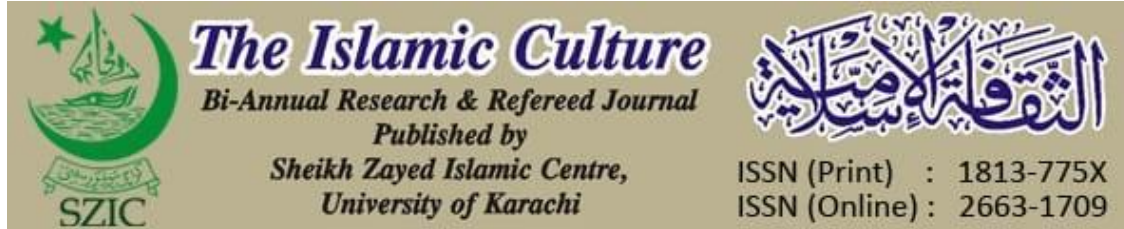


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ISLAMIC THOUGHT ON HUMANISM: AN ANALYSIS OF GEORGE MAKDISI'S VIEWS

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Abstract

Islamic thought encompasses humanistic values and principles. It recognizes the significance of knowledge, reason, ethical conduct, social justice, equality, human dignity, and compassion. George Makdisi is a renowned scholar of Islamic intellectual history. His work shows that Islamic thought embodies a deep respect for intellectual curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge. Makdisi emphasized that Islamic thought strongly emphasizes ethical imperatives and moral responsibility. He believes that scholasticism in medieval Europe was influenced by Islamic educational institutions and intellectual traditions. Therefore, he highlights the transmission of knowledge from the Muslim world to Christian scholars by translating and studying Arabic texts. Currently, there is a need to create a beneficial framework for humanity all around the world and eliminate coldhearted approaches. The work of Makdisi is therefore very important in this respect. This project aims to have a deep insight into Makdisi's work and bridge the gap between Islam and the West.

Keywords: scholasticism, classical Islam, the medieval period, Humanist, the golden age

1. Introduction

George Makdisi (1920-2002) was a highly esteemed scholar of Islamic and medieval studies. Born on February 15, 1920, in Shweir, Lebanon, Makdisi came from a family with a rich intellectual tradition. He pursued his early education in Lebanon before moving to the United States to further his studies. Makdisi obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from Harvard University in 1941, majoring in history and literature. He then continued his academic journey at the University of Pennsylvania, where he received his Master's degree in Arabic studies in 1943. Later, in 1953, he completed his PhD in Oriental Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Throughout his career, Makdisi held numerous academic positions at prestigious institutions. He began his teaching career as an instructor of Arabic at the American University of Beirut. In 1954, he joined the faculty of the University of Michigan, where he taught Arabic and Islamic studies for several years. In 1967, he moved to Harvard University, where he held the position of Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies until his retirement in 1990. He has also served as emeritus professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies¹ at the University of Pennsylvania and has held visiting positions at numerous universities around the world.

Makdisi's research focused primarily on medieval Islamic education, intellectual history, and cultural exchange. He made significant contributions to our understanding of the development of educational institutions in the Islamic world, challenging Eurocentric narratives and highlighting the rich intellectual heritage of Islamic civilizations. His comparative approach explored the connections between Islamic and Western intellectual traditions, particularly in the realm of scholasticism. Over the course of his career, Makdisi authored numerous articles and delivered lectures on topics related to Islamic and medieval studies. His work, characterized by meticulous research and interdisciplinary analysis, has left a lasting impact on the field. Makdisi's scholarship inspired a new generation of scholars and continues to shape the discourse in Islamic and medieval studies. George Makdisi passed away on September 4, 2002, leaving a legacy of influential scholarship and a profound contribution to understanding Islamic intellectual history. Although he was criticized on several issues, his dedication to academia and commitment to bridging cultural divides have solidified his place as a respected figure in Islamic and medieval studies.

He is best known for his research on the cultural and intellectual history of the Islamic world, and his contributions to the field of Islamic studies. He has published extensively on the history of Arabic sciences, Islamic education, and medieval Arabic literary and cultural history. For instance, Makdisi had written a book on 'The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West' with reference to scholasticism. This book is based on seven parts with different chapters in each part. Highlighting the importance, Makdisi, in the preface of the book writes: "To my knowledge, no one has suggested a connection between the Islamic *Studia Adabiya* and the *Studia humanitatis* of Italian Renaissance; nor between the Islamic scholasticism as described in the two *Rises* and that of the Christian West. Highly worthy of mention, however, is the reference of Charles James Lyall, in his *Translations of Ancient Poetry*, to the early Islamic philologists as 'the great Humanists'."²

1.1 Background

Humanism is the system of education and mode of inquiry. According to Grudin, it originated in northern Italy during the 13th and 14th centuries and later spread through continental Europe and England. The term is on the other hand applied to different Western convictions, strategies, and methods of reasoning that put focal attention on the human domain³. George Makdisi contends that humanism began in the Islamic world⁴, as a larger movement of the 'Islamic Golden Age'. Makdisi takes note that during this period, there was a reestablished accentuation on the investigation of the traditional Greek texts, which had been converted into Arabic by Islamic researchers. These texts, which included works by Aristotle, Plato, and others, were studied alongside the Islamic scholarly tradition and led to another type of humanism that underlined the significance of rational inquiry, reasoning, and social refinement. This humanistic methodology was then transmitted to the Christian West through the interpretation of Arabic text into Latin and assisted with forming the scholarly scene of the medieval period. The work of Makdisi challenges the customary view that humanism started only in the Christian West and contends for a more perplexing and nuanced comprehension of the intellectual history of the Middle age time frame.

Considering the significance of Humanism and need for the society, it is important to work on subjects that can benefit humanity with practically no segregation of religion, nationality, or geological limits. For the same reason, George Makdisi is most popular for his services to the field of Islamic culture, traditions, and history of the Islamic world.

Makdisi is credited with being quite possibly the earliest researcher to show the presence of Arabic enlightenment in the medieval period of the Islamic world. He contended that the Islamic Golden Age was characterized by the spirit of scientific and intellectual inquiry that was not restricted to the interpretation of Greek works into Arabic, but at the same time was characterized by unique commitments by Muslim researchers. Makdisi's work on Islamic studies significantly affects the investigation of the subject. He exhibited that the conventional Islamic madrasa, a long way from being essentially a philosophical-theological college, was an exceptionally evolved foundation of advanced education that offered guidance in a variety of subjects, including logic, grammar, law, and the natural sciences. Furthermore, Makdisi's examination of the historical backdrop of Arabic sciences has given significant experiences in the improvement of logical ideas in the Islamic world. He has shown that the sciences thrived in the Islamic world and that Muslim researchers made huge commitments to fields like medicine, mathematics, and astronomy. Makdisi has additionally made significant commitments to the investigation of medieval Arabic cultural and literary history. He has composed widely on the intellectual and cultural exchange between the Islamic world and the West and has shown what these exchanges meant for the advancement of both Muslim and Western civilizations.

Makdisi's work in the field of Islamic learning has been extensive and has assisted in the understanding of the Islamic world, and its intellectual and cultural legacy. In the current period, it is the need of time to eliminate barbaric methodologies and make a valuable structure for humanity throughout the world. The contribution of Makdisi is, therefore, very important in this aspect. Some of his notable works include, (a) 'The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West' (1981) this book examines the

development of institutions of higher education in both Islamic and Western societies.⁵ (b) 'The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West with Special Reference to Scholasticism' (1990) where Makdisi compares the development of humanism and scholasticism in Islamic and Christian societies.⁶ and (d) 'Ibn 'Aqil: Religion and Culture in Classical Islam' (1983). It is a biography of the Muslim scholastic and humanist Ibn A'qil by Makdisi. The book sheds light on the most important periods of classical Islam, one which has had a significant impact on religious and intellectual culture in the Christian Latin West.⁷ Makdisi's works reflect his deep knowledge of Islamic and Arabic studies, as well as his ability to make insightful comparisons and connections between different cultural and intellectual traditions. However, some scholars argue that his characterization may overlook the unique nature and objectives of the educational systems in the Islamic world.

1.2. Statement Of The Research Problem

Makdisi's contribution is valuable for its multidisciplinary approach and provides an inclusive understanding of Arab-Islamic culture. This comparative style of Makdisi explores the interactions and connections among different intellectual and cultural traditions. In this regard, a deep insight into the work of Makdisi is required to bridge the gap between Islam and the West. Therefore, in-depth qualitative research is necessary to gain insight into Makdisi's views related to humanism in the context of the thoughts of Islam.

2. Literature Review

Humanism as Grudin writes, is a system of education and mode of inquiry that was started in northern Italy during the thirteenth and fourteenth hundreds of years and later spread through mainland Europe and Britain. The term is on the other hand applied to different Western convictions, strategies, and ways of thinking that put focal accentuation on the human domain. Otherwise called Renaissance humanism, the verifiable program was so comprehensively and significantly powerful that it is one of the main motivations behind why the Renaissance is seen as a particular authentic period. To be sure, however, the word Renaissance is of later money, the principal thought of that period as one of re-establishment and enlivening is humanistic in the beginning. However, humanism looked for its philosophical bases in far prior times and, besides, kept on applying a portion of its power long after the end of the Renaissance.⁸

Andrew Copson is the Chief Executive of Humanists UK, and he is one of the leading figures in the contemporary humanist movement. Copson sees humanism as a positive force for change in the world, promoting the values of reason, compassion, and social responsibility, and offering a vision of a better future based on human potential and creativity.⁹ Taking it a step further, Pinn argues that humanism is a positive and life-affirming worldview that offers a compelling alternative to religious and supernatural beliefs. He traces the historical foundations of humanism, from Greek philosophers to enlightened thinkers and beyond, and shows how it has developed and adjusted to changing cultural and social contexts.¹⁰ Contrary, Jens Zimmerman analyzes the connection between religion and humanism in contemporary Western culture and contends that the two are not mutually exclusive, but rather complement each other in significant ways. He argues that religion and humanism can go together to give a more profound comprehension of human experience and to address the social and moral difficulties of the time. He studies the historical foundations of humanism and religion in Western culture, tracing their advancement from the Renaissance to the current

day. He examines various ways through which humanism and religion have been characterized and practiced over time and contends that both can offer significant bits of knowledge and points of view on the human condition. That's what Zimmerman contends, to address these difficulties and to restore Western culture, it is important to figure out how to integrate religion and humanism in a significant and useful manner.¹¹

At the point when we discuss Islam and Humanism, Lenn E. Goodman considers the concept of humanism inside the Islamic custom. Goodman contends that Islamic humanism is a distinct intellectual and philosophical movement within Islam that underlines the significance of individuals and advances human-focused understandings of Islamic teachings. He talks about the historical origins and evolution of humanism in Islam, analyzing its improvement in the classical period and its effect on different fields, including philosophy, science, theology, and social justice. In this way, he contends that Islamic humanism offers a remarkable viewpoint on the issues and makes an important contribution to contemporary conversations in the Muslim world.¹² Marcel A. Boisard investigates the roots of Islamic humanism, following its development from the classical time frame to the current. Boisard talks about the key figures and thoughts of the movement, including the philosophers al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd, the spiritualist Ibn Arabi, and the thinker of today's world Muhammad Iqbal. He contends that Islamic humanism significantly affects different fields, including art, science, literature, and philosophy. He investigates the ways by which Islamic humanism has added to the advancement of human knowledge and understanding and has assisted in shaping the intellectual and cultural history of the Muslim world.¹³ Hanfi examines how Islamic humanism highlights the significance of human nobility, freedoms, and social justice, and the way things depend on a belief in the unity of God and the unity of humanity. He further studies the connection between Islam and different religions and cultures, contending that Islamic humanism is viable with pluralism and tolerance.¹⁴ Summing up, Siti states that while there are tremendous contrasts between Islamic humanism and secular humanism, there also exist areas of common ground that can be identified. For instance, both perspectives highlight the significance of human pride and the worth of human existence, and both advance the utilization

of reason and moral standards in directing the human way of behaving.¹⁵

3. Islam On Humanism

Humanism is a philosophical and ethical stance that underlines the worth of human beings, either independently or collectively, and usually prefers critical thinking and proof over acknowledgment of faith or belief. Albeit the expression "humanism" isn't unequivocally used in the Quran, there are several verses to show the qualities and rules that are central to humanism. The Quran highlights the dignity and value of every human, no matter what is their race, identity, or economic well-being. It instructs that a person is made by Allah with intrinsic worth and a purpose in life. One of the vital standards of humanism is, everyone has innate nobility and worth, and this is reverberated in many verses of the Quran. Such as:

And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colors. Lo! herein indeed are portents for men of knowledge.¹⁶

And honored them,

Verily we have honored the Children of Adam. We carry them on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have preferred them above many of those whom We created with a marked preferment.¹⁷

Another verse is,

For that cause We decreed for the Children of Israel that whosoever killeth a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind, and whoso saveth the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind. Our messengers came unto them of old with clear proofs (of Allah's Sovereignty), but afterward lo! many of them became prodigals on the earth.¹⁸

This verse highlights the sanctity of human life and condemns any act of violence or aggression against another person but in the case of justice. It encourages people to value and protect human life and to promote peace and harmony in society.

The Quran encourages compassion and kindness towards all people, including those who may be marginalized or oppressed. Such as:

"O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware."¹⁹

In another verse, Almighty Allah orders,

"O ye who believe! Be steadfast witnesses for Allah in equity, and let not hatred of any people seduce you that ye deal not justly. Deal justly, that is nearer to your duty. Observe your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah is Informed of what ye do."²⁰

The question arises, Why to do so? And we see the Almighty says:

"But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters."²¹

The verse inspires individuals to accomplish something useful and to try not to inflict any kind of damage or defilement on the earth. It underscores the significance of treating others with consideration, sympathy, and equity, and of endeavoring to make the world a superior spot for all. Collectively, the Quran advances the possibility of human respect, empathy, and equity, which are key upsides of humanism.

Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught his followers to be kind and compassionate to all people, regardless of their race, religion, or social status. He said, "Allah is merciful to those who show

mercy to others. So, show mercy to those on earth, and Allah will show mercy to you"²². His (peace be upon him) another saying is, "The best of people are those who are most beneficial to people."²³ These words emphasize the importance of serving others and being a source of benefit to those around us, which is a key principle of humanity. Once the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."²⁴

Addressing all humanity, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "O people! Undoubtedly, your Lord is one and the father of all of you is also one. No Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab, nor a white person over a black person, nor a black person over a white person, except piety."²⁵ Overall, Prophet Muhammad's teachings emphasize the value and dignity of all human beings, the importance of serving others, and the need to treat all living beings with kindness and compassion.

These were the basic teachings of Islam which were followed by the early Muslims and left an impressive impact on the contemporary world. Later, in the classical period of Islam, there were significant developments and achievements in various fields, including Islamic theology, law, philosophy, science, art, and architecture. Islamic scholars during this period made important contributions to various disciplines. There are several intellectuals made important theological and legal advancements, such as Imam al-Ghazali and Imam Ibn Hanbal. Philosophers like al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) played an essential role in the preservation and translation of the contribution of Greek philosophers and integrated them into Islamic thought. Intellectuals like Al-Khwarizmi made great contributions to mathematics while al-Battani and al-Biruni as astronomers extended knowledge related to their fields. In medication, researchers like Ibn Sina delivered persuasive medical texts that were broadly studied and translated into Latin during Medieval times.

4. George Makdisi's Views

George Makdisi made a great contribution to the study of humanism in medieval times. He asserts that humanism has its roots in the classical period of Islamic civilization. A time when Muslim scholars and philosophers sought to accommodate spirituality and reason in their understanding of the human experience and the world. In his book, "The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West: with special reference to Scholasticism", he specifies significant connections and parallels between the scholarly customs of the two civilizations during the medieval period. Makdisi argues that humanism was a wide intellectual movement that underlined the significance of critical thinking, rational inquiry, and social refinement. In his view, humanism was not a consistent movement, instead incorporated a variety of disciplines, such as grammar, rhetoric, theology, philosophy, medicine, and jurisprudence. He believes that during classical Islam, knowledge was based on three main categories, for example, (a) the Arabic literary arts, (b) the Islamic religious sciences, and (c) the Foreign Sciences or the studies of the Ancients, especially of the Greeks.²⁶ Further, there was a scholarly class that they framed separately in the public arena. The biographers frequently allude to an intellectual as being a member of *Ahl al-Adab* ('The Humanists' or 'The Members of Humanism')²⁷ Regarding the most important form of *Adab*, al-Ahnaf bin Qais considered the eloquent speech as the most essential while Abdullah bin al-Muqaffa in *al-Adab al-Saghir* said that the principal part of

humanism is an eloquent discourse, and the principal part of eloquent discourse is acquired through learning.²⁸

Makdisi begins by examining the development of scholasticism in Islamic civilization, particularly in the Abbasid era. He highlights the establishment of centers of learning, such as the House of Wisdom in Baghdad, which became important hubs for scholarship and the translation of Greek philosophical and scientific works into the Arabic language. As he writes, the drive of Greek books from Byzantium to Baghdad started vigorously with a letter from Caliph al-Ma'mun to the Byzantine sovereign. He requested a few chosen works that were preserved in their country's library. The request was initially refused then al-Ma'mun sent a delegation. The librarian of Dar al-Hikmah named Salim was also with the delegation. Then, with the agreement of the Byzantine sovereign, they selected the books and brought them back. It was a great incentive for the interpretational movement which was started during the reign of al-Ma'mun's father, Harun al-Rashid, and ultimately achieved the Arabic-Islamic blowup of information.²⁹ Similarly, 'when the Islamic political control spread over much of southern Europe sporadically from 711 AD to 1492 AD, its effects are found in the development of Western thought; we have simply chosen to ignore the exploration of this history. It would shock many scholars to note that the oldest degree-granting university in existence, the University of *al-Karabune* or *al-Qarawiyyin*, established in 859 AD, was founded by an Arab woman, Fatima al-Fihri.³⁰

Makdisi argues that scholasticism in medieval Europe was influenced by Islamic educational institutions and intellectual traditions. He highlights the transmission of knowledge from the Muslim world to the West through the translation and study of Arabic texts and writes that "it is generally known that this influence existed in such fields as philosophy and medicine, mainly because of the translation of books in those and other fields of the sciences, from Arabic to Latin, as well as the adoption of Arabic terms"³¹ and with the reference of Ibn Butlan, he mentions three significant divisions of the sciences that had developed in Islam by the middle of the third/ninth century: the Islamic Sciences, the philosophical and natural sciences, and the literary arts.³²

Makdisi draws comparisons between Islamic and Christian scholasticism, noting the shared emphasis on rational inquiry, dialectical methods, and the use of logical argumentation. He discusses the influence of Islamic scholasticism on Christian thinkers during the medieval period, particularly through the translation movement in Spain and Sicily, where Islamic philosophical and scientific works were translated into Latin and had a significant impact on Western thought.

The mosques were not only institutes to disseminate Islamic teachings, but some mosques were specially constructed to serve as the center of *Adab* studies. As Makdisi writes "From early times on, grammar, lexicography, poetry, history, genealogy, and other *Adab studies* were taught in the mosques, small as well as great."³³ For instance, Hadrat Hassan bin Thabit who is generally known as the poet of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), is reported to have recited poetry in Masjid-e-Nabvi.³⁴ Later, there seem various centers for learning, Makdisi discusses the role of these private and government institutions as he writes, "The waqf institutions were those where humanistic studies of *Adab* were pursued especially as propaedeutic to the religious sciences. But there were other locales where the study of humanism was carried out further by those who wished to devote themselves single-mindedly to this field of studies. Humanism

never cut itself off from the domain of religious studies.”³⁵ However, some critics argue that its influence has tended to favor certain themes or interpretations at the expense of other perspectives, potentially limiting the diversity of perspectives in the field.

4.1 Scholasticism

Scholastics engaged in detailed textual analysis and logical disputation, often employing a question-and-answer method known as the "scholastic method" or "scholastic dialectic." They sought to use reason and rationality to explore theological and philosophical questions and to provide systematic explanations for matters of faith and doctrine. The dawn of scholasticism in Islam begins with the *Risala* of Shafi.³⁶ Makdisi argued that the origins of Western scholasticism can be traced back to the influence of Islamic thought. He has emphasized the intellectual exchanges that took place between Islamic and Christian scholars during the medieval period. He posited that the translation movement from Arabic into Latin, which occurred in the 12th and 13th centuries, played a crucial role in transmitting Islamic philosophical and scientific works to the West.

In the development and promotion of scholasticism, there was a pivotal role in medieval universities, both in Europe and the Islamic world. He underscores the influence of these educational institutions in shaping the curriculum, methodology, and intellectual climate of the time. While acknowledging the historical importance of scholasticism, Makdisi also offers critical perspectives. He suggests that the dominance of scholasticism in medieval education limited the scope of intellectual inquiry and stifled alternative perspectives, creating a narrow focus on abstract questions and intricate debates. Makdisi connects the beginning of modern doctoral degree with Islamic civilization that ‘the doctorate has traveled through three periods of history, from the Middle Ages down to modern times, under three main designations: (1) the classical Islamic-Arabic *ijāzat al-tadris*, (2) the medieval Christian-Latin *licentia docendi*; and (3) the modern doctorate.’³⁷

Makdisi highlighted the works of Muslim philosophers and theologians, such as Avicenna (Ibn Sina) and Averroes (Ibn Rushd), who had a significant impact on Christian theologians and philosophers. According to Makdisi, these Islamic thinkers introduced rational and systematic methods of inquiry, laying the groundwork for the rise of scholasticism in Western Europe. He argued that the dialectical methods of Islamic legal and theological scholarship, combined with Aristotelian philosophy, shaped the scholastic approach of posing questions, analyzing arguments, and seeking logical resolutions.

Makdisi's research challenged the prevailing notion that scholasticism emerged exclusively from Western intellectual traditions. Instead, he proposed that it was influenced by the intellectual achievements of the Islamic world. He viewed scholasticism as a product of the cross-cultural exchange and mutual influence between Islamic and Christian scholars, rather than a purely Western phenomenon. It's important to note that while Makdisi's views on the influence of Islamic thought on scholasticism have been influential, they are not without controversy. Some scholars have offered alternative interpretations and emphasized the distinctiveness of Western scholasticism.

4.2 Major Fields Within *Adab* Humanism

Makdisi highlights several major fields within *Adab* humanism, such as:

4.2.1 Grammar

The science of grammar began in the 1st century.³⁸ The close connection between grammar and religious studies is illustrated in statements attributed to the Prophet and his Companions. The Prophet is reported as having said: Recite the Quran...and search for the meanings of its strange words. Hadrat Umar (may Allah be pleased with him): 'Learn the Arabic language; for it strengthens the mind, and adds to the manly virtues. Hadrat Ali (may Allah be pleased with him): Cleave to the grammar of Arabic, and poetry; for they undo two knots of the tongue, barbarism, and ungrammatical language.³⁹

The most important extant work on grammar, *The Book*, is by 'Amr bin 'Uthman bin Qanbar, a disciple of al-Khalil bin Ahmad. This work attained the status of a canonical work in Arabic grammar. While 'Abd al-Rahman bin Hurmuz al-Madani (d. 117/735), is said to have been the inventor of grammar. But Qjfti explains that Madani learned his grammar from Du'ali and was the first to teach it in the city of Madina.⁴⁰

Adab humanism emphasized the study of language and grammar as essential tools for communication and understanding. Grammar was seen to cultivate precision and clarity in speech and writing, and linguistics was studied to explore the structure, origins, and evolution of language.

4.2.2 Poetry

Adab humanism celebrated the beauty and power of literature and poetry. Arabic literature, in particular, was highly regarded, and poets were esteemed for their ability to express profound thoughts and emotions through verse. Literary works were seen as a means to engage with the complexities of human experiences, express moral values, and convey social criticism. In pre-Islamic Arabia, Hammad *al-Rawiya* was given the credit for having collected the famous Seven Odes of the ancient Arabian poets, called *al-Mu'allaqat* (The Suspended Poems). He was the first to collect pre-Islamic poems and to relate their history and was known for his astonishing memory.⁴¹ An example of the evidential use of poetry is the work of Ibn al-Yazidi. He is a student of al-Farra'. His work is in six volumes based on the rare or strange words in the Quran (*Gharib al-Quran*), where each word of the Quran was supported with several verses from pre-Islamic poetry as evidential examples. To Ibn Abbas is attributed the saying that when a problem arises regarding the meaning of a strange word in the Quran, one should 'seek it in (pre-Islamic) poetry, for it is the Register of the Arabians.⁴²

Later, Lyell who was a British civil servant and scholar contributed to the study and translation of Arabic literature, particularly ancient Arabic poetry. His book, "Translations of Ancient Arabic Poetry", published in 1885 and later revised in 1930, was intended to introduce English readers to the rich poetic tradition of Arabia. In this work, Lyall presented a selection of Arabic poems from different periods and regions, spanning from the pre-Islamic period to the early Islamic period. He translated these poems into English, trying to capture the essence, imagery, and poetic devices used by Arab poets. Lyell's translations aimed to convey the cultural and historical context of the poems while retaining their literary beauty and emotional impact.⁴³ "Translations of Ancient Arabic Poetry" served as an important resource for Western readers

interested in exploring the literary heritage of Arabia. It contributed to a wider understanding of Arabic poetry and its influence on later literary traditions.

4.2.3 Eloquence

In Arabic, the terms *balagha* and *bayan* had the meanings of both rhetoric and eloquence. *Adab* humanism placed great emphasis on the art of effective communication. Rhetoric, the study and practice of persuasive speech, and oratory, the art of public speaking, were considered crucial skills for intellectuals and leaders. Mastery of these disciplines allowed individuals to convey their ideas effectively and influence others. In fact, 'the most essential part of humanism is eloquent speech.'⁴⁴ In Islam, the Quran was one of the sources of eloquence for poets and writers of artistic prose. It was regarded by the Arabs as the ideal of eloquence, a model, the model par excellence for poetry, oratory, and epistolary art. It was the schoolboy's first textbook, which he memorized in the next step, his prayerbook as he grew up into adolescence and adulthood. It was the first text of classical Arabic that he memorized through constant daily repetition.⁴⁵

As far as the eloquence of the Quran is concerned, Allah the Almighty challenged the people that if they think this is the speech of a human being, then they should also make a speech like it.⁴⁶ Then this challenge was reduced to ten surahs⁴⁷ and finally, it was said to make only one surah⁴⁸. But no one could make even one surah like it. Labid ibn Rabi'ah was a renowned poet of the pre-Islamic era in Arabia. His contributions to Arabic poetry and his ability to capture the essence of human emotions have secured his place as one of the most celebrated poets of the pre-Islamic era. He was more than 100 years of age when he went to Madina and met Hazarat Muhammad (peace be upon him). There he listened to some verses from Surah Baqarah and accepted Islam. He then gave up writing poetry. At the point when he was inquired as to why he quit poetry, he said, "Allah has given me the Quran rather than poetry." Although after accepting Islam, he wrote some poems but based on Islamic philosophy,⁴⁹

4.2.4. Oratory

Adab humanism placed great emphasis on the art of effective communication. Rhetoric, the study and practice of persuasive speech, and oratory, the art of public speaking, were considered crucial skills for intellectuals and leaders. Mastery of these disciplines allowed individuals to convey their ideas effectively and influence others. The first and perhaps the most important known collection of speeches (khutab) is that of Ibn Nubata al-Fariqi. His collection was first compiled and arranged by his son Abu Tahir Muhammad and his grandson, Abu 'l-Faraj, both of whom added some of their speeches. Ibn Nubata was an orator at the court of the Hamdanid Prince Saif al-Da'ula, a contemporary of the prince's famous court poet, al-Mutanabbi, under whom he is said to have studied some of the poet's Diwan. His speeches may be divided into two, such as (1) Religious Sermons based on (a) praise of God and prayer for the Prophet, (b) exhortation to fear God and the last judgment, observance of the moral and religious laws, performance of the obligation of jihad against the enemy, and (c) petition for God's help and blessing, ending with aversion from the Quran; and (2) Speeches on political occasions.⁵⁰

There is another monumental work in the form of "al-'aqd al-Farid" (The Peerless Necklace) by Ibn Abd Rabbihi. It is an encyclopedia of humanistic studies and related subjects with three of its main parts devoted

to speeches in pre-Islamic and Islamic times.⁵¹ The Arab-Islamic world has produced numerous influential orators throughout history who have made significant contributions to the fields of religion, politics, philosophy, and literature.

4.2.5 Epistolary Art

Epistolography, the art or science of letter-writing, is believed to have developed quickly into the most important form of writing in Islamic society.⁵² Letters, like other documents, were based on three main parts, the introductory protocol (*al-fawatih*), the body of the letter (*al-lawahiq*), and the concluding protocol (*al-khawatim*).

a. The introductory protocol was called *iftitah al-mukataba*, and its parts, *al-fawatih*, were: the bismillah, the *hamd* and the *tashahhud*, the *salwala*, the *salam*, and the *badiya* (i.e. *amma ba'd*). The *Unwan* (address), was also part of the introduction, e.g. *min fulan ila fulan* (from So and So to So and So).

b. The term for the text was *matn*, or *ma bain aa-salamain*, 'that which is between the two salutations', because letters usually began and ended with the salutation, *salam*.

c. The concluding protocol, *al-khawatim*, consisted of *istithna*' (i.e. *in sha Allah taala*, 'God willing'), the *ta'rikh* (dating), the *alama*, signature of the person drawing up the document. The *hamd*, *salwala*, and *hasbala* are religious closing phrases.

Interestingly, the same three main divisions were later observed in medieval Latin documents.⁵³ Further, Makdisi writes that the letters in Islam begin with the Prophet, his Companions, and Successors while the epistolary as an art reaches its zenith in the tenth century. The art was inaugurated with Abd al-Hamid and sealed with Ibn al-Amid.⁵⁴

4.2.6 History

The study of history and biography is an integral part of *Adab's* humanism. *Khabar* and *Ta'rikh*

are the two basic words used to designate history? In this regard, it is highly noteworthy that the Arabic word *khabar* (pl. *akhbar*) and the Italian word *novella* have the same meaning (a piece of news, tale, short story) and point to a probable connection between the two terms.⁵⁵ History was protected by authoritative transmission (*riwaya*), guaranteeing their authenticity, i.e. the purity of classical Arabic, as well as the accuracy of the words and deeds of the Prophet.⁵⁶ Historical narratives and biographies were valued as sources of knowledge, moral lessons, and inspiration. The study of the past provided insights into the rise and fall of civilizations, the achievements of great individuals, and the consequences of human actions.

4.2.7 Moral Philosophy

Adab humanism sought to develop individuals who were not only knowledgeable but also possessed refined manners, eloquence, ethical awareness, and an appreciation for beauty. During classical Islam, this holistic approach aimed to foster intellectual, moral, and cultural growth in individuals and society. *Adab* humanism emphasized philosophical inquiry and ethical reflection. Scholars explored various philosophical traditions, including Islamic philosophy, Greek philosophy (especially Aristotelian thought), and Neoplatonism.

Ethical teachings and moral principles derived from these philosophical traditions were examined to guide individuals in leading virtuous lives and cultivating moral character. For the same, at that time there were remarkable study circles and most importantly academic sermons such as *Khutba* and *Wa'z*.

As Makdisi writes, '*Adab* went through various stages of moral thought, combining various elements. Persian moral thought and Greek philosophical ethics had their part to play, and their teachings found their way eventually into the works of *Adab*. Of greater importance were the influences within Islam itself, especially from *Sufism*.'⁵⁷ He also believes that 'the moral philosophy of *Adab* is an eclectic combination of foreign and Islamic traditions which may be found in the work of Ibn Qutaiba, '*Uyun al-akhbar*' (Choice Narratives). The secular and the religious find their way into this book.'⁵⁸

4.3 THE METHODOLOGY OF LEARNING

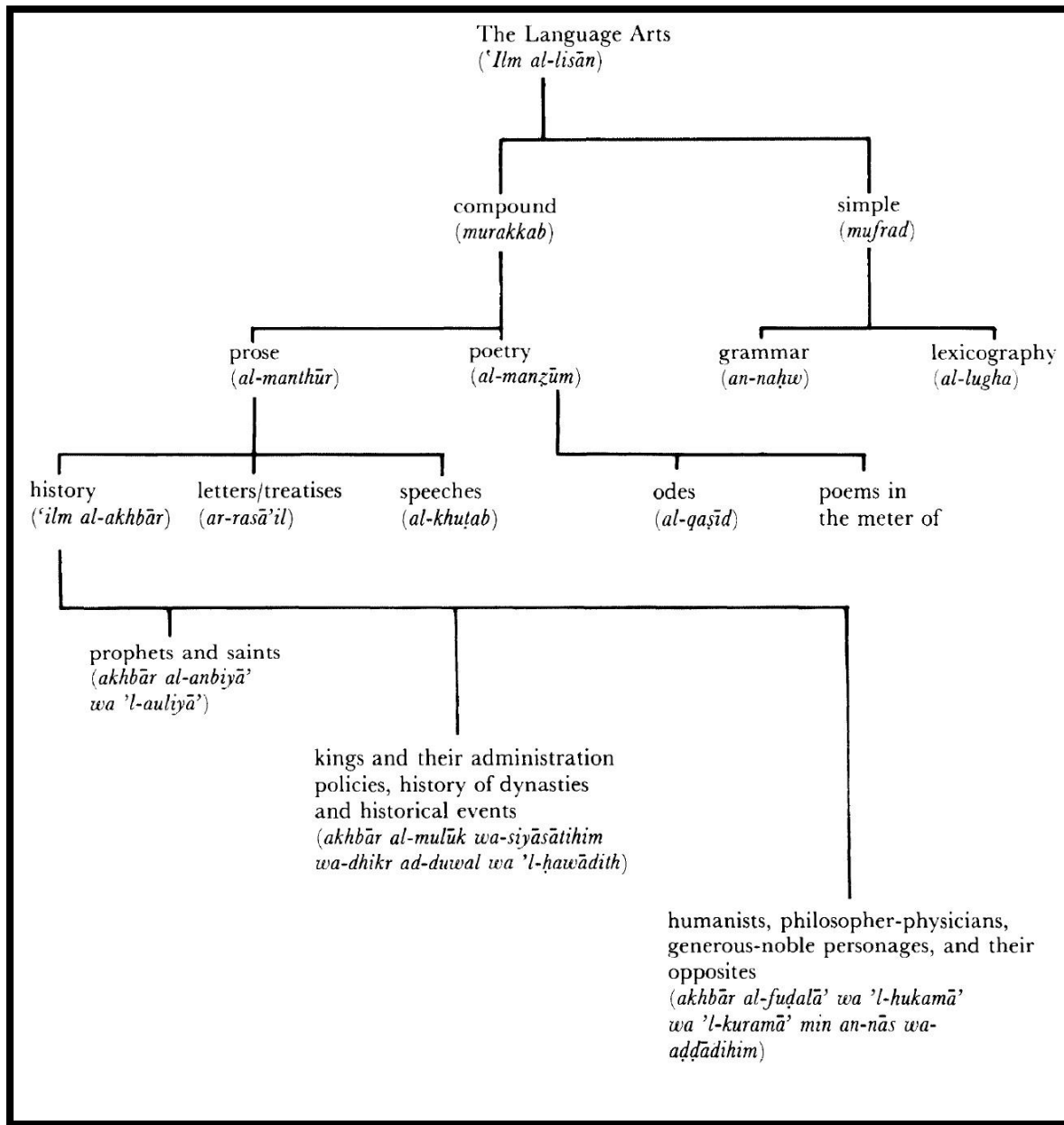
George Makdisi's works and research provide insights into his views on educational practices in the Islamic world. Here are some general themes that can be inferred from his writings:

4.3.1 Memory

Memorization as a mainstay of the Arab culture of learning has enhanced the Arabs' ability by use of memory to learn fast and imprison information for a short period.⁵⁹ The habit of memorization was embedded in all levels of learning from youngsters and spread across all disciplines. As Makdisi writes, memory was a tool with which to take in all that one could of the Traditions that the past ages had sent from the old Arabians down through the ages, including the Holy Scriptures and other knowledge related to the religions including Islam.⁶⁰

4.3.2 Mudhakara

Mudhākara was another tool to learn and also to retain the materials of *adab*, and preserve them in the memory. Albeit the term is used in more than one sense. Maybe its most regular use in humanism was in the sense of instructive conversation, one in which the parties to the conversation exchanged their knowledge to their mutual benefit, as well as to that of the audience, if any. *Mudhākara* was likewise utilized to test the information on a candidate for a post. There were different manners by which coaches were tried for their insight. Al-Mahdi chose to employ Kisa'i as a mentor for his child Harun when the occupant coach had offered some unacceptable response to Mahdi on a syntactic inquiry.⁶¹



Fields of Adab

(Source: Makdisi, George. *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West: With Special Reference to Scholasticism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990. p.168-69)

4.3.3 Munazara

Munazara is another pedagogical method that originated quite early in Islam. In the study of law, the scholastic method of *Munazara* can be seen quite early in the Islamic milieu- prevailed. The student would additionally learn the school of law (*Madhab*) with which he was affiliated; the points of difference (*Ikhtilaf*) within the same *madhab* and between the four schools of law; called *Munazara* (disputation).⁶² Makdisi explains it as, this type of disputation, where 'no holds were barred', took place in the field of humanistic studies where many subjects were involved. In the case of a jurisconsult or a theologian, the disputation, unrestricted as to subjects involved, would be within the field of law and/or theology. The essential characteristic in such encounters was that the questions were not restricted to the subject matter within the claimed competence of the scholar taking the questions.⁶³

4.3.4 Tools of the Humanist Methods of Dictation Self-Teaching

The main tools of Humanists were notebooks and inkwells, the slate was sometimes used as an extra precaution against errors before transcribing the materials onto the notebook. The task of memorizing the knowledge recorded in notebooks was a never-ending one. It is said that the ninety-year-old Tha'lab was on his way home from the Mosque when he was run down fatally by a mule-drawn cart because he had been engrossed in his notebooks as he walked. Further, Muslim scholars also created the index, especially for the use of the compilations of hadith.⁶⁴

4.3.5 The Method of Dictation

The method of dictation (*Imla*) was also used as a method of learning. This method was much in practice during the 9th century by theologians and philologists. While during the 10th century, the philologists outgrew the theologian's method of teaching they gave up the method of dictation in favor of explaining a work, which one of the students read, 'just as one explained compendiums (*mukhtasarät*). However, as a method of instruction in the field of theology, dictation was used.⁶⁵

4.3.6 Self-Teaching

Sometimes the knowledge was acquired without the help of a master. It was the method of Self-teaching. This method of acquiring knowledge was adopted by those who did not have the resources to pay for classes or private teaching in the homes of master scholars. It was also the method followed by those who could afford to pay the necessary fees, often incredibly high, but who, for one reason or another, preferred to study on their own.⁶⁶

A good example of works written for the humanist autodidact is the lexicon of the magistrate Safi al-Din Nashwan bin Sa'id al-Himyari, he was a firm believer in self-teaching, encouraging the neophyte to by-pass the professor. About his book, he says that this book is meant for autodidacts. It will protect him from solecisms and distortions; the knowledge it contains exceeds that of the professor under whom he may study.⁶⁷

5. Conclusion

George Makdisi's views shed light on how Islamic thought incorporates humanistic principles and values. He emphasized the role of the Islamic world as a center of learning and intellectual exchange in the medieval period, arguing that the Islamic tradition of intellectual inquiry and scientific discovery helped to lay the foundations for the European Renaissance. He saw the Islamic tradition as an important source of knowledge and inspiration for the development of humanism and science in the West. Makdisi's views on humanism were influential in shaping contemporary debates about the relationship between Islam and the West, and about the role of religion in shaping humanist values and practices. His work remains a valuable source for anyone seeking to understand the rich and diverse intellectual and cultural heritage of the Islamic world and its contributions to humanist thought and practice. Although George Makdisi's contributions to Islamic and medieval studies have been significant, his work is not without criticism. It is important to engage critically with his scholarship, acknowledging his valuable insights while also considering alternative perspectives and approaches to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subjects he addressed.

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