

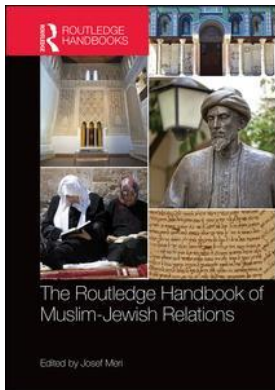
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### Education

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## Education

### Reclaiming the sacred common ground of Jewish-Muslim experiences of education

*Moshe Sokolow and Matthew L. N. Wilkinson*

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#### **Introduction: the political, theological, and educational axioms for Muslim-Jewish education**

It is axiomatic that education is both political and philosophical-theological activity. It is political in that any human grouping prepares its young and, to a lesser degree, its mature members either to replicate and/or to transform its received knowledge and customs. It is philosophical-theological in that all educational processes rest upon shared assumptions, articulated and unarticulated, about the nature of the world, the self and their Source (or lack of It).

For the entire institutional 1,437-year old history of Islam, which was pre-dated by about 2,400 years of Judaism, Muslims and Jews have had a political, theological, and educational relationship. Since the establishment of the community of believers in Medina, which constitutionally included Jewish Arab tribes, the Mosaic-Judaic tradition has represented for Muslims a formative example of a revealed monotheistic faith. Indeed, Muhammad saw himself as the final in a line of Abrahamic prophets with Moses as a distinguished forebear whose message Muslims were required to respect and obey. The protected legal status of Judaism and Jews within early Islamic civilization created circumstances that allowed for natural synergies for Jewish-Muslim scholarship in education with their shared philosophical-theological premises and pedagogies to take root and, to varying degrees, to thrive.

Bearing in mind these political and theological circumstances that set up the conditions for Muslim-Jewish educational synergy, it is also axiomatic that education is the simultaneous and synergistic function of four “commonplaces”: the learner, the instructor, the milieu, and the subject matter.<sup>1</sup> To the extent, then, that Judaism and Islam have shared any of these commonplaces, we should expect their educational endeavors to bear a resemblance. To the extent that they actually exchanged information or assumptions about these commonplaces,

however, we should expect not merely resemblance but close similarity. As first observed by S. D. Goitein, master nonpareil of Cairo Geniza studies:

Jewish education grew organically out of the needs and practices of the Jewish religion many centuries prior to the rise of Islam, but was open to Islamic influences because of the close affinity between the two religions.<sup>2</sup>

And as noted later by Jonathan Berkey:

The education of Jews in the medieval Near East, as reflected in the records of the Cairo Geniza, parallels that of Muslims in its curricular emphasis on law, its pedagogy and institutions, and even in the language and metaphors that the surviving documents use to characterize the world of learning.<sup>3</sup>

In the first part of this chapter, we document and examine some of those similarities between Muslim and Jewish educational purposes, methods, and philosophy in the context of the medieval and early modern periods of Islamic civilization. We suggest that shared congruencies of Jewish and Muslim education in purpose and context contributed to collaborative synergies between Jewish and Muslim scholars around educational themes, in particular as exemplified by the cases of the Muslim educational thought of Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) and the Jewish educational thought of Maimonides (Moshe ben Maimon) or Mūsā ibn Maymūn (d. 1204).

In the second part of this chapter, we briefly suggest that the transformation and then gradual breakdown of the political framework of Islamic civilization and the political reframing in the modern period of communities previously defined religiously on national lines<sup>4</sup> contributed to the breakdown of these collaborative synergies between Jewish and Muslim scholars in education. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the Israel-Palestine question, a question of national sovereignty underscored by toxic religious subtexts, has all but eradicated the general ability of large numbers of young Muslims and Jews to respect one another's existence, let alone be prepared to learn from one another's theological and educational traditions.

In the third part of this chapter, we offer a framework for the philosophical reconstitution of the possibility of collaborative synergies between Jewish and Muslim education in operationally secular, multi-faith contexts. This philosophy will put the nature of the believing Muslim and Jewish child, the nature of interpersonal relationships with others, and the child's relationship with God at the heart of the educational endeavor in an effort to transcend the hiatuses and blocks to mutual engagement set up by contemporary geo-politics. We also suggest how this philosophical framework can be brought to bear by teachers of faith or no-faith in religious education and history classrooms in contemporary schools.

## **Induction into Covenant and Dīn: the shared purpose and methods of Jewish-Muslim education**

### ***Shared premises lead to shared purposes***

In both ancient and medieval Judaism and early and medieval Islam, education meant the preparation of the young human being for the knowledge and worship of and obedience to God and just and humane transaction with other human beings, understood through

the prism of law derived from divine sources – *Shari'a* for Muslims and *halakhah* for Jews – gleaned through a strong working knowledge of God's Revealed Books, the *Torah* in Judaism and the *Qur'an* in Islam.

For Jews, education was the route into the Covenant with God and for Muslims, similarly, education was the route into the Way of Life (*Dīn*) of submission to God (*Al-Islām*)<sup>5</sup>. For both traditions, therefore, the central purpose of education was (and for many remains) the induction of the human being into a conscious relationship with the Living God, enacted by means of a pragmatic understanding of His Books and His Law.

This purpose of entering into a covenantal relationship with God through education in His Book and His Law and the rational systematic understanding of them is evidenced, for example, by the introduction to the Arabic translation of the Torah (*tafsīr*) of Sa'adya Ga'on (Egypt, Iraq; 882–942): “When the Omniscient desired in this Book [the Torah] to instruct human beings and to direct them to His service and worship...<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, the most commonly used word to describe education in the Islamic tradition – *tarbiya* – is derived from the word used for the Lordship of God – *rabb* – implying both the educational need for the recognition of Lordship and the need for a humane and nurturing attitude to that recognition.

In the earliest Muslim community of Muhammad in Medina (622–632), this *tarbiya* meant an imparting of the basic teachings and principles of the Qur'an orally by Muhammad to his Companions (*ṣaḥāba*) coupled with their detailed practical exemplification in the operations of a normal daily life (later to be codified as the *Prophetic Sunna*). The educational event of Medina also showed that the education of the individual was an act of companionship conducted by means of respectful human relationships between the teacher and the taught – a precedent that was to sustain Islamic education for hundreds of years in myriad different cultural settings. Thus education meant preparing the individual to relate appropriately to both the Transcendent Other in the vertical axis and the immanent “other” in the horizontal axis since both God and other humans had rights over the believer.

Indeed, the need for education defined the very nature of humankind and the human relationship with God according to the first words of the Qur'an:<sup>7</sup> “Recite in the name of your Lord who created humankind from a blood-clot. Recite, for your Lord is the most Noble who teaches humankind what you did not know by means of the pen.” Moreover, the Qur'an required believers to reflect on the nature of the creation whose signs (*āyāt*) provided the most basic form of natural education. In both Judaism and Islam, it was a stated religious obligation for every believer to be educated enough to conduct his or her religious and worldly affairs in an effective and God-aware way.

In both traditions, this religious-educational obligation fell on both a child's parents and the religious community. In Judaism as in Islam, education in Torah began at home. In their fourth year of age, children<sup>8</sup> were “dedicated to Torah study,” and in the fifth, “they began to read [Scripture]” (Tanḥuma Kedoshim 14).<sup>9</sup> Initially, they were educated by their parents, but when it became clear that parents were abrogating that responsibility, the Sages (ca. first century CE) enacted universal public education and established schools “in every region and every district” providing tuition at public expense for children beginning at the age of six or seven – depending upon the individual child's physical and mental capacity (Babylonian Talmud [BT] Baba Batra 21a).

Within the context of the explosion of the educational/knowledge-acquisition enterprise that necessarily accompanied that advent of a new or, at least from the Qur'anic point of view, purified Abrahamic faith, the presence of historically large numbers of adherents of the ancient and revealed Abrahamic faith of Judaism with its ancient and refined tradition of

education connected with religious law provided a providential opportunity for Muhammad and his followers to see and learn how a revealed religion with a religious law could be promulgated, preserved and taught to its adherents.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Close structural parallels***

Given the close residential and theological connection between Arabian Judaism and early Islam, we should not, therefore, be surprised that there exist close structural parallels between early Islamic education and ancient Jewish education. Both were focused around simple religious sites as well as sites of the crafts and professions where craftsmen-scholars taught what they had learnt of faith; both focused at the early age of six or seven on children learning the demands of ritual religious purity and both, as we shall see, emphasized the memorization of an oral tradition as the first step toward a legal and rational understanding of faith that would be developed as childhood (ages six to 12) gave way to youth (ages 13 to 21).<sup>11</sup> Both ancient Judaism and early Islam recognized that a methodical and increasingly regulated educational process was the key to first developing and then safeguarding high standards of understanding of religious law.

These parallels can, for example, be seen in the close resemblance of the structure of the earliest books of Islamic law (e.g., *Al-Muwatta'* of Imam Mālik ibn Anas) with the Orders of the Judaic Talmud divided, as the Talmud is, into purity, holy things/prayer, civil and criminal law, festivals, women and agriculture. Moreover, both Islam and Judaism defined the need for the young to be educated for a faithful life as a religious duty incumbent on both community and parent and as an inalienable right of the child.<sup>12</sup> A reflection of the importance attached to elementary education is the Talmudic adage: “The entire world is sustained only on account of the breath of schoolchildren” (BT Shabbat 119b). In Islam, the reinstatement of the rights of vulnerable young people such as orphans to property and education was a key tenet of Muhammadan ethics.

Islamic intellectual and educational civilization emerged in a recognizable form from the eighth century onward, drawing on the reclaimed philosophy of the ancients, in particular Aristotle, at the instigation of the ‘Abbāsīd caliph Al-Ma’mūn and his establishment of the House of Wisdom (*Bayt al-Ḥikma*) in Baghdad (which was itself modeled on the Jewish House of Study<sup>13</sup>). As this multi-faith civilization emerged, these synergies deriving from a shared Abrahamic educational purpose and residential proximity developed into a shared and interactive educational culture.

### ***Shared assumptions about learning and teaching***

#### ***The preeminence of habit***

As a prelude to practical pedagogical advice, Jews and Muslims shared assumptions about the nature of learning and teaching – particularly as they affected religious instruction. Paramount among these assumptions was the primacy of habit.<sup>14</sup>

Aristotle had already spoken in praise of habit, noting,

Moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, whence also its name (ethike) is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word ethos (habit). From this it is also plain that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature; for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature... Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do

the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.<sup>15</sup>

Medieval Jewish and Muslim philosophers of education followed his advice<sup>16</sup> – often in strikingly similar fashion. Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) wrote,

One who seeks proficiency in penmanship possesses a natural disposition towards calligraphy; he needs only to perform the same manual tasks performed by the calligrapher, persevering for as long as it takes to imitate proper penmanship, since proper penmanship constitutes the activity of the calligrapher and the novice must exert himself to imitate the expert.

He must persevere [in this imitation] until it becomes an imbedded trait in his soul and eventually his calligraphy will be as beautiful naturally as it first was through his exertion... Originally, his calligraphy was unnatural; however it impacted upon his heart, from his heart it moved to the limb, and he thereby became a natural calligrapher...

This is one of the remarkable things about the connection between the heart (*qalb*) and the limbs (*jawāriḥ*), that is, the soul and the body. Every trait that reveals itself in the heart leaves its trace on the limbs to the extent that, undoubtedly, they move only in accordance with it. Every action that proceeds from the limbs leaves a trace on the heart, creating a cycle.<sup>17</sup>

According to Al-Ghazālī, the way in which activities that are initially cumbersome become natural is through their repetition (*i'tiyād*) until they become habitual (*mu'tād*).

The way to the purification of the soul, therefore, is to become accustomed to actions that emanate from the perfect pure souls, until they become habitual by virtue of their repetition, with increasing frequency thereby creating a disposition imbedded in the soul. These activities are transformed by habit into nature, and the same positive [traits] that were [initially] difficult are now simplified...

It is remarkable that the relationship between the soul and the body [resembles] a circle: By means of the enforced physical activities, the soul obtains a [virtuous] trait; this trait influences the body and determines a [subsequent] physical activity to which one has now become naturally habituated after [first] having performed it unnaturally.<sup>18</sup>

This notion of a natural tendency or disposition brought to the fore through practice is paralleled in Maimonides:

As regards the privileged few, “the remnant whom the Lord calls” (Joel iii. 5), they only attain the perfection at which they aim after due preparatory labor. The necessity of such a preparation and the need of such a training for the acquisition of real knowledge, has been plainly stated by King Solomon in the following words: “If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: and it is profitable to prepare for wisdom” (Eccles. x. 10); “Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end” (Prov. xix. 20).<sup>19</sup>

To Maimonides, habituation is not merely the essence of education (Hebrew: *ḥinnukh*), it is its definition:

The meaning of *ḥinnukh* is habituation (*al-ta'wīd*)... The word *ḥinnukh* is used in these matters to refer, metaphorically, to the beginning of a process, as though a utensil were being accustomed to a particular task, by way of comparison to a person who is first learning a particular science or a particular virtue (*khalqan*), which he repeats until he acquires it.<sup>20</sup>

The pedagogical coefficient of the preeminence of habit is crystallized in a late-thirteenth-century Spanish Jewish work entitled *Sefer Ha-Ḥinnukh*, using the very figures of speech that both al-Ghazālī and Maimonides associated with habit:

My son! Do not attempt to catch me in my words by asking: Why did God command us to perform all these things because of that miracle; would not one recollection prompt our thoughts and prevent [us and] our descendants from forgetting it? This would not be an intelligent challenge but an immature one.

Now, my son, if you are perceptive, listen carefully and I shall give you practical instruction in Torah and Mitzvot.

Man is influenced by his actions. His heart and all his thoughts always follow upon the deeds he performs with them –for better or worse. Even a person who is thoroughly evil in his heart; all of whose thoughts are perpetually evil; if he stimulates his spirit and places his efforts and involvement at the continual disposal of Torah and Mitzvot –even if not for Heaven’s sake – he will immediately be inclined towards the good, and by the deeds he performs he will slay the evil intent. “Hearts are drawn after actions.”<sup>21</sup>

### *Learners and instructors*

In the medieval period, Jewish and Muslim teachers had no pedagogical training per se; their authority was derived from mastery of the substance of the discipline and, in the Muslim case, by the permission (*ijāza*) to varying degrees of formality granted by the pedagogue’s teacher to teach the designated disciplinary areas. These disciplines were, for example, Qur’anic recitation (*qirā’a*), Qur’anic commentary (*tafsīr*) at primary level and understanding of the principles of Arabic grammar (*naḥw*) and the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) at secondary level.<sup>22</sup>

Instruction in both traditions was mainly by rote repetition and memorization. Corporal punishment was considered “the only way some children will learn”<sup>23</sup> and justified in the case of medieval Jewish education on Talmudic precedent.<sup>24</sup>

In contrast to the relative disdain with which teachers were generally regarded in classical Greece and Rome, the Jewish and Muslim teacher in the early medieval Islamic orbit enjoyed greater respect, as witnessed by the use of “the teacher” [Hebrew: *ha-melammed*; Arabic: *al-mu’allim*] as an epithet frequently appended to signatures on Genizah documents and the fact that in both traditions respect for the teacher by the taught was considered an essential precondition for the effective transmission of knowledge (see below).<sup>25</sup>

This relationship of respect was all the more important since, in both traditions, knowledge was not bound so much, as in contemporary schooling, to the structure, form, and content of an authorized curriculum but much more to the authenticity, reliability, and piety of the person of the teacher. This again was a direct inheritance of a shared Abrahamic inheritance: Jews regarded Moses as the Great Teacher of God’s 613 commandments and, similarly, Muslims regarded Muhammad as an instructor in the Straight Path to God.



The applied consequence of their shared assumptions about education is well illustrated by the lists of the desirable characteristics of students and teachers compiled by Abu Hamid Al-Ghazālī, and Yosef Ibn Aknin (Arabic: Ibn ‘Aqnīn; d. 1220).<sup>26</sup>

#### Learners

<i>Al-Ghazālī</i> <sup>27</sup>	<i>Ibn Aknin</i> <sup>28</sup>
Purify his soul from impure traits and blameworthy characteristics	Purity; guarding against and distancing himself from that which is vile
Reduce ties with affairs of the world	Reduce his involvement in material acquisitions and wealth
Neither scorn knowledge nor exalt himself over the teacher	
Pay no attention to differences of opinion	
Not allow any praiseworthy knowledge to escape him	Not to leave any facet of the science [unexplored]
Begin with branch of knowledge that is most important [i.e., to know God]	
Don't move on to next branch until previous one is mastered	Begin the apprehension of knowledge with its roots and beginnings
Know how to ascertain the noble nature of a science	
Adorn inner self with virtue	
Know the relation of different sciences to his goal [prioritize]	

#### Instructors

<i>Al-Ghazālī</i>	<i>Ibn Aknin</i>
Sympathetic to students	Treats his students like his children
Seek no remuneration	His instruction must be free of charge
[Not] allow the student to attempt the work of any grade unless he is qualified for it...	Guide the student to attain success...
The purpose of knowledge is to draw nearer to God	The purpose of knowledge is to acquire life in the world to come
[Dissuade] by suggestion rather than openly	He should be patient and generous (not hypercritical nor impatient)
Not belittle or disparage the value of other sciences	
Limit the student to what the latter is able to understand	Teach them according to the capacity of their intellects
Give his backward students only such things as are clear	
Practices what he teaches	The scholar [must] practice that which his knowledge mandates



Not only are the concepts congruent, but their literary formulation is as well. This suggests strongly that Muslim and Jewish thinkers around education were not only sharing ideas but sharing texts upon which they drew, pretty directly, we might say plagiaristically, for inspiration.

<i>Al-Ghazālī</i>	<i>Ibn Aknin</i>
The first duty of the student is to purify his soul from impure traits and blameworthy characteristics...	The first [of nine conditions of the student] is purity; guarding against and distancing himself from anything vile by acquiring righteous characteristics...
The second duty of the student is to reduce to a minimum his ties with the affairs of the world... This mind which divides its attention among different things is like a stream, the water of which flows in several directions only to be absorbed in part by the earth and in part by the air, with the result that nothing is left for irrigation of planted lands.	The third condition is that he should reduce his involvement in material acquisitions... If thought is diverted to seek various objectives, it will be like ... a stream whose waters are dispersed, the air and land dry it out, and there is no [water] remaining to irrigate the plants and to serve a useful purpose.
The first duty of the teacher is to be sympathetic to students and treat them as his own children...	The fourth condition is that he treats his students as his children and imagines as though they actually were his children...
The second duty of the teacher is to follow the example of the Law-Giver [i.e., Muhammad: <i>ṣāhib al-sharʿ</i> <i>ṣallā Allāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam</i> ]: he should seek no remuneration... Riches as well as everything else in the world are servants of the body while the body is the vehicle of the soul which, in turn, is in the service of knowledge with which it is honored.	The third condition is that his instruction must be free [of charge], without remuneration... Wealth is a servant and not a master, and wisdom is a master and not a servant. [The teacher seeking wealth] has reversed this principle, making the servant the master and the master the servant...

### **Shared milieu and subject matter**

#### *The yeshiva, the bet midrash, and the madrasa*

The milieu in which instruction and learning occurred were remarkably similar in classical Islamic civilization for young Muslims and Jews in both form and method. This suggests not only the similar nature of the Jewish and Muslim educational enterprise in the preparation of the youngster for a religious-legal relationship with God but also that Muslims learnt from the educational infrastructure of Judaism in North Africa and elsewhere as they came to design their own mechanisms and institutions of instruction.

The question of when the Jewish academy came into existence is the subject of ongoing scholarly debate. While the more traditional opinion sees it as having been initiated in the era of the Amoraim (the sages of the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds) of the third to fifth centuries, a more recent view (relying primarily on modern theories of Talmudic recension) posits their introduction only in the near post-Talmudic era (ca. 450–600 CE).<sup>29</sup> In either case, it was fully developed by the tenth century, and its best known exemplar was the *Ṣūrā* Academy situated in Baghdad, whose organization is described in some detail by a contemporary visitor from North Africa.<sup>30</sup>

Both sides to the dispute agree, however, that the formal, institutional academy known in Hebrew as *yeshiva* and Aramaic as *metivta* (literally, a place of sitting) was preceded by smaller-

scale schools that were known, individually, as *be rav* (literally, a rabbi's house) in which a small circle of disciples gathered to study with a particular teacher – just as circles of Muslim disciples would meet in a *ḥalaqa* or *majlis* (also, literally, a place of sitting), usually situated in a mosque, with an individual *faqīh* or religious scholar.<sup>31</sup>

Of greater etymological proximity, however, are the terms *bet midrash* (Hebrew) or *be midrasha* (Aramaic), closely approximated by the Arabic term *madrasa*, all three being derivatives of a cognate verb, *dr*'s, to study or teach (depending upon the verbal form employed). The best known of all the medieval madrasas, and the model after which many later such schools were founded, was the Nizāmiyya, established in 1067 by the Seljuk minister Nizām al-Mulk – also in Baghdad. (In 1091, a year before he died, Nizām al-Mulk had the distinction of appointing Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī to the faculty of the Nizāmiyya, the last such position the latter would hold before his “defection” from philosophical study to mysticism.<sup>32</sup> We have taken note of Ghazālī's philosophy of education and its influence on Jewish educational theory in the previous section.)

The similarities between, or mutual influences upon, the yeshiva and madrasa are also a matter of disagreement. In his study of medieval Muslim education, A. S. Tritton indicated his belief that the latter was modeled upon the former.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, S. D. Goitein declared, “The yeshiva was pre-Islamic, and, even during the heyday of Islam, differed completely from its Islamic counterpart, the madrasa (as far as it could be compared to the yeshiva at all).”<sup>34</sup> A striking confluence of method, nonetheless, was the emphasis each placed upon memorization.

### *Orality versus textuality*

Both religions' legal systems rely on the evidence of both scripture and tradition – initially oral and eventually recorded. During the intervals between the amalgamation of the traditions and their reduction to writing (and even afterward!), both placed significant emphasis on memorization. Memorization (Aramaic: *girsā*) was accomplished, by and large, through rote repetition. The Talmud, for one, advises that “One who repeats his lesson 100 times cannot be compared to one who repeats it 101 times” (BT Ḥagigah 9b) and recommends memorization as a necessary prerequisite for comprehension: “Let one memorize and subsequently analyze” (BT Shabbat 63a).<sup>35</sup>

In Islam, the memorization of the Qur'an (*taḥfīz*) was both a staple of religious education and an exceptional religious and cultural virtue. As the *ḥadīth* report,

Whoever reads the Qur'an, memorizes it, and acts upon it, on the Day of Judgment he will be clad (by angels) with a crown of light, its light is like the sunlight, and his parents will be clad with two garments better than the whole world and whatever it contains. So they would amazingly ask: “What action did we do to deserve this?” They will be told: “Because your son memorized the Qur'an.” (Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī)

Whosoever memorizes the Qur'an and practices what is lawful and abstains from what is prohibited, Allah will enter him into the Garden [of Eden] and accept his intercession on behalf of ten such relatives who have been destined to enter Hell. (Tirmidhī)

Here, too, however, memorization was only the preface to comprehension, as reflected in one of the aphorisms of Nāṣir al-Dīn Ṭūsī: “Memorizing two words is better than hearing two pages, but understanding two words is better than memorizing two pages” (Risāla 19r).

In Judaism, however, the early emphasis on memorization was eventually mooted due to the widespread proliferation of Talmudic manuscripts. As Efrat and Elman report in their comparative study of the yeshiva and the madrasa, Islamic law had certainly developed a strong book tradition by the time of the organization of the famous Nizāmiyya madrasa in 1067. In contrast, “the geonic yeshivot struggled to maintain a privileged position for orality while yielding to the demands of the book culture within which it found itself.”<sup>36</sup>

Of greater significance for our purpose, however, is the somewhat anomalous situation that even after the initial appearance of such manuscripts in the eighth century, memorization continued, unabated, to be the preferred practice in Jewish schools and academies throughout the Muslim world.

In his seminal “Epistle” on the composition of the Talmud, R. Sherirah Ga’on (d. 1006) stated,

How were the Mishnah and Talmud written?

The Talmud and Mishnah were not written, but rather composed, and the rabbis were careful to recite orally, but not from [written] copies, for we say, “Things which are oral, you may not say in writing,” and we say “These you may write, but you may not write laws.”<sup>37</sup>

Aaron Hakohen Sargado, a mid-tenth-century authority, reported, first-hand, on the practice of his own academy (yeshiva), stating, “Our whole yeshiva, of which it is known that its version [of the Talmud] is from the mouths of the great ones, most of them [i.e., the members of the yeshiva] do not know anything of a book...”<sup>38</sup>

## Decline and fall of the Muslim-Jewish educational culture

Crucially, moreover, these striking parallels of educational Jewish–Muslim purpose, pedagogy/pedagogue, student, and milieu were constructed within a political framework in which the educational work of the Abrahamic faiths in preparing individuals for a worshipful engagement in the life of society was a political given and embedded in the nature of civic life. Early medieval Islamic civilization depended on the delicate balance of power between legal (the class of the *ulama*) and civic (represented by the caliph) authority,<sup>39</sup> and the preservation of this relationship meant the perpetuation of a religiously well-educated populace (or at least elements from it) from which the legal elite could emerge.

However, if the existence of this stable political relationship accounts at least in part for the circumstances of the fertile exchange of Jewish–Muslim educational thinking in the early medieval period (ca. 750–1200) as exemplified by Al-Ghazālī and Maimonides, then it stands to reason that the breakdown and atrophy of that relationship and other related changes within the Islamic civilization are likely to account at least in part for the atrophy and ultimately complete termination of this shared, cross-fertilizing educational culture.

The early Islamic phase (632–1100) had necessitated the expenditure of a huge amount of jurisprudential energy of the part on both Muslims and Jews, and this creativity had provided the basis of the shared culture outlined earlier. On the part of Muslim scholars, the entire edifice of the methods and substance of a juridical practice (*Shari’a*) had to be derived from the text of the Qur’an and the Sunna (customary practice) of Muhammad as Islam transmogrified from the religious praxis of a small, tribal community with the presence of the religion’s founder in its midst to the imperial faith of a conquering power, *without* its founder alive to turn to for rulings. Islam and Muslims in the two centuries after

Muhammad's death rapidly came face-to-face with a proliferation of circumstances for which there was little or no legal precedent in the Qur'an and Sunna itself. It was in these circumstances of rapid, necessary legal innovation that the Schools of Islamic Law – Mālikī, Ḥanafī, Ḥanbalī, and Shāfi'ī – each with its eponymous founder and a circle of religious-legal disciples, which were later to become canonical, emerged, each with its own methods of making a legal application of the Qur'an and the Sunna to contingent circumstances and its own ways of teaching these methods.

Simultaneously, Jewish rabbinical scholars had to make sense legally of novel circumstances as the status of Jewish communities of the Middle East changed from suspect outsiders of the Byzantine Roman Empire to fully-fledged citizens (even if not on equal terms with Muslims) of the new Islamic world order.

In these circumstances, Muslims and Jews had needed to draw both legally, educationally, and philosophically on each other and on the philosophy of the ancients in order to make sense and respond to rapidly changing socio-political circumstances. However, from the thirteenth century onward, the political and intellectual climate of the Muslim world changed, and the circumstances of Muslim-Jewish exchange changed with them.

First, intellectually, the assault of Al-Ghazālī on the Hellenistic trend in Muslim philosophy and the application of the Aristotelian method dented the confidence of Muslim thinkers in the religious propriety of drawing on the philosophy of non-Muslim pagan thinkers. Despite the fierce rebuttal of Al-Ghazālī's claims by Ibn Rushd in his famous "Incoherence of the Incoherence" (ca.1179), the Sunni Muslim world never applied itself to systematic theological-philosophy with the energy and creativity that it had done from ca. 900 to 1200. Thus, crucially for this chapter, a significant platform and theological neutral space for Muslim-Jewish intellectual and educational exchange was gradually eradicated. The rejection by Jews of a significant portion of the Maimonidean philosophical corpus – beginning in Provence in the mid-thirteenth century – marks a similar turning point.

Second, the Messianic energy that had taken Islam from the borders of France to China in the expectation of a world converted to Islam before the End of Time gave way to an acceptance by the Muslim rulers and *ulama* (religious-legal scholars) of the existence of a world divided geo-politically into the Muslim world (*Dār al-Islām*) and politically non-Muslim world (*Dār al-Kufr*). This quasi-legal construction of the world came together with the realization that *Dār al-Islām* might itself be threatened by Christendom and other entities and, indeed, that *Dār al-Islām* might itself contract. This increased political vulnerability was exacerbated by the devastating Mongol invasions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, whose destruction of the great libraries of 'Abbāsīd Baghdad symbolized the destruction of a multi-faith educational culture that had seen the collaborative quest for knowledge as a religious virtue in its own right. The Crusades, while a mere nuisance compared with the Mongol invasions, exacerbated this increased feeling of vulnerability and the feeling that outsiders and, therefore, outsider-insiders to the world of Islam like Jews and Christians were not so much a source of intellectual benefit as intellectual as well as political threat.

The increased vulnerability of the Muslim world from the outside was mirrored and aggravated by internal dynastic strife that disrupted the relative stability of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate, even if its power had come to be largely symbolic, and meant that successive dynasties of Fāṭimid, Ayyūbid, Mamlūk, and latterly Seljuk dynasties survived by dint of their ability to organize politically and mobilize themselves militarily. This again contributed to the withering of the conditions of multi-faith and multicultural intellectual exchange that had characterized such situations as Ummayyad Córdoba under 'Abd al-Raḥmān III or the House of Wisdom in 'Abbāsīd Baghdad. This is perhaps best represented by the fact that the

famous, chivalric Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, better known as Saladin (r. 1169 – 1193), defender of Jerusalem and founder of the Ayyūbid Sultanate, was responsible for closing the Jewish Houses of Study in Cairo. Moreover, across the Muslim world during the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk periods, synagogues and churches, which also acted, as we have seen, as centres of education, were converted into mosques in a development that had been almost unknown in the ‘Abbāsīd period and expressly forbidden by the early caliphs of Islam. For the first time in Muslim consciousness during the late medieval and early modern period, Jews (and even more so Christians) came to be regarded at times not as Abrahamic cousins as People of the Book (albeit rather misguided ones with some strange religious views!) but, especially at times of war and crisis, as “the enemy within.” This hardening of attitude was accompanied by hardening of the rules of *dhimma*, such as restrictions on bearing arms, dress, professions, and governmental service, imposed on Jews and Christians by *Shari’a* law, which Muslim jurists and rulers had tended in times of Muslim confidence to apply with maximum possible leniency and expediency.

The Sunni Muslim world regained a high degree of political stability and material and intellectual confidence under the Ottoman sultans, in particular from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries onward. It is unsurprising, therefore, according to our thesis that the situation of the substantial Jewish communities of Anatolia, including large numbers of Sephardic (Spanish) and other Jews seeking asylum from persecution in northern Europe and expulsion from Spain, Portugal, and England in the early modern period, found themselves in situations of refuge and potential flourishing in the Ottoman Empire under Muslim law that had re-instituted religious tolerance of People of the Book.<sup>40</sup> In the sixteenth century in particular, Jews were prized, encouraged, and sometimes ordered to populate areas of the Ottoman Empire (e.g., newly conquered Cyprus) as they were recognized for their knowledge in commerce and of European habits and languages and were allowed, for example, with severe restrictions made at the behest of the calligraphic class of scribes, to introduce printing in Latin languages and Hebrew, though not in the Arabic or Osmanli script.

This last point betrays an essential flaw in the Ottoman enterprise. The Ottoman Empire was a highly successful and well-organized military religious state whose ruling elite occupied positions in religious office, government, and the army (or janissary corps to which a Jewish functionary was attached as the commercial agent). Its educational system, run through private endowments called *awqāf* and usually attached to mosque complexes called *millet*, served for the perpetuation of a class of efficient imperial bureaucrats, imams, and civil servants who could run an empire; it did not, by and large, serve the interests of intellectual innovation or intellectual cultural exchange.

This educational absence, in the long run, had disastrous consequences both for the Ottomans themselves and for Jews living in the Ottoman Empire. For the Ottomans, it meant that technological, intellectual, and commercial innovations, such as the aforementioned printing, and capital finance as well as ideas of the empirical sciences and political representation that were built, ironically, on the platform of Islamic medieval learning, had to be imported from the outside and only arrived wholesale with the Tanzimat reforms of the mid-nineteenth century when it was too late for them to be integrated effectively into Ottoman Muslim life. For Jews under the Ottomans, the lack of dedication to education meant the atrophy and eventually the loss of the very skills that had made them such prized citizens of the Ottoman state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: namely, knowledge of European languages and cultural forms, such as theatre,<sup>41</sup> and the latest ways of commerce and skills of manufacture such as of fine clothes.

Reports of European visitors to Istanbul in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries speak of conditions of material and intellectual impoverishment of the Ottoman Jews, who were already in circumstances of terminal decline within an Ottoman state that had become the “sick man of Europe.” By the nineteenth century, this state was desperately under-financed and desperately short of political and educational ideas of its own, for which it was increasingly dependent on the (highly-inappropriate) models of the secular French republic.

If the conditions of Ottoman Jews in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were bad, elsewhere in the Muslim world they were worse. Travelers to Morocco, for example, told of the ritual humiliation of Jews who were confined to their own quarters in Moroccan cities and were allowed out only if they were wearing signifiers of their essential inferiority to Muslims, such as straw slippers!<sup>42</sup>

Whereas from the earliest days of Islam the accent of Jewish activity had been focused on the Muslim world within a civilization molded by the Abrahamic law with the opportunities derived thereof for educational synergy, from the nineteenth century onward the legal and education systems of both Muslims and Jews were to be increasingly modeled on the national education systems of secularizing Europe and were enmeshed in the colonial ambitions of the Great Powers. These education systems, such as that of Egypt and elsewhere in the Muslim world, were still informed at a distance by the principles of Islamic law, but the educational fabric of Islam of the *kuttāb*, the madrasas, and the legal schools, built around the respectful personal relationship between the teacher and the taught, was replaced by secular primary, secondary, and tertiary education with statutorily defined curricula. The purpose of these new national curricula was the establishment of secular, national, and technological states served by specialist doctors, lawyers, engineers, and bureaucrats for whom the human being’s relationship with God and its legal expression were now entirely a private affair, if it was permitted existence at all. The rapid dissemination of secular education among Jews through schools established by the Alliance Israélite Universelle, beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, had a like effect upon Jewish education and also contributed toward the deterioration of the standing of Jews in the Muslim world.<sup>43</sup>

### **The philosophical reconstitution of Muslim-Jewish relations in education**

So in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Muslims and Jews *qua* religious believers have gone their separate ways in the faithful education of their young, which is usually the preserve either of faith-based community institutions within national states or a marginal, relatively neglected element of statutory national curricula (e.g., the GCSE Islamic Studies or Jewish Studies programs in England). Furthermore, at the geo-political level, at which, as we have seen, the conditions for Muslim-Jewish collaboration in education have either been created or obstructed, the European-Jewish project of Zionism (1895–1948), promoted by and then resisted by the British national state, followed by the establishment of the State of Israel (1948) and the displacement and (from a standard Muslim point of view) subsequent repression of Palestinian Sunni Muslims by the State of Israel have driven a sharp and seemingly unshiftable political wedge between two Abrahamic communities. This event has generated a collective amnesia of the fact that for centuries these communities lived in close and usually amicable collaborative educational coexistence characterized by a cross-fertilization of educational purpose and pedagogy.

This political state of affairs is itself highly disruptive of both comparative and collaborative Jewish-Muslim education in the Middle East and the Euro-American Muslim-



Jewish diaspora. In 2008, one of us was involved in a collaboration between a Muslim faith school and a Jewish synagogue youth group in North London over a piece of drama – a collaboration that foundered on the political rocks of the 2008-2009 Israeli invasion of Gaza. Extreme anti-Zionist narratives drive the radicalization of a significant minority of young Muslims on the internet. Deeply regrettably, Judaism has become conflated with Zionism in the minds of many young Muslims, leading to a creeping anti-Semitism in elements of the Muslim community and the erroneous belief by many young Jews that all young Muslims are potential terrorists. How, if at all, can education help young Jews and Muslims to transcend and then to transform this political hiatus and find a way forward to a more enlightened, mutually respectful, and synergistic future?

We suggest that a return to the shared philosophical-theological educational purpose of Jewish-Muslim education on the relatively level playing field of liberal secular democracies such as Britain and America can be a good place to start. For many Jews in these settings, a significant component of education is still the effective induction of the young human into the Covenant with God and for many Muslims in these liberal secular settings, similarly, a significant component of education is still an induction into the Way of Life (*Dīn*) of submission to God (*Al-Islām*).<sup>44</sup> Within the framework of mainstream state school education on a level legal playing field, where young Muslims and young Jews meet by default, the humanities subjects (which, after all, were designed for the nurture of young people’s humanity)<sup>45</sup> can help. In this part of the chapter, we suggest that the philosophy of critical realism can help reactivate an understanding of this shared educational purpose in its religious and historical dimensions.

Therefore, the next section of the chapter suggests tools for effecting a serious and meaningful comparative religious educational provision for young Muslims and young Jews that, in line with typical requirements for state schools, will help them to learn about, from, and for their faith traditions in a way that harnesses multi-faith perspectives and draws on the distinctive metaphysical nature of the traditions of Judaism and Islam. This is done by using what we call the fulcrum of critical realist philosophy in the classroom in what we term the extra-faith, inter-faith, and intra-faith modes, including embracing “difficult” issues.

### ***The fulcrum of critical realism in Muslim-Jewish education***

The critical realist understanding of reality is grounded in three inter-related philosophical principles:

- 1 ontological realism,
- 2 epistemological relativism, and
- 3 judgmental rationality (Figure 10.1).

These have together been described as the fulcrum of critical realism and its cognate Islamic critical realism.<sup>46</sup>

Ontological realism means that being exists independently of knowing/knowledge (e.g., the sun exists in exactly the same way whether the universe is described in a geocentric or a heliocentric way). In the social-natural world, the objects of knowledge are existentially intransitive; that is to say that they exist independently of the agents of knowledge, otherwise there would be nothing to know in the first place. However, the social processes of knowing are causally interactive with the objects that they come to know.

When applied to the ontology of the spirit and religion, ontological realism pertains to the essential being of spiritual phenomena. For example, God can be said to exist (or not exist)



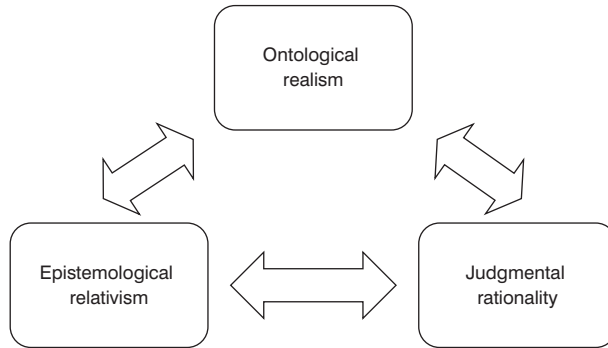


Figure 10.1 The fulcrum of critical realism and Islamic critical realism

independently of our knowledge of Him. Unseen spiritual realities (e.g., human/divine spirit, divine providence, intercession with God) can be allowed to exist (or not to exist) independently of our knowledge of or belief in them. Ontological realism about God does not claim that God exists but that the fact and realities of His existence are not dependent on our knowledge of Him/Them.

As far as young Muslims and Jews are concerned, ontological realism refers *inter alia* to spiritual being and entities: the unified being of God, the reality of Prophethood, the existence of Revelation – the Torah and the Qur’an – the reality of Divine Purpose and Destiny – in short, to the basis of a shared metaphysical universe independent of the specifics of creed and to the philosophical possibility that this metaphysical universe exists.

Epistemological relativism asserts that beliefs about and understandings and knowledge of Being are socially produced, instantiated in historical and personal circumstances, fallible and transient. Epistemological relativism in the spiritual domain of the dimension of religious belief pertains to beliefs, knowledge, and understandings of spiritual phenomena that usually take the form of religious traditions.

To espouse the idea of epistemological relativism is to say “... that a belief about the reality or existence of God is quite consistent with ... the idea that God manifests Himself in a variety of different ways or is accessed by different people in different traditions in a plurality of different ways.”<sup>47</sup> *In other words, the fact that God has been known differently does not mean that the God that is known is different.*

Typically, when thinking about Jewish-Muslims relations, in the category of epistemological relativism would fall the concepts of Covenant and Dīn as methods and ways of coming-to-know and forming a relationship with God. Also, within this category would fall the various manifestations of Jewish and Muslim traditions: Sunni, Shi’a, Orthodox, United Reformed, Liberal, and the like. The placing of these in the dimension of epistemological relativity can, as we will see, enable young Muslims and Jews to understand that within the Abrahamic tradition there have been many ways of approaching the being of the One God, even if they do not believe that they are equally truthful or effective.

Within the critical realist schema, the compatibility of ontological realism and epistemological relativism necessitates judgmental rationality. That is to say that there exist or can be created rational criteria to adjudicate between different knowledges, traditions, understandings, and values that are not all equally accurate, truthful, sustainable, or useful.

Judgmental rationality in the spiritual dimension pertains to deliberation and deciding about the plausibility of spiritual phenomena and the traditions connected with them: The

compatibility of ontological realism and epistemological relativism necessitates *judgmental rationality in that there must be coherent rational (doctrinal), emotional, and experiential grounds for choosing one mode of spiritual access (religious tradition) as opposed to another if that decision is to be intellectually and spiritually sustainable.*

The methods of Judaic-Islamic religious decision making can be located in the category of judgmental rationality. These include exegesis (*tafsīr/parshanut*), analogy (*qiyās/heqeish*), consensus (*ijmāʿ*), and the hermeneutical principles (*middot*) by which the Torah is analyzed.

Therefore, it is possible with these basic principles both to claim that God has been accessed and has revealed His Being through a variety of traditions *and* to choose or to be committed to one tradition as opposed to another, while still drawing on the insights of other faiths.

This fulcrum of critical realism presents an intellectual framework that, as we will see, can offer the young Muslim, the young Jew and other young people of faith:

- 1 confidence in the rational possibility of the existence of essential spiritual phenomena as described by their faith at the level of ontological realism;
- 2 humility with regard to his or her interpretation of these phenomena and his or her sectarian commitments, which includes openness to the spiritual insights of those of other faiths at the level of epistemology; and
- 3 intellectual rigor in the tools for making decisions and distinctions between competing truth-claims and the authenticity of different religious experiences at the level of judgmental rationality.

It offers the possibility of a “light” religious perennialism<sup>48</sup> that is commensurate, for example, with Qur’anic teaching about the authenticity and inviolability of a variety of religions<sup>49</sup> and with Jewish tradition’s stipulation that the divine voice of revelation at Sinai was heard by all “seventy” nations—each in its own language.<sup>50</sup>

Many spiritual roads lead potentially to the top of the mountain of spiritual ontology, but they do not all necessarily do so with equal truth or efficacy.

### ***From philosophy to pedagogy (Figure 10.2)***

#### ***Spiritual being: the extra-faith mode***

The application of the fulcrum of critical realism in the humanities classroom involves condensing these complex philosophical ideas down to a pedagogical form. For these purposes, ontological realism becomes “spiritual being” and is to be explored through what we call the *extra-faith* mode.

The extra-faith mode is the mode at which the nature of spiritual and religious phenomena is examined ontologically in the classroom without reference to a religious tradition. It is the mode of looking at the field of absolute concerns of the life of the spirit generated by the universal quest for the meaning of life. The extra-faith mode is also the mode of identification by pupils in conversation with their teachers of universal religious phenomena that are fit for study and analysis.

In teacher-training sessions in secondary religious education conducted at the University of Cambridge, for example, the following spiritual phenomena have been identified (by no means exclusively and exhaustively) in the extra-faith mode as part of a universal patrimony of spiritual being: justice, destiny, nature, God(s), pilgrimage, prayer, the after-life, religious

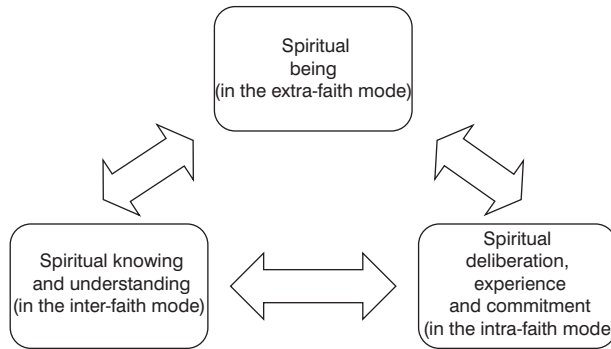


Figure 10.2 The fulcrum of critical realism transposed into religious education

books, and morality.<sup>51</sup> Thus, it is the mode that in some ways combines the world religions' phenomenological approach that underscored the multicultural turn in religious education with the current trends toward philosophy and ethics in the philosophical identification of universal religious phenomena.

The extra-faith mode enables a teacher to bring those who have a commitment to different faiths and those who have no commitment to faith into the classroom conversation at the very start of a unit of study on an equal epistemic footing, which can help to create a climate of consensual humility, which is essential to the success of the shared quest for religious understanding.<sup>52</sup> Teachers can create a consensus in the extra-faith mode that these spiritual phenomena exist in the lives of religious people without any reference to the necessity of a truth-claim or lack of it. In other words, the class can agree to proceed according to the principle of ontological realism *as if* these spiritual phenomena exist.<sup>53</sup> For even if they turn out to be either false or only partially true, they will be things that no class member can deny affects people's lives and minds.

Once this consensus is achieved and the pupils have identified a religious phenomenon, the teacher is free to explore the most basic nature of the phenomena (e.g., pilgrimage as a journey made with a spiritual purpose) so that all the students can get a clear idea of the nature of what they are studying in a way that will also begin to suggest relativity and variety, and of religious understanding and the particular manifestations of that universal nature in the Jewish and Muslim traditions.

In the context of education for Jewish-Muslim relations, the extra-faith mode can be used to examine the meaning and nature of a relationship with God, the nature of Revelation and Prophethood (i.e., What is God? What is Revelation? What is Prophethood?) as a prelude for a closer comparative examination of the specifics of Judaism and Islam in the inter-faith mode (see further).

*Spiritual knowing and understanding: the inter-faith mode*

Therefore, while spiritual being at the extra-faith mode refers to religious phenomena – metaphysical realities that are claimed by religions to exist in the ontology of the spirit – epistemological relativism becomes, at the level of the classroom, “spiritual knowing and understanding” and is explored through the *inter-faith* mode (see Figures 10.2 and 10.3).

The inter-faith mode is the comparative mode of exploring different religious phenomena as understood from the point of view of different faith traditions and different sectarian positions within traditions. It is the comparative mode at which children can understand that similar phenomena of spiritual and religious being have been expressed similarly *and* differently in different faith traditions. It is the informative, “learning-about-religion” mode in which the child can gather information about the faith of the “other” compared with facets of his or her own faith. Thus, it is the mode of discovery that some religious phenomena and beliefs are universal, while others are not. It is the mode of visits to sacred sites and of exploration of the deep diversity of human religious expression in artifacts, art, and architecture. Such visits in the inter-faith mode may themselves challenge the deeply held cultural prejudices and assumptions of some children. For example, Conroy et al.<sup>54</sup> describe the visit of Muslim girls to a Hindu temple, which, after resistance and reluctance, was deeply transformative of their opinion of the Hindu “other.” The same can apply to Muslim visit to synagogues and Jewish visits to mosques, by which the sacredness of space and architecture can help them to transcend political differences and inherited prejudices.

In short, the inter-faith mode is the mode of the comparative exposure to the most visible, audible elements of spiritual expression. It is the mode at which, for example, Muslim and Jewish children can discover and explore their places of worship and core articles of faith and understand that they are particular manifestations of universal religious phenomena in a way that does not undermine their particularity but which connects both faiths to a universal human tendency to seek a systematic connection with Truth-and-Reality – God.

In this regard, it will be particularly important for Jewish and Muslim children to explore the ideas of Covenant and *Dīn* as expressions of a relationship with God in their traditions that exhibit both similarity and difference. The deeper meanings of Covenant and *Dīn* in the lived experiences of Muslims and Jews can be explored in the intra-faith mode (see Figure 10.3).

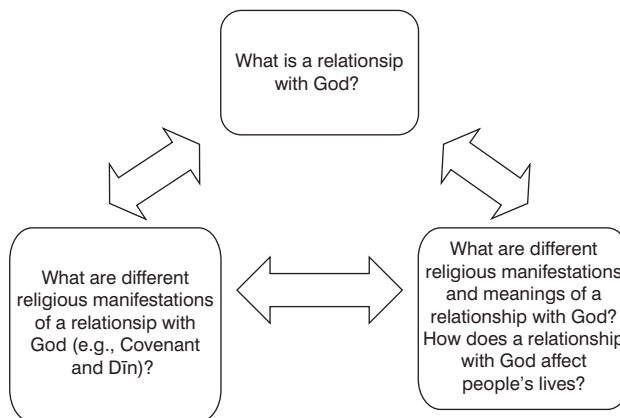


Figure 10.3 An example of the fulcrum of critical realism in use with the example of Covenant or *Dīn*

### *Spiritual deliberation, decision making and commitment: the intra-faith mode*

The intra-faith mode emerges from the fact that it is not enough for children to be exposed to the ontology and epistemology of the spirit and of religion if they are to be provided with a serious religious education. Given that they are at the phase, especially in adolescence,<sup>55</sup> of negotiating and making their first independent decisions about their core, absolute values, they must be enabled to experience, decide, feel and, if and when appropriate, to commit and justify their religious faith (or lack of it). Therefore, in this classroom version of the fulcrum of critical realism, judgmental rationality becomes “spiritual deliberation, experience and commitment” and is explored through the *intra-faith mode*. The intra-faith mode is the mode for exploring, in depth, the spiritual experience of religious phenomena and being empowered through knowledge, analysis, and discussion to make personal decisions and judgments about them and their claims to truth.

This is also the mode for the teasing out of the esoteric juice from exoteric faith positions that the children may already have<sup>56</sup> (e.g., the performance of ablution [*wuḍūʿ*] before prayer in Islam and ritual hand washing before meals [*netillat yadayim*] in Judaism). It is the mode at which the skilled religious education teacher can challenge Muslim and Jewish children, at primary or secondary level, to explore the deeper meaning and spiritual rationality of beliefs and practices that they have learnt at home or in the madrasa or Jewish day school in order that they can understand them properly and be enabled to articulate them to others. It is in this vital mode that contested sectarian positions can be explored: what they mean in life to those who believe them and for those who reject them. It is a vital mode for learning how to justify and articulate religious faith to a skeptical and secular world.

For example, among teacher-trainees at Cambridge, one exercise involved distinguishing between Islamic primary sources, Islamist derivatives, and violently extreme Islamist texts by identification of a criteria of a lack of Islamic “seriousness” in Manichean world views and by furnishing elements of basic textual analysis for recognizing an authentic Islamic text.<sup>57</sup> That is to say, in the intra-faith mode Muslim and Jewish young people can be shown that there are simple ways to choose *for themselves* between healthy and unhealthy forms of spiritual doctrine and experience and to learn how to tease apart religious faith from politics and culture. Thus, the intra-faith mode can help them to develop both spiritual literacy and other-regarding moral autonomy. The intra-faith mode both challenges the intellectual laziness that spiritual experience cannot be articulated or analyzed identified by Barnes<sup>58</sup> and allows for the reality of the ineffable, unspeakable nature of direct experience of the Holy, which is the experience of the mystic from a wide range of faith traditions, including Islam and Judaism.

In the intra-faith mode, children can explore their own and their families’ experiences of Covenant and Dīn through interviews and sharing of family stories. Jewish children can explain to Muslim children what it means to have a covenantal relationship with God and how this manifests in daily life. Muslim children can share the experience of religion as a Dīn (way of life) and the opportunities and difficulties that may present to life in secular contexts for them or their parents.

Thereby, using the fulcrum of critical realism, teachers can help young people to share something of the essential character of what it means to live and think as a Muslim or a Jew, which is a particularly important contribution of young people of faith to the study of religion in a materialist and secular environment that is often inherently inhospitable to and ignorant of the extra-worldly concerns of religious believers.

### ***The role of history education***

If mainstream religious education has a role to play in creating an intellectually robust platform for Muslim-Jewish understanding within a broader context of the development of the religious literacy of all children, history education also has an important role to play.

We have suggested earlier how extreme, one-sided historical narratives drive religious radicalization and extremism in young Muslims and Jews. Moreover, the absence of the history of Judaic-Islamic contribution to the progress of humanity in school history in Britain, America, and elsewhere contributes to a dangerous lack of empathy in young Muslims and Jews and an inability to understand the history of the present<sup>59</sup> from the others' point of view. This "absent curriculum"<sup>60</sup> is partly, of course, a product of the nationalistic function of school history of building shared national identity, which itself was built upon the relegation of faith-based identities. Nevertheless, the teaching of the contribution of moments of intense Muslim-Christian-Jewish collaboration to the general patrimony of human progress, such as Córdoba in Umayyad al-Andalus and 'Abbāsīd Baghdad or the apparatus of the high Ottoman state, will give all pupils in contemporary multi-faith settings a better awareness of how religious faith has not historically been only an obstacle to scientific progress (as is commonly presented in many schools as the default intellectual position) but a significant platform for it.

The inclusion of some of the contributions of these faith-groups in school history will also help to undermine the false narrative of historical enmity between faith-groups that underscores the default expectancy of many young people in the world today and will help to create the conditions of intellectual collaboration and exchange. It can even in the long-term future inspire the political will for change by drawing on a rich, collaborative past. History education can help create the conditions for more general rapprochement between young Muslims and Jews by suggesting both the possibility for real political change and shared intellectual success and innovation.

### **Conclusion**

Cochran<sup>61</sup> cites the example of Mamlūk slave-soldiers who were educated by the state to change languages, national identifications, loyalty, and religious beliefs as a clear example of the deeply transformative power of education. While no responsible contemporary educator would aim to have their charges "change" any of the above, the world faces a series of crises of which a significant common factor is the failure of different religiously defined groups living within national frameworks to communicate effectively and humanely with each other and also with those individuals and institutions characterized by the absence of faith.

Israel-Palestine is one obvious example of an unresolved religio-national conflict that vexes the minds and infects the consciousness of significant numbers of young Muslims and Jews. In the face of such entrenched and polarized contemporary hiatus, split and hostility, both history and theology suggest that Muslims and Jews are, in reality, natural friends and allies. This chapter has suggested that effective humanities education is one way, as both Al-Ghazālī and Maimonides would have put it, to reactivate the habit of this natural Muslim-Jewish disposition for collaboration and success.



## Notes

- 1 Joseph J. Schwab, *Science, Curriculum and Liberal Education* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 365.
- 2 S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: the Jewish communities of the Arab world as portrayed in the documents of the Cairo Geniza*, vol. 2 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1968–1988), p. 403.
- 3 Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 5–6.
- 4 M. Mazower, *The Balkans* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000).
- 5 E. N. Dorff, “The Concept of the Child Embedded in Jewish Law,” in *Children, Adults and Shared Responsibilities*, ed. M. J. Bunge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 27.
- 6 Sa’adya makes the identical point more concisely in the introduction to his commentary on Psalms: “There are some for whom command and prohibition is most effective; for others, the impending [promise of] reward or [threat of] retribution must [strengthen or] weaken their resolve. For yet others, the recounting of the stories of those who improved and succeeded, and those who were corrupt and perished, is the most compelling means of enforcing this lesson.” Moshe Sokolow, “Saadia Gaon’s Prolegomenon to Psalms,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 61 (1984): 145.
- 7 Qur’an 96:1.
- 8 We are being politically correct. The sources use “boys” for students and refer to their natural teachers as “fathers.” Girls were home-schooled, too, but their education was almost exclusively in those obligations whose performance was homebound – such as laws of Kashrut, Shabbat observance, and ritual purity.
- 9 Tanḥuma is a largely homiletical midrash (exposition) on the Pentateuch.
- 10 S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs* (New York: Schocken Books, 1955), p. 46 ff.
- 11 M. Frenkel, “Adolescence in Jewish medieval society under Islam,” *Continuity and Change*, 16:2 (2001): 263–281.
- 12 E. N. Dorff, “The Concept of the Child Embedded in Jewish Law,” p. 20
- 13 J. Cochran, *Democracy in the Middle East* (Plymouth, U.K.: Lexington Books, 2011), p. 40.
- 14 See Richard S. Peters: “Habit and Reason: The Paradox of Moral Education,” in *Moral Development and Moral Education* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 45–60.
- 15 *Nicomachean Ethics* II:1.
- 16 See the entry on “Aristotle: Ethics” in the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/aris-eth/>) for the consequences of translating *hexis* as “passive habituation” or as “active conditioning.” Our understanding of Aristotle and of his medieval interpreters follows the latter definition.
- 17 Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* III: 2, 58 (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-Arabiyya, n.d.). The choice of this analogy appears to have been influenced by its prior use by Al-Fārābī. Cf. Al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, trans. Richard Walzer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 261.
- 18 Iḥyā’, *ibid.*
- 19 Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* I:34.
- 20 Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah* – Menaḥot 4:4.
- 21 Mitzvah #16: The prohibition against breaking a bone of the Paschal sacrifice.
- 22 *Ijāza*, permission or certification to teach religion, became standard in the Islamic world beginning in the ninth century. Cf. George Makdisi, “Madrasa and university in the Middle Ages,” *Studia Islamica* 32 (1970): 260; *Ibid.*, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1981), p. 270. While Makdisi compares the Islamic *ijāza* to the subsequent Christian *licentia docendi*, he neglects to cite the Talmudic precedent of the license to rule individually in matters of civil law, Babylonian Talmud [BT], Sanhedrin 5a.
- 23 Robert Brody (ed.), *Teshuvot Naṭronai [bar Hillai] Ga’on* (Jerusalem, 1994) #256. Cf. Goitein, “Side Lights on Jewish Education from the Cairo Genizah,” *Gratz College Anniversary Volume* (Philadelphia, 1971), p. 90 #7a.
- 24 (BT) Baba Batra 21a: “When striking a child, only a shoelace may be used.” It is so codified by Maimonides, *Hilkhot Talmud Torah* 2:2.
- 25 Goitein, *ibid.*, p. 190.
- 26 Steven Harvey, “Al-Ghazali and Maimonides and their Books of Knowledge,” in *Be’erot Yitzhak: Studies in Memory of Isadore Tversky*, ed. Jay M. Harris (Cambridge MA: Harvard University



- Press, 2005), p. 115, writes: “Scholars have suggested the influence of Alghazali on this text, and it is, in fact, certain that Ibn ‘Aqin had Alghazali’s account of the duties of the teacher and the student in front of him when he wrote this chapter.”
- 27 Iḥyā’, *ibid.*
- 28 Ms. Oxford 1273, folio 106r ff. (unpublished).
- 29 Cf. Jeffrey L. Rubinstein, “The rise of the Babylonian Rabbinic Academy: a reexamination of the Talmudic evidence,” *Jewish Studies: An Internet Journal*, 1 (2002): 55–68.
- 30 Adolf Neubauer, *Medieval Jewish Chronicles* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1970), 2: 78–88.
- 31 Jonathan Berkey, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
- 32 Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 35 ff.
- 33 A. S. Tritton, *Materials on Muslim Education in the Middle Ages* (London: Luzac & Co. Ltd, 1957), p. 35.
- 34 Goitein, *op. cit.*
- 35 Nathan Morris, *The Jewish School* (London: Spottiswode and Eyre, 1937), pp. 112–133.
- 36 Daphna Efrat and Yaakov Elman, “Orality and the Institutionalization of Tradition: The Growth of the Geonic Yeshiva and the Islamic Madrasa,” in *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality, and Cultural Diffusion*, eds. Yaakov Elman and Israel Gershoni (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 100.
- 37 Passage translated by M.S. from the Hebrew, *The Epistle [Iggeret] of Sherirah Gaon*, ed. B.M. Levin, (Jerusalem: 1972), pp. 72–73. An English translation of the Epistle may be found in *The Iggeret of Rav Sherira Gaon*, trans. Nosson Dovid Rabinowich (Brooklyn: Moznaim, 1988). A somewhat different translation may be found on p. 84.
- 38 Otzar HaGeonim, vol. 7, p. 71 (referring to Yevamot 39b).
- 39 N. Feldman, *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).
- 40 B. Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 108–147.
- 41 *Op. cit.*, p. 131.
- 42 Jane S. Gerber, “The Pact of ‘Umar in Morocco; A Reappraisal of Jewish-Muslim Relations,” in *Proceedings of the Seminar on Muslim-Jewish Relations in North Africa* (New York: World Jewish Congress, 1975), pp. 40–50.
- 43 Norman A. Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), p. 101. Cf. Aron Rodrigue, *Jews and Muslims: Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Modern Times* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2003).
- 44 E. N. Dorff, “The Concept of the Child Embedded in Jewish Law,” p. 27.
- 45 This idea is expressed in a paper “Re-Claiming Education” by R. Pring presented at the Critical Realism Group Seminar, Institute of Education, University of London, 12 January 2010.
- 46 M. L. N. Wilkinson, *A Fresh Look at Islam in a Multi-Faith World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).
- 47 R. Bhaskar, “Who Am I?” in *Reflections on Meta-Reality* (New Delhi: Sage, 2002), p.27
- 48 Perennialism is a philosophy of religion, popularized by the British writer Aldous Huxley (1894–1963), which proposes that religions are diverse manifestations of the same transcendental yearning for experience of the Divine.
- 49 Qur’an 5:69
- 50 Exodus Rabbah 5:9.
- 51 Sessions were conducted by Matthew Wilkinson.
- 52 J. C. Conroy, D. Lundie, R. A. Davis, et al., *Does Religious Education Work?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
- 53 Berger (1967), cited in M. Grimmitt, *Religious Education and Human Development* (Great Wakering, U.K.: McCrimmon, 1987).
- 54 Conroy et al., *op. cit.*
- 55 J. Kroger, *Identity in Adolescence – The Balance between Self and Other*, second ed. (London: Routledge, 1996).
- 56 J. Igrave, “Issues in the delivery of religious education to Muslim pupils: perspectives from the classroom,” *British Journal of Religious Education*, 21:3 (1999): 146–157.
- 57 Undertaken by Matthew Wilkinson.
- 58 L. P. Barnes, “What is wrong with the phenomenological approach to religious education?” *Religious Education*, 96:4 (2001): 445–461.

- 59 J. Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916).
- 60 M. L. N. Wilkinson, "The concept of the absent curriculum: The case of the Muslim contribution and the English national curriculum for history," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 46:4 (2014): 419–440.
- 61 J. Cochran, *Democracy in the Middle East* (Plymouth, U.K.: Lexington Books, 2011)

### Further reading

- Goitein, Shelomo Dov, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 2: The Community (Berkeley, CA: 1971). Contains, *inter alia*, the most extensive coverage of Jewish education in the medieval Muslim world, as evinced through documents retrieved from the Cairo Genizah.
- Makdisi, George, *The Rise of the Colleges* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981). The most complete and authoritative account of the institutional development of the educational processes of Islam.
- Rosenthal, Franz, *Knowledge Triumphant* (Leiden: Brill, 1970). The most comprehensive study of epistemology in Muslim philosophy and the importance that the concept of knowledge played in Muslim society, with numerous parallels to Jewish sources.
- Wilkinson, Matthew, *A Fresh Look at Islam in a Multi-Faith World* (Routledge, 2015). The full account of the philosophy of Islamic critical realism that underpins the third section of this chapter of the philosophical reconstitution of Muslim-Jewish relations in education and its application to contemporary humanities education.

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