – or ‘pillar’ – in the formation of the modern/colonial world. Maldonado-Torres [2014a] concedes that:

The expansionist view of a *holistic and systemic Christendom* that we see in the eleventh and twelfth centuries cannot be properly understood without reference to the first two Crusades (the first from 1095 to 1099, the second from 1146 to 1149) and the struggle against imperial Muslim power [emphasis added]. (p.643)

However, then he goes on to describe the racial world system emerging in the long *durée* of the 16th century, commencing with the Columbian voyages, as effecting a ‘rupture’ of the “theological-racial episteme” (p.648) which existed previously in the medieval era, and its replacement by an anthropological / racial episteme (p.651) which he ties to a process of Western secularization; in short, “*homo religiosus* begins to be displaced by *homo politicus* and *homo economicus*” (p.652). I am inclined to consider the idea of a ‘rupture’ problematic insofar as it suggests a break with the past whereas I want to argue for continuity through change based on the phenomenon of historical *sedimentation* of structural relations referred to earlier. In short, I want to argue for the

taking up into and *persisting* of the old at the core of the new which is crucial in terms of how we think about the ontological background or ‘horizon’ of ‘The World’. On this point, consider the following statement of Mastnak [2004] who might be understood as strongly contesting the view that there is anything approaching a symmetry between the different components – or ‘pillars’ – contributing to the forging of modernity/coloniality:

Lumping together the Saracen with the Jew or Cathar or, later, with an African animist or an Inca priest – as all ‘different’ and ‘inferior’ because they refused “the universal and rational message of Christianity” – may make a point against ‘European denigration of the other’ [yet] such an approach does little to elucidate the nature of power in Western Christendom and the role of the image of the Saracen in articulating that power. In my view, *the image of the Muslim alone was integral to the articulation of power in the Christian West* [emphasis added]. (p.571)

Thirdly, and building upon the preceding two points, there is a need to consider how anti-Islamism functions in and *as* a background or ‘horizon’ informing debates that were arguably of decisive significance in the discursive emergent construction of ‘race’ such as that which took place at Valladolid during 1550-1551 CE between Bartholome De Las Casas and Juan Gines de Sepulveda [Mastnak 1994a]; in this connection, it is not insignificant that the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453 CE revived Crusading activities in Europe [Hamdani 1981].

In summary, while concurring with decolonial scholars such as Sylvia Wynter [2003], Nelson Maldonado-Torres and others regarding the systemic particularity (specificity, uniqueness) of the ‘Big Bang of Race’, I suggest that the conditions for the possibility of rendering this ‘bang’ intelligible require excavation of a previously-ignited anti-Islamic ‘gunpowder trail’ leading up to the ‘powder keg’ that ultimately explodes globally as race via European colonial expansion.

3. Anti-Islamism

Understanding the nature of the modern/colonial world system – a system predicated on a violent binary hierarchy of Europeanness and non-Europeanness [Hesse 2004] or ‘the West’ and ‘the Rest’ [Hall 1992] – is essential for understanding the paradigmatic background ‘horizon’

against which categories such as ‘religion’ and ‘politics’ and orientations such as ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ emerge, are framed and set in hierarchical opposition; for example, the modern liberal democratic West presents itself as secular / political and rational in contrast to a religious and irrational ‘Muslim’ – rather, Islamicate – world. This is significant since excavation of the site of ‘religion’ reveals it as, among other things, a modern/colonial category which has been used to domesticate (privatize, depoliticize) the Islamicate [Asad 1993] [Moosa 2009] [Cavanaugh 2014]; in this context, contemporary Islamism signifies the re-emergence of Islam in the public sphere – that is, the *re*-politicization of Islam [Sayyid 1997]. I suggest that in Western contexts, this ‘ghostly’ reappearance of what can be shown to be an old and familiar *enemy* is registered in familiar terms, viz. as perceived threat and projected Orientalist misrepresentation manifesting in contemporary form as Islamophobia, rhetoric about an alleged ‘clash of civilizations’, and debates about the inclusion / exclusion of Islam (and Muslims) from Western society. I maintain that the foundations of such phenomena are pre-modern/pre-colonial, deeply sedimented and require excavation.

3.1. *Anti-Islamism as Ontological*

While decolonial scholars rightly point to the ‘colonial moment’ of the long *durée* of the 16th century inaugurated by the Fall of Granada in 1492 CE, and the commencement of the Eurocentrically-framed ‘voyages of discovery’ as initiating indigenous genocide, systematizing anti-black racism and bringing the modern/colonial world into being along structurally-hierarchical lines, the phenomenon of structural / systemic anti-Islamism dates back much earlier – arguably to the launch of the Crusades in 1095 CE. As Hamdani [1979] states, “the year 1492 is an important milestone ... Yet its birth in a medieval crusading milieu is most often underrated, if not totally forgotten.” (p.39) I suggest that while decolonial scholars such as Maldonado-Torres have not *forgotten* the crusading milieu, they *have* underrated its importance vis-à-vis thinking about modernity/coloniality, and that this underrating is due to a mistaken conception of the *paradigmatic* relationship between

Christendom and ‘Islamdom’, that is, the spatial-political abode of the Islamicate. For example, Maldonado-Torres [2014a] claims that

In the twelfth century, Christian conceptions of the ‘Saracens’ were more than anything else *defensive reactions* against the power and prestige of the Arab–Muslim Empire [such that] Christian kingdoms began to articulate their internal unity on the basis of religion and language [emphasis added]. (pp.644-645)

However, historian Tomaz Mastnak has called such ‘defensive’ accounts into question by examining how Christian, and subsequently European, political identity was formed through an antagonistic negative dialectical relationship with the Islamicate [Mastnak 1994b, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2010]. On his view, Christian ‘reactions’ of the kind referred to by Maldonado-Torres were motivated less by an *actual* existential threat from an aggressive and expansionist Islam [Mastnak 2004], and far more by a *perceived* and projected threat manufactured by a rising papal ‘secular’ power in the 11th century concerned with ‘exorcising’ – that is, externalising – violence from within Christendom by redirecting it towards a constructed antagonistic ‘Other’, thereby forging a ‘Crusading Peace’ [Mastnak 2002]. According to Mastnak [1994b],

Europe as a unity that [emerged from Christendom and] developed a ‘collective identity’ and the ability to orchestrate action ... was, as a rule, articulated in relation to Muslims as the enemy ... [Crucially,] European identity was formed not by *Islam* but, predominantly, in the relationship ... to *Islam*. (p.3)

Mastnak rightly points out that what is being targeted here is not so much Islam as a religion in the sense of a doctrine or theology – although such framings readily feature in pre-European discourses within Western Christendom [Daniel 1960] [Blanks and Frassetto 1999] [Tolan 2002] [Arjana 2015] – but rather Islam as a socio-political order, notwithstanding the problematic application of the term ‘religion’ to Islam for reasons mentioned earlier, and concerns about the separability or otherwise of ‘religion’ from ‘politics’ / ‘the secular’. It is important to note that the opposition / antagonism at work here between Christendom and Islamdom is not trans-geographical in nature, but fundamentally Eurocentric, ‘Western’ or ‘Occidental’ [Penn 2015].

However, what is most important to point out, insofar as it bears on the ontological sedimentation thesis argued for herein, is that such anti-Islamism transcends later *internal* conflicts within Europe such as

the Thirty Years War between the Catholic papacy and Protestant separatists – a conflict which resulted in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 CE and, ultimately, the formation of a global interstate system [Bulliet 2015]. What this means is that, once it has been *produced* as a means by which to unite Christians and facilitate the formation of Europe, anti-Islamism does not disappear with the resumption of internal Euro-Christian conflict, but persists, albeit *reproduced* in new guise; formerly it was the Saracen, then the Moor, and then the Turk, yet what remains the same across such changes is the threat of an antagonistically-viewed Islamicate ‘Other’. I suggest that this points to the existential facticity of a *historically-essential* relationship, one that *persists* – thereby pointing to a frame problem – through various transformations or ‘iterations’, viz. Christendom, Europe, ‘the West’.

Incorporating the arguments of Mastnak into a decolonial perspective suggests that the ‘Big Bang of Race’ needs to be positioned – and considered – in relation to a prior ‘Big Bang of Religion’ which occurred in the pre-modern/pre-colonial era and involving the sedimentation of anti-Islamism in a European identity that informed and inflected the onset of systemic racialization. Commenting on the ‘legacy system’ effects of this prior ‘bang’, Mastnak [2002] states that

As an ideal and as a movement, the Crusades had a deep, crucial influence on the formation of Western civilization, shaping culture, ideas, and institutions. The Crusades set a model for ‘expansionist campaigns against non-Europeans and non-Christians in all parts of the world.’ The ideas, iconography, and discourse associated with the Crusades made a profound imprint on ‘all Christian thinking about sacred violence’ and exercised influence long after the end of actual crusading. They continued to play a prominent role in European politics and political imagination. In fact, the crusading spirit has survived through Modernity well into our own postmodern age. (p.346)

3.2. *Anti-Islamism as Ontic*

If this line of argument is correct and the ontological background or ‘horizon’ of ‘The world’ should be understood in terms of a historically-sedimented structure incorporating an anti-Islamicate ‘core’, what does this mean in terms of how to think about anti-Islamicate phenomena such as 18th and 19th century Orientalism, contemporary neo-Orientalism

underpinning a purported ‘clash of civilizations’, and the discriminatory practice of Islamophobia? Should these be understood as simply “more of the same” crusading activity? Allen [2010] considers such a position to be problematic insofar as it evinces a trans-historical retrospective projection which fails to engage contextual factors – social, political, economic, cultural etc. – particular to the contemporary era.

While recognizing the markedly different nature of the contemporary era in contrast to pre-modernity, I am inclined to think that arguments for a radical difference mask / occlude the foundational role of anti-Islamism in the constitution of racial modernity/coloniality vis-à-vis ontological considerations. Rather than thinking in terms of *identity* and/or *difference* between anti-Islamism, on the one hand, and Orientalism and Islamophobia, on the other, I suggest we are dealing with phenomena situated on different ‘sides’ of an ‘ontological difference’, such that one cannot be reduced to yet also not separated from the other; following Heidegger [1969], I suggest we are dealing with a case of identity and difference being ‘the same’ in the sense of belonging together. On this basis, I suggest that Orientalism, Islamophobia and other related phenomena are best understood as ontic phenomena, manifestations of a historically-sedimented anti-Islamicate foundational component to the ontological background or ‘horizon’ that is ‘The World’; such phenomena constitute instances of a ‘dislodging’ of such sediment to the surface of ‘The World’.

4. Beyond the ‘Between’

Granted the persuasiveness, if not correctness, of my decolonial interrogation of the “question concerning Islam”, wherein the ‘choice’ between inclusion and exclusion of Islam (and Muslims) into Europe (and ‘the West’ more broadly) has been shown to conceal the ontological background ‘horizon’ of a world – ‘The World’ – foundationally-constituted through a historically-sedimented antagonistic anti-Islamism, where does this leave us? If the modern / colonial world system is indeed a violent global systemic hierarchy, then perhaps some form of ‘counter-violence’ is necessary to bring ‘The World’ to an end and replace it with

another, different and hopefully better world. Insofar as Islam, Muslims and the Islamicate might refuse to engage 'The World' in terms of the 'choice' between inclusion *into* it or exclusion *from* it, the possibility of contributing to bringing forth a world beyond 'The World' arises. How might this be achieved? What form(s) might such 'counter-violence' take?

One possibility is to have recourse to rhetoric and argumentation. For example, Almond [2013] presents five strategies for deconstructing the idea of 'Europe' by undermining the notion that it is a self-contained space – a key assumption underlying the 'Clash Thesis' – and which might be extended to 'The World': (1) Re-origination (alienating Europe's origins); (2) re-configuration (splitting it into alternative topographies); (3) provincialization/de-universalization (reducing it to just another language game); (4) fissuring through internal Othering (revealing its internal differences); and (5) strategies of commonality (showing how many of its features spill over into adjacent cultural spaces). It should be noted that Almond ultimately remain skeptical about the success of any such purely discursive move.

Another possibility that presents itself is concrete, 'physical' violence, a continuation or resumption of the violent decolonization process that Fanon describes in *The Wretched of The Earth* [1968], albeit on a possibly trans-national or post-national basis. It is important to contrast this kind of violence with the allegedly nihilistic violence associated with groups such as Al-Qaeda and, more recently, IS (Islamic State). Commenting on the phenomenon of Al-Qaeda, Abou El Fadl [2002] described them as "orphans of modernity", and that "far from being authentic expressions of inherited Islamic paradigms, or a natural outgrowth of the classical tradition, these are thoroughly a by-product of colonialism and modernity", their vision of Islam being self-defined in opposition to 'the West' as a constructed antithesis. Insofar as the reactionary violence of IS / Al-Qaeda is dialectically-constituted, it might be argued that it constitutes an ontic phenomenon which operates according to the logic (or 'grammar') of an occluded ontological background 'horizon' of violence that engendered both 'the West' and, derivatively, its illegitimate and violent abandoned post-colonial offspring. On this basis, both the violence of 'the West', by which is

meant here the ‘coalition of the willing’ in the international system dominated by Europe and the US, and that of Al-Qaeda and its successors needs to be placed on the same side of an ‘ontological difference’ and opposed through a commitment to ontological ‘counter-violence’. Such decolonial violence, taking its lead from Fanon is targeted at the logic of ‘The World’ and its entangled hierarchical structure as captured in the maxim “‘The World’ must *end* so that the earth (and its people) can *mend*.” I should like to add that should such a path be adopted, it must be informed by a commitment to what Delkhasteh [2007], drawing on the thought of Iran’s first elected President AbolHassan Banisadr, describes as ‘de-violentization’, viz.

The implementation of policies, which can lead to decreasing and eventually eliminating violence: of individuals towards themselves, towards each other, and towards the environment. Although this doctrine prioritizes pacifism, it also recognizes the possibility that controlled and limited use of ‘defensive violence’ may be necessary in order to neutralize ‘aggressive violence’ if the conditions for its total elimination are not in place ... Pacifism in its absolute terms rejects the use of violence irrespective of circumstances, while the doctrine of de-violentization is based on the belief that power will not be neutralized without resistance.

However, perhaps the most interesting possibility, and one that arguably speaks most to the possibility of a Muslim refusal of the choice between inclusion into or exclusion from Europe, ‘the West’ and ‘The World’ understood ontologically and with respect to the decolonial framing of this problem, is that presented by Asad [2012], albeit framed in the context of a principled opposition to statist politics:

For Muslims the possibilities of ‘political Islam’ may lie [in] the practice of public argument, and in a struggle guided by deep religious commitments that are both narrower and wider than the nation state ... It presupposes openness and readiness to take risks in confronting the modern state that the state (and party politics) cannot tolerate. This politics may confront the liberal state by opposing particular policies through civil disobedience, *or even by rising up against an entire political order* ... This is not politics in the Schmittian sense of a confrontation between ‘friend’ and ‘enemy,’ but in the sense of trying to *force* unregarded *questions* into the public domain as defined by the liberal state [emphasis added]. (pp.84-86)

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