MAPPING THE
SECULAR MIND

MODERNITY'S QUEST FOR A GODLESS UTOPIA

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FOREWORD

HAGGAG ALI's *Mapping the Secular Mind: Modernity's Quest for a Godless Utopia* critically examines issues of reason, rationality, and secular materialism, to explore how these mental perceptions, or ways of mapping the world, have affected human interaction and sociological development. He does this by comparing and contrasting the ideas of Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri (1938–2008) and Zygmunt Bauman (1925), focusing on similarities and differences in their thinking, what influenced their perspectives (specifically Marxism), and the historical context of their life and work. Bauman for instance, an eminent Jewish scholar, has known war and exile and is strongly anti-Zionist. The dynamics are interesting.

In doing so, Ali is also able to introduce and study some of the most important epistemological metaphors used to describe, analyse and understand society and the human condition. For instance, the analogies of man and society as a machine (the clockwork universe) and of society as an organism were heavily criticised by Elmessiri.

Renowned for their work, both thinkers have been highly influential in their field. Zygmunt Bauman is retired Emeritus Professor at the University of Leeds and one of the world's foremost sociologists. A prolific author, his most famous and compelling publication is arguably *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), discussed by Ali at length. In the work Bauman makes the remarkable case that rather than being an example of accidental deviation from modern principles, including rationalism, the Holocaust, as well as the whole Nazi enterprise, were in fact consistent with the very essence of modernity and its worldview, Social Darwinism taken to its logical course. The reasons underpinning the rise of the fascist state are examined in order to warn humanity of the dangers of a modernity that furnishes the "necessary conditions" for its undertaking and for the neatly legitimised disappearance of unwanted people.

The late Egyptian scholar Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, one of the foremost intellectuals of his age, was Professor Emeritus of English literature and critical theory at Ain Shams University, Cairo. Also a prolific writer he published many articles and books on various subjects including, Zionism, modernism, postmodernism, secularism, and materialist philosophy. Elmessiri was particularly interested in the issue of bias in the social sciences and how this influenced the way in which reality was perceived, deconstructed and reconstructed.

According to Ali, the various epistemological paradigms that form the foundations of Western thought, whilst challenging religion's function as the route to Ultimate Truth and targeting it as the source of human primitiveness, have in the postmodern era themselves failed to deliver. The many hands that made up Enlightenment philosophers (or *les philosophes* as they are referred to in French) had a grand plan: to fashion an earthly paradise of man's own making, doing away with ignorance, superstition and backwardness. This was to be achieved through the vehicles of science, rationalism, and reason, with Man at the helm – that is at the centre of all discourse and of all that matters, controlling and shaping his destiny, and modeling society under new norms of behaviour.

Some of this was fantasy. Postmodern society is in fact dysfunctional on many levels. It is also a far cry from the utilitarian utopia so enthusiastically envisaged by a philosophy that to this day views the mind as self-sufficient for human progress. Ali points to the delusions of such utopianist thinking.

Written in a clear and lucid style, the book will benefit both general and specialist readers, increasing their awareness of the question of cognitive mapping, and how human beings devise paradigms to form a mental picture of the world around them.

This study is being published to widen discourse, invite scholars to respond, and hopefully pave the way for further research. Readers may agree with some of the issues raised, and disagree with others, but it is hoped that for the most part both general and specialist readers will benefit from the perspective offered and the overall issues examined.

Where dates are cited according to the Islamic calendar (hijrah) they are labelled AH. Otherwise they follow the Gregorian calendar

and labelled CE where necessary. Arabic words are italicized except for those which have entered common usage. Diacritical marks have been added only to those Arabic names not considered modern. English translations taken from Arabic references are those of the author.

The IIIT, established in 1981, has served as a major centre to facilitate serious scholarly efforts based on Islamic vision, values and principles. The Institute's programs of research, seminars and conferences during the last thirty years have resulted in the publication of more than four hundred titles in English and Arabic, many of which have been translated into other major languages.

We express our thanks and gratitude to the author for his cooperation throughout the various stages of production. We would also like to thank the editorial and production team at the IIIT London Office and all those who were directly or indirectly involved in the completion of this book including, Shiraz Khan, Maida Malik, Dr. Maryam Mahmood, and Salma Mirza. May God reward them for all their efforts.

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Introduction:
Cognitive Mapping and
Metaphoricity

THE term "cognitive map" can be best introduced through an inter-
esting anecdote that goes back to the sixteenth century. According to
the well-known Islamic studies scholar and world historian Marshall
Hodgson, the Italian missionary Matteo Ricci brought to China a
European world map to show the Chinese the new discoveries in
America. As he expected, the Chinese were very impressed by these
discoveries, but he realized that they felt offended when they saw the
map splitting the earth's surface down the pacific, thus making China
appear off at the right-hand edge. What is at stake here is that the con-
tours of this geographical map contradict the Chinese cognitive map
and refute their perception of China as literally the "middle kingdom"
i.e. the centre of the universe and thus the centre of the map. Though
embarrassed and perplexed, Ricci managed to overcome this awkward
situation by drawing another map, splitting the Atlantic instead, thus
making China appear more central. The significance of this anecdote
lies in the fact that human conceptual systems are significant and influ-
ential maps which are prior to the contours of natural, geographical
and political maps. Drawing a map, geographical or cognitive, is thus a
compromise of what mapmakers would like to include and what they
want to exclude.[1]

The term "cognitive map" has a long history in many psychological
studies that used it in the 1940s as a metaphorical reference to the

accurate memory of space determination and the ability of constructing mental patterns that enhance the process of place expectation.[2] Cognitive maps, schemata, scripts and frames of reference have become the most dominant metaphors used to underline the epistemological and ontological systems people use to perceive, understand, code and decode complex problems and phenomena.

The importance of these metaphors in the postmodern world derives from the excessive celebration of a value-free, fragmentary and free-floating culture based on the disappearance of all centres, both divine and human: "the death of God," "the death of man," "the death of the author," "the deconstruction of the subject," "the dissolution of identity," "the displacement of the ego" and "the end of History." Within this context, cognitive mapping and remapping transcend spatial orientation and information processing to embrace all attempts at asserting the ontological and epistemological authority of history and legitimizing the human resistance to fragmentation and perpetual becoming. Thus, the metaphorical entailments of cognitive maps go beyond the mere idea of spatial layout, and they can be used to underline the mental maps that people use not only to map space but to perceive and deal with human reality, to code and decode complex texts and narratives.

As the secular mind has laid the foundations of modernity, that is our modern and post- modern world (including its problems), an attempt will be made to explain the term "modernity" and its semantic field before further analysis. By the early 1980s, the "modernism/ postmodernism" constellation in the arts and "modernity and post-modernity" in critical and social theory had become one of the most contested terrains in the intellectual life of western societies.[3] The term modernity is very controversial, and no definition can fully describe its dynamics, achievements and consequences. It was the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau who first used the word *moderniste* in the ways used in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.[4] The word modernity, however, came into existence only in the late 1980s and Raymond Williams's revised edition of *Keywords* (1983) is cited by Tony Blackshaw as an evidence that there was hardly any recognition

of the term modernity in specialized dictionaries and glossaries; the discourse on modernity started only with the emergence of theories of postmodernism, and it gave rise to the opposition between modernism and postmodernism on the one hand, and modernity and postmodernity on the other.[5] In other words, modernity is usually explained and defined in comparison with the term "postmodernity," which is also fiercely contested.

Perry Anderson points out that Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*: *A Report on Knowledge* (1979) is believed to be the first book to approach postmodernity as a comprehensive change of human condition, particularly the rise of the post-industrial society theorized by Daniel Bell and Alain Touraine. The most defining feature of postmodernity is "the loss of credibility of meta-narratives," including classical socialism, Christian redemption, Enlightenment progress, Hegelian spirit and Romantic unity.[6] In other words, modernity can be defined as the celebration of secular meta-narratives, especially the Enlightenment progress.

1.1 THE PROJECT OF COGNITIVE MAPPING

The project of cognitive mapping was launched by American Marxist critic Fredric Jameson in the late 1980s as a socialist political strategy directed at creating a global class-consciousness that could resist late capitalism and the confusion it had created in our human condition. Jameson's major argument is that we are unable to map our position in the postmodern world in the same way the dwellers of the city fail to locate their position in the complex urban space. Thus one of the major characteristics of cognitive mapping is that it presupposes the existence of a condition of loss and confusion. The cartographers themselves are no exception; they are like nomads who attempt to overcome this confusion and re-examine the foundations of our position towards the grand issues of existence, our worldviews and their consequences.

Cognitive mapping is introduced as an outlet from a state of confusion and as a strategy aimed at creating representational patterns capable

of promoting class-consciousness. The latter is seen as the ultimate goal of cognitive mapping, since it is expected to help people locate themselves in the urban totality dominated by the "cultural logic of late capitalism." This conception of cognitive mapping echoes the concept of *Totalitatsintention* (the drive towards totality) developed by the Marxist critic Georg Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness* to conceptualize the relationship between the dynamics of social relations and the resistance to reification and fragmentation resulting from the dominance of the capitalist paradigm in western modernity.7 Jameson states this fact in his book *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) and points out that cognitive mapping is a "code word for class consciousness" within the "new spatiality implicit in the postmodern."8

Jameson's cognitive mapping and utopia are seen as two major related concepts that have the potential to overcome the current failure of dialectical criticism, which is expected to map a totality i.e. a class conciousness. Cognitive mapping in this sense is closely related to the concepts of representation and figurability, which were the fundamental preoccupation of literary criticism of the early 1970s. What is remarkable about figuration is that the represented object transcends the particular and concrete in favour of an abstract idea that goes beyond the surface appearance of things. The representational object of cognitive mapping is also an abstract concept but it articulates a concrete totality that goes beyond empirical verification, and thus uncovers the mysterious forces that constitute our world and existence. Cognitive mapping is thus performed and created in discourses that introduce representational structures to make truth intact but without a direct access or reference to external reality. Like cognitive mapping, utopia is not seen as a realm of fantasy or a form of ideality but as a cognitive procedure that uncovers the dynamics of the present and the iron cages of "unfreedoms."9

Commenting on Jameson's use of the term cognitive mapping, Adam Roberts argues that it re-defines ideology as the representation of the subject's imaginary relationship to his "real" conditions of existence. It is an attempt to "fantasize" our condition in a wider framework

of mythic narratives that have the potential to represent the "political unconscious" of social totality so as to grasp the change in our mode of being-in-the world.[10]

1.2 ABDELWAHAB ELMESSIRI AND THE NEW ISLAMIC DISCOURSE

In the last few decades, Western critique of modernity has inspired Muslim intellectuals to develop new ideas, images, terms and concepts that state their positions towards the tendencies of secular modernity, its transformations and consequences. Modernity is usually equated with the lofty ideals of the Enlightenment, particularly the promise of nature, reason and progress to establish a rational and progressive system. This perspective changed to a large extent after the Second World War and the development of a very sophisticated western self-scrutiny discourse, heightened by the works of the Frankfurt school.

In his attempt to deconstruct the dominant perception of modernity, the Arab Egyptian Muslim intellectual Abdelwahab Elmessiri (1938–2008) benefited from this western critical legacy and traced the reversals of idealism and materialism, of transcendentalism and immanentism in western discourse. Elmessiri's opposition between immanence (the essence of the secular modern) and transcendence (usually interpreted as the Islamic worldview), has led many Arab scholars to identify him as one of the proponents of a new Islamic discourse. Elmessiri's awareness of the decline of the leftist movements and the rise of political Islam enabled him to envisage the possibility of a break with modernity. Elmessiri's critique of modernity can be seen as an attempt to Islamize modernity but ironically via western critique itself.

In his attempt to explore the features of the new Islamic discourse, Elmessiri provided the following diachronic classification: (1) the traditionalist Islamic discourse, which emerged as a direct and immediate reaction to the colonial invasion of the Muslim world and prevailed until the mid-1960s, and (2) the new Islamic discourse, which assumed a definite form in the mid-1960s. Both discourses, in Elmessiri's view, endeavour to provide an Islamic answer to the questions raised by

modernization and colonization. There are, however, radical points of divergence between them due to the fact that the bearers of the new Islamic discourse could recognize the other face of modernity, one which is totally different from the glorious Western modernity known, experienced and studied by the first generation of the pioneers, including Shaykh Mohammad Abduh and Shaykh Rifaʿa al-Tahtawy.[11]

Though "late capitalism" constitutes one of the major drives behind the interest of Muslim intellectuals in cognitive mapping, it is not the only force that directs and shapes their critique of the secular modern. Unlike Jameson, Elmessiri launched the cognitive mapping of secular modernity not to legitimate Marxism and its perception of history but to present a critique that uncovers the forces and the implications of its emergence, its inherent worldview and consequences. He attempted to provide us with maps, codes and signs that may inform our choice by making us aware of the tendencies and the consequences of the modern secular worldview.

Elmessiri agrees with Jameson that capital has defied all cultural specificities and all forms of authenticity in favour of the dominance of only one value: the value of exchange. Elmessiri, however, deciphers the code of capitalism and replaces it with secularism. In his two-volume work *al-ʿAlmāniyyah al-Juzʿiyyah wa al-ʿAlmāniyyah al-Shāmilah* [Partial Secularism and Comprehensive Secularism], he puts it this way:

> [Jameson's] analysis of the general value of exchange that annuls [human and cultural] specificities is not about capital as an economic matter, but as a mechanism with an epistemological dimension (ultimate and total), leading to the deconstruction and destruction of all that is unique, special, authentic, sacred, mysterious and ambivalent…. Capital is thus a mechanism that throws man away from complex history and civilization into the simple and monistic world of nature; it is the mechanism of the dominance of the monistic and materialistic natural laws. Capital is thus the most important mechanism of the desanctification of man. But it is not the only mechanism; there are many others.[12]

Introduction: Cognitive Mapping and Metaphoricity

For almost four decades, Elmessiri was engaged in a philosophically oriented study of western modernity and its relationship with Nazism and Zionism. In his autobiography *Riḥlaty al-Fikriyyah: al-Bidhūr wa al-Judhūr wa al-Thimār* [My Intellectual Journey: The Seeds, The Roots, and The Harvest], Elmessiri underlines the influence of humanist Marxism on his thought, especially its integration of both theoretical foundations and the critique of man's historical and social condition. The Marxist critique of western modernity and its emphasis on *Gemeinschaft* (community) are believed to have saved Elmessiri from 'nihilism' and to have provided him with a 'solid critical foundation.'[13] Elmessiri puts it this way:

> Marxism reinforced some of my inherent positions such as the rejection of injustice and exploitation; the necessity of establishing justice on earth; the importance of transcending the existing reality and never surrendering to it; most importantly, Marxism provided me with a critical ground that enabled me to have a critical distance from my bourgeois milieu in Egypt and later from the American life during my stay in the United States.[14]

Elmessiri's intellectual background and his project of cognitive mapping, however, are wider than the ideals of Marxism and its ambitions. Born in a traditional and conservative milieu in the village of Damanhur in Egypt, Elmessiri was brought up in a community that celebrates the ideals of diversity, tolerance and family ties. At High school, almost at the age of twelve, Elmessiri joined the Muslim Brothers and participated in their religious activities for a period of two years. At the age of sixteen, he was obsessed with the common questions about the origin of evil in the world. This hermeneutics of suspicion failed to find convincing answers in his ideological and religious background, and it led him to embrace Marxism as a tool of philosophical understanding and as a means of fighting social injustice. In the mid-1950s, he became a member of the Communist Party and participated in its activities till 1959. Elmessiri, however, stresses that what he learned from Marxism melted entirely into his "humanistic Islamic vision."[15]

At Rutgurs University and in the post–1967 period, Elmessiri and his friend Kevin Reilly launched the Socialist Forum, and the first lecture he delivered was entitled "A Lecture by an Arab Socialist on the Arab–Israeli Conflict." Elmessiri used this forum as a platform to discuss this conflict regardless of the proposed and announced themes.[16] Elmessiri's critique of Zionism shows clearly in his early writings, including *Nihāyat al-Tarīkh: Muqaddimah li Dirāsat Binyat al-Fikr al-Ṣuhyūnī* [The End of History: An Introduction to the Study of the Structure of Zionist Thought, 1972], a 500 page work *Mawsūᶜat al-Mafāhīm wa al-Muṣtalaḥāt al-Ṣuhyūniyyah* [The Encyclopaedia of Zionist Concepts and Terminology, 1975], *Al-Firdaws al-Arḍī: Dirāsāt wa Inṭibaᶜāt ᶜan al-Haḍārah al-Amrīkiyyah al-Ḥadīthah* [The Earthly Paradise: Studies and Impressions about Modern American Civilization], 1979], and a two volume work entitled *Al-Iydyūlūjiyyah al-Ṣuhyūniyyah: Dirāsah Ḥālah fī ᶜIlm Ijtimāᶜ al-Maᶜarifah* [Zionist Ideology: A Case Study in the Sociology of Knowledge, 1982-1983].

After getting his doctoral degree in comparative literature from Rutgers University in 1969, Elmessiri was introduced by Osama al–Baz, the political adviser of former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, to the most well–known Egyptian journalist and historian Mohamed Hassanein Heikal. The latter was then the editor–in–chief of the most popular Egyptian daily newspaper *Al-Ahram* and he encouraged Elmessiri to work at the Centre for Political and Strategic Studies as a specialist on Zionism. By the late 1970s, Elmessiri, however, could not even step in to the *Al-Ahram* offices because he publically opposed the Camp David Accords. Elmessiri decided to devote his intellectual endeavour to editing and complying the entries of *Mawsūᶜat al-Yahūd wa al-Yahūdiyyah wa al-Ṣuhyūniyyah* [Encyclopedia of the Jews, Judaism and Zionism, henceforth *Mawsūᶜat*], which was published by Dār al–Shurūq in Cairo in 1999, and then in 2001 in a CD by Bayt al–ᶜArab li al–Tawthīq al–ᶜAṣrī wa al–Naẓm. Elmessiri did not see his career as mere academic work but as a symbol of "man's battle against injustice, as this eternal struggle between an authentic human being (who tries to transcend the realm of the five senses) and the natural/materialistic man who is consumed by this realm."[17]

Elmessiri was aware that he had transcended the existing facts that had been pointing at the possibility of reaching peace in the Middle East; he kept viewing the events, contemplating them and writing the *Mawsūʿat* over 25 years during which people were under the illusion that the Arab-Israeli conflict was approaching its end and perpetual peace would prevail.[18]

Elmessiri usually refers to his sojourn in the United States during two separate periods (1963-69/1975-79) as a very crucial moment that shaped his understanding of the transformation of western modernity as a "paradigmatic sequence" that starts with solid rational materialism and ends with liquid non-rational materialism.[19] Elmessiri's reference to the 1960s is very important because the very idea of modernization, according to Dean Tipps, was developed and promoted by American social scientists in the period after the Second World War, reaching its climax in the mid-1960s during which there was a widespread attitude of complacency towards American society and a remarkable expansion of American political, military and economic interests throughout the world.[20]

The 1970s, however, are crucial to an understanding of Elmessiri's critique of modernity because this period witnessed the rise of political Islam which managed, after the Arab defeat by Israel in 1967, to fill the vacuum left by the leftist movements, their rhetoric of technological progress as well as their idealistic discourse of Arab socialism, one that was (mis) used to justify the loss of political freedom in exchange for the rhetoric of national development and technological progress. The 1970s and the early 1980s, according to Sami Zubaida, can be seen as the charismatic period of political Islam which was embraced by many of the prominent Egyptian leftists, including Hassan Hanafi, Tariq al-Bishri and Adel Hussien, as a vehicle of popular contestation and national liberation.[21] This period had a great impact on Elmessiri whilst he was writing the *Mawsūʿat*. Elmessiri states:

> [I]t was in the period of 1984 and 1985 that Islam was transformed before my eyes from a mere faith that I profess into a worldview from which one can generate highly explanatory paradigms and answers to the grand questions of existence.[22]

However, it was not until the 1990s that Elmessiri fully crystallized his two major interpretative paradigms, namely, immanentism and comprehensive secularism.[23]

In his book, *Al-Ṣuhyūniyyah wa al-Nāziyyah wa Nihāyat al-Tārīkh* [Zionism, Nazism and the End of History], Elmessiri expresses a deep sense of belonging to a new Arab and Islamic intellectual trend that started in the 1940s, reaching its climax in the last few decades. In Elmessiri's view, this trend was an attempt to contribute to human civilization, taking into account the cultural and historical specificity of the Arab and Islamic worldview. Among the prominent names that Elmessiri associates with this trend are Jamal Hemdan, Anwar Abdel Malek, Adel Hussein, Tareq al-Bishri, Jalal Amin, Asem al-Dusuqi, Qasim Abduh Qasim and Rafiq Habib.[24] In a private conversation with the author of this book, Elmessiri stressed that he abandoned the materialistic paradigm in favour of Islamic humanism because he came to realize that:

> Islam represents a worldview that rejects the materialistic Promethean and Faustian outlook. It calls for a balance between man and the universe rather than establishing paradise on earth or putting an end to history or harnessing man and nature in the service of the powerful.[25]

In his late life, Elmessiri was much involved in politics, and he had a great impact on the political scene. He was one of the founding members of the Islamically-oriented Al-Wasaṭ Party, which was founded in the 1990s by Abu al-Ela Madi as a centrist and moderate branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. It was Elmessiri who reformulated the principles of the Al-Wasaṭ Party and who wrote a twelve-page introduction to the party programme in August 2004. The party succeeded in mobilizing public opinion in favour of a moderate centrist view of Islam based on dialogue with the West, the principles of democracy and the support of the rights of women and non-Muslims.

Elmessiri was also the general co-ordinator of the Egyptian popular movement for change *Kifāyah* (Enough), which has been calling for peaceful change and democratic transformation in Egypt long before

the fall of Hosni Mubarak's regime. Elmessiri died in 2008, that is, two and a half years before the January Egyptian Revolution. However, his discourse on secular modernity still has a major attraction not only in Egypt but also all over the Arab world, especially among religiously-oriented intellectuals, scholars and politicians, including even the prominent Coptic intellectual and politician Rafiq Habib who is currently the vice-president of the Muslim Brotherhood's political party *Al-Ḥuriyyah wa al-ʿAdālah* [Freedom and Justice]. A recent interactive online conference held by Elmessiri's disciples on 27 June 2011 entitled "Abdelwahab Elmessiri: The Present Absent in the Egyptian Revolution" underlined the significance of Elmessiri's discourse on the current debates on modernity, secularism, citizenship and the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East.

In both western and Arab discourses, modernity is almost always related to the ideals of the Enlightenment, particularly the promise of Reason and science to promote our human and social existence. Elmessiri refers to this understanding of modernity as "partial secularism," which he describes as "moral secularism" or "humanistic secularism."[26] According to Elmessiri, the acceptance of this moderate secularism as an integral part of pluralism is embraced by the major Islamic trend, which is advocated by Fahmi Huwaidi, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Mohammed Salim al-Awa, Abu al-Ela Madi, and Adel Husain (Egypt), Rachid Ghannouchi (Tunisia), Taha Jabir al-Alwani (Iraq), AbdulHamid AbuSulayman (Saudi Arabia), Azzam Tamimi (Palestine), Parviz Manzur (Pakistan), and Ahmet Davutoğlu (Turkey). This Islamic trend accepts the legitimacy of moderate secularism and the role of its advocates as partners in the political life of Islamic society.[27]

In *Dirāsāt Maʿrifiyyah fī al-Ḥadāthah al-Gharbiyyah* [Epistemological Studies in Western Modernity], Elmessiri deconstructs the mainstream understanding of Western secular modernity and defines it as the "use of value-free science and technology."[28] It is a form of comprehensive secularism which does not aim merely at the independence of science and technology from human subjectivity or the separation of church and state, but at "the separation of all values (be they religious, moral, human) not from only 'the state' but also from public

and private life, and from the world at large. In other words, it strives for the creation of a value-free world."[29] Over and above, Elmessiri argues that modernism in art and literature, especially in its tragic and absurdist form, can be conceived as a critique of the contradictions of modernity, including the mechanistic tendencies of both capitalism and communism, and the shameful past of European expansive imperialism.[30]

In the introduction to the third edition of *Al-Ṣuhyūniyyah wa al-Nāziyyah wa Nihāyat al-Tārīkh* [Zionism, Nazism and the End of History], dedicated to the formerly Marxist French intellectual Roger Garaudy, Elmessiri expresses his astonishment at the fact that before the late 1980s, western scholarship had hardly recognized or approached Nazism and Zionism within the framework of a value-free, rationalistic and imperialistic modernity. Elsewhere Elmessiri mentions the way such ideologies were excluded from the map of secular modernity:

> The history of secularism is fragmented…for it was monitored by the Western social sciences in a piecemeal diachronic fashion: first humanism and/or the Reformation, the Enlightenment, rationalism, and totalitarianism; then the counter-Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Darwinism; then positivism, existentialism, phenomenology; and finally came the end of history and postmodernism. Racism, imperialism and Nazism were all seen as aberrations, having a history of their own, distinct from the history of secularism and modernity.[31]

Elmessiri, however, lavishes praise on Zygmunt Bauman's interpretation of modernity saying that his writings, particularly *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), are among the most important references he has drawn upon to develop his cognitive mapping of modernity.[32] Elsewhere he stresses that Bauman's writings are among the works he has read avidly as they uncover the dark sides that lie beneath the joyful glittering surface of modernity.[33]

The most remarkable feature of Bauman's critique is the invention or the introduction of new metaphors and concepts as one of the major mechanisms of the cognitive mapping of modernity. This study will attempt to show that Bauman's proposal of new tropes and concepts

has much in common with Elmessiri's metaphor-based interpretation of modernity and secularism. Bauman's cognitive mapping depends on two key tropes: solid modernity and liquid modernity. Surprisingly enough, Elmessiri's cognitive mapping centres on almost the same tropes: rational solid materialism and non-rational liquid materialism. These major metaphors are based on the invention, or the collection, of sub-metaphors that are believed to have the potential of mapping the dominant motif of the secular modern. However, this study on Bauman and Elmessiri is not as much a question of influence but rather a search for common and opposing responses to specific questions concerning the use of hermeneutics in the interpretation of secular modernity.

In mapping secular modernity, Elmessiri went beyond capital as the only mechanism of the desanctification of man. More importantly, he realized that the definitions of secularism in dictionaries and encyclopedias either give conflicting meanings or reduce the term to the simplistic and popular formula of "the separation of religion and state." Ambivalent as it is in Western discourse, the term became more ambivalent and chaotic when it was transferred into the Arab and Islamic world.[34] Elmessiri underlined a number of problems with the dominant definitions of secularism, many of which deal with the denotations and etymology of the word, ignoring its connotations and the development of its semantic field over centuries. Many of the definitions deal with the history of secularism in the West, but they ignore the actual crystallization of the comprehensive secular paradigm. In other words, all negative phenomena that accompanied secularism are excluded: imperialism, world wars, totalitarian movements, alienation, reification, commoditization, consumerism, anomie, nihilism and anarchy.[35]

In his attempt to go beyond these problems, Elmessiri stressed the metaphysical inferences and crystallizations of secularism as a "comprehensive epistemological vision of God, man and nature, one which constitutes a sequence that emerges in time and space with varying degrees and forms."[36] The understanding of secularism as the separation of church and state should be replaced by a more complex

representation of secular modernity as a comprehensive world out-look that operates on all levels of reality through a large number of mechanisms.[37] Elmessiri does not claim that this paradigm is entirely new and he stresses that it has been introduced by Western intellectu-als, including Irving Kristol (secularism as a religious view deifying man); Agnes Heller (secularism as a pantheistic view); Max Weber (secularism as the disenchantment of the world); and Zygmunt Bauman (secularism as a compulsive modernization and a social production of moral indifference).[38]

The examination of cognitive mapping introduced by Zygmunt Bauman and Abdelwahab Elmessiri will be the major objective of this study, since both of them see the secular modern as a comprehensive vision of God, man and nature. Both of them use almost the same metaphors and paradigms, yet they offer different prescriptions to the crisis of the secular modernity. Neither Bauman nor Elmessiri embrace Marx's historical materialism or economic determinism; their fascina-tion with Marxism can be attributed to its strong emphasis on such human and political categories as political emancipation and social justice. It is true that both of them have drawn heavily on humanist Marxism, but they avoided the emphasis on class consciousness and the general obsession with the proletariat as a political category or as the right agency of effecting revolutionary ambitions or collective emancipation.

Unlike many intellectuals of Marxist background, Elmessiri and Bauman do not focus only upon social stratification, the suffering of the proletariat and their potential for revolutionary promise. Rather, they use the Marxist emphasis on social justice as a point of departure to comment critically on the human condition. Above all, they transcend the conventional capitalist/socialist dual classification and put the capi-talist and the communist systems in one and the same category. What united capitalism and communism, according to Bauman, is a shared emphasis on the promises and prospects of modernity, particularly the intensification of production, super-industrialism, rational manage-ment and the necessity of controlling nature and establishing the King-dom of Reason and the earthly paradise.[39] Elmessiri puts it this way:

Introduction: Cognitive Mapping and Metaphoricity

> The secular paradigm includes both capitalism and socialism as materialist para-
> digms that organize human societies; both are variants of a deeper and more
> comprehensive paradigm, namely, comprehensive secularism (rationalistic mate-
> rialism and materialistic monism as well). The paradigm of secularization is even
> used to explain many phenomena in the modern age, not only in the West but also
> all over the world; the prime manifestations of this paradigm are democracy, mod-
> ern western philosophy, modernization, modernism and postmodernism.[40]

Though belonging to different religions, nationalities and cultures,
Elmessiri (Arab-Egyptian former Marxist-Muslim) and Bauman
(Polish-British former Marxist-Jew), have used the allegories of the
Jew to approach much wider questions of secular modernity, includ-
ing Nazism, racism, imperialism and the Jewish experience in modern
Europe. The fact that Bauman comes originally from Poland gives this
comparison a unique dimension, since when we talk about the Jews of
the Western world, we are talking in fact, according to Elmessiri,
about the Jews of Poland! It was only in the 1980s that Elmessiri came
to realize that the vast majority of Jews in the West by the end of the
eighteenth century were in Poland, and that they were divided among
Russia, Austria and Germany by the division of Poland itself; thou-
sands and millions of them emigrated to England, Austria, Canada, the
United States, South Africa and Palestine.[41] It was also in Poland that
the other face of secular modernity fully emerged; in Poland alone six
Nazi concentration camps were established, of which the biggest and
the most popular was Auschwitz. Reliable statistics, according to
Gilbert Achcar, show that in 1948 almost 170,000 Jews from Poland
constituted the largest segment of the community of Jews living in
Palestine.[42] Bauman himself was forced to immigrate to Israel in the
late 1960s, but he opted for England immediately after receiving a job
offer from the University of Leeds.

With these facts in mind, Elmessiri embarked on developing new
interpretative paradigms of secular modernity and its relationship with
Nazism and Zionism. He drew heavily on Bauman's critical contribu-
tion and praised his cognitive mapping of modernity in his intellectual
autobiography and in a number of his major Arabic publications,

including *Al-Ṣuhyūniyyah wa al-Nāziyyah wa Nihāyat al-Tārīkh* [Zionism, Nazism and the End of History] (1997), *Mawsūᶜat* (1999), and *Al-ᶜAlmāniyyah al-Juzᶜiyyah wa al-ᶜAlmāniyyah al-Shāmilah* [Partial Secularism and Comprehensive Secularism] (2002). Here a Muslim Arab intellectual draws on the works of a Jewish European sociologist and attempts to integrate his discourse on secular modernity into contemporary Islamic discourse. Though representing a unique case of inter-textuality, Elmessiri and Bauman take different positions regarding the available options in western tradition and the possibility of an alternative worldview to the original project of secular modernity. Thus the study of Bauman's influence on Elmessiri goes beyond the search for specific words, images, terms and phrases that Elmessiri borrowed from Bauman. Rather, it underlines how this influence is the result of a common human consciousness, and how critics of the secular modern can use the same terminology to generate common maps with different prescriptions.

1.3 ZYGMUNT BAUMAN AND THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE

Bauman was born in Poland in 1925, and his family escaped to the Soviet zone of occupation, following the Nazi invasion of Poland at the beginning of the Second World War. By the late 1950s, Bauman, like Elmessiri, had been playing a significant role in humanist Marxism, remaining faithful to the major principles of Marxism and its repudiation of false consciousness. In the 1960s, Bauman became a member of the governing Polish United Workers Party, but he never approved of the practices of the communist regime. In the late 1960s, precisely in 1968, Bauman renounced his party membership and in the same year, in an anti-Jewish campaign, he, as well as many Jewish intellectuals, was driven out of Poland and stripped of his Polish citizenship on the accusation of fomenting student riots. Bauman had to go first to Israel where he stayed no more than three years. Janina Bauman, his wife, uncovers in a conversation with Madeleine Bunting the true reason behind their decision to leave Israel: "[I]t was a nationalistic country, and we had just run away from nationalism. We didn't want

to go from being the victims of one nationalism to being the perpetrators of another.''[43] In a conversation with Benedetto Vecchi, Bauman himself does not hesitate to say, ''I suppose that my Jewishness is confirmed by Israeli inequities paining me still more than atrocities committed by other countries.''[44]

The nationalistic drive that characterizes western modernity has a great impact on Bauman's mapping of modernity and postmodernity. The uniqueness of his critique came into prominence with the publication of his metaphorical trilogy: *Legislators and Interpreters* (1987), *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) and *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991). Bauman has never abandoned his belief in the strong relationship between modernity and modernism, arguing that modernists gave their allegiance to the discoveries of modern science and developed their theories on scientific premises. He stresses that the impressionists took inspiration from optics, cubists from the relativity theory, and surrealists from psychoanalysis.[45] Elsewhere, Bauman argues that modernism would have never come into existence without the acceptance of the premises of modernity, especially the construction of contemptible people into a collective image of the bourgeois, philistines, or vulgar and uncultured masses.[46]

It is true that the Nazi Holocaust did not have a direct impact on Bauman's personal life, but his wife Janina had suffered as a young Jewish girl in the Warsaw ghetto. Janina wrote her memoirs *Winter in the Morning*, which aroused Bauman's interest in the Holocaust as a window to modernity or as one of its possibilities. More importantly, Bauman, in a conversation with Anver Shapira, criticizes the Israeli abuse and ''privatization'' of the Holocaust, arguing that the ''Jews can be safe only in a world free of nationalisms, and that includes Jewish nationalism.''[47] Bauman's anti-nationalistic stance shows in his membership in a well-known British group called Jews for Justice for the Palestinians. The group co-operates with other groups such as Writers against the Occupation and Jewish Students for Justice for Palestinians, all of which promote the idea that there is no hope for Israel without justice for the Palestinians. This is why they direct their efforts at building a broad-based End the Occupation campaign, one that

supports the rights of the Palestinians and condemns Israeli occupation, illegal settlement and the abuse of military coercive force and violence against armless and impoverished Palestinians.

Bauman's exile from Poland played a crucial role in his mapping of the consequences of modernity; it has given him the advantages of marginality that led him to focus on the position of strangers, exiles and outsiders. Bauman has intellectually led the nomadic existence of the stranger, and he summarizes this intellectually fertile mode of existence in the eloquent statements made by Frederic Raphael, George Steiner and Ludwig Wittgenstein, respectively: (1) "The meaning of my being a Jew is that I am everywhere out of place," (2) "My homeland is my typewriter," and (3) "The only place where real philosophical problems could be tackled and resolved is the railway station."[48]

In *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991), Bauman traces the failure of the liberalist utopia of western modernity and stresses that exclusivist nationalism was not confined to Poland, since it manifested itself clearly in the failure of the assimilatory ambitions in almost all European countries. Phony assimilation, as Bauman describes it, involved the dismissal of the mystical and messianic trends as un-Jewish, granting credibility of cultural adjustment only to the relations of the *salon*: the Bible of Luther, Hermann Cohen and Kant, Steinthal and Wilhelm von Humboldt. The majority of the Jews were thus encouraged to acquire "refined manners" and new standards of "cleanliness." The call for physical and moral "cleanliness" was accompanied with a call for linguistic cleanliness, and Yiddish, the language of the *Ostjuden* (East European Jews from Russia, Poland, Ukraine and Galicia) became a target of ridicule among German Jews. Like Yiddish, Polish language was disdained as inferior to German. The *Ostjuden* were conceived of as "disease and epidemic-carriers," "filthy, ignorant and immoral savages," and "unwelcome strangers."[49]

Bauman's analysis of the history of Jewish assimilation in the West is closely related and defined against the stereotype of the unassimilated *Ostjude*, the Jew of East and Central Europe. Bauman holds that the Holocaust had much sway on the meaning of Judaism because some theologians viewed it as a sign of the "absence of God," the "failure of

God," the "Jewish exilic tradition" and the choice of the Jews as the "carriers of the truth" of modern civilization. Since the mid-nineteenth century, France, England and Russia directed their efforts at eliminating the increase in the numbers of the so-called poor, un-educated, backward and uncivilized Jewish immigrants who had two major options of salvation: Zionism and socialism. In Poland, the situation was much worse because there had been a strong belief that the Jews were an alien and poisonous body in the emerging Polish national organism.[50]

The saddest irony is that the success of individuals in almost all walks of life was not a sufficient guarantee of political equality and social acceptance. As a nation without a state, Jewish communities in Europe attempted to gain "a state-like sovereignty," but the failure of this ambition has led, in the final analysis, to the emergence of political Zionism and its programme of a new "Jewish liberal state":

> There is little doubt that the birth of political Zionism, most certainly in its most consequential, Herzl's version, was the product of the disintegration of assimilatory efforts, rather than a fruition of the Judaist tradition and the resurrection of the love of Zion.[51]

German Jews themselves saw the Zionist programme mainly as a solution to the *Ostjuden* problem; the suggestion made in 1914 that the Zionists themselves should actually go to Palestine "came as a shock to many philanthropic Zionist sympathizers who saw themselves as Germans."[52]

1.4 MODERN EPISTEMOLOGICAL BIAS

In spite of the differences in their religious, ideological and cultural backgrounds, both Elmessiri and Bauman devoted their critiques to the mitigation of the arrogance of secularism, especially its celebration of the nature-centred cosmology and the anthropocentric epistemology of natural sciences. Their critiques are accompanied with a serious call for establishing a new science which is given different designations,

but whose target is almost same: critical sociology (Bauman) and *Fiqh al-Taḥayuz* or the science of understanding bias (Elmessiri); both of which call for an ontological hermeneutics that goes beyond the objectivism/relativism dichotomy.

Throughout the 1990s, Elmessiri devoted much of his critical concern to the analysis of epistemological bias. In 1992, he managed to organize a conference in Cairo on the issue of bias in the different fields of knowledge. The conference papers, along with other studies, were published in a two volume work entitled *Ishkāliyyat al-Taḥayuz* [The Problems of Bias]. The third edition of this work appeared in 1998 in seven volumes; the first volume is entitled *Fiqh al-Taḥayuz*, and it constitutes a long introduction in which Elmessiri explains the dynamics of bias and the myths of both objectivity and subjectivity. Elmessiri also replaced the terms "subjective" and "objective" with the terms "more explanatory" and "less explanatory," thus making interpretation a continuous process of ijtihad (generative and creative interpretation). This new science, according to Elmessiri, neither aspires for a full control of human phenomena nor dismisses the ontological and epistemological dimensions of metaphoric language.[53] Elmessiri repeated this view and this call in a one volume work in English entitled *Epistemological Bias in the Physical and Social Sciences* (2006).[54]

Elmessiri's position is very close to that of Bauman who believes that the challenge of hermeneutics to social sciences consists of two problems: that of consensus and that of truth. Positive sciences established a disinterested commitment to truth and eliminated extra-scientific commitments on the ground they belong to the world of fantasy, unrealism, and utopianism.[55] Their success entailed an aggressive separation of scientific, moral and aesthetic discourses. The fascination with solid, objective and scientific facts is an attempt to exorcise "Descartes' malign genie," "the ghost of relativism" and the "inner demon" of uncertainty.[56] Bauman entirely rejects this "positivist restrictive epistemology" or "positivist imperialism," and has been critical of "neutral technology" and the authority of technical-instrumental interests which reinforce the already existing split between subjects and objects

of action, the controllers and the controlled, the superior and the subordinated.[57]

Critical sociology, according to Bauman, undermines the analogy between a living organism and human society and dismisses the biological approach in the analysis of socio-cultural systems. Human societies and phenomena are neither biological organisms nor merely static or functional structures. It is hardly surprising that Bauman repudiates extremist behaviorism and fundamentalist sociology because their approach is based on the assumption that "human behavior posits no problems essentially different from those encountered…in the exploration of flies' conduct."[58]

Immanuel Kant, in Bauman's view, was the first to uncover the naïveté of the image of the mind as a *tabula rasa*, arguing instead that cognition is a creative work of reason in its encounter with reality. The subject of cognition is and must remain an active agent. Subjectivity is inseparable from cognition; and therefore, objective knowledge could be reached, if at all, only through it. Thus our understanding, in Bauman's view, should be viewed as a selective and an endless herme-neutical reflection and reassessment rather than a unilinear progress towards objective or absolute knowledge.[59]

Bauman argues that though the Kantian model recognized the indispensable role of the cognizing subject, it doubted the subject's disinterestedness and saw the cognitive framework as the distorting impact of prejudice and ideology. Critical theory, on the other hand, does not see the relation between reason and the world as a question of cognition but as the question of theory and practice, thus shifting the epistemological emphasis from the cognitive act to the social produc-tion of the cognized world. This perception, according to Bauman, is very crucial because it goes beyond two assumptions: (1) human beings possess everything in their minds and what is needed is only an encounter with the objects in reality and (2) the world itself (objects and outside reality) is absolutely true.[60]

Here Bauman stresses the role of critical theory which conceives of the liberation from the world and the emancipation of it as two inter-related and even inseparable tasks. In other words, the significance of

critical theory lies in its repudiation of the defeatist withdrawal of the self and in seeing the possibility of the emergence of collective orientation and self-conscious history.[61]

Bauman's and Elmessiri's critical positions can be understood within the framework of the revolt against the domination of nineteenth-century positivism. This point is eloquently explained by the German-American political philosopher Eric Voegelin (1901–1985) who pointed out that the prominence of the natural value-free sciences led to the belief that they were models possessing some "inherent virtue." With the reign of this view, according to Voegelin, ontology became the scapegoat, and consequently ethics and politics could no longer be understood as sciences of the order in which human nature reaches actualization.[62] However, any analysis without an ontological orientation, in Voegelin's view, remains unscientific because political science goes beyond the validity of propositions to the truth of existence, and the prerequisite of analysis is still the perception of the loving openness of the soul to its transcendent ground of order.[63] The rejection of the this openness has led, in the final analysis, to the celebration of 'the death of God' and to a long process of imposition of meaning on history to the extent that we are confronted with the "anarchy of liberal and racist, of progressive and Marxist" and of many nationalist histories that "spelled the end of history as a science."[64]

1.5 MODERNITY AS METAPHOR AND NARRATIVE CATEGORY

Both Bauman and Elmessiri have embraced a metaphorical approach in their mapping of modernity and postmodernity. This methodological decision confronts a major challenge, especially when seen from a deconstructive perspective that considers truth an army of faded metaphors. According to both Nietzsche and Derrida, truth is described as "an army of faded metaphors;" concepts of reality as "effects of figurality" and the logocentric rationalism of metaphysics as a "carnival of figurative conceits."[65] This observation, however, does not necessarily entail the abandonment of the search for a degree of

truth or the acceptance of the dominance of nihilistic tendencies in the processes of perception and interpretation. On the contrary, it uncovers a key aspect of cognitive mapping i.e. challenging and questioning the existing interpretations and representations because reality is complex and even unfixable. The history of truth is undoubtedly an "Error" or an "army of faded metaphors" in the sense that among the plurality of sentences, utterances, interpretations or modes of being, only one sentence, one utterance, one interpretation, or one mode of being is emphasized at the expense of other options and possibilities. This perception of the challenging relationship between truth and reality or between the world and the perception of the world acquired new significant implications with the publication of Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). These implications are very crucial to the representation of both Bauman's and Elmessiri's metaphorical methodology.

Thanks to Kuhn, two key terms gained much popularity in western European discourse: "paradigm" and "paradigm shift." Kuhn's basic assumption is that science can not be seen only as a progressive accumulation of facts and data because it depends largely on the authority of scientific communities. Rather, scientific research should be seen as a process of "puzzle-solving" guided by a ruling paradigm (a body of intertwined theoretical and methodological belief shared by a community of scientists). As Kuhn suggests, when the scholars' confidence in the ruling paradigm is permanently shaken, they are expected to realize the presence of a crisis and the necessity of paradigm shift, a moment which is seen as a scientific revolution and a "Gestalt-switch."[66] This argument had far reaching consequences beyond the realm of natural sciences as it mitigated the authoritative position of science as the sole source of objective knowledge and provided the legitimation for the humanities.[67]

The terms 'paradigm' and 'paradigm shift' can be used to establish an "elective affinity" between Bauman's critique of modernity and Kuhn's argument. To put it differently, Kuhn's notion of paradigm can be employed to understand Bauman's call for a transition from modernity to postmodernity due to the realization of the contradictions

inherent in the paradigmatic vision of modernity. Within this context, Bauman's critique of modernity uncovers a "paradigmatic crisis" that entails the necessity of emergence of a new interpretative paradigm to replace, or at least modify, the old one and the worldview it represented. The same "elective affinity" can be traced in Elmessiri's writings. However, Elmessiri's conception of paradigm is more comprehensive than that of Kuhn on the ground that it is neither limited to the natural sciences nor ignores the grand ontological issues of human existence.

Before examining Bauman's and Elmessiri's position towards the notions of paradigm and paradigm shift, it is extremely important to refer to Graham C. Kinloch who seems to have used Thomas Kuhn's notion of paradigm and applied it to the study of modern Western thought. In his book *Sociological Theory: Its Development and Major Paradigms* (1977), Kinloch argues that two significant paradigms can be easily traced in western thought: the organic paradigm and the conflict radical paradigm. The construction of these paradigms is based on a methodological decision that tends to over-emphasize the similarities between theorists and to ignore apparently conflicting details in favour of the prominence of one major dimension i.e. "paradigmatic foundation." Within the organic paradigm, society is conceived of as an integrated organism dependent on its division of labor. The conflict-radical paradigm has much in common with the organic functional paradigm, yet it views conflict, rather than integration, as central to the social system. Though different in assumptions, both the organic and the conflict radical paradigms belong to the organic, naturalistic, evolutionary and functional explanations of society. Kinloch does not hesitate to state that western civilization has been oscillating, since the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, between these major paradigms.[68]

Though the notion of paradigm, as introduced by Kuhn and manipulated by Kinloch, does not imply any suggestions of imperialistic monopolization of truth or objectivity, Bauman has remained suspicious of the excessive enthusiasm for this term, suspecting that it may be manipulated and misused to claim universal acceptance and exclusive superiority. This suspicion can be attributed to Bauman's

faith in the fact that reality is "much more complex than even the best paradigm."[69]

Bauman nevertheless, has been using, consciously or unconsciously, the notion of paradigm in almost all of his English writings on modernity and postmodernity. A close examination of his writings shows that he uses the notion of paradigm; however, he used this analytical tool only by intuition and without much theorization.

It is true that Bauman distances himself from the term paradigm and its negative connotations, yet he uses other terms and phrases that are almost synonymous with the positive connotations of the term paradigm as manipulated by Kinloch and Elmessiri. Among the most recurrent terms in Bauman's writings on modernity and postmodernity are "world mapping," "pattern," "repeatable pattern," "mental setting," "central discourse," "theoretical model," "dominant ideology of the system" and the most "decisive feature." These terms are used in the same way Elmessiri uses such terms as theme, pattern, type, mental image, mental structure and cognitive map. All of them belong to a common semantic field that seeks to draw and re-interpret the ambitions of the past and the various, yet similar, roads taken to fulfill them without claiming that they represent definitive answers or the only valid interpretation. Bauman himself defines the nature of this semantic field when he refers to the role of intellectuals in the postmodern era. The task of the intellectuals is an interpretative, a "sense-making," a "world-mapping" knowledge that constructs a "mental setting in which decisions are taken and freedom of choice is exercised."[70]

A further example of Bauman's methodology can be traced in his analysis of the different visions of modernity introduced by thinkers like Max Weber (progressive rationalization), Freud (psychotic and neurotic ailment) and Nietzsche (the will to power). By putting all these examples into one and the same category, Bauman, implicitly and unconsciously, points out one of the major characteristics of the use of paradigms i.e. their tendency to go beyond intellectual differences, minute details and superficial oppositions in favor of the prominence of common and dominant features of discourse. Bauman emphasizes that it is due to a "new cognitive perspective" that the

differences among the visions of modernity have begun to look less important, stressing instead a close kinship bond between the apparently antagonistic views.[71]

In one of his earliest writings on modernity, namely, *Socialism: the Active Utopia* (1976), Bauman saw modernity as a complex phenomenon that resists clear-cut definitions. He, however, attempted to associate it with such general and abstract patterns as the "technological revolution," the "human ascendancy over Nature" and the social systems associated with the rise of these patterns.[72] Elsewhere Bauman proposes to define modernity as "the time, or the way of life, in which order-making consists of the dismantling of traditional, inherited and received order; in which 'being' means a perpetual new beginning."[73] This definition is more than just a rhetorical and eloquent statement as it is based on the belief that the differences in approaches and opinions among writers and critics can be transcended in favour of discovering and establishing the "ideal type," the dominant motif or the most defining decisive feature of modernity. Bauman writes:

> Modern utopias differed in many of their detailed prescriptions, but they all agreed that the 'perfect world' would be one remaining forever identical with itself, a world in which the wisdom learnt today will remain wise tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, and in which the life skills acquired will retain their usefulness forever. The world depicted utopias also, expectedly, a transparent world – one in which nothing dark or impenetrable stood in the way of the eye; a world with nothing spoiling the harmony; nothing 'out of place'; a world without 'dirt'; a world without strangers.[74]

Elsewhere Bauman's definition of modernity is related to the notions of "cognitive map," "repeatable pattern" and what he refers to as the "decisive feature" and "the defining and permanent feature."[75] The belief in the superiority of the European modernity attracted and unified the contributions of intellectuals despite their apparently conflicting differences and political affiliations. Bauman puts it this way:

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> I take here the concept of 'modernity' to stand for a perception of the world, rather than (as it has been misleadingly intimated) the world itself; a perception locally grounded in a way that implied its universality and concealed its particularism. It has been the decisive feature of modernity so understood that it relativized its (past and contemporary) adversaries and thereby constituted relativity itself as an adversary; as a spoke in the wheel of progress, a demon to be exorcized, a sickness to be cured.[76]

Bauman's emphasis on the difference between the "perception of the world" and the "world itself" is the basic mechanism of cognitive mapping because it focuses on "cultural logic," to borrow Fredric Jameson's term, rather than a diachronic unfolding over time. This crucial aspect of cognitive mapping, as well as its tendency to uncover the logic of narrative and storytelling, is celebrated in Jameson's unique study *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (2002). Modernity, within this approach, cannot be regarded as a historical period that can be periodized or as a concept, philosophical or otherwise, that can be easily defined but as a "narrative category," a "unique kind of rhetorical effect," and a "trope" which is entirely different in structure from the traditional figures and thus constitutes a "decisive break with the previous forms of figurality." It is precisely for this reason that what critics consider a theory of modernity is a "projection of its own rhetorical structure onto themes and content in question." This process involves a re-writing of the narratives of modernity; an act which cannot be considered fictive or unreal but one that transcends both conventional narratives and the "alleged insights of historical analysis."[77]

In mapping modernity and postmodernity, Bauman has decided to abandon the traditional vision and division of tropes of discourse and embraced metaphor as an analytical tool that has the potential to map the epistemological and ontological foundations of modernity, its ambitions and consequences. Thus in the present context, metaphor refers to all those tropes (metaphors, metonymy, synecdoche, etc) and abstract concepts that occur over time and discourses to express a worldview or a world-perception. In a private correspondence with

the author of this book, Bauman stresses his belief in the cognitive capacity of metaphors and their ability to "to mentally map the lines of dependency too extended and too far reaching to be experienced 'at the first hand' and subjected to direct sensuous scrutiny." He stresses that metaphors are the "indispensable scaffoldings for imagination and perhaps the most effective tool of comprehension." Though fully aware of the methodological limitations of metaphors, particularly their "incurable non-comprehensiveness and non-finality," Bauman embraces metaphors as effective tools that can help us suggest and grasp similarity (resemblances or world perception) not identity (same meaning, world or reality). Here Bauman does not hesitate to uncover the bias of use of metaphor when it "prejudices the perception of the object it tries to comprehend." In other words, metaphors are by nature reductionist; nevertheless, they are necessary tools of approaching the human condition since human beings and the human condition "are not ideal objects for scientific treatment." The use of metaphors is a true indication of the "refusal to act under false pretences, to bid for greater authority than realistically can be claimed, and above all to distort the subject–object communication." Here metaphor is not only "a cognitive strategy; it is also…an ethical choice."[78]

Bauman's views on metaphor and its role in society are embraced by many writers and critics who still believe in the impossibility of doing without imagery and metaphysics. Iris Murdoch, for example, stresses that there is a "continuous breeding of imagery in the consciousness which is, for better or worse, a function of moral change. This slow constant genesis reflects and affects the quality of our attachments and desires."[79] Human beings live naturally and normally by metaphors to the extent that old associations are broken and new ones are created; we "live by developing imagery and also by discarding it. The 'modern crisis' can be seen as a crisis about imagery (myth, and metaphysics)."[80]

Bauman's metaphorical approach, according to Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Sophia Marshman, may potentially contain the seeds "not only of hermeneutical understanding but also of political mobilization and social transformation."[81] Bauman has never abandoned

the explanatory power of metaphors and concepts in the interpretation of the human condition. In *Freedom* (1988), Bauman draws our attention to the fact that such concepts as class, domination, authority, ideology and culture have played a significant role in organizing the sociological map of the human world.[82]

Aware as he is of the effectiveness of metaphors as means of abstraction in the description and the explanation of the human condition, Bauman repudiates the reduction of metaphors to the simple process of a linguistic transfer of old lexical meanings to new objects. Commenting on one of the simplest metaphors, Bauman points out that "society," for example, can be conceived of as the prime metaphor that refers to an "abstract totality" and an "imagined community" under the protection of a nation-state. Metaphors have a cognitive function that lies, in Bauman's view, in its ability to "juxtapose the unclear with the obvious; it suggests thereby an affinity…between the two."[83]

The adoption of metaphor as a basic mechanism in cognitive mapping is based on a methodology that transcends the traditional approaches to tropes of discourse as emotive, decorative, aesthetic and rhetorical devices. The inclusion of metaphor in the terminology of discourse analysis and cognitive mapping is an integral part of serious scholarly attempts aimed at "sociologizing" metaphor. This approach is very close to the sociological call for a "metaphor-based sociology of knowledge" that views metaphors as effective elements in the interplay of knowledge and power. Metaphorical representation is expected to be one of the major mechanisms of cognitive mapping because it will help us understand how discourses, paradigms and world views are transformed or even overturned.[84]

Bauman takes the Enlightenment as the starting point of his metaphorical critique in order to uncover the crucial role played by *les philosophes* (the intellectuals of the Enlightenment) in creating a worldview that served the universalistic ambitions of the nation-state. The Enlightenment is represented by Bauman as a coalition between culture and power i.e. between modern intellectuals and modern rulers who are referred to metaphorically as gardeners and legislators in search of utopia and perfection. According to Bauman, European Jews

were conceived of as stateless strangers and weeds that threaten the garden of modernity and the ideal of perfection. The task of modernity "consists of safeguarding the people from the overgrowth of the weeds."[85]

In this context, postmodernity was seen as a chance to recover modernity without any illusions or false consciousness regarding its destructive ambitions of universalization and intolerance to difference. This chance seemed possible because the role of the intellectuals is reduced to that of modest interpreters and semiotic brokers. The decline of the role of the intellectuals, however, has also been accompanied with a comprehensive process of liquefaction that dominates the scene to the extent that the term "postmodernity" itself can no longer uncover the dynamics of contemporary human condition. It is precisely for this reason that Bauman has introduced the metaphor "liquid modernity," one which celebrates two new sub-metaphors: sex and the body. This movement from solidity to liquidity is underscored in Elmessiri's cognitive mapping of modernity and post-modernity.

In his book, *Al-Lughah wa al-Majāz: Bayna al-Tawḥīd wa Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* [Language and Metaphor: Between Monotheism and Pantheism], Elmessiri explores his basic assumption that the use of metaphor is "inevitable in most processes of cognition and articulation, particularly highly complex phenomena."[86] The entire motif of modern secular western thought, according to him, can be grasped in two major metaphors: (1) the organismic metaphor and (2) the mechanistic metaphor; both, however, celebrate closed systems that deny transcendence and pluralism, thus reducing human beings and human existence into the dynamics of nature/matter in the philosophical sense of the word.[87]

Elmessiri's mapping of modernity, like that of Bauman, usually starts with a critique of the Enlightenment as the starting point of "solid rational materialism" that (mis)used science and philosophy to legitimize the construction of secular ideologies with a view to establishing an earthly paradise and realizing the end of history. The Enlightenment, as well as modernity at large, is seen as a secular worldview that celebrates the deification of man as the master of nature and the maker

of history. Unlike the early Bauman who saw postmodernity as a chance to overcome the false consciousness of modernity, Elmessiri never saw postmodernity as an open system that promises pluralism, diversity and multiculturalism. Elmessiri, on the contrary, has been stressing from the outset that postmodernity or "liquid non-rational materialism" is not only an anti-metaphysical revolution but also a revolution against metaphysical materialism itself and the faith of humanism in the power of Reason to understand and change the world. Postmodernity is seen as a worldview that denies both history and referentiality because it declared the death of man in favour of such non-human categories as the market and power or in favour of such one-dimensional categories as the body, sex and pleasure.[88]

Like Bauman, Elmessiri used the notion of paradigm intuitively without any attempt at theorizing the term as an analytical tool, particularly in his early writings *The End of History* (1973) and *The Earthly Paradise* (1979). He, however, managed to develop this methodology through an extensive theorization and intensive elaboration on the meaning of paradigm and its elective affinity with metaphor as a trope of discourse in almost all of his later writings, particularly his eight-volume work *Mawsūʿat*.

In almost all of Elmessiri's writings, the term paradigm is used, more often than not, in reference to an analytical tool and an immanent system through which people perceive and formulate their world. Like Bauman, Elmessiri does not equate the term paradigm with the world or reality because a paradigm "has no concrete existence and also because it is the fruit of a mental image, an intellectual system, a conceptual pattern, an abstract mental structure and a symbolic representation of truth."[89]

Aware of the fact that his manipulation of the term 'paradigm' stressed such terms as system and structure, Elmessiri emphasizes that he, unlike the structuralists, attempts to endow the human subject with an active role in the construction of paradigms and the process of interpretation. It is precisely for this reason that he always stresses that a paradigm is a mental construct or a cognitive map that the human mind abstracts from an enormous quantity of relations, details and facts.[90]

This process necessarily entails that the human mind is engaged in a serious process of inclusion, selection and exclusion so as to establish a general pattern that can stand as a valid interpretation of the relevant text, phenomenon or situation. In defining the term paradigm, Elmessiri equates the terms "cognitive" and "epistemological," especially when he maintains that a paradigm is "an epistemological map that the human subject abstracts…out of the events that he encounters, or the phenomena he examines, or the texts he reads."[91]

Commenting on the significance of the term "cognitive map," Elmessiri states that man is not simply a bundle of material desires, and that his mind is not a mere *tabula rasa* but a human being who is endowed with generative powers and a repository of many symbolic systems or a storehouse of conscious and unconscious images and memories. This map, like any paradigm, is not a fixed encrustation that does not change but a perception that can be challenged, thus giving rise to the possibility of a new vision or, to borrow Thomas Kuhn, a "Gestalt-switch."[92]

With his intensive elaboration on the meaning of paradigm, particularly in his *Mawsūʿat*, his intellectual autobiography and his book *Difāʿ ʿan al-Insān: Dirāsāt Naẓariyyah wa Taṭbīqiyyah fī al-Namādhij al-Murakkabah* [Defence of Man: Theoretical and Applied Studies in Complex Paradigms], Elmessiri has managed to distance himself from linguistic structuralism which attacks the notion of the subject, history and time in order to discover timeless, universal and absolute structures. Elmessiri always stresses that 'epistemological' and 'cognitive' paradigms revolve around three grand issues: (1) man and his relation to nature/matter, (2) the *telos* of existence and (3) the question of the ultimate point of referentiality.[93] With this conception of paradigms, not only has Elmessiri distanced himself from structuralism but also transcended Kuhn's definition of paradigm, endowing it with an ontological or even metaphysical dimension.

Here Elmessiri's contribution lies in his determination to ignore the western history of the term epistemology as he tends to equate it with both ontology and metaphysics. According to the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (2005), epistemology or the theory of knowledge is a

branch of philosophy that explores the nature of knowledge, its possibility and general basis. Above all, epistemology is seen as the question of our cognitive stances and the right to our beliefs. Epistemology is usually explained by reference to the Cartesian method of doubt and the search for certainty. It comes as no surprise that Cartesian metaphysics was based on epistemological considerations. Ontology is concerned with the features of existence and Being. The question of metaphysics is also related to existence but in relation to the ultimate reality that transcends the boundary of possible experience. Both ontology and metaphysics were criticised by postmodernists and deconstructionists who favour cultural relativism rather than any objective conceptions of truth.94

Equating epistemology with both ontology and metaphysics can be attributed to the influence of the Islamic world view on Elmessiri's critique of modernity. This orientation can be seen as an inversion of the western world view and its 'epistemologically defined ontology.' In other words, the "ontologically determined epistemology" of the Islamic worldview, according to Ahmet Davutoğlu, can be seen as an alternative paradigm to the "epistemologically defined ontology" of the post-Renaissance western world view.95

But the dichotomy between Islam and western modernity cannot explain the nature and the dynamics of hermeneutics, especially hermeneutical ontology. Hermeneutical ontology or ontological hermeneutics, according to Stanley Rosen, can be defined as a method that "treats the text, whether a philosophical essay, a work of art, or a dream, or a sign, not of its own sense, but of some comprehensive theory of human existence, even of Being."96

Elmessiri's emphasis on the ontology of paradigms raises a very old hermeneutical problem. According to Paul Ricoeur, there has been a constant tendency to reduce fiction to illusion, thus closing the way to any "ontology of fiction."97 However, the goal of metaphor is to shatter "not only the previous structures of our language, but also the previous structures of what we call reality….With metaphor we experience the metamorphosis of both language and reality."98 Elmessiri's basic methodological assumption is that a paradigm is

almost synonymous with the major and abstract theme or the major metaphor that endows a literary work (fiction in Ricoeur's terminology) with its unity and coherence. Metaphor thus becomes a paradigm for the explanation of the literary work since readers can "construct the meaning of the text in a way which is similar to the way in which we make sense of all the terms of metaphorical statement."[99]

Elmessiri's metaphorical methodology can be best introduced through a stimulating example. According to Elmessiri, when a critic approaches Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, he/she can trace the most significant metaphor i.e. the blood metaphor. This recurrent metaphor is used in reference to Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's sense of guilt due to the crime they have committed as well their failure to conceal this unbearable feeling. The metaphor reaches its climax with Lady Macbeth committing suicide and Macbeth throwing himself into the "laps of determinism" and drowning in "seas of blood."[100]

Here one can argue that the terms metaphor and paradigm are almost synonymous with the Aristotelian *mythos*, which is, according to Paul Ricoeur, "the principal 'part' of the tragedy, its 'essence'; all other parts of the tragedy – the 'characters,' the 'thoughts,' the 'diction,' the 'spectacle' – are connected to the mythos as the means or the conditions of the performance of the tragedy as *mythos*."[101]

This methodology poses a challenge and requires us to raise the following questions: Does this definition of paradigm mean that we are going to approach western modernity as a metaphor, a play (as a tragedy to be more precise), a poem (an elegy perhaps), or a movie that has a certain beginning and well-known end? Is it all possible to use this methodological instrument in the fields of politics, philosophy, religion and sociology? Are paradigms nothing but closed systems that deprive western man, this abstract entity, of all potentials for transcending this text, movie or play, thus reducing him/her to our tragic hero Macbeth and/or our tragic heroine Lady Macbeth?

In Elmessiri's thought, paradigms cannot be equated with the world, truth, or reality because they are modest interpretative tools. Western man is approached as an abstract entity and a cohesive image consisting of a set of characteristics that are gradually engraved on the

person's mind, heart and even the unconscious to the extent that he would be unable to see reality except through it.[102] In approaching modernity, it seems impossible, in Elmessiri's view, to do without such abstract categories as "man," "modern western civilization," "modern English civilization," "the Industrial Revolution" or the "Enlightenment," though we are fully aware that we are referring not to real referents residing in the world but to metaphorical expressions that can help us communicate and narrate the story. This methodology offers a modest product of a human perspective that aspires to reach only a degree of truth and not the whole truth because absolute objective knowledge is not only an impossible dream but also a terrible nightmare.[103]

This methodology is very close to Richard Bernstein's suggestion that our contemporary intellectual discourse attempts to go beyond the objectivism/relativism dichotomy. In his book *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (1983), Richard Bernstein points out that there has been a growing atmosphere of confusion, uncertainty and skepticism about foundations, methods and rational standards of explanation and interpretation of historical narratives, literary texts and the overall human condition. This state of confusion has given rise to an extreme version of relativism, one which frequently leads to cynicism and absurdism. Above all, the state of confusion becomes more complex due to the floating of such signifiers as "rationality," "objectivity" and "realism" as well as the difference in the fundamental attitudes of the interlocutors towards these signifiers and their explanatory or dogmatic power. Bernstein, however, argues that our intellectual discourse has been attempting to go beyond the opposition between objectivism and its connotations of foundationalism and scientific rationalism on the one hand and relativism and its connotations of skepticism and nihilism on the other. This orientation repudiates both absolutism and subjectivism in favour of a sophisticated form of "fallibilistic objectivism" or a "non-subjective conception of relativism."[104]

Here another stimulating example of Elmessiri's paradigmatic or metaphorical methodology can be introduced to highlight the modest aspirations as well as the explanatory power of the formulation of

cognitive paradigms. Elmessiri used his skills in literary criticism to trace the change of characterization in different literary genres to explain the idea of paradigm and paradigm shift. He holds the view that against the paradigm of complex and heroic, though tragic, characters portrayed in eighteenth and nineteenth-century literature is set the modernist paradigm of anti-heroes suffering from loneliness and alienation as in T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*; from complete surrender to determinism as in Kafka's novels and from absolute absurdity as in Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*.[105]

This conception of paradigm and paradigm shift echoes Georg Lukács in analysis of the ideology of modernism. The transformation of the image of man in literature, according to Lukács, is not just a change in artistic technique but a change in a worldview, especially the Heideggerian ontology of *Geworfenheit* (thrownness), which is used consciously or unconsciously by modernist writers who portrayed man as if he were "by nature solitary, asocial, unable to enter into relationships with other human beings" and as if this nightmarish and neurotic state is "an immutable *condition humaine*."[106]

The cognitive and interpretative function of paradigms has much in common with that of tropes of discourse, particularly metaphors and their ability to articulate complex relations that are difficult to be expressed in literal language or semi-algebraic terms. Elmessiri does not hesitate to define analytical cognitive paradigms as "intensive metaphors open unto reality."[107] This belief encouraged him to conclude that it is possible to examine the history of ideas and cognitive paradigms through a selective and exclusive examination of the development and the transformation of cognitive metaphors.[108]

This emphasis on the significance of metaphors can be traced in Elmessiri's *Al-ʿĀlam min Manẓūr Gharbī* [The World from a Western Perspective] in which he refers to the influence of the New Criticism on his thought. Elmessiri embraced the New Critical notion that poetry and metaphor are issues related to our human existence and that "close reading" could result in the imposition of a certain meaning on the text, a meaning that has never been intended by the poet or the author.[109]

Introduction: Cognitive Mapping and Metaphoricity

The analysis of metaphors plays a crucial role in this process since the adoption of a specific metaphor is not only an act of linguistic criticism but also a process of identification with a specific worldview. In the introduction to *Epistemological Bias in the Physical and Social Sciences*, Elmessiri stresses that the metaphors that dominate western thought cannot be approached as neutral descriptive figures of speech because the use of the adoption of a particular metaphor creates an "elective affinity" between the scholar and the worldview represented by the metaphor.[110] Elsewhere Elmessiri underlines the fact that his metaphorical methodology can be attributed partly to his study of Romantic theory and poetry, both of which see the truth not as a thing added to phenomena and reached by reason but as something inherent in the phenomena and felt by the human subject.[111] It is interesting also to note that the house in which Elmessiri lived in Damanhur followed the design of Art Nouveau, an architectural design which appeared in Europe between 1890 and 1910 as a "part of the Western man's Romantic revolution against an industrial and mechanical society."[112]

Elmessiri insists that human language, unlike the language of algebra and geometry, is not an unbiased tool, which can adequately describe the world of unbiased facts.[113] Though aware of the modest role of interpretation, Elmessiri has great expectations similar to those of Maasen and Weingart who stress that metaphor analysis might uncover "paradigm shifts, the emergence of a new *Zeitgeist*, or the rise and fall of general world views."[114] Metaphors cannot be reduced to the process of transferring old lexical meanings to new objects because they are literally "ways whereby societies 'build' webs of collective meaning; create…*cultural cosmologies* or meaning-worlds that, once built, for better or worse become the 'homes' in which we reason and act, places that constrain without determining any of our particular conclusions or actions."[115]

Within this methodology, metaphors are viewed as a fertile source of cognitive mapping, since they enable us to uncover similarities, relationships and structures between various categories and phenomena. Metaphors are ubiquitous because they dominate our conceptual

system and structure our worldview and the very understanding of human existence.[116] Metaphors have an epistemological authority, one which shows clearly in the metaphors of wholeness, extending "not just across domains of nature and culture, but into domains of pragmatic politics as well."[117] The transferability of metaphor is traced from the scientific discourse of biology to the discourse of politics and every day communication (and vice versa) or, to borrow Friedrich Engels, from "natural history" into the "history of society." This process may involve a deliberate misuse of metaphors, especially when ideologies are "elevated to the level of scientific truths."[118] The transfer of Darwin's oft-quoted metaphor "struggle for survival" is often mentioned in connection with the German context where 'struggle for existence' was translated to "*Kampf ums Dasein*" and had a devastating role in the politics of Germany up to the Second World War.[119]

The secular mind had a grand plan, to establish an earthly paradise, a utopia of the here and now, a modern civilization governed by human reason, rationality, and the triumph of progress. Whilst ideals are one thing, the means to realize them is something else. Away from the hype, emancipating humanity from the 'shackles' of God and religion has proved no easy matter.

Mapping the Secular Mind critically examines issues of reason, rationality, and secular materialism, to explore how these mental perceptions, or ways of mapping the world, have affected human interaction and sociological development. It does this by comparing and contrasting the ideas of Abdel-wahab M. Elmessiri (1938–2008) a leading Arab intellectual, and Zygmunt Bauman (1925), one of the world's foremost sociologists. In the last few decades, an emergent Western critique of modernity has inspired Muslim intellectuals to develop new ideas, images, terms and concepts that state their positions towards the tendencies of secular modernity, its transformations and consequences, and how it manipulates perceptions of reality.

The book challenges foundations of secular ideology to argue that its aspirations have deeply transformed human consciousness and man's sense of self, leaving him a creature of purposeless consumption, wearied by the search for fulfilment, and controlled by materialistic laws governing physical phenomena. It also offers a more darker thesis, that Fascist Germany and the Eugenics movement were a form of Social Darwinism taken to its logical course. These were not an aberration from the principles of modernity, Ali argues, but a consistent outcome of the modern worldview, with the seeds of self-destruction being woven into the very fabric of the philosophy.

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