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INTRODUCTION

Psychoanalysis and Islam

In truth, we find treatises on the soul in Arabic works that evoke the Freudian division among the parts of the personality: id, ego, and superego.

—MOUSTAPHA SAFOUAN

IN 1945 PSYCHOLOGIST Yusuf Murad introduced the Arabic term *al-lashuʿur*, a term borrowed from the medieval Sufi philosopher Ibn ʿArabi and redolent with mystical overtones, as "the unconscious" in the newly founded Egyptian *Majallat ʿIlm al-Nafs* (Journal of Psychology).[1] Only two years prior, in 1943, Murad had published *Shifaʾ al-Nafs* (Healing the Psyche) as part of the popular *Iqraʾ* (Read) series, a text that introduced its audience to the basic theories and concepts of psychology and its schools of thought. In 1946, lawyer Muhammad Fathi Bey published a full-length treatise titled *The Problem of Psychoanalysis in Egypt*.[2] Responding to allegations that Freudianism had little to teach us about crime, he argued that, quite the contrary, psychoanalysis and criminology were entirely analogous disciplines. A decade later, in 1958, the Egyptian Lacanian analyst Moustapha Safouan translated Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* into Arabic for an eager audience.[3]

The Arabic Freud explores how Freud traveled in postwar Egypt, invoking Freudianism not as a pure form, "the source of an unchanging truth that was the model, mold and dress code to be imposed on all our experience," but rather as a multivalent tradition and metonym for broader Arabic debates surrounding the status of the unconscious in psychic life.[4] An understanding of the body of work developed on psychoanalysis in Egypt and of the intersections between Islamic thought and psychoanalysis enables us to reconsider that quintessential question of modernity, the question of the self, in a non-European context.[5] Indeed, the story of the elaboration of modern languages of the self in twentieth-century Egypt moves us away from models of selfhood

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as either modern or traditional, Western or non-Western, autonomous or heteronomous, and unsettles the assumption of an alleged incommensurability between psychoanalysis and Islam.

Significantly, the new science of the self that emerged drew both from Freudianism and other psychoanalytic traditions, as well as from key classical Islamic thinkers, such as Avicenna (d. 1037), Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111), Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 1209), and most extensively, Ibn ʿArabi (d. 1240). This contemporaneity of classical Islamic texts, coexisting and intermingling with psychoanalytic models, allows us to trace the epistemological resonances of discursive traditions as they come into contact.[6] Translating and blending key concepts from psychoanalysis with classical Islamic concepts, Egyptian thinkers explored the resonances between psychoanalytic and pre-psychoanalytic traditions in order to produce a theory of the self that was at once in concert with and heterogeneous to European analytic thought. According to novelist and playwright Tawfiq al-Hakim the impulse to blend traditions went as far back as Abu Nasr al-Farabi's neoclassical contemplation of Plato's *Republic*, one in which Greek ideas were poured into the mold of Islamic philosophy and Arabic thought and the intermarriage of literatures, epistemologies, and ontologies transpired.[7]

Tracing the lineaments of the unconscious, *The Arabic Freud* maps out the topography of modern selfhood and its ethical and epistemological contours in postwar Egypt. What does it mean, I ask, to think through psychoanalysis and Islam together, not as a "problem" but as a creative encounter of ethical engagement? Rather than view Islamic discourses as hermetically sealed, or traffic in dichotomous juxtapositions between East and West, this book focuses on the points of intersection, articulation, and commensurability between Islamic discourses and modern social scientific thought, and between religious and secular ethics. The hybridization of psychoanalytic thought with pre-psychoanalytic Islamic discursive formations illustrates that *The Arabic Freud* emerged not as something developed in Europe only to be diffused at its point of application elsewhere, but rather as something elaborated, like psychoanalysis itself, across the space of human difference.

A Copernican Revolution

Notions of the unconscious had seeped into Arabic writings in Egypt since at least as far back as the 1920s and through a myriad of sources, including for example Pierre Janet, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Alfred Adler.[8] Salama Musa, an avowed Fabian and public intellectual, published multiple books, beginning in the late 1920s, that touched on Freudian and psychoanalytic themes for a lay audience.[9] Musa had referred to the unconscious by the somewhat awkward compound phrase *al-ʿaql al-batin* (the inner mind), which he had to define extensively for his audience, in a 1928 text.[10] Yet the imprint of

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Freudian psychology was becoming increasingly visible in the 1930s and 1940s in the focus on unconscious drives, as synopses and translations of Freud began to appear. For example, a 1938 article in *al-Hilal* noted that a generational shift had taken place and that Egyptian youth were avidly reading Freud and were familiar with his ideas on psychoanalysis, the unconscious, the interpretation of dreams, and the sexual drive.[11] A 1941 article in *al-Thaqafa* by intellectual and writer ʿAli Adham discussed Freud's attitude toward war, translating and summarizing portions of "Thoughts for the Times of War and Death" and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, while outlining the sexual or life drive and explicating the increased significance of the death drive for Freud in the aftermath of the Great War.[12] By the mid-1940s a burgeoning lay literature on psychology was so well developed that scholars felt compelled to critique the unscientific literature "drowning the marketplace"—a testament to the increased salience of psychology to popular public discourse.[13] And by 1951 Kamal al-Din ʿAbd al-Hamid Nayal, a secondary school philosophy teacher, proposed prenuptial psychological exams in order to prevent unhappy marriages due to unresolved Oedipus complexes.[14]

Indeed, no knowledge of Freud could be complete without an understanding of the Oedipus complex, which Arabic readers would have been familiar with through the two adaptations of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* that appeared in 1949 by playwrights Tawfiq al-Hakim and Ali Ahmad Bakathir, as well as the first scholarly Arabic translation in 1939 by Egyptian belle lettrist Taha Husayn.[15] Egyptian dramatist al-Hakim's version is noteworthy for its innovative interpretation that places the central conflict of the play not between man and fate, but rather between fact and (hidden) truth, a decidedly Freudian reading.[16] But it was above all in Naguib Mahfouz's masterful 1948 literary rendition that the Oedipus complex was brought to life for its Arabic readers. In *al-Sarab* (*The Mirage*) the highly introverted protagonist Kamil Ruʾba Laz immerses himself in a daily dreamscape to escape a stifling reality and a pathological attachment to his mother, characterized by "an unwholesome affection which had exceeded its proper limits … a kind of affection that destroys."[17]

Understandings of Freud abounded in literary criticism as well. In 1947, the renowned Islamist thinker and writer Sayyid Qutb discussed the heuristic value of a psychological and specifically a psychoanalytic approach to literary criticism—itself defined as the attempt to understand literature as "the expression of a sensory experience in an inspired image."[18] Qutb demonstrated a psychoanalytical approach through a detailed consideration of Freud's study of Leonardo da Vinci.[19] Qutb's familiarity with Freud was gleaned directly from the pages of *Majallat ʿIlm al-Nafs*, as evidenced by his reference to the unconscious as *al-la-shuʿur*, as well as his use of the term *al-jinsiyya al-mithliyya* to refer to homosexuality, both terms of art put forth by the journal.[20] In 1953, two psychoanalytically oriented studies of the ʿAbbasid poet

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Abu Nuwas, widely known for his homoerotic poetry, were published in Egypt. Both studies, one by literary critic Muhammad al-Nuwayhi and the other by poet and writer ʿAbbas Mahmud al-ʿAqqad, were greatly concerned with Abu Nuwas's psychosexual makeup.[21] In 1954, outside of Egypt, Iraqi sociologist ʿAli al-Wardi wrote on the importance of Freud and "unconscious drives rooted in psychological and social conditions."[22] The ardent interest in Freud was the purview of academics and novelists, prevalent in lay and scholarly literature alike, as well as an object of interest to both secular and religious thinkers. Freud, it would seem, was nothing short of ubiquitous in postwar Egypt and the Arab world.

Psychoanalysis and the Religious Subject

In his *Sources of the Self*, philosopher Charles Taylor discusses the shift that occurred in the moral topography of modern selfhood in the early modern West.[23] In particular, he locates the emergence of a space of moral interiority characterized by a language of inwardness, and separated from the divine, with the thought of Descartes. Post-Cartesian thought, he argues, located the sources of the self within humans, rather than in relation to a path toward the divine. Revisiting the Western European archive of selfhood, Jerrold Seigel departs from Taylor's account, which, he argues, overemphasizes the punctual and disengaged nature of selfhood as a "rejection of moral sources exterior to human existence (the original sin of modernity in Taylor's story)."[24] Rather than speak of modern selfhood in the singular, Seigel's more capacious conception allows for variation and vicissitude, to include those, for instance, who were animated by a "desire to preserve a connection with the very premodern conceptions of a transcendent universe able to guarantee the harmony between self and world whose decline Taylor laments."[25] Moreover, Seigel departs from views that "regard the notion of an individual and subjectively grounded selfhood as peculiarly Western and modern."[26]

This more nuanced and expansive understanding of the history of modern selfhood helps us unsettle assumptions regarding the singularity of Western selfhood, as well as the secular nature of modern selfhood, assumptions that have been usefully undone by a growing body of literature on the globalization of the unconscious that has placed European and non-European formations within a single analytic lens. Ranjana Khanna has introduced the notion of "worlding" psychoanalysis, arguing that "understanding psychoanalysis ethnographically involves analyzing its use, both by Europeans and by the colonized," thereby "provincializing a language that presented itself as universal."[27] Shruti Kapila has investigated "Freud and his Indian friends," demonstrating how psychoanalytic knowledge was challenged and reappropriated in the context of colonial India, particularly with respect to religion, which was placed within a normative rather than pathological domain.[28] Similarly, Chris-

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tiane Hartnack has detailed Girindrasekhar Bose and the Indian Psychoanalytic Society's integration of classical Hindu texts and popular cultural traditions into their psychoanalytic theory, while Mariano Ben Plotkin has traced the emergence of a psychoanalytic culture in Argentina and its institutional dissemination throughout the twentieth century, and Rubén Gallo has excavated the "terra incognita that is Freud's Mexico."[29] Such reformulations of the global modern subject have refused to see the emphasis on the divine, for example, within non-European models of selfhood as atavistic remnants to be worn away by modernity and secularization. They have thus belied the implicit, albeit unsayable of European psychoanalysis, "the impossible achievement of selfhood for the colonized, who remain primitive and concealed."[30]

Despite this, the assumption that modern selfhood, and by extension psychoanalysis, are normatively secular, remains a tenacious one. Many scholars have assumed "the non-religious, radically atheistic, anti-metaphysical foundations of psychoanalysis," based on Freud's readings of monotheism in *Moses and Monotheism* and his statements in "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices," *The Future of an Illusion*, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, and elsewhere in his writings.[31] Admittedly, there were early analysts who believed that religion "was an expression of the infantile in mental life," and that religious ideas were "illusory wish fulfillments." Religious practices were compared to obsessional neuroses, religious experience to infantile regression and desire for union, or a misinterpretation of sexual feelings and even to catatonia and schizophrenia. However, there were analysts who tried to bridge the gap between analysis and religion, such as Eric Fromm and Karen Horney.[32] Bruno Bettelheim, for example, argued that in the original German, Freud's language was full of references to the soul, going so far as to refer to analysts as "a profession of secular ministers of the soul."[33]

To be sure, Freud himself has been subject to a wide variety of interpretations, ranging from those who see him as singularly atheistic to those who argue for his positive affirmation of Judaism.[34] In a most controversial interpretation, psychoanalysis has even been seen as a secularized version of Jewish mysticism.[35] At the center of these analyses often lay Sigmund Freud himself who, many have claimed, demonstrated an ambivalence toward religion in general, and Judaism in particular. Edward Said's *Freud and the Non-European* addresses the question of Freud's complex and troubled relationship to his Jewish identity primarily through the prism of its implications for political and national identity. Said deftly reads *Moses and Monotheism*, and its assertion that Moses was an Egyptian, as indicative of an antinomian thinking and an "opening out of Jewish identity towards its non-Jewish background."[36] Said sees the strength of this Freudian insight regarding the nonunitary nature of identity as "attending to it as a troubling, disabling, destabilizing, secular wound—the essence of the cosmopolitan, from which there can be no recovery," once again connecting the cosmopolitanism of psychoanalysis

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to its secularity.[37] Other scholars have focused less on Freud as a historical personage or on *Moses and Monotheism* as indexical of Jewish identity, and more on psychoanalysis as a heteroglossic tradition that exceeds "the scope of Freud's explicit postulates and arguments," thereby revealing "an *other Freud*," or what is "in Freud more than Freud."[38] Such an attentiveness to the productive tensions and ambivalences in Freud's work have enabled the staging of a dialogue between psychoanalysis and theology.[39] In a reevaluation of the Freudian tradition, Eric Santner takes seriously the therapeutic elements of monotheism, while elaborating the psychotheological contours of everyday life (revelation as enabling accountability and openness to the Other), to borrow his turn of phrase.[40]

Moving away from the literality of determining "what Freud really meant" has led to an emphasis on understanding the relationship between psychoanalysis and religion through the prism of ethical being, being for the Other, and the "love of man and the decrease of suffering" shared by religion and psychoanalysis alike.[41] Thinkers have turned to bearers of the Freudian tradition, most notably Jacques Lacan, to argue for what James DiCenso terms "*a reciprocal impingement of religiously derived concepts and issues upon psychoanalytic theory*."[42] As Lacan noted, the subject of religious experience was for Freud, "literally a dead letter. . . . Yet . . . that letter was nevertheless definitely articulated."[43] Lacan systematically addressed the question of "the monotheistic foundations of Western subjectivity as a set of discursive ruptures" through which the modern subject was forged.[44] The emphasis on Lacan has enabled a rethinking of the relationship between psychoanalysis and "religious and ethical selfhood."[45] In short, Lacan's method "is to bring psychoanalysis into *proximity* with both philosophy and religion," while acknowledging that "religion can give expression to the ethical potentiality for being of the subject."[46]

The Mystic Fable

Within the analytic tradition, mysticism, as a subset of religious belief and practice, has retained a peculiar importance, and for some, an exalted status. Freud himself, according to Ernest Jones, "regretted having ignored 'the rarer and more profound type of religious emotion as experienced by mystics and saints,'" having focused instead on the religious belief of the common man.[47] As Marion Milner points out, Freud discussed mysticism in precious few references.[48] In the introduction to *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud discussed a letter from Romain Rolland in which his friend described an affective or psychic state termed "oceanic feeling":

> It is a feeling which he would like to call a sensation of "eternity," a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded—as it were, "oceanic." This

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> feeling, he adds, is a purely subjective fact, not an article of faith; it brings with it no assurance of personal immortality.[49]

Freud ultimately concluded that oceanic feeling was a form of primary narcissism, a residual effect of the ego-feeling of "limitlessness and of a bond with the universe."[50] Oceanic feeling represented a sort of primitive survival in the domain of mental life—an early phase of ego-feeling.[51] According to Ranjana Khanna, Freud's conception was part of a larger progressivist and civilizational discourse "seen not as evolution but as a history in which those whom he understood to be savages really did *await treatment*."[52]

In discussing oceanic consciousness, Freud noted that the affect caused him "no small difficulty." "I cannot," he continued, "discover this 'oceanic' feeling in myself. It is not easy to deal scientifically with feelings."[53] William Parsons has shown that Freud's thirteen-year correspondence with Romain Rolland was beset with ambivalences and that his view of mysticism was far more nuanced than received accounts would have us believe. So much so that the Freud-Rolland debate foreshadowed philosophical arguments found in contemporary debates about mysticism, setting forth the possibility of a "new dialogical position that grants legitimacy to mystical modes of knowing."[54] In sum, we find "an ambivalent Freud who . . . oscillated between an ill-informed, dismissive reductionism . . . and a more open appreciation of mystics as 'intuitive psychologists' whose ecstatic and artistic utterances, properly interpreted, might lead us to new forms of psychological knowledge."[55]

Beyond the appreciation of such new forms of knowledge, thinking *alongside* mysticism has arguably deepened the analytic tradition and enabled a reconsideration of the ethics of the human subject. Lacanian psychoanalysis, oftentimes through its engagement with mysticism, places ethics at the core of man's relationship to the good, as an unconscious dialectical relationship between the subject and the law mediated through enjoyment (*jouissance*). As Marc De Kesel argues, Lacan breaks with Aristotelian ethics in terms of *content* (as for example, in the cultivation of virtuous habits), but retains the central *form* of ethical judgment in the subject's mediation between the pleasure principle and the reality principle.[56] And yet within Lacan's framework the good is not imagined as the moral universe of general values (neither "the moral 'ought' of the superego," nor the Kantian categorical imperative), but rather a positive orientation toward what lies beyond the formal law, "an antimoralistic ethics."[57] Classical ethics is consequently decentered while its core form is retained.

Lacan devoted particular attention to mysticism, conceived in the style of courtly love, as exemplifying an erotics centered on the love of the "good old God."[58] For Lacan "religion in all its forms" consisted in avoiding a constitutive emptiness (a vacuole) at the heart of the human subject that he terms, following Freud, *das Ding*, conceived as a radical evil, a death drive, around

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which man must keep his distance and yet ethically orient himself.[59] The entire process of sublimation, to which Lacan devotes much attention, relates to this confrontation between man and "the deathliness of his drive."[60] Religion, like art, sublimates *das Ding*, encircling it in order to conceive it; it is "a gap always in abeyance (a béance) of religious men and mystics."[61] For Lacan "all mysticisms, all that Kant disdainfully calls the *Religionsschwärmereien*, religious enthusiasms. . . . What is all this except a way to rediscovering the relation to *das Ding* somewhere beyond the law?"[62]

In this book, I explore Islamic mysticism, or Sufism, as a particularly fruitful point of entry for thinking about the relationship between Islam and psychoanalysis in terms of the theorization of the relations among ethics, eros, and the unconscious. Like Michel de Certeau, I find that mystical religious literature often shared an epistemological alignment with psychoanalysis. Pursuing the functional analogy between psychoanalysis and mysticism, de Certeau analogizes these two discursive formations as inaugurating the question of the subject, conceiving the body as itself a symbolic language, establishing a dialectic between the hidden and the shown, and asking what remains of the spoken word, all the while authorizing "a critical analysis by establishing a space (be it 'mystical' or 'unconscious') posited as different but not distant from the configuration organized by those founding principles of the historical system."[63]

It is perhaps, then, not accidental that Lacan had referenced the Muslim Andalusian mystic and philosopher Ibn ʿArabi on a number of occasions, going so far as to note his own alignment with Ibn ʿArabi's position on symbolic knowledge over the rationalism of Averroës.[64] Nor, too, is it incidental to find that Moustapha Safouan, a preeminent member of Lacan's inner circle in Paris, had originally trained with Ibn ʿArabi scholar and translator Abu al-ʿAlaʾ al-Afifi, whose doctoral thesis elaborated on the medieval mystic's conception of psychology.

Psychoanalysis and Islam: A Tale of Mutual Understanding?

The first Arabic translators of Freud rendered "the unconscious" as *al-lashuʿur*, a notion deeply resonant within the Islamic mystical tradition and evocative of the work of Ibn ʿArabi.[65] Contemporary scholars have revisited this link between psychoanalysis and Islam by focusing on Ibn ʿArabi's rendition of the Qurʾanic story of Abraham, in which Abraham dreams that he is sacrificing his son and believes it to be a divine commandment. According to Ibn ʿArabi:

> God said to Abraham while he was speaking to him: "In truth, O Abraham, you believed in a vision," which is not to say that Abraham, be-

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> lieving he had to sacrifice his son, was faithful to the divine inspiration; because he has taken the vision literally, while every dream demands a transposition or interpretation.[66]

As Jean-Michel Hirt notes, the Abrahamic trial confronts us with "whether to believe or to interpret one's dream," in which the "error is to give in to the manifest meaning of the dream, to reduce it to action, instead of hearing its latent signification."[67]

Tunisian analyst Fethi Benslama elaborates further: Ibn ʿArabi interprets the dream not as the desire to sacrifice the son, but rather as "the desire to kill the child in the father."[68] Abraham is "'not-conscious' (*bi lā chuʿūr*) of the true object of the desire for sacrifice," nor of the divine interpretation of the dream, of which he "was not conscious (*la yachʿur*)."[69] Ibn ʿArabi continues, "Because God is never unconscious (*bi lâ Chʿur*) of anything, while the subject is necessarily unconscious of such a thing in relation with such other."[70] Man is therefore not conscious of the multiplicity of things (for example, in Abraham's dream) and their transmutation into multiple forms, Benslama continues, "forms to which man does not have full access since there is an unconscious."[71] As Benslama states, "Ibn Arabî's unconscious is not the Freudian unconscious, even if it often comes close to it. It is the condition of the spiritual veiling and unveiling of the multiple forms of man."[72] While it may ultimately be true that Ibn ʿArabi's unconscious differs from the Freudian unconscious, it was epistemologically resonant with it, much in the same way that Ibn ʿArabi's notion of the imaginal world (*hadrat al-khayal*) resonated with Lacan's Imaginary, albeit conceptualized as a theophany, as I elaborate in chapter 2.[73]

Fethi Benslama's reading of Ibn ʿArabi takes place in the context of an "exploration of the texts and symbolic constructions of the Islamic religion in relation to the hypotheses of psychoanalysis."[74] In particular, he seeks to redress Abdelkebir Khatibi's claim that "*Islam is an empty place in the theory of psychoanalysis*."[75] His parsing of the Abrahamic story of sacrifice is an attempt to situate the "primal fictions of Islam and the workings of its symbolic systems" in terms of the Freudian role of the father in the establishment of the monotheistic religions.[76] Yet in focusing on the "repressed elements of Islam's founding narrative," Benslama's writings have been motivated, in part, by a concern for political Islamism as a return of the repressed.[77] Islamist movements, he notes, are "haunted by the question of origins," the heart of a "tormented present."[78]

Benslama is not alone in his use of psychoanalytic concepts and tools in order to understand the means and motives of Islamic religious phenomena. There is, in fact, a large psychoanalytic literature that seeks to understand contemporary Islamism as well as an alleged Arab and Islamic hostility to psychoanalysis.[79] In striving to explore the psychic reasons for an assumed Islamic resistance to psychoanalysis, such thinkers have proffered explanations of an

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Arab culture "dominated by the figure of the persecuting Master outside its ranks and the paternal Master within them."[80] Even when such explanations purport to be historical, they fail to take into account the specific history through which "Islam" and "psychoanalysis" became iconic symbols representing allegedly distinct civilizations and political positions. Such debates reduce theoretical models to political signifiers largely evacuated of meaning (a Western self signified by psychoanalysis and an Eastern self signified by Islam). Joseph Massad has criticized this body of literature on psychoanalysis and Islam by arguing that it represents an "uninterrogated conjunction of a reified psychoanalysis and a reified Islam," with the psychoanalytic insights of Benslama functioning as mere "invocations of liberalism."[81] The attempt to stage an interlude between psychoanalysis and Islam reproduces "the avatars of colonial thought with regard to the matter of the psychic being."[82] Indeed, as Alberto Toscano eloquently states, the "idea of transforming psychoanalysis into a secular clinic aimed at diagnosing the phanstasmatic impasses that prevent 'Arabs' or 'Muslims' from becoming the properly pathological subjects of modernity (rather than fanatics stuck between crumbling tradition and fear of 'Westoxification') leaves itself open to the accusation that psychoanalysis might constitute yet another stage in that cunning of Christianity which has often taken the name of 'secularism.'"[83] Such is an implicit danger of Gohar Homayounpour's spirited defense of *Doing Psychoanalysis in Tehran*, where she rebuts claims of an Islamic resistance to psychoanalysis, but only by virtually effacing Islam's presence in the Islamic Republic of Iran, with the exception of a few offhand references.[84]

The Arabic Freud actively refutes the secular civilizing mission of certain strands of psychoanalysis by bringing psychoanalysis and Islam into dialogue with each other and yet at the same time it does not take Islamic scripture, theology, and tradition as an ahistorical object of psychoanalytic inquiry. As such, I do not use psychoanalysis as a theory through which to understand the origins of Islam as a religion, or its allegedly attendant civilization, for example, by exploring the role of the father in the Qurʾan (by analyzing the dramatic import of the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar and so forth).[85] Rather, I explore specific intellectuals who theorized the self by drawing on both Islamic and psychoanalytic idioms, and reconstruct historical interactions, such as an interlude between Sufism and psychoanalysis in mid-twentieth-century Egypt, in which thinkers read classical Sufi philosophers such as Ibn ʿArabi, alongside, in concurrence with, and in distinction to Freud.

I thus join a body of work that takes seriously the relationship between psychoanalysis and Islam as mutually transformative, without succumbing to a secular liberal universalism or cultural imperialism. Stefania Pandolfo has referenced the relationship between Islam and psychoanalysis as representing the possibility of an opening, of "cultivating an ethical attitude in which

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one risks one's concepts, and oneself, in the opening to other traditions—welcoming, in the process, the transmutations of psychoanalytic knowledge."[86] Sigi Jöttkandt and Joan Copjec have likewise argued for the need to stage an "encounter between Islam and psychoanalysis in their mutual opening to the field of the impossible."[87] What is crucial to note here is that to instantiate the dialogue between psychoanalysis and Islam is to admit "to a modern subject whose freedom and finitude, responsibility and praxis are articulated in relation to God, on a transcendental axis where the soul/self must be trained and equipped, in this world, to become the addressee of divine discourse; and who simultaneously . . . is ethically active in relation to others in a community."[88] Allowing the encounter between Islam and psychoanalysis to exert pressure on psychoanalytic thought may therefore be productive and generative of new forms of psychoanalytic knowledge.[89] The idea, of course, is not to collapse the distinction between the two traditions, but rather to allow each to view the other as an aperture within which a certain form of lucidity becomes possible.

In contrast, then, to the so-called tale of mutual ignorance between Islam and psychoanalysis asserted by Benslama and others, I trace a tale of historical interactions, hybridizations, and interconnected webs of knowledge production between the Arab world and Europe. A series of interactions, I might add, in which there was as an ethical engagement between psychoanalysis and religion, and in which the two terms were not assumed to be a priori distinct. The result, I hope, will be part of the project of understanding psychoanalysis ethnographically, not simply by provincializing psychoanalysis's European provenance, but rather by demonstrating the non-Western traditions and individuals who contributed to psychoanalysis as a body of knowledge that was always already hybridized with the discourse of the other.[90] The coproduction of psychoanalytic knowledge across Arab and European knowledge formations definitively demonstrates the outmoded nature of historical models that presuppose originals and bad copies of the modern subject—herself so constitutively defined by the presence of the unconscious.

Decolonizing the Self

No discussion of psychoanalysis and Islam can avoid the question of colonialism and the relationship between Islam and the West. Gayatri Spivak has gone so far as to suggest that "institutional psychoanalysis can be a latter-day support of . . . epistemic violence," while Jacques Derrida has noted "the psychoanalytic colonization of a non-American rest-of-the-world."[91] Referencing colonial Algeria, he suggests that "it was altogether exceptional and untypical for psychoanalysts to raise the question of their own practice in its political, ethno-psychoanalytical and socio-institutional dimensions."[92]

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And yet, as Ranjana Khanna has detailed, psychoanalysis has been widely used by theorists of decolonization ranging from Aimé Césaire to Frantz Fanon, remarking that it was not possible to "think of selfhood entirely independently of psychoanalysis."[93] In fact, she continues, the political stakes of decolonization "demanded that subjectivity come to the fore in consolidating a theory and practice of political commitment."[94] Nevertheless the presence of non-Western analysts raised the pressing question of "*Who* can legitimately lay claim to psychoanalytic knowledge?"[95] Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks examines "the manner in which psychoanalysis … has served to exclude the non-Western analyst from theory or has demanded a reinscription of his/her subjectivity in consonance with Freudian (cultural) ideology."[96] Far from advocating a rejection of psychoanalysis, Seshadri-Crooks proposes it as a tool with which to understand "the historical ruptures and the epistemic violence engendered by colonialism, with regard to the (re-)inscription of subjectivity as such."[97] Indeed, countless texts of postcolonial critical theory and history have attended to the historicization of such epistemic ruptures and realignments of subjectivity.[98]

At the same time, conventional narratives of Arab intellectual history focus on colonialism as a formative rupture that split twentieth-century thought (and subjects) into liberal secular and religious trends. Moroccan historian Abdallah Laroui and Egyptian political theorist Anouar Abdel-Malek, for instance, expound the twentieth-century Arab intellectual as the product of the struggle for the reconquest of identity in the face of a constitutive self-alienation created by the colonial encounter.[99] For Laroui and others, the intelligentsia's response to colonialism and European hegemony led to two dominant trends, traditionalist Islamic thought and modernist thought—the former characterized by a repetitive recitation of the past or an alienation through time, and the latter by an eclecticism characteristic of ideological backwardness, or an alienation through space.[100]

My concern here, however, is of a decidedly different nature. Rather than assume the rigidity, mimesis, or univocity of "traditional" and "modern" thought, I explore the ways in which writings on the self drew from both psychoanalysis and the Islamic discursive tradition, understood as convivial bodies of knowledge subject to continuous reinterpretation. Further, in thinking about the routes of psychoanalysis in postwar Egypt, I attend to what endures of precolonial ontologies and epistemologies, to the continuities rather than ruptures, and to the trace rather than the cut. If as Pandolfo says, "psychoanalysis … developed at the margins of European modernity, from the debris of minor or obliterated traditions, and in the form of a counter-move," then so too did postwar Arab writings on the self.[101] What intellectual exchanges, conceptual translations, and encounters between traditions took place between Islam and psychoanalysis?[102]

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In fact, theoretical literature on the anthropology of Islam, such as Katherine Pratt Ewing's insightful ethnography of Sufism in contemporary Lahore, or Amira Mittermaier's anthropology of the imagination in Egypt, have eschewed simplistic interpretations of postcolonial Muslim personhood as caught between the fetters of tradition and modernity.[103] Most pertinently, Javed Majeed has compellingly argued that the Sufi poet Muhammad Iqbal might be seen as a possible landmark "in which Islamism and Western critical theory can be considered, not as oppositional discourses, but together, with overlapping concerns, as critiques of and responses to colonial modernity."[104] Similarly, Naveeda Khan explores Iqbal's engagement with philosopher Henri Bergson in order to demonstrate his recasting of Islam as an "open religion with possible futures as yet uninstantiated."[105]

Referencing psychologist Yusuf Murad, leading Egyptian literary critic Mahmud Amin al-ʿAlim referred to him as the consummate "philosopher of integration."[106] Rather than the "tale of mutual ignorance" that some have claimed to exist, for example, between Islamic and Western theories, debates in the formative postwar period in the Middle East did not view eclectic blendings, in Frederick Cooper's phrasing, as "personally destabilizing, as intellectually contradictory, or as threatening to [one's] sense of cultural integrity: *in between* [was] as much a place to be at home as any other."[107] For example, in postwar Egypt, an entire generation of scholars and their students began to teach the social sciences in Arabic at Egypt's national university, establishing an Arabic language lexicon for fields such as sociology and psychology within a university that had heretofore been dominated by French and British influence. Scholars created synthetic visions that combined Durkheimian sociology with Ibn Khaldun's theory of civilizations, or the dialectical dynamism of psychoanalysis with the mystical philosophy of Ibn ʿArabi, all the while uncovering epistemological resonances between modern European and Arab discursive traditions and demonstrating the contemporaneity of classical Arabic and Islamic texts. Whether scholars were translating Bergson and Fanon, reading Freud, or rethinking Qurʾanic ethics, European philosophy was simply not to be dismissed.

And yet even as they were in dialogue with various strands of European thought—existentialism, socialism, and Marxism, to name but a few—postwar intellectuals often agitated for complete political and cultural decolonization. As Yoav Di-Capua has detailed, the postwar period was dominated by a concern for the creation of a "new Arab man"—sovereign, authentic, and free—and on the elaboration of a postcolonial ontology centered on being rather than essence.[108] The 1940s and 1950s constituted the beginnings of a "working through" of the constitutive self-alienation of the colonial era (and hence the focus on the *nafs* or psyche) and a negotiation of the oftentimes divergent agendas of intellectuals and the state. The drive toward national liberation

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and social justice led to an ambivalent relationship to the postcolonial state, viewed at once as the avatar of national independence and an apparatus of political repression.

In particular, psychoanalysis could not be completely divorced from the attempts to professionalize psychology in the postwar period while putting its views and findings at the service of medicine, criminology, and state social engineering in the hope of creating the postcolonial "new man." At times, psychoanalysis was harnessed to postwar concerns centered on youth and sexual deviance, or on crime and psychopathy, for instance. This was particularly the case given the fact that psychoanalysis itself had made only negligible inroads into clinical practice. Inevitably, such attempts led to tensions between philosophical and ethical orientations and pragmatic political concerns that emerged when intellectual objectives became tethered to postcolonial political programs.

Homo psychoanalyticus was thus not characterized by "the neutralization of ethics and of the political realm" and a dissociation of the "psychoanalytical sphere from the sphere of the citizen or moral subject in his or her public or private life."[109] Rather, psychoanalysis presented the possibility of enjoyment in the use of the other as an instrument or object, while at the same time offering a means of undermining that sovereign pleasure, precisely by critically analyzing one's own psychic implication in it. Simply put, psychoanalysis oscillated between ethical ideals centered on the opacity of the human subject (her resistance to intelligibility and understanding) and the belief in the transparency of humans and the possibility of their instrumentalization. Such divergent views marked the difference between the prospect of a psychoanalysis that would be at "*at the service* of those who suffer, and not an instrument of power or mastery over them."[110]

More specifically, the trajectory of psychoanalysis in Egypt indicates a tension between a notion of the human subject as conceptually opaque, as only incompletely knowable to itself or others due to the existence of the unconscious, and as operationally transparent as the erstwhile object of postcolonial projects of social reform and amelioration. This tension, one internal to psychoanalysis, has often been discussed in terms of the divide between certain strands of Freudian or Lacanian psychoanalysis that posit a "radically unknowable, radically incalculable" subject and those of American ego psychologists that aim for the adaptation of the human subject to his environment.[111] This latter tradition has been criticized for its amenability to projects of human engineering that render the human subject whole, transparent, and calculable, in effect leading to a psychologized subject who becomes the object of Foucaultian biopower.[112]

Among those who drew on psychoanalysis, we observe that the key term of reference was never the ego, but rather always the polysemic Arabic term *nafs* (soul, spirit, psyche, self), a concept implying a spiritual core, alongside the presence of the unconscious (*al-la-shuʿur*) as a place where God could be

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manifested. Such domains far exceeded the operations of the ego while simultaneously grounded in the praxis of ethics. It would be reductive, then, to think that intellectual and ethical concerns could simply be mapped onto political agendas, and questions beyond postcolonialism and nationalism deeply engaged thinkers concerned with the science of selfhood and the soul. I therefore eschew an analysis that would view psychoanalysis as merely yet another technology of the late colonial state or of postcolonial nationalism, or as epiphenomenal to larger political developments in the Arab world. Psychoanalysis found outlets in theoretical and philosophical debates where thinkers elaborated on the conceptual history of the unconscious and of desire, while attuned to the ethical contours of the subject. At the same time, the exigencies of postcolonial politics often rendered psychological theories in the service of disciplinary projects and prescriptive visions of the postcolonial subject. *The Arabic Freud* traces the movement of these two components of psychoanalytic thought, outlining how these two strands—the philosophical and the pragmatic—intersected and diverged in various ways within the history of analytic thought within twentieth-century Egypt.

Structure, Method, and Argument

By exploring the formation of modern discourses of subjectivity in fields as diverse as psychology, Islamic philosophy, and the law, this book demonstrates that psychoanalysis was a tradition with deep and varied roots in the Egyptian postwar setting, not only among psychologists and mental health professionals, but also among Islamic thinkers and legal practitioners. At the same time this is not a reception history; it does not in any way seek to exhaustively assemble together all those who wrote about or approached Freud's ideas in Egypt, nor does it catalog Arabic translations, commentaries, and exegeses of Freud. Rather, I both stage and historically reconstruct a philosophical encounter between psychoanalysis and Islam, one in which Arab intellectuals emerge as producers of philosophy and theory rather than merely as objects of study or the simple products of their political context.[113] As Edward Baring notes, we should be wary of "a mode of history that reduces philosophical texts to their contextual moment. One should not see biographical, political, or cultural background as an 'origin' for philosophical ideas."[114]

We will encounter Arabophone writings on the self by a variety of scholars virtually unknown to a Western audience, all of whom were in conversation with a range of figures of psychoanalysis, such as Sigmund Freud, Karen Horney, Henri Wallon, and Ian Suttie. Such a dialogue was enabled by a longstanding engagement with the classical Arabic tradition of scholarship on the soul or *nafs*, one that included key luminaries of Islamic thought, al-Ghazali and Ibn ʿArabi, as well as lesser-known thinkers, such as Ibn ʿAtaʾ Allah al-Sakandari.

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I mobilize both sets of writings, those on psychoanalysis and those of classical and contemporary Islamic thought, as theoretical frameworks and objects of philosophical analysis, shuttling back and forth, much as my own historical actors, between frameworks. At the same time, my analytical orientation is not confined to those of the scholars that I study, and I draw freely from the psychoanalytic tradition, drawing on scholars such as Jacques Lacan who were at times at odds with the theoretical formulations of my historical actors. I do so with the intent of emphasizing certain affinities, while highlighting key differences between these traditions, rather than a dogmatic fidelity to a particular psychoanalytic orientation.

Part I, "The Unconscious and the Modern Subject," explores postwar intellectuals' engagement with psychoanalytic theory in philosophical and ethical debates on the nature of the soul, the self, and the psyche. Part II, "Spaces of Interiority," explores the more pragmatic concerns that emerged with the professionalization of psychology, particularly within the psychology of sexuality and youth and criminal psychology. Traversing literatures minor and major, ranging from scholarly texts on psychoanalysis to lay literature on self-healing, the following chapters address many of the key questions of psychoanalysis and its intersection with multiple traditions, Islamic and otherwise, by exploring, in turn, the modern subject of consciousness, ethics, sexuality, and the law within mid-twentieth-century Egypt.

Chapter 1, "Psychoanalysis and the Psyche," considers Freudian itineraries in postwar Egypt through an exploration of the work of Yusuf Murad, the founder of a school of thought within the psychological sciences, and the journal he coedited from 1945 to 1953, *Majallat ʿIlm al-Nafs*. By training a generation of scholars, Murad left a wide-ranging legacy on psychology, philosophy, and the wider academic fields of the humanities and the social sciences. Melding key concepts from psychoanalysis with classical Islamic concepts, Murad elaborated a psychological theory of the subject as an integrative agent, embodying a complex synthesis of unity and multiplicity. Theorizing the temporality of the subject, the epistemology of psychoanalysis and the analytic structure, and the *socius*, Murad both drew upon and departed from European psychoanalytic thought, while often insisting on the epistemological and ethical heterogeneity of different theories of the self.

Chapter 2, "The Self and the Soul," reconstructs a historical interlude between Sufism and psychoanalytic psychology in postwar Egypt. How might we think through the relationship between psychoanalysis and the Islamic tradition, while respecting the "ontological stakes" of the latter, namely, the belief in divine transcendence and divine discourse? I address this question through a detailed exploration of the writings of Abu al-Wafa al-Ghunaymi al-Taftazani and his mentor Muhammad Mustafa Hilmi, both prominent Egyptian intellectuals who expounded Sufi ideas for a broader reading public, beginning in the 1940s. Situating these figures within the larger intellectual

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and religious context of mid-twentieth-century Egypt, I explore the elective affinities between Sufism and certain strands of psychoanalysis in terms of a dialogical relationship between the self and the Other, as mediated by the unconscious.

Chapter 3, "The Psychosexual Subject," traces the intersection of psychoanalysis and the invention of the psychosexual subject in postwar Egypt. Following a set of discussions on Freudian theory and sexuality in *Majallat ʿIlm al-Nafs*, as well as a series of popular and didactic books, I explore newly emerging languages of desire and ethics and their relationship to gender and sexuality. In sharp contrast to the alleged incommensurability between psychoanalysis and Islam, postwar psychoanalysis was able to breathe new life into an earlier premodern classical literature centered on desire and the appetites and on the ethical cultivation of the child. The invention of the psychosexual subject, in other words, did not necessarily entail a simple shift of pleasure and desire away from the theological pastoral toward secular science and medicine as some scholars have asserted.

Between June 1947 and February 1949, a series of articles in *Majallat ʿIlm al-Nafs* debated the heuristic value of Freud's ideas, particularly surrounding the Oedipus complex, for an understanding of criminality. Chapter 4, "Psychoanalysis before the Law," traces this debate spawned by professor of criminal psychology Muhammad Fathi, while paying particular attention to the social role of the criminal at midcentury. I argue that the convergences or divergences found between psychoanalysis and the law were in part related to disputes regarding the causal nature of crime. Further complicating these debates was the juridical status of psychoanalysis itself as it struggled to assert its autonomy as a field of therapeutic practice within the Egyptian legal system. At the center of all of these arguments lay the criminal, himself increasingly enmeshed within new legal and forensic practices, as well as multiple legal regimes over the course of the twentieth century.

In the epilogue, I return to the central question of this book—what does it mean, *now*, to think through psychoanalysis and Islam together as a creative encounter of ethical engagement? Addressing recent scholarly interventions, such as those of Julia Kristeva, that operate within larger civilizing mission narratives that couple psychoanalysis with the secularization of Judeo-Christian legacies, I question the notion of psychoanalysis as the purview of any singular civilization. What might it mean to rethink the secular ends of analysis and open ourselves up to an ethical encounter with the Other?

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