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## On the Limits of Islamist Heideggerianism: A Critique of Sayyidian Onto-Theology

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### 1. Introduction

Building on earlier work exploring transversals and reversals in the context of engaging the matter of Heidegger and the Islamicate (Ali 2019), in this essay I continue my investigation of Islamicate engagement with Heidegger by exploring the work of Muslim decolonial theorist and rhetorician, Salman Sayyid, pointing to various strands of anti-foundationalist and pragmatist interpretation of Heidegger that inform his articulation of a discourse-theoretical, post-'left Heideggerian' position in pursuit of the project of 'Critical Muslim Studies'. Sayyid's oeuvre is highly apposite vis-à-vis the matter of "philosophical hermeneutics in the Islamicate context" insofar as it unsettles the idea that Islamicate space is coterminous with geography by evincing postmodern/postcolonial and decolonial Islamicate engagement with the Heideggerian corpus located *within* Europe, thereby disrupting the tendency to trans-historically conceive the Islamicate as necessarily situated beyond European / 'Western' borders.

My approach to engagement with Sayyid's work is similarly informed by a decolonial orientation – that is, one committed to decentring Eurocentrism – albeit with a view to exploring the limits of what I take to be Sayyid's 'critical Islamist'<sup>1</sup> mobilization of certain strands of Heideggerian thought. Going further, and building on this line of argument, I am concerned to explore the extent to which Sayyid's project turns, at least partly, on a reading of Heidegger that does violence to his thought when viewed as a whole by way of a partial, exclusive focus, and instrumentalist appropriation of elements of the existential analytic of Dasein presented in *Being and Time*, which Heidegger always considered preparatory to/for his overall project, viz. the question concerning Being, by 'bracketing' engagement with his later works from the post-*Kehre* period<sup>2</sup>.

In terms of how to explore the limits of Sayyid's critical Islamist appropriation of Heidegger, I suggest following Heidegger's (1968) lead, viz. asking what remains *unthought* in a thinker with a view to overcoming – in the sense of 'getting beyond' – the confines of his thought; in short, in what follows I shall attempt to "question concerning Sayyidian Heideggerianism"<sup>3</sup>.

### 2. Brief overview of the "Sayyidian corpus"

Drawing on a background in government, international relations, ideology and discourse analysis, Salman Sayyid is responsible for inaugurating the nascent field of Critical Muslim Studies<sup>4</sup>. Sayyid's *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and The Emergence of Islamism* (1997) was ground-breaking in transforming the way in which Islamism is conceptualised, redeploing various strands of European thought<sup>5</sup> in articulating an anti-foundationalist / post-positivist, post-Orientalist and decolonial conception of Islamism as a project concerned with unsettling Eurocentrism through the (re-)emergence of Islam as a political phenomenon within the public sphere. While Sayyid's principle focus arguably lies in mobilizing the tools of

postmodernism – most significantly, discourse theory – to theorize Muslim political subjectivity, the Sayyidian project is more broadly concerned with investigating the process of world-making, the implications of such activity and its development through history.

Sayyid's discourse-theoretical hermeneutic commitments are set out in a series of early works, specifically, "Sign O' Times: Kaffirs and Infidels Fighting the Ninth Crusade" (1994), *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and The Rise of Islamism* (1997), and "Political Analysis in a World without Foundations" (1998). Later works including ontological analyses of the phenomenon of Islamophobia in the essays "Out of The Devil's Dictionary" (2010) and "A Measure of Islamophobia" (2014b), and his recent *Recalling The Caliphate: Decolonization and World Order* (2014a) – an exploration of the conditions understood to be necessary for the emergence of an Islamicate 'Great Power', wherein issues of hermeneutics and ethics and their entanglement with the political are engaged along Heideggerian and other lines – build upon the anti-foundationalist, discourse-theoretical framework presented in the earlier works. For Sayyid, discourse theory can be seen as "a working through of the implications of anti-foundationalism for the social sciences" (Sayyid and Zac 1998, p.251), where anti-foundationalism involves accepting that "there are no foundations to rely upon for an understanding of the world [and that] socio-political phenomena have to be understood by looking at the way in which actors, objects, and politics are constructed within a discourse." (p.250)<sup>6</sup> It is crucial to appreciate that in discourse theory, the *political* has primacy since "it is the practice of politics that constructs our world" (p.253), that *language* is the means by which to access reality, although language does not create entities (p.254), and that "the articulation of discourse is a social and political process ... which involves both linguistic and extra-linguistic elements." (p.255)

Having identified those contents of the Sayyidian corpus arguably bearing most directly on the matter of Islamicate philosophical hermeneutics, I turn now to consider some examples of Sayyid's mobilization of specifically Heideggerian ideas.

### 3. Sayyidian Heideggerianism

Sayyid's engagement with Heidegger manifests in a variety of ways. While explicit reference to the Heideggerian *corpus*, whether in the original German or its English translation(s), is conspicuous for its absence, the presence of ostensibly Heideggerian *ideas* is readily identified in his works. In this connection, consider the following:

1. Deployment of the 'ontological difference' in a political context arguably based on an isomorphism involving the Schmittian (2005, 2007) distinction between politics and the political on the one hand, and Heidegger's distinction between the ontic (beings) and the ontological (being) on the other – such isomorphism being traceable to the discourse-theoretical 'left-Heideggerianism' of Ernesto Laclau<sup>7</sup>.
2. Utilization of notions such as 'horizon' (Sayyid 2010, pp.15-17), 'intelligibility' (Sayyid 2014a, pp.6-8) and 'background' practices of 'comportment' (Sayyid 2014a, p.7), skilful 'coping' (Sayyid 2014b, p.21) and 'disclosedness' (Sayyid 2014a, pp.6-7) in theorizing socio-political formation / world-making – specifically, that associated with Islamism (or political Islam).
3. Critique of calculative – 'algorithmic' – rationality and the importance of skilful 'coping' as a means by which to resolve the hermeneutic (or interpretative) problem of infinite

regress that threatens in the context of (socio-political) rule-following (Sayyid 2014a, pp. 176-177).

4. Tacit appeal to the early Heideggerian analytic of *Dasein* and notions of 'equipment', 'availability' / 'readiness-to-hand' etc. vis-à-vis the taking up of the 'tools' of post-modernity and their contingent re-deployment in pursuit of Islamist decolonial projects (Sayyid 1997, p.75).
5. Deployment of notions such as 'thrown-ness' in order to contest the autonomy of volition vis-à-vis possibilities for behaviour in socio-political contexts (Sayyid 2010, pp.13-14).
6. Tacit appeal to the existential analytic of *Dasein* and the temporal structure of care associated with this being in thinking human being in terms of a 'future-oriented project' (Sayyid 2014c, p.14).

#### 4. Critique

Sayyid's reading of Heidegger is informed by two currents of thought: on the one hand, an American pragmatist / pragmatic phenomenological interpretation of Heidegger due to Rorty (1991), Dreyfus<sup>8</sup> (1991) and Thomson (2005), the first two of whom (at least) attempt to assimilate the early Heidegger's thought to that of the later Wittgenstein in order to argue for the existential priority of a pre-reflective / non-thematic discursive account of 'being-in-the-world'; on the other hand, and as mentioned earlier, a discourse-theoretical 'left Heideggerian' conception of the political due to Laclau (Marchart 2007). In what follows, I should like to offer some critical reflections on Sayyid's mobilization of Heidegger as informed by the first of these two currents before mounting a critique of onto-theological elements within the Sayyidian corpus.

##### 4.1. Sayyid, Pragmatism and Pragmatic Heideggerianism

Sayyid's indebtedness to the American pragmatist / pragmatic reading of Heidegger is readily apparent<sup>9</sup> and based on two 'chains of transmission', viz. (1) Heidegger via Wittgenstein via Rorty, and (2) Heidegger via Wittgenstein via Dreyfus (and more recently Thomson). I would suggest that appreciating the genealogy of Sayyid's Heideggerianism is important since a growing number of Heidegger commentators have pointed to a distortion of the Heideggerian oeuvre through its assimilation to the thinking of the later Wittgenstein on a pragmatist / pragmatic<sup>10</sup> reading of the early Heidegger, although the issue is somewhat more complicated than as argued by such critics.

Regarding Dreyfus (and Thomson), Olafson (1994) maintains that "through an assimilation of much of Heidegger's thought to that of Wittgenstein, Dreyfus treats human being (*Dasein*) as being principally defined by its embeddedness in 'shared social practices' and claims that the mode of comportment he calls 'coping' is the source of the intelligibility of our world which he also identifies with being as such." (p.45) However, Olafson argues that "unless it is brought into much closer contact with Heidegger's ontological account of the kind of entity *Dasein* is, 'coping' remains an ontic concept that cannot perform the function Dreyfus assigns to it". (p.45)<sup>11</sup>. Complementing this line of argument, Christiansen (1997) maintains that "Anglo-American philosophers [such as Dreyfus] have often attempted to discern deep identities and affinities [between Heidegger] and more familiar philosophers and traditions, in particular, with Wittgenstein and American pragmatism [specifically, that of Dewey]" (p.77); however, he insists that "it is a fundamental mistake to associate Heidegger in any way with pragmatism": for example, what Dreyfus refers to as 'absorbed coping' and which he

describes in terms of the operation of non-cognitive, unreflective motor skills, “is, for all its absorbedness, essentially and always *sighted* [emphasis added]<sup>12</sup>” (p.87). In a later work, Christiansen (1998) accuses Dreyfus of distorting Heidegger’s position by way of ‘substantial omission’ (p.71), providing concrete textual evidence in support of this controversial claim. He also takes Dreyfus to task for attempting to *naturalise* Heidegger, a highly problematic move since on Christiansen’s view, Heidegger “is driven by a concern to ‘destroy’ the metaphysical tradition so as to liberate human thought from this tradition’s currently hegemonic form. This currently hegemonic form is precisely the metaphysics of *naturalism* so rampant in contemporary North America [emphasis added].” (p.85)

In addition to Sayyid’s debt to Dreyfus (and Thomson), there is his also the matter of his debt to Rorty, and the rather strident – and arguably, dogmatic – views that both advance vis-à-vis the status of anti-foundationalism. According to Calder (2003), Rorty offers a “deflationary, utilitarian account of language as a means of coping with the world ... Rather than their being entangled in some complex relation to something non-human called Truth, success for these [linguistic] descriptions comes functionally, in the form of meeting social needs.” (p.43) Consistent with his anti-foundationalist and pragmatist re-conceptualisation of truth in terms of usefulness, yet somewhat paradoxically given his commitment to a Darwinian naturalist view of language, Rorty (1991) maintains that it is not the case that “language really is just strings of marks and noises which organisms use as tools for getting what they want. That Nietzschean-Deweyan description of language is no more the real truth about language than Heidegger’s description of it as ‘the house of being’ or Derrida’s as ‘the play of signifying references.’ Each of these is only one more useful truth about language – one more of what Wittgenstein called ‘reminders for a particular purpose.’” (p.4) While this view is coherent insofar as it has recourse to pragmatist criteria in evaluating the status of the pragmatist project, it remains necessary to question concerning the purpose of pragmatism *per se* vis-à-vis the reason for its adoption<sup>13</sup>. Yet beyond this there might also be a need to question concerning the *existential* status of the pragmatic assertion about pragmatism contained in Rorty’s final sentence, notwithstanding the pragmatist insistence that there is no way in which things really ‘are’ in and of themselves that can be known by human beings apart from a description in language. For example, what is the existential status of the copula (‘is’) operative in the rather reductive and dogmatic assertion – indicated by use of the word ‘only’ – that “each of these is only one more useful truth about language...”, and in Rorty’s more clearly assertive statement that “language *is* a set of tools rather than a set of representations [emphasis added]” (p.3)? A similar existential question might be directed to Sayyid given his insistence that “anti-foundationalism doesn’t have any special claims to truth or knowledge; *it’s just how the world is* [emphasis added]”. (Sian 2014, p.146) I would suggest that one does not have to be a positivist to believe that there is something more than mere rhetorical force at work here, viz. the presence of a rather dogmatic *mood*. Sayyid’s double use of the copula (‘is’) in asserting “it’s just how the world *is*” appears to run counter to the very historicity to which he points when referring to “contingencies of formation and how things have come into being”. In this connection, it is crucial to appreciate that his usage of the copula is informed by the views of literary theorist Stanley Fish (Sian 2014, p.146), the latter of whom argues that anti-foundationalism has a *provisional* existential status, it being no more than a ‘useful fiction’ that “can be asserted as *absolutely true ... (at least for the time being)* [emphasis added]” (Fish 1989, p.30). Does Sayyid similarly hold that anti-foundationalism is simply the way the world is *now*, that the



world might not have been anti-foundational in the *past* and/or might not be anti-foundational in the *future*?

Sayyid is also somewhat indebted to Rorty for the latter's conception of the difference between literal and metaphorical language, deployment of metaphor being a recurring motif in the Sayyidian oeuvre. According to Calder (2003), for Rorty "the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical is not a distinction, or a productive tension between two sorts of meaning, but simply a distinction between familiar and unfamiliar uses of language. [Crucially,] metaphors are rule-less, they are leaps in the dark" (pp.45-46), and Rorty sees human history as "the history of successive metaphors ... the relation between metaphoricity and literalness being simply a temporal one". (pp.48-49) Regarding the generative source of metaphor, Scharff (1992) has rightly referred to "Rorty [seeing] himself as rescuing early Heidegger's 'pragmatism' from late Heidegger's 'poetic-nostalgic' reclamation of tradition" (p.484), yet Dreyfus and Hall (1992) point to Rorty's appeal to poets and thinkers as those "whose elemental words and metaphors created the vocabulary" for creating new world-views, although "there is ... no place for *obedience to the call of being* in Rorty's account of the activities of thinkers and poets [and that] he can make no sense of Heidegger's claim that thinkers and poets gain their authority *from something beyond them* [emphases added]." (p.19) This would appear to follow from Rorty's categorical rejection, presumably on the basis of his atheist commitments, of the possibility of "appeals, vertically, to some ahistorical standard or regulative idea" (Calder 2003, p.56) Against Rorty, Sayyid (2014a, p.162) insists on the 'Transcendent' – that is, 'vertical' – status of The Qur'an<sup>14</sup>, albeit conceding that its interpretation remains situated in the 'horizontal' realm of human contestation. In addition, where Sayyid, a Muslim, would presumably differ with Rorty, an atheist, is in the latter's insistence that metaphors do not "help us *towards* a grasp of true reality. Just as there is no pre-existent goal of intellectual inquiry, neither is there any pre-existent goal of the individual human life, or of the history of a given community, or of humanity as a whole [emphasis added]." (Calder 2003, pp.47-48) What remains somewhat unclear is where Sayyid stands regarding the generative source(s) of metaphor<sup>15</sup>.

#### 4.2. Sayyid, Anti-Foundationalism and Metaphysics / Onto-Theology

Sayyid's anti-foundationalist commitments include an endorsement of Heidegger's historical 'destructive' account of Western metaphysics as onto-theology presented by Thomson (2000, 2013), yet it is somewhat unclear whether Sayyid sees this critique as extending to Islamicate metaphysics. However, what is perhaps more urgently at issue is the question concerning possible metaphysical / onto-theological commitments on Sayyid's part despite his anti-foundationalism, what these commitments are, and how a Sayyidian 'theology', notwithstanding its tentative and minimalist articulation, might be (re)constructed from certain sparse and fragmentary statements within his corpus.

According to Sayyid and Zac (1998), "an anti-foundationalist perspective aims at understanding political phenomena without relying on given foundations such as *the will of God*, nature, or social cycles as the ultimate grounding of history. The main proposition is that truth is not discovered, but fabricated ... According to an anti-foundationalist perspective, there are no foundations to rely upon for an understanding of the world. Thus, socio-political phenomena have to be understood by looking at the way in which actors, objects and politics are constructed within a discourse [emphasis added]." (p.250)<sup>16</sup> Yet does anti-foundationalism *necessarily* – that is, *essentially* – require 'bracketing' the Divine (will) from

any consideration of how to understand political phenomena? To what extent might such 'bracketing' of the Divine from the sphere of the social/political turn on a rather *specific conception* of the Divine – that is, an onto-theology – that allows for and facilitates such 'bracketing'? In this connection, and in a footnote commenting on his assertion that “the Pakistan experiment offered the chance of a mobilized Muslim subjectivity to construct a virtually ex nihilo order”, Sayyid (2014c) states that “of course, a literal ex nihilo beginning is an impossibility this side of the big bang.” In a different version of the same essay, Sayyid (2014d) expresses himself slightly differently stating that “of course, a literal ex nihilo beginning is an impossibility this side of the Big Bang, *or direct Transcendent intervention* [emphasis added].” (p.11) One might wonder what *ontological* implications follow from the adoption of a Big Bang cosmology, given Sayyid's apparent endorsement of the historical facticity of such an event: for example, is he committed to a 'closed' universe of physicalist causality, a position which continues to come under attack given the 'hard problem' of consciousness, and the recent 'ontological turn' away from language-centred philosophy to varieties of speculative realism including those framed in terms of a reconstituted 'occasionalist' metaphysics (Harman 2002)?

However, I want to focus on Sayyid's invocation of the 'ex nihilo' in the context of 'direct Transcendent intervention'. For *whom* is 'creatio ex nihilo' a literal impossibility, and *what* sense of impossibility is intended here, viz. logical, physical or something else? Although a definitive answer to the first question might be arrived at via a process of elimination based on Sayyid's reference to 'direct Transcendent intervention', invocation of the latter leads to questions concerning the existential status of Sayyid's onto-theological conception of the Divine as *exclusively* Transcendent, rather than as *both* Transcendent *and* Immanent according to Akbarian metaphysics<sup>17</sup>, for example. In arguing along these lines, my aim is to draw attention to the *provisional* and *specific* nature of Sayyidian onto-theology with a view to considering the implications – social, political etc. – of doing onto-theology 'otherwise'<sup>18</sup>.

Yet remaining for the moment within the confines of Sayyidian onto-theology, in order to shed light on its motivations, it is necessary to gain a sense of how he thinks about The Qur'an<sup>19</sup>. On his view, it has a 'transcendent' nature (2014a, p.157), presumably established via a contrast with the sphere of the immanent (that is, the created order). Sayyid also contrasts the 'transcendental' and the historical, where the former apparently refers to the trans-historical, viz. “the Qur'an transcends and overcomes all attempts at limiting and mastering it within a *specific* historical frame [emphasis added].” (p.160), insisting that “the Qur'an provides a means of accessing the transcendental.” (p.163) According to Sayyid, The Qur'an occupies 'onto-theological space' for Muslims (2014a, p.166), where “theology is internal to the social” (p.165), based on shared conventions such that “theology is grounded hegemonically [and] is not outside the political” (p.159). On his view, “our understanding of the nature of the Divine [that is, theology] is ... based on shared social practices and how they interact with more idiosyncratic readings provided by our biographies.” (p.165) Crucially, he maintains that 'Divine ontology' grounds the reading of The Qur'an, and that such grounding is political rather than theological in nature, where the latter is understood as a discourse on the nature of the Divine (p.166). Yet what sense of the ontological is at work here? *Can* it be a Heideggerian sense of the ontological given that for Heidegger, at least as understood along the lines suggested by Dreyfus, Thomson and others, being (*Sein*) is *dependent* on human being (*Dasein*) and finite (since *Dasein* is itself finite)?<sup>20</sup> I would venture to suggest that Sayyid is tacitly engaging here with a non-/post-Heideggerian

understanding of Divine ontology<sup>21</sup>. Yet what exactly *is* this Divine ontology? In order to answer *that* question, there is a need to further (re-)construct – and *deconstruct* – Sayyidian onto-theology.

In this connection, and returning to Sayyid's pronouncements concerning the *possibility* of 'direct Transcendent intervention', to what extent do these point to an onto-theology framed in terms of a general *absence* of the Divine as active in the world?<sup>22</sup> Going even further, I would suggest that his assertion of the possibility of 'direct Transcendent intervention' ostensibly contradicts the conception of the Divine nature as briefly articulated in an endnote wherein he insists that "*of course*, any kind of anthropomorphic expression that calls upon God to act *has to be* understood as a metaphor, since it is difficult to *think how* the supreme being, knowing all, can be described in human terms like 'acting' and 'intending'. Perhaps the all-powerful, all-knowing infinite *can only be* [emphases added]." (2014a, p.210)<sup>23</sup> Apart from the question as to whether the being of God *can* be thought in terms of a Heideggerian ontology characterised by a conception of being marked by finitude and filtered through the lens of American pragmatism / pragmatic phenomenology<sup>24</sup> – assuming, of course, that God *has* being at all<sup>25</sup> – is intervention *not* a form of action? I would suggest that in 'bracketing' action and intention from the Divine, and arguing that such expressions *must* be understood as metaphorical – Sayyid comes close to articulating a rather 'thin', apophatic (or 'negative') theology<sup>26</sup>, one which is asserted rather dogmatically, which is somewhat ironic given Sayyid's anti-foundationalism<sup>27</sup>. Appreciating the ostensibly apophatic nature of the Sayyidian Divine is important insofar as the theological 'folds back' onto the political in the sense that how the Divine is *conceived* has implications for conceptualizing the sphere of the human; for example, if only humans are capable of action, then the political sphere is necessarily an *exclusively human* sphere<sup>28</sup>. In short, I am suggesting that the political and the theological stand in reflexive relation to each other – that there is an 'entanglement' of the political and the theological<sup>29</sup>. Given that Sayyid sees the political as entangled with the ethical, what might follow from adopting an alternative conception of the Divine such as the one offered by ibn 'Arabi which commits to *both* an apophatic position vis-à-vis the Divine essence (*dhāt*) and a non-apophatic position vis-à-vis the Divine Names as relational and ordered, the latter of which are held to constitute what might be described as a 'relational bridge' between the Divine and the phenomenal world (including the human)?<sup>30</sup> At this point in the discussion, it is crucial to attend to a central motivation underlying Sayyidian onto-theology, viz. a concern to uphold Divine transcendence and block anthropomorphic conceptions of the Divine.

Sayyid (2014a) rightly maintains that "within Islamic interpretations the distinction between the Divine and the human cannot be bridged." However, he then goes on to state that "Islamicate reflections on the nature of the Divine have been very consistent in maintaining the gap between *human and divine spheres*, a gap that is wide and permanent. Therefore, no human enterprise can appropriate or displace the centrality of the Divine, since *the human and Divine can be said to exist in distinct ontological realms* that cannot be bridged [emphases added]." (p.36) I want to suggest that this way of framing the issue arguably turns on an ontological *duality* that is somewhat at odds with 'non-dual' conceptions of unicity (*tawhīd*) present within the Islamic tradition<sup>31</sup>. Sayyid appears to think that it is *only* by consigning the human and Divine to 'distinct ontological realms' that an alleged conflict between 'Divine causality' and 'human agency' can be avoided, a position that appears to turn on the assumption that the possibility of Divine intervention (or causation) in the



'horizontal' realm (of history) precludes the possibility of human freedom<sup>32</sup>. Yet this would only hold true if the sphere of human agency was 'closed' – that is, autonomous in an *absolute* sense<sup>33</sup>. Against Sayyid, I suggest that it is quite possible – in fact, *necessary* – that the Divine *can* 'bridge' (or rather, *does* in fact 'bridge') to the human, although the human cannot 'bridge' to the Divine, and that this position is fully consistent with Akbarian metaphysics<sup>34</sup>.

Regarding Sayyid's concern about anthropomorphism, I want to suggest that this is largely unwarranted in an Islamicate context including that of Akbarian onto-theology wherein the human being is tasked with manifesting (exemplifying, embodying etc.) the Divine Names (albeit in a necessarily finite capacity) – what might be described (albeit somewhat problematically) as 'theosis' or 'theomorphism'<sup>35</sup>. What, if anything, follows from such a commitment – that is, how does this *positive* 'onto-theology' impact on the entanglement of the ethical and the political? What might such a 'positive' conception of The Divine mean in terms of thinking through the ethical-political given ibn 'Arabi's conception of the human as created in the image or 'form' (*surah*) of God – that is, being theomorphic albeit in some finite / limited sense? Sayyid resorts to metaphor vis-à-vis the Divine Names in order to forestall anthropomorphism and safeguard Divine transcendence, but what if he has things in reverse and the Divine Names are grounding of human / anthropomorphic attributes?<sup>36</sup>

Insofar as it is beyond the scope and remit of the present study to explore the ethical-political possibilities opened up by shifting from Sayyidian to Akbarian onto-theology, I will confine myself here to offering some brief comments on Sayyid's tacit positioning of discourse theory as a politically-neutral 'meta-discourse' for theorizing social/political formations as discursive<sup>37</sup>. On this view, discourse theory arguably occupies ontological space, social/political formations such as Islam/Islamism being conceived ontic phenomena, notwithstanding Sayyid's (2014a) arguments to the contrary. In my view, the 'danger' associated with such a move is that Islam is thereby 'domesticated', subsumed as ontic relative to poststructuralist anti-foundationalism as ontological. Sayyid appears to opt for such an arrangement on the grounds that it provides a theorization of existential ontology that allows for the possibility of voluntary submission to the Divine (that is, becoming Muslim). Yet I would suggest that it is possible to articulate the theorization of such possibility otherwise – for example, by drawing upon Islamicate onto-theologies that do not require positioning Islam solely as ontic, based on the distinction/difference between a universal/general ('ontological') *kawniyy* Islam and a particular/specific ('ontic') *shar'iyy* Islam<sup>38</sup>. In this connection, it must be appreciated that The Qur'an refers to 'Islam' and its verbal cognates in two senses: one of these might be considered 'ontic' in that it describes the *specific* way of being adopted by *some* human beings – what might be described, albeit problematically, as the '*existentiell* Islam' of *shari'a*; by contrast, the other sense might be considered 'horizontal', and thereby 'ontological', insofar as it describes the *general* way of being of human being – *and all other beings* – in the cosmological order, what might be described as the '*existential* Islam' of *deen*.

#### 4.3. Decolonizing Sayyidian Onto-Theology

In addition to the above, I suggest there is also a need to question concerning the implications of the Eurocentrism – more specifically, *Western Christian*-centrism<sup>39</sup> – of Heidegger's existential analytic of *Dasein* vis-à-vis Sayyid's discourse-theoretical mobilization of this phenomenology<sup>40</sup>. In this connection, consider Sayyid's deployment of

the Heideggerian notion of ‘thrown-ness’. How does Sayyid understand and use this existential structure? Moreover, what is its scope – that is, range of spatial/geographical and temporal/historical applicability? For example, does Sayyid intend a ‘regional’ (spatio-temporally local) and *specific* use of the notion with a view to describing the modern/colonial situation marked by the persistence of colonial structuring onto-logics – that is, *coloniality* – into which non-European people are ‘thrown’, or does he intend a more pervasive and *general* use of the concept so as to include the description of Muslim (and non-Muslim) relations in pre-modern/pre-colonial Islamicate contexts? If the former, it should be noted that Heidegger did not understand thrown-ness in this way, although this should not be a cause for concern given Maldonado-Torres’ (2004, 2010) decolonial interrogation of and *extension* to Heideggerian hermeneutic ontology. Yet if Sayyid intends a more general use of thrown-ness – specifically, one applying to the pre-modern/pre-colonial Islamicate and/or a possible future decolonised Islamicate – pause for thought might be warranted on onto-theological grounds insofar as Heidegger’s conception of thrown-ness is arguably entangled with the Christian idea of ‘The Fall’.<sup>41</sup> Is this ‘entanglement’ necessary or contingent? Sayyid would presumably argue for the latter given his anti-foundationalist commitments, yet I suggest that attempting to disarticulate ‘fallen-ness’ from thrown-ness obscures the extent to which the latter is dependent on the former. For example, it should be noted that in the Qur’anic account of the Adamic myth, there is no suggestion of a ‘Fall’, but rather a ‘slip’ on the part of the human being<sup>42</sup>, a slip for which human beings were forgiven by The Divine, thereby undercutting the notion of ‘original sin’ operative within Christianity and taken up by Heidegger in his notion of fallen-ness. More importantly, however, nowhere does The Qur’an refer to the human condition of situatedness in the world as ‘thrown’; rather, in relation to ‘the slip’, human beings are held to have been ‘placed’ on Earth and commanded to ‘get down’ – they were not *thrown* down. On this basis, one might be led to ask whether Sayyid is somewhat ‘guilty’ of unconsciously importing ‘secularised’, post-Christian ideas into Islamicate discourse via appeal to such Heideggerian notions as thrown-ness, and that a degree of decolonization of his ontology is onto-theologically warranted<sup>43</sup>.

#### 4.4. Summary

In summary, I want to suggest that Sayyid’s Heideggerianism is problematic for the following reasons among others that have been set out above:

1. Sayyid’s appeal to a Rortyan re-conceptualisation of truth along pragmatist lines, assuming that the ontology of the world can be captured in terms of a pragmatist reading of the existential analytic of *Dasein* presented by the early Heidegger – that is, in terms of tool-use – is problematic insofar as it is arguably an attempt to collapse truth to instrumentality<sup>44</sup>. The pragmatist reading of the early Heidegger has been the focus of intense criticism for its distortion of the Heideggerian project as viewed holistically – for example, attempts to naturalise Heidegger (Rorty, Dreyfus) and argue that the existential analytic points to an understanding of the being of *Dasein* that is anti-representationalist and anti-Cartesian (Christiansen, MacAvoy)<sup>45</sup>.
2. Sayyid’s commitment to a discourse-theoretical perspective arguably entails a form of ‘linguistic idealism’ such that, and paraphrasing Heidegger, language is not the house of being, that in which it dwells, but rather a prison in which being is confined. While Sayyid would presumably contest this view, arguing that discourse contains *both* linguistic *and* extra-linguistic practices, it is important to appreciate that, following Dreyfus’ and Rorty’s pragmatist / pragmatic assimilation of the early Heidegger to the later Wittgenstein,

Sayyid understands such practices in essentially 'behaviouristic' and 'externalist' terms. This is significant since Sayyid thereby 'brackets' any role for the 'inward' or 'mystical' element in Heidegger's and Wittgenstein's thought, despite evidence that such an element is central to their respective oeuvres<sup>46</sup>. Against Sayyid's discourse-theoretical position, I want to suggest that embodiment – that is, the 'materiality' of the body – and the possibility of experiential, yet *ineffable* (that is, non-linguistic) phenomena, need to be taken into consideration; further, that together they constitute means by which to effect a 'prison break' from linguistic idealism, pointing to an engagement with being beyond the discursive. Regarding the issue of ineffability and linguistic idealism, in an early work, Sayyid (1994) maintains that "according to Rorty, all people have a set of words and phrases that they use to justify the things they do and believe. He describes such a set of words as a person's final vocabulary. It is the vocabulary that one resorts to in order to tell a story about one's self. It is final in the sense that *beyond these words there is only tautology, silence or force* [emphasis added]." (p.264) Yet is this list exhaustive of what lies beyond language? For example, what about embodied tacit knowledge in the sense of know-how?<sup>47</sup> What about phenomenal knowledge – that is, ineffable first-person experience?<sup>48</sup> It should be noted that Sayyid and Zac (1998) are ostensibly aware of the phenomenological reality of first-person experience insisting that "analysts employing discourse theory are sometimes prey to the illusion that their reading of a discourse somehow captures the world of the subjects of that discourse. That is to claim too much. All that discourse theory can enable us to do is to advance an interpretation of the way a specific discourse is constructed: how identities are constituted, how narratives are articulated, and how the ensemble of narratives is rendered coherent. *To make larger claims about discourse analysts unveiling the minds of subjects and having access to their thoughts is simply a phenomenological illusion. Discourse analysis cannot give us access to the mind and inner thoughts of an other; it cannot overcome the inevitable distance that exists between the analyst and the object of study, between any object of identification and the result of that identification* [emphasis added]." (p.265) During an interview with Sian (2014), Sayyid asserts that anti-foundationalism, a cornerstone of discourse theory, is simply 'the way the world is', anti-foundationalism being defined as the view that "there are no foundations to rely upon for an understanding of the world [which means that] socio-political phenomena have to be understood by looking at the way in which actors, objects, and politics are constructed *within a discourse* [emphasis added]." (Sayyid and Zac 1998, p.250) Yet insofar as Sayyid and Zac explicitly concede that discourse "cannot capture the world of the subjects of discourse", and subjective experience is a phenomenon occurring within the world given that subjective experiences belong to subjects and subjects belong to the world, to what extent does this undermine their later assertion that "it is the practice of politics that *constructs* our world [emphasis added]" (p.253)? How can the political as discursive – and thereby 'bracketing' of subjective experience – construct the world when the world 'contains' subjectivity? Sayyid and Zac might deflect this line of argument by insisting on the distinction between subjects and subjectivity (p.264), yet to what extent can this distinction be sustained given the possibility of subjective experiences that are transformative of the subject, and in such a way as to manifest in and impact on the realm of the social/political, viz. subjectivity? In short, what if the relationship between the subject and subjectivity is marked by a certain 'permeability'?

3. Sayyid's endorsement of anti-foundationalism and his insistence that, ultimately, truth bottoms out in usefulness, the latter of which can only be established through

argumentation, viz. rhetorical power plays, results in grounding epistemology in politics. Yet insofar as the political is framed in terms of human actors and the power relationships between them, I want to suggest that the political is entangled with metaphysical and theological commitments since the latter inform, albeit tacitly, anthropological and sociological matters. Sayyid endorses Heidegger's destruction of Western metaphysics / onto-theology, yet it is unclear whether he considers such destruction as extending to Islamicate metaphysics. More importantly, there is the matter of an ostensible contradiction between Sayyid's commitment to anti-foundationalism and his articulation of an ontic, apophatic and transcendent conception of God ("the supreme being") – in short, a metaphysical / onto-theological *thinking* of the 'how' of God – to consider, in addition to a failure to interrogate the limits of, and alternatives to, discursivity and rationality in engaging the being – or beyond – of the Divine and 'its' relation to the world.

## 5. Conclusion

Notwithstanding the above, insofar as Sayyid's oeuvre is concerned with decentring Eurocentric universalism through a commitment to a post-positivist, post-Orientalist and decolonial perspective, I suggest that its basic orientation is both sound and productive, and that it should be mobilized in arguing that the question concerning philosophical hermeneutics in the Islamicate context, wherein 'philosophical hermeneutics' is seen as a phenomenon with a European genealogy, is tacitly Orientalist and Eurocentrically-universalist, and that it thereby warrants contestation through decentring. This leads me to suggest adopting a strategy of 'reversal' in seeking to unsettle the implied direction of travel embedded in the phrase "philosophical hermeneutics *in* the Islamicate context", and interrogate the distinction *between* philosophical hermeneutics *and* Islamicate thought. Due to constraints of time and space, in what follows I shall confine myself to offering a few brief remarks on this issue by way of conclusion.

Consistent with the understanding that genealogies are fluid, hybrid and cross-civilizational, I do not seek to argue for a 'reversal' in the sense that philosophical hermeneutics can be reductively traced to and/or grounded in Islamicate thought; rather, that the distinction between philosophical hermeneutics and Islamicate thought arguably turns on a certain essentialist, Eurocentrically-universalist and Orientalist conception of the location (geographical, historical, cultural etc.) of 'the secular' and 'the religious'. In this connection, my argument for reversal should be understood as an attempt to further contest the tacit knowledge/power asymmetry associated with use of the prepositional 'in' as contrasted with the conjunctive 'and' to which attention was drawn in an earlier work (Ali 2019). I suggest that rather than considering how a tacitly Eurocentrically-universal, philosophical hermeneutics might be deployed to engage with the Islamicate tradition, it is *decolonially* more productive to think about how a non-Eurocentrically-universal Islamicate philosophical hermeneutics might self-reflexively engage the Islamicate legacy and other-reflexively engage the contents of the 'Western' tradition. In this connection, one can point to both pre-modern/pre-colonial and postmodern/postcolonial figures within the Islamicate context who operate with what can only sensibly be described as a universal philosophical hermeneutics, albeit an 'other' universality.

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<sup>1</sup> Although Sayyid does not explicitly frame his position as 'Islamist', I suggest that a sustained commitment to a 'critical' variant of such a political orientation is evident from a broad and deep reading of his works, in particular *A Fundamental Fear* (1997) and, *a fortiori*, *Recalling The Caliphate* (2014).

<sup>2</sup> In arguing along these lines, I am aware of the ongoing debate as to whether there was, in fact, a *Kehre* ('Turn') in Heidegger's thought. I am also aware that for some commentators such as Gordon (2017, pp.146-149) it is entirely warranted, from a transcendental-pragmatist perspective, to instrumentally appropriate concepts – or 'tools' – from a philosopher's thought that are available to and usefully deployed in order to advance a 'critical' project. Notwithstanding such arguments, I remain unconvinced of the legitimacy of designating such partial appropriation as demonstrating fidelity to the philosopher's own position, and there is also the question concerning the ultimate coherence or otherwise of assemblages of 'tools' drawn from various sources to consider. For my part, I am inclined to think that tools cannot simply be extracted/detached from their equipmental embedding and bolted – or 'sutured' – together into new 'equipmental wholes' in bricolage/assemblage fashion in pursuit of a different project without a certain amount of persistent 'leakage through' from the prior equipmental whole into the posterior whole..

<sup>3</sup> I want to emphasize that the motivation for the critique presented herein is not a concern to undermine the possibility of Islamist Heideggerianism *per se*, but rather an attempt to explore how such a critical Islamist Heideggerianism – or rather *post*-Heideggerianism – might be done *otherwise*, gesturing in the direction of the political ramifications that might follow such an endeavour. In short, the decolonial critique presented herein is motivated by a concern to rectify certain perceived shortcomings in the Sayyidian project; it is not intended to undermine or dismiss the latter outright. Paraphrasing Sandoval (2000), the present work should be understood as informed by a 'decolonially-loving' orientation – *a fortiori* by a sense of Muslim fraternity (*akhuwwat*).

<sup>4</sup> Sayyid (2014a) defines CMS as "a series of interventions that aim to clear the ground for sustained reflection on the relationship between Islam, Muslims and the postcolonial context in which they are currently disclosed" (p.11); more precisely, "a field of investigations into matters associated with Muslims which are framed by three related epistemological stances. It is characterised by systematic enquiries that are post-positivist, post-Orientalist and decolonial." (p.12) For Sayyid (2014a), post-positivism follows from the adoption of an anti-essentialist position, while Sayyid et al. (2015) frame post-positivism somewhat less stridently as the 'suspicion' of positivism; 'post-Orientalism' refers to non-essentialist analyses of the use of the signifier 'Islam'; and 'decolonial' refers to a project of 'epistemic disobedience' characterised by contestation of Eurocentric categories and rejection of the violent hierarchy of 'the West' and 'the Rest'.

<sup>5</sup> Such strands include Saussurean linguistics, Barthean semiotics, Derridean deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis, not to mention the Foucauldian theorization of power, Gramscian notion of hegemony, and Laclau and Mouffe's discourse-theoretical concept of 'the political'.

<sup>6</sup> According to Sayyid and Zac (1998), "all that our knowledge industries can do is to tell us human tales about human actors. Discourse theory cannot ground itself in anything other than its own concepts and its own narration." (p.256) Apart from the obvious – and, I suggest, rather dubious – self-referentiality (and discursive idealism) of the discourse-theoretical perspective, and with a view to setting the stage for what follows, I suggest

that this way of framing the issue tends to obscure the way in which specific metaphysical – or in Heideggerian terms, ‘onto-theological’ commitments – impact upon the ontology of *Dasein* (human being) as an actor, which in turn impacts upon the ontology of the social/political (*mitsein*). In short, and contrary to Sayyid and Zac, I argue that there are, in fact, foundations to anti-foundationalism insofar as the latter turns on a set of purportedly post-onto-theological commitments concerning the ontology of actors, objects etc., and that such commitments amount to an anthropology and sociology, notwithstanding Heidegger’s disavowal of such a framing.

<sup>7</sup> In this connection, see (Tutt 2015a, p.2) and (Tutt 2015b, pp.1-2). Sayyid’s persistent mobilization of Heidegger’s ontological difference in a political context is readily evinced throughout his corpus..

<sup>8</sup> Characterizing Dreyfus as a pragmatist is somewhat problematic on account of his and Charles Spinosa’s phenomenological commitment to a robust, multiple realism against Rorty’s deflationary pragmatism; on this point, see (Spinosa 2005) and (Spinosa and Dreyfus 1999). Dreyfus (2001) maintains that “Heidegger pioneered [a] deflationary realist account of the everyday [yet] sought to establish a robust realist account of science” (p.159). Statements such as these suggest that Dreyfus can be viewed *both* as a realist *and* as a pragmatist, albeit of a Peircean rather than Rortyan variety.

<sup>9</sup> For example, in the context of a discussion of how to theorise the phenomenon of Islamophobia, and tacitly appealing to Heidegger’s notion of ‘ontological difference’, Sayyid (2014b) maintains that “ontic approaches to Islamophobia cannot do justice to the concept [and] that a Heideggerian–Wittgensteinian approach to Islamophobia is better than what is currently in play ... A Heideggerian phenomenological understanding of knowledge acquisition, which ties in with a Wittgensteinian-inspired understanding of the language game, played around the category of Islamophobia ... allows us to measure Islamophobia *phronetically* [emphasis added].” (pp.22-23)

<sup>10</sup> For early critiques of pragmatist and/or pragmatic readings of the early Heidegger of *Being and Time* (1927), see Fell (1992) and Blattner (1992).

<sup>11</sup> Olafson maintains that Dreyfus fails “to do justice to Heidegger’s central theme – being as presence” (p.45), and presents a number of criticisms of the Dreyfusian reading of Heidegger that are significant vis-à-vis critique of Sayyid’s adoption of the latter, viz. (1) critique of Dreyfus’ interpretation of being as ‘intelligibility’, thereby arguably assimilating being to epistemology (p.51); (2) assimilation of Heidegger to Wittgenstein’s account of life as rule-governed (p.46); (3) failure to consider the implications of Wittgenstein’s commitment to replacing philosophy with a critical diagnostic / ‘therapeutic’ discourse in contrast to Heidegger’s commitment to a constructive project for philosophy (pp.48,53). It should also be noted that Olafson sees Dreyfus as committed to a ‘cultural determinist’ position which he maintains cannot be attributed to Heidegger (p.60); in this sense, Dreyfus is arguably more of a Wittgensteinian-Foucauldian than a Heideggerian, and insofar as Sayyid follows Dreyfus, it follows that he might be better characterised in these terms too.

<sup>12</sup> In this connection, see Christiansen (1997, pp.96-97). Crucially, Christiansen maintains that this view is traceable to Aristotle and the latter’s associating *phronesis* (or practical wisdom) with sight – more specifically, the ‘eye of the soul’ (p.97); this is significant since Sayyid (2014b) makes explicit reference to the importance of *phronesis* in relation to tackling Islamophobia, yet appears to understand the phronetic rather reductively in politically-behaviourist terms that make no reference to the intuitive and/or aesthetic.

<sup>13</sup> I want to suggest that this matter might be resolved, at least partly, through interrogation of the social, political and/or *theological* commitments of advocates of this position. For example, Kirk (1999) maintains that Rorty “rejects the idea that the world has an ‘intrinsic nature’” since he considers this “a remnant of the idea that the world is a divine creation” (pp.135, 136).

<sup>14</sup> According to Sayyid (2014a), “the Qur’an ... transcends relative judgements and points Believers towards the Absolute.” (p.167)

<sup>15</sup> Sayyid mobilizes metaphor for various purposes in his work, including arguing for a rather apophatic conception of the Divine, and while not sharing his atheism, he does appear to uphold Rorty’s view that language is a *human* phenomenon operating in the sphere of human action, thereby tacitly ‘bracketing’ any consideration of Divine action in this realm.

<sup>16</sup> To what extent does the idea of truth as *fabricated* rather than *discovered* point to a rather specific Rortyan (mis-)reading of Heideggerian ‘disclosure’? Consider, in this connection, Sikka’s (2017) assertion that “*Being and Time* consistently uses, in relation to various forms of human understanding (including scientific understanding), language suggesting illumination, uncovering, discovering and revealing.” (p.678) On this basis, it appears that Heidegger is no anti-foundationalist / social constructionist, which puts him at odds with Sayyid who follows Foucault in seeing discourse as constitutive rather than reflective or representational. Perhaps, rather than Sayyid’s describing the position set out in *A Fundamental Fear* as informed by the triad Heidegger-Wittgenstein-Kuhn (Sayyid 2015a, p.xvi), it is more accurate to describe it in terms of the triad Foucault-Wittgenstein-Kuhn.

<sup>17</sup> Briefly, by ‘Akbarian metaphysics’, I refer to the onto-theological worldview set out in various works authored by Andalusian Muslim scholar, ‘mystic’, poet and philosopher, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Arabī al-Ḥātīmī at-Ṭā’ī (1165-1240 CE), commonly known as Muhyiddin ibn ‘Arabi and renowned among practitioners of Sufism by the name *al-Shaykh al-Akbar* (“the Great Shaykh”). For detailed expositions of the Akbarian metaphysical worldview, see Izutsu (1983) and Chittick (1989).

<sup>18</sup> Sayyid (2014a) maintains that theology is “based on shared conventions ... In other words, theology is grounded hegemonically, which means theology is not outside the political.” (p.159) On his view, the political is conceived in ontological– more specifically, discourse-theoretical – terms. Yet insofar as discourse theory draws on certain ideas drawn from the early Heidegger, to what extent does it turn on Heidegger’s ‘bracketing’ of the



theological from the ontological, and an anthropocentric / *Dasein*-centric sense of being that is arguably marked by certain limits concerning the possibility of rethinking the ‘theological’ – limits that might be significant if and when overcome and then folded back upon the political?

<sup>19</sup> Sayyid (2014a) maintains that Muslims “read the Qur’an to feel the imprint of the Divine” (p.163) and refers to it in a number of places as a ‘text’ (p.154). Apart from identifying a rather reductively ‘liturgical’ sense of Muslim engagement with The Qur’an at work here (for which the present author owes a debt to Shuruq Naquib), is such ‘imprint’ to be understood as a static trace which *becomes* dynamic solely through the act of human interpretation, or is The Qur’an *itself* a dynamic phenomenon insofar as it is the living speech (*kalam*) of the Divine as argued by ibn ‘Arabi (Chodkiewicz 1993) (Winkel 1997)? In addition, although The Qur’an *can* be – and *has* been – treated as a text, there is a need to question concerning the terms on which the notion of ‘text’ is constructed within Sayyidian discourse and how this ‘textuality’ maps onto post-Enlightenment conceptions of text. For a critique of ‘textualist’ interpretations of The Qur’an vis-à-vis its intrinsic ontology, see Madigan (2001).

<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that recent Heidegger scholarship suggests that the question concerning the ‘dependency’ of being on human being is less settled than might first appear to be the case. For example, Richard Capobianco has argued that a close reading of Heidegger’s reading of the *Heraclitus* fragments establishes that Heidegger saw being as independent of *Dasein* yet ‘needing’ the latter by virtue of this relationship (of independence). Capobianco (2019b) concedes that “admittedly, there is an ambiguity and/or lack of clarity in Heidegger’s own thinking on the key issue of the precise nature of the ‘relation’ of being and the human being”; yet on the basis of a close reading of Heidegger’s later works which explore the thinking of the Pre-Socratics Parmenides, Heraclitus and Anaximander, he is led to conclude that “[Heidegger] is saying that being (and not simply beings) is independent of the human being and that in this ‘relation,’ being is independent of the human being. It follows from this, then, that Heidegger is saying that being ‘is’ whether there are human beings or not ... Our ‘safeguarding’ the truth of being in language is our task, yes; nevertheless, the truth of being is not dependent upon our safeguarding. This is the necessary consequence of saying that being is ‘independent’ of human *Dasein*.”

<sup>21</sup> On the understanding of being as *finite*, temporalizing, presencing process, and God as highest present being, see Capobianco (1988, pp.184, 187-188). I would suggest that given Sayyid’s (2014a) conception of “the supreme being” as ‘infinite’, it would appear that he does not – *cannot* – subscribe to a Heideggerian understanding of being and/or the Divine, *at least of this kind*. The latter qualification is necessary since some Heidegger commentators have contested the necessity of understanding God as a finite being; on this point, see Hanley (2000, pp.180,189, 199)..

<sup>22</sup> Is it not possible that, contrary to Sayyid, there is, in fact, *ongoing* Divine ‘intervention’ in the world – in short, that the Divine is *ever-present* and not merely in an ‘observer’ capacity? In this connection, see Turner (2009, pp.76-77). What possible social/political implications might follow from the adoption of this alternative, non-Sayyidian onto-theology?

<sup>23</sup> I would suggest that Sayyid’s metaphorical conception of Divine action and intention is prompted by his attempt to *think* the ‘how’ of such phenomena, such thinking being informed by anti-foundationalist and pragmatist conceptions of thinking, knowing and being. That said, it is rather strange that Sayyid refers to “the supreme being” as ‘all-knowing’ and ‘all-powerful’, such epithets ostensibly being deployed non-metaphorically. Are knowledge and power not similar to action and intention and thereby similarly anthropomorphic? It is also interesting to consider what might be Sayyid’s motivations, albeit problematic, for retaining knowledge and power as *non-metaphorical* attributes of the Divine. Is it possible that this selection is motivated by certain Foucauldian proclivities? Yet another issue to consider given Sayyid’s insistence that history is forged through human action is how (and where) the Divine is supposed to manifest His/Its power? Is this restricted to the natural/non-human sphere alone? If so, why? Furthermore, there is the question concerning the nature of this ‘divide’ between the natural and human realms to consider, viz. whether it is epistemological or ontological etc.

<sup>24</sup> In fact, there is a larger question to be raised here, viz. whether the being of God can be ‘thought’ *at all*. According to Vedder (2013), “with the existential determination of the essence of the human being, nothing is decided about the ‘existence of God’ or his ‘non-being’ any more than about the possibility or impossibility of gods. [Heidegger] does not speak out about the existence of a God or godhead, but this is because he thinks about the possibility and framework within which something like a God has to be thought.” (p.334) Yet this is to assume that God *can* be *thought* within a framework, and that such a *thinking* is *necessary* for an experience of the Divine. For example, according to the Akbarian worldview, God *as such* cannot be experienced, but only related to via His Names, which constitutes the breakthrough beyond the apophatic and a means by which to circumvent tacitly philosophical (in the sense of rationalist, rationalizing) approaches to God, including, I would suggest, the one cursorily adopted by Sayyid.

<sup>25</sup> Rather ironically, given his endorsement of Heidegger’s critique of onto-theology, Sayyid refers to God as “the supreme being”. In addition to wanting to question this onto-theological/metaphysical assertion—shared by both Sayyid and Capobianco (1988) – I want to draw attention to the way in which this move effects a domestication of Islam and The Divine to the sphere of the ontic, viz. Islam as an *existentiell* and Allah as a being (among beings). Furthermore, and to reiterate a point made earlier, what conception of ‘being’ is Sayyid mobilizing here? What does it mean to attribute being to *Allah*? For example, if Sayyid endorses the view that being means *Dasein*-centric intelligibility as proposed by Dreyfus (1991) and Thomson (2000, 2005, 2013), yet insists that “the supreme being can only be” (Sayyid 2014, p.310), does this not mean that “the supreme being” is in some sense ‘dependent’ on *Dasein*-centric intelligibility? What is the nature of this ‘dependency’? While addressing such

issues is beyond the scope of this essay, it is important to note that nowhere in The Qur'an is God described 'ontically' as a being (*mawjood*), supreme or otherwise, nor 'ontologically' as being *per se* (*wujood*), such terms originating in Islamic Peripatetic philosophy and later developed within philosophical / metaphysical Sufism (*tasawwuf*); on this point, see Shehadi (1982).

<sup>26</sup> It is worth pointing out here that there appears to be some similarity between the position held by the Muslim peripatetic philosopher Abu Yūsuf Ya'qūb ibn 'Ishāq aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ al-Kindī (801-873 CE), generally known as al-Kindī, and that advanced by Sayyid; in this connection, see Adamson (2002) and Adamson (2015, Chapter 3).

<sup>27</sup> Sayyid refers to God as 'all-knowing' (let alone 'all-powerful' and 'infinite'), yet nowhere engages with how such attributes should be understood. In this connection, and in the context of discussing the issue of caliphate, Tutt (2015b) points out that "Sayyid refrains from substantial references to the classical Islamic canon of Islamic scholarship (jurisprudence, kalam, etc.)" (p.1), and I suggest this refrain (non-engagement, 'silence') extends to matters theological / metaphysical.

<sup>28</sup> Put simply, I am arguing that onto-theological commitments impact upon anthropology – in the sense of the ontology of *Dasein* (human being) – which in turn impacts upon the ontology of the social/political (*mitsein*). In addition, contrary to Sayyid and Zac (1998), I suggest that anti-foundationalism *does*, in fact, tacitly engage foundations insofar as it turns on a set of postulated and allegedly 'post-onto-theological' (Heideggerian) commitments concerning the ontology of actors, objects etc. as such – that is, who/what gets to count as an actor.

<sup>29</sup> I further maintain that this position is broadly consistent with Schmitt's views on the matter, and that Sayyid's failure to engage this 'entanglement' is surprising – and somewhat ironic – given his mobilization of the Schmittian concept of the political in his discourse theoretical framework.

<sup>30</sup> In Islamic tradition, the apophatic and non-apophatic are related to 'transcendence' (*tanzih*) and 'immanence' (*tashbih*), respectively.?

<sup>31</sup> In *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (1986, p.74), Ismail al-Faruqī presents a dualistic onto-theological framework involving 'two orders' which I suggest is strikingly similar to the two 'ontological realms' posited by Sayyid. For a critique of al-Faruqī's scheme informed by a non-dual perspective on unicity, see Vadillo (2003, pp.657-658).

<sup>32</sup> For example, in the context of discussing the implications of the Christian doctrine of incarnation wherein "the mundane and the Divine occupy the same ontological plane", Sayyid (2014a) makes the ostensibly more general 'non-confessional' (*sic*) point that "narratives of divine causality and intervention come to be locked in a zero-sum game with narratives that centre on human agency. As a consequence, science and religion continually collide." (p.36)

<sup>33</sup> Sayyid appears to hold that the end of prophetic revelation marked by the death of Prophet Muhammad entails the cessation of Divine intervention in the world. I would suggest this is a *non sequitur*.

<sup>34</sup> According to ibn 'Arabi, the human is ontologically-dependent on the Divine, while the Divine is ontologically-independent of the human; in fact, in and of itself, the human has no ontology – it is nothing (*udum*); on this point, see Izutsu (1983) and Chittick (1989) among other works.

<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, Wood (2017) maintains that ibn 'Arabi shares and reinforces the view of the philosopher al-Kindī "that al-haqq [i.e. God, The Real] had to be experienced through a process of realization (*al-ta'alluh*)." (p.7) It is crucial to appreciate that *theosis* / *theomorphism* is distinct from incarnationism (*hulūl*) insofar as the latter refers to the Divine becoming human, thereby collapsing the ontological 'gap' between the human and Divine, a position explicitly rejected by ibn 'Arabi at the very outset of his 'Treatise on Being' (*Risālat-ul-wujūdiyyah*).

<sup>36</sup> In this connection, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that nowhere in his corpus does Sayyid engage with the being of 'the human' beyond utilizing certain elements of the early Heidegger's existential analytic of *Dasein*; more precisely, there is no attempt to question concerning the human from a perspective informed by the Islamic(are) historical corpus – that is, in terms of the Muslim as *insān*.

<sup>37</sup> In this connection, see Sayyid and Zac (1998, p.267).

<sup>38</sup> On this basis, I understand Sayyid's deployment of Islam in the context of his political discourse as *shar'iyy*.

<sup>39</sup> In this connection, Hankey (2004) maintains that "Heidegger's whole concern is with Christianity and the fateful result of the Christianization of God." (p.442)

<sup>40</sup> According to Dreyfus and Rabinow (1993), "Heidegger's existential ontology is the best description of human social being that philosophers have yet offered but it is totally abstract." (p.38) Contrary to this view, I argue, following Caputo (1993, 2000) and others, that Heidegger's existential structures of human *Dasein* are quite concrete insofar as they have been drawn – that is, *abstracted* – from specific cultural and historical practices, viz. those associated with Western Christianity, which have been secularized/'de-godded' and then (re-)presented as universal.

<sup>41</sup> On this point, see Goossens (2006, p.10) and Vedder (2006, p.51), Coyne (2011) and Coyne (2015, pp.104-106).

<sup>42</sup> The Qur'an (2:36) states: "But Satan *caused them to slip* (*azzallahumā*) out of it and removed them from that [condition] in which they had been..." The verb form appearing in this verse is third-person, masculine, singular (Form IV) perfect and carries the meaning "to cause to slip, stumble". While it could be argued that a slip might entail a fall, it is important to contrast the *contingent* and *transitory* nature of this event with its trans-historical ontological (that is, essentialist) deployment within the Christian doctrine of 'Original Sin'.

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<sup>43</sup> This line of critique should be understood as contributing to the very project of 'clearing' to which Sayyid (2014a) draws attention vis-à-vis preparing the ground/conditions for the onset of Muslim political autonomy, and preparatory to a what might be described as a Qur'an-centric "existential analytic of *insān*".

<sup>44</sup> As Kirk (1999) states, "being a useful tool is one thing; being true is something else." (p.137)

<sup>45</sup> This line of argument, viz. that a *holistic* engagement with the Heideggerian corpus discloses the problematic nature of fixating on the *Dasein*-analysis in terms of 'coping' with and 'comporting to' the world, derives additional support from the recent work of Capobianco (2010, 2014) who argues for understanding Being as "the temporal-spatial way whereby and wherein beings issue forth, come to be [and pass away], in their beingness, that is, in their full appearance or 'full look'" (Capobianco 2019a, pp.4-5), rather than as 'intelligibility' (Dreyfus, Thomson) or 'sense'/meaning' (Sheehan).

<sup>46</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this essay to engage the question concerning Wittgenstein and the mystical, an important point of departure is provided by Nieli (1987); on the mystical element in Heidegger's thought, see Caputo (1986) and Sikka (1997) among other works.

<sup>47</sup> It is somewhat strange that Sayyid (1994) does not consider this possibility given his assertion that the discursive includes non-linguistic practices and skills (Sayyid and Zac 1998, p.255).

<sup>48</sup> In this connection, see Campagna's (2018) recent exploration of the relationship between technic/language and 'magic'/ineffability.