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POST-ISLAMISM AND THE RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE OF ʿABD AL-SALAM YASIN

For more than a decade, post-Islamism has been at the center of a major debate in French academia regarding the historical evolution of Islamism. The concept was put forth in the early 1990s as an attempt to apprehend the apparent crisis within many Islamic movements of the Middle East. In Iran, the increasingly authoritarian character of the Islamic republic, as well as the predominance of the mullahs' discretionary powers, seemed to undermine the credibility of the Islamist alternative. Elsewhere, as in Egypt and Algeria, the advent of an Islamic order never came to pass and appeared illusory. Islamists were unable to cope with the repression and the containment policies of secular states. Therefore, a number of French scholars argued that Islamism—that is, the holistic, populist, and often revolutionary ideology whose goal is the establishment of an Islamic state and the governance of all aspects of society according to Islamic principles—had reached a dead end. Ruhollah Khomeini, Sayyid Qutb, and Abu al-Aʿla al-Mawdudi were passé. An era of post-Islamism was dawning.[1]

Initial articulations of this argument posited that Islamism was shifting toward practical and ideological compromises vis-à-vis politics. This idea remains the cornerstone of recent theoretical developments, which isolated a series of independent features for defining post-Islamism and its manifestations.[2] First, post-Islamists may remain politically active but have more modest agendas than their predecessors: "[t]oday, Islamists everywhere evolve into Islamo-nationalist movements (Turkish Refah, Palestinian Hamas, Algerian FIS) for which the *umma* becomes a slogan for internal use."[3] Second, post-Islamists are creating a de facto secular space by re-routing religious activism away from the state and, sometimes, from political issues altogether. The recrudescence of Sufi brotherhoods and Salafi neofundamentalist movements is thus considered symptomatic of post-Islamism. While the former promote quietist mysticism, the latter focus on individual orthopraxy and often tend to eschew the political sphere. Groups calling for the implementation of the shariʿa are increasingly unwilling to take political responsibilities and prefer to leave the task to current regimes. Third, post-Islamism implies theological and philosophical reformulations. Coping with the intellectual failure of political Islam, some thinkers articulated secular or apolitical positions. Examples of post-Islamist thought range from the hermeneutics of Abdolkarim Soroush, who disputes

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the doctrinal rigidity of the Shi'i establishment in Iran, to the Syrian-based *ʿālim* Saʿid Ramadan al-Buti, who emphasizes Islamic spirituality and ethics.[4]

For the student of contemporary Morocco, post-Islamist theory is simultaneously intriguing and perplexing. Prima facie, it could explain multiple recent phenomena, including the advent of the moderate Party of Justice and Development (PJD) and the unprecedented visibility of the Butshishiyya Sufi order. Yet the theory is still lacking in evidence. The notion of post-Islamist thought is particularly embryonic. According to Olivier Roy's own avowal, it is the least substantiated aspect of post-Islamist theory.[5] This paper proposes to examine the concept's validity by using the religious discourse of the Moroccan Islamist ʿAbd al-Salam Yasin as a case study. Indeed, several markers of post-Islamist thought—such as the significance of spirituality and ethics—are highly suggestive of Yasin's ideas.

For the past thirty years, ʿAbd al-Salam Yasin has been one of the major Islamic activists and intellectuals of his country. In addition to being Supreme Guide of al-ʿAdl wa-l-Ihsan (Justice and Beneficence)—an illegal yet tolerated movement that aims at the re-Islamization of society—he is also a prolific writer. Since 1972, he has published nearly thirty books in addition to several articles. Although political, social, and economic issues are prominent in his corpus, they should not distract analysts from the equally abundant spiritual content. Post-Islamist theory provides an opportunity to delve into the specifically religious and nonpolitical aspects of Yasin's thought, which historians and social scientists have often neglected.[6] The theoreticians of post-Islamism themselves have overlooked the apparent congruence between Yasin's discourse and the concept of post-Islamist thought.

Superficial congruence, however, requires verification. What exactly does Yasin's religious discourse consist of, and how is it novel? Is the notion of post-Islamist thought capable of conveying its specificity? This paper will show that a detailed analysis of Yasin's discourse fails to validate post-Islamism; instead, it unveils some of the theory's weaknesses and provides clues to solve them. Since the term "post-Islamist" cannot adequately make sense of Yasin's nonpolitical ideas, this paper will argue that "post-Salafism" is a more appropriate and meaningful category. From a strictly religious viewpoint, Yasin's discourse is distinctive by transcending the broad Salafi epistemology that exalts exoteric scripturalism and formal instruction (*taʿlīm*) at the expense of mysticism and spiritual guidance (*tarbiya*). Unlike the notion of post-Islamist thought, post-Salafism does not depend on the prior failure of political Islam; nor does it focus on political attitudes and ideas. Instead, it indicates changes in the dominant Salafi-oriented approach to religion that characterizes most Sunni Islamists and many alleged post-Islamists.

REHABILITATING MYSTICISM

Post-Islamist theory hinges on a historical narrative. It assumes a chronological sequence in which Islamism rose, failed, and critically needed to reconsider its political, social, and intellectual nature. According to this scenario, the 1970s were the prime of Islamism. During that decade, the Muslim Brotherhood's radical offshoots gained ground in Egypt following the defeat of Nasserism. In Pakistan, General Zia ul-Haq toppled the socialist regime of ʿAli Bhutto in 1977 and allowed the political ascent of al-Mawdudi, his

disciples, and his ideas. The decade culminated in Iran with the resounding victory of the Islamic Revolution over the Shah's regime in 1979. The gradual passage to post-Islamism occurred only later, after political disillusionment began in Iran in the mid-1980s and intensified with the global debacle of Islamism throughout the 1990s.[7] Consequently, the failure of political Islam would have triggered the formulation of substitute discourses revolving around spirituality.

This narrative not only distinguishes Islamism from post-Islamism in time; it also reveals what factual information has been used to characterize both categories. Based primarily on data from Egypt, Iran, and Pakistan during the 1970s, the first part of the narrative is somewhat selective. It disregards the historical conditions that forged Islamism in countries such as Morocco, for which less scholarly research is available. As a result, it assumes that Islamism boomed systematically in reaction to the bankruptcy of secular nationalist regimes that had weak religious legitimacy. Those who filled the void in the name of religion were Islamists influenced by Qutb, Khomeini, and al-Mawdudi: they boldly called for an Islamic state, privileged a political reading of the Qur'an, and had little or no spiritual objectives per se. Such a narrative is acceptable insofar as it conveniently summarizes the upsurge of Islamism in core Middle Eastern countries and in Pakistan. The proponents of post-Islamism, however, use this portrayal of the 1970s as a historical and intellectual archetype, which then becomes a yardstick for identifying later signs of post-Islamism everywhere, from Istanbul to the suburbs of Paris. Such a methodology is too inductive to be taken at face value. Different historical conditions shaped different approaches to Islamism. Indeed, post-Islamist theory is unable to account for the fact that spirituality has been central to ʿAbd al-Salam Yasin's discourse since 1972—that is, well before the alleged failure of political Islam.

The Moroccan Context

The logical explanation for this theoretical anomaly is that the political and religious landscape of Morocco in the early 1970s did not fully correspond to the Egyptian, Iranian, or Pakistani paradigms. Although Yasin responded to the successes and tribulations of Islamism abroad, he developed his ideas in a unique local context. At the time, Moroccan Islamists faced religious competition. On the one hand, the monarchy had deep Islamic foundations. King Hasan II asserted his sharifian origins and his pre-eminence as Commander of the Faithful (*amīr al-muʾminīn*). On the other hand, one of the regime's major political challengers—the nationalist Istiqlal party—already used an Islamic idiom to articulate some of its grievances. From its inception in the 1930s, Moroccan nationalism had been tied to the Salafiyya. ʿAllal al-Fasi (d. 1974), who headed the Istiqlal from 1956 until his death, was an Islamic modernist à la Muhammad ʿAbduh.[8]

This situation contributed to making the rise of Islamism much less exuberant in Morocco than it was in Egypt, Iran, or Pakistan. During the 1970s, Moroccan Islamists were generally fragmented and restrained.[9] The advocates of the nationalist Salafiyya within the Istiqlal faced similar difficulties. Their old message of Islamic reform hardly answered the problems of independent Morocco, especially its socio-economic and political inequalities. By 1959, the Istiqlal had split, spawning an important new oppositional current based on secular socialism. Such ideological divisions benefited the

monarch, who elevated himself above rivalries and consolidated his power. Nationalist Salafis and Islamists shared religion as a vehicle for oppositional politics, yet none of them appeared capable of fostering any real change within Moroccan society.[10] In this context, Yasin's interest for mysticism had a tactical value.

Indeed, nationalist Salafis and Islamists were restricted by a common epistemological stance: they both neglected spiritual devotion and mystical fulfillment, which were still central to the Moroccan masses' religious life.[11] The nationalist Salafiyya was a scriptural and elitist reform movement that tended to belittle the popular mystical dimension of Islam. While older Moroccan Salafis such as Abu Shuʿayb al-Dukkali (d. 1937) had been open to conciliation, their younger disciples were not. The anti-colonial struggle required al-Fasi to assert that Islam was inherently rational, progressive, and conducive to modernity. Therefore, he repeatedly claimed that Sufism had obscured the true nature of Islam, which was found in the Qur'an, the hadith, and the practice of the pious ancestors (*salaf*).[12] He also condemned Sufi brotherhoods for their collaboration with French imperialism. Upon independence, Sufism was a marginal form of religiosity among the nationalist Moroccan elites.

Similarly, the most prominent Islamist organization of the early 1970s, al-Shabiba al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Youth), ignored mysticism. In keeping with the dominant intellectual Islamist current of the period, al-Shabiba abided by a Salafi epistemology. The organization followed the doctrines and the exegesis of Sayyid Qutb, which had wide political implications but provided no real spiritual solace.[13] By connecting mystical elements to Islamism, ʿAbd al-Salam Yasin could aspire to transcend this hegemonic Salafi epistemology and reach out for the Sufi sensibilities of Moroccan masses. This is not to say that Yasin's approach was strictly a tool of self-promotion. While the re-appropriation of mystical elements certainly corresponded to his personal religious beliefs, it also allowed him to lay the foundations for a more comprehensive, uniting, and mobilizing approach to Islamism in Morocco.

Yasin was fully aware of the potency of mysticism because it had been a determinative experience in his life. Born in 1928, Yasin is the son of a Berber fellah and allegedly comes from a poor family. He started to read the Qur'an at an early age and studied in a private elementary school in Marrakech. At fifteen, Yasin entered the Bin Yusuf Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, where he studied for four years. In 1947, he moved to Rabat to attend a pedagogical school for teachers, and he began a long career in education, mainly as an Arabic teacher, the following year. In 1955, Yasin successfully passed a national examination to become education inspector and took up this new line of work in a primary school in Casablanca. During the following years, he moved frequently between Beni Mellal, Marrakech, and Casablanca to occupy higher managerial positions in the primary and secondary school system.[14] Around 1967, however, illness prevented him from pursuing his career. This hitch coincided with a mid-life crisis that manifested itself through spiritual anguish. Approaching the age of forty, Yasin suddenly became preoccupied with existential questions regarding Islam and the meaning of human life.

Searching for answers, he was drawn to a Sufi master—al-Hajj al-ʿAbbas ibn al-Mukhtar al-Qadiri—who headed the Butshishiyya order.[15] Yasin found in him and in Sufism the guidance and spiritual fulfillment he had been looking for. He affirms that al-Hajj al-ʿAbbas liberated him from his ignorant, inherited understanding of Islam

(*al-Islām al-mawrūth al-majhūl*).[16] Yasin remained closely associated with the leader of the Butshishiyya until al-Hajj al-ʿAbbas died in 1972. At that point, Yasin disagreed with Hamza—the son and successor of al-Hajj al-ʿAbbas—with respect to the orientation that the Sufi order should adopt. While Hamza was faithful to the quietist tradition of the Butshishiyya, Yasin wanted the order to move toward greater activism in the public arena.

Therefore, Yasin left the Butshishiyya in 1972 and began a life of social involvement as an Islamist intellectual. He founded no organization until the following decade and so devoted all his energies to writing. With respect to politics and economics, Yasin's discourse is often commonplace and recapitulates ideas that Qutb and al-Mawdudi previously addressed. What truly distinguishes him is his religious discourse, which remained permeated with mystical elements, despite his conversion to Islamism. By the 1970s, the ideas of Qutb and al-Mawdudi enjoyed unprecedented popularity and authority among Islamists but were almost exclusively concerned with temporal issues. Yasin disputed this limitation and believed that the religious dimension of Islamism should address spiritual matters, as well. Yasin's mystical inclination, however, did not result from disillusionment vis-à-vis politics, as post-Islamist theory suggests, nor did it chronologically follow the alleged failure of political Islam. On the contrary, from the early 1970s onward, Yasin viewed mysticism as essential for the success of Islamism in Morocco and throughout the Muslim world.

Main Spiritual Concepts

Yasin justifies his post–Salafi discourse in terms of medical analogies. According to him, the contemporary *umma* suffers from a disease: its body is ailing because its spirit is sick. Muslims have lost their spiritual bond by growing too enamored with this world (*dunyā*) and becoming averse to death. Thus, Yasin argues that Islamists like himself must put forth a religious medication that corresponds to this diagnosis. The appropriate remedy, he claims, is spiritual guidance (*al-tarbiya al-rūḥiyya*).[17] For him, Islamic fervor requires a mystical knowledge (*ʿilm ladunī*) that reason alone fails to grasp. Although he acknowledges the intellectual exertions of Muhammad ʿAbduh, he draws inspiration from the theosophy of Sufi teachers such as the Moroccan shaykh, ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Dabbagh (d. 1719).[18] Indeed, Yasin's literary production is replete with concepts that have Sufi overtones. Three of them are particularly recurrent: *ṣuḥba* (spiritual companionship), *dhikr* (remembrance), and *iḥsān* (beneficence). From the onset, companionship and remembrance have been prominent subject matters in his corpus, especially in the first two books he published in 1972 and 1973. Both concepts imply what Annemarie Schimmel calls mysticism of personality—that is, the cultivation of love relations between God and individual believers.[19]

The term *ṣuḥba* usually refers to the interaction between the members of a Sufi order and the shaykh who guides them. For Yasin, it remains a form of spiritual tutorship between two or more individuals but is no longer confined to Sufi orders. Thus, *ṣuḥba* means seeking the company and the positive influence of believing Muslims who may serve as guides or role models. Yasin argues that sound companionship is the necessary condition for creating an environment that is conducive to spiritual progress. In some cases, *ṣuḥba* may entail sacrifices, such as the departure (*hijra*) from a familiar but

improper social circle or the renunciation of distracting luxury. In return, Muslims shall find solidarity and spiritual support to experience the love of God (*maḥabba*) and to taste the sweetness of faith (*ḥalāwa al-imān*).[20] According to Yasin, the communal dimension of *ṣuḥba* is also key because it can help to overcome the intellectual and sometimes physical dissension (*fitna*) that occurs among Muslims. For this reason, he views spiritual companionship as the first step toward building a strong and united Muslim community, as Medina was under the pious ancestors.[21]

Through *ṣuḥba*, Yasin aims to fill the gaps left by the foremost proponents of the Salafi epistemology: "[w]ell-known preachers such as Muhammad ʿAbduh, al-Mawdudi, and Sayyid Qutb refer to the glorious Islamic model in their books; they recommend to adhere to the sunna and to observe the example of the Prophet. Yet they never explain to us how to do this."[22] Spiritual companionship, Yasin claims, is one such means. Indeed, he criticizes al-Mawdudi for being wary of *ṣuḥba* and for associating it with dubious Sufi practices.[23] He also complains that Qutb wrote virtually nothing about spiritual companionship in his body of literature, even though he spent more than twenty years studying the formative texts.[24] Yasin suggests that the sociopolitical projects of Qutb and al-Mawdudi failed to become mass movements because they neglected *ṣuḥba*. In turn, he attributes the original success of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt to the mystical convictions of its founder—Hasan al-Banna—and his concern for *ṣuḥba*. Yasin is keen on reminding his readers that al-Banna, like him, was a former Sufi.[25]

The second mystical concept that recurrently appears in Yasin's writings is *dhikr* (remembrance), which is also typical of Sufi practice. It usually refers to the ritualistic and repetitive mention of formulas that evoke God's name. In the Butshishiyya order, for instance, *dhikr* was prominent and involved Qur'anic liturgy combined with a specific phrase-patterned litany (*wird*). Yasin, for his part, merely emphasizes the profession of faith (*shahāda*). His *dhikr* consists of repeating "there is no god but God" several hundred times a day, alone and in groups.[26] He upholds the orthodoxy of such practice by stressing that *dikhr* is a Qur'anic recommendation and that more than seventy hadiths underline the importance of the *shahāda*.[27] Even though his *dhikr* is simpler than the one practiced in the Butshishiyya, Yasin openly pursues the same mystical objective as his former Sufi masters. He claims that invoking and remembering God on a constant basis is a means to purify one's heart and link oneself to the metaphysical reality (*al-ghayb*) that positivist thinkers deny. Thus, remembrance is an integral part of spiritual guidance and a complement to companionship as it teaches Muslims to love and fear God and leads them to perform good deeds.[28] As a further justification, Yasin often underlines that Hasan al-Banna, in his own time, had also insisted on the importance of *dhikr*.

In the 1980s, Yasin began focusing more intensively on the notion of beneficence (*iḥsān*), which became the single most important ethical principle of his discourse. In Yasin's thought, beneficence is not a means of spiritual guidance per se, like *ṣuḥba* or *dhikr*. Rather, it is a superior stage of consciousness (*maqām*) to which all Muslims should aspire. It supersedes the previous two concepts because it refers to the high moral and spiritual condition that one reaches through guidance. The term "*iḥsān*" is found in the hadith literature and has a Qur'anic origin, as well: "[s]urely, God bids to justice and good-doing (*iḥsān*) and giving to kinsmen; and He forbids indecency, dishonour, and insolence, admonishing you, so that haply you will remember."[29] For Yasin, *iḥsān* implies an ethical and responsible behavior toward oneself and the community to enhance life

in this world (*dunyā*) and to prepare souls for salvation in the hereafter (*ākhira*).[30] Thus, *iḥsān* is a way of being, thinking, and acting that translates a love for God and his creation. Examples include fighting one's ego, providing money for the poor, and even protecting the ecosystem.[31]

The notion of *iḥsān* implies a framework of mystical gradation that is typical of Sufism. Yasin does not deny the succession of stages and the relevance of guided initiation:

> Islam is ascension. Islam is not a stationary state. The first step is that of the practicing Muslim who makes sure to fulfill the duties that the law prescribes to him and to all Muslims. The second step is that of iman [faith]: a high step where adoration and moral rectitude are on a par. The third degree is *iḥsān*, which is the starting point and the infinite space of the great spiritual journey. In the latter's utmost stage, a spiritual guide is necessary because the trip is long and full of difficulties.[32]

Undoubtedly, the concepts that Yasin borrowed from Sufism proved useful when he decided to found his first Islamist association in 1981, Jamaʿa al-Usra, which transformed into al-ʿAdl wa-l-Ihsan in 1987. Indeed, companionship, remembrance, and beneficence provided him with a basic structural, ritual, and disciplinary framework. It should be noted that references to Sufism also endowed Yasin with a certain political authority (*wilāya*). In Morocco, the model of the Sunni Muslim saint as an active religious-cum-political figure dates from the mid-15th century. There is a long history of pre-modern Moroccan Sufis partaking in socio-political life and reminding the sultans of their duty on behalf of the population.[33] In a way, Yasin can be viewed as a continuation of this tradition. In the famous open letter he sent to King Hassan II in 1974, which was titled "Islam or the Deluge," Yasin claimed a moral and spiritual ascendance. He admonished the king to repent, to return to God, and to follow a straight path for his own sake and for the good of his community.[34]

Seeking Acknowledgment and Consensus

Yasin's rehabilitation of mystical elements clashed with the fundamentals of Salafi epistemology. In Morocco, his theosophical ideas have been subjected to sharp criticism by Wahhabi-inspired Salafis and by fellow Islamists whose religious philosophy derives from Salafi principles. In 1983, the movement al-Islah wa-l-Tajdid (Reform and Renewal), a splinter group of al-Shabiba al-Islamiyya, published a short document attacking the Sufi inclination of Yasin's thought. According to this group, Yasin unsparingly relied on weak (*daʿīfa*) hadiths and Sufi lore, which led him to overemphasize *dhikr* and to distract Muslims from the Qur'an. In a typical Salafi fashion, the document invokes the intellectual authority of Ibn Taymiyya to condemn the mystical dimension of Yasin's religious discourse.[35]

It is true that Yasin's initial publications naively referred to controversial Sufis and their vocabulary. In his first book, for instance, Yasin devoted an entire section to the praiseworthy science of Muslim "saints" (*awliyā'*) and even mentioned Ibn ʿArabi (d. 1240)—whom the proponents of Salafi epistemology despise and typically accuse of existential monism—as a source of wisdom.[36] Such references were too marginal within Islamist circles to escape criticism. In his subsequent books, Yasin tried to remove such obvious sources of discredit. He virtually abandoned the notion of saint and no longer

referred to Ibn ʿArabi. By 1980, he had considerably reduced his allusions to the most esoteric or supernatural issues. In *L'islam à l'heure de la révolution*, for instance, one finds only a lone reference to dream interpretation as a means of spiritual guidance. Dreams, Yasin argued, may serve to indicate spiritual maturity: at a higher stage of *iḥsān*, a Muslim is likely to have explicit visions of the Prophet.[37]

Trying to avoid controversy, however, was insufficient to secure the religious legitimacy of an eclectic combination between mysticism and Islamism. In the 1980s, Yasin faced a dilemma: to defend the validity of his unusual approach or to cave in to his detractors and abandon the mystical elements of his discourse. He chose the former option and attempted to prove his critics wrong. To transcend the dominant Salafi epistemology, he had no choice but to demonstrate that certain spiritual matters, though often rejected out of hand as being "Sufi," were indeed compliant with scripturalist orthodoxy. Through this plea, Yasin endeavored to gain recognition from other Islamic activists and, ultimately, to foster a truly consensual discourse. In a book originally written around 1989, he seeks the indirect approval of reputable Muslim scholars, be they dead or alive. One of his main points is to show that mysticism was inherent to the religious worldview of great medieval Muslims.

For this purpose, he distinguishes between orthodox "Salafi" Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf al-salafī*) and "philosophical" Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf al-falsafī*).[38] Salafi Sufism is presented as a shariʿa-abiding type of mysticism that is also concerned with the welfare of hearts and souls. Two of its famous representatives were ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Jilani (d. 1166), the founder of the Qadiriyya order, and Ahmad al-Rifaʿi (d. 1182). Philosophical Sufism, in turn, designates a gnosis whose origins, according to Yasin, are found in neo-Platonism. He accuses this type of mysticism of being antinomian, tainted by foreign ideas, and sullied by spiritual ecstasies of divine infusion and union (*al-ḥulūl wa-l-ittiḥād*). These charges tacitly refer to the mysticism of al-Hallaj (d. 922) and Ibn ʿArabi. Without further elaboration, Yasin dismisses philosophical Sufism as non–Islamic. Rather, he wants to emphasize Salafi Sufism and its significance.

Yasin affirms that some of the most eminent Muslim scholars of the medieval period were not mere ulamas, but also jurists of guidance (*fuqahāʾ al-tarbiya*) and spiritual doctors who could cure hearts (*aṭibbāʾ al-qulūb*).[39] Judging by his extensive, though selective, quoting, the "doctors of the hearts" are numerous and come from all Sunni legal schools (*madhāhib*). Yasin wishes to underline that, for such scholars, spiritual growth was as significant as scripturalism and legal sciences. The Maliki jurist al-Shatibi (d. 1388), for example, wrote passages in which he admitted the validity and ethical benefits of orthodox Sufism.[40] So did Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 1200), the Hanbali author of *Talbis iblis* (The Devil's Delusion)—a book that the proponents of the Salafi epistemology often hail as the utmost denunciation of Sufism. While al-Jawzi condemned certain practices such as dancing (*raqṣ*) and liturgical concerts (*samāʿ*), he considered that dry legalism was insufficient to fulfill inner longings and that only a sober form of mysticism could appease one's heart.[41] As for the Shafiʿi scholar Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 1505), he sought spiritual guidance from the masters of the Shadhiliyya order after completing his formal religious studies.[42]

To be sure, Yasin's favorite model is al-Ghazali (d. 1111), whom he recognizes as the archetypal unifier of Sufism and traditional Islamic knowledge (*ʿilm*). Yasin is prone to identify himself with his intellectual muse, especially since they have in common

a mid-life spiritual crisis that led them to embrace mysticism. Al-Ghazali, however, is not the most authoritative or inspirational figure among contemporary Islamists. Therefore, Yasin endeavors to unveil evidence of mystical affinities in the writings of the most zealous Hanbali scholars—such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) and his pupil Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350)—to whom his Salafi-oriented detractors are indebted. Using specific quotations, Yasin argues that both scholars respected the ethical value of orthodox mysticism, even though they disliked the word "Sufism." Ibn Taymiyya did not believe that Sufis were blamable per se; instead, he wrote that Sufis were liable to error, just like any other Muslim seeking truth. As for Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, he declared that orthodox Sufism was among the noblest of Islamic sciences, second only to the theology of God's unity (*ʿilm al-tawḥīd*).[43]

Yasin contends that today's advocates of the Salafi epistemology, which include Islamists and Wahhabi-inspired Salafis, are misreading their sources. As a result, they cast undue discredit on Sufism and deprive the *umma* of much needed spiritual guidance. To buttress this delicate argument, Yasin invokes a contemporary *ʿālim* who shares his point of view. This scholar is Saʿid Ramadan al-Buti, who, according to Olivier Roy, exemplifies the concept of post-Islamist thought. Like Yasin, al-Buti challenges the standard Salafi reading of Ibn Taymiyya, whom he refuses to portray as an enemy of Sufism.[44] Al-Buti is different, however, in that he enjoys widespread popularity as a television preacher and benefits from a solid reputation as a graduate of al-Azhar and as a professor in the faculty of Islamic law at the University of Damascus. By referring to al-Buti, Yasin is able to compensate for his own lack of formal academic credentials while lending credibility to his religious discourse.[45]

This rhetoric, however, is a double-edged sword. Since Yasin aims to transcend the Salafi distrust vis-à-vis Sufism, he ipso facto confronts a new problem. Indeed, he cannot accept one of the logical conclusions of his own argument, which would be to invite contemporary Muslims to join orthodox Sufi orders or to seek the guidance of an orthodox Sufi shaykh. Yasin does not wish to rehabilitate Sufis as religious competitors; nor does he want to acknowledge Sufism as an alternative to political Islam. His intention remains to foster a credible, uniting, and eclectic Islamist ideology that can appeal to as many Muslims as possible. Therefore, Yasin finds himself in an awkward position. While attempting to rehabilitate a certain form of Sufism, he must simultaneously struggle to dissociate himself from it. He readily proclaims that orthodox Sufism is not a proper Islamic medication: "I do not propagandize Sufism; I like neither the noun nor the form [its practice takes] because I cannot find them in the book of God or the sunna of his Prophet."[46] Instead, Yasin contends that orthodox Sufis are relevant only insofar as they hold the key to *iḥsān* and preserve the means of spiritual guidance. However, nothing good can be expected from them because they are disengaged from socio-political life and cannot escape their solitary contemplation even when injustice is omnipresent. Although Yasin admits he owes everything to his Sufi masters, he argues that criticizing them for their quietism is an essential part of the contemporary Islamic renewal.[47] Thus, he uses the adjective "Sufi" only to describe his past convictions (*sawābiq*).[48]

Despite such ambiguities—or perhaps because of them—it appears that Yasin's partial rehabilitation of mysticism was rewarding. It provided him with a distinct yet inclusive religious ideology that eventually contributed to turning al-ʿAdl wa-l-Ihsan into one of the most popular Islamist organizations in Morocco. Though unusual, Yasin's religious

discourse cannot reasonably be referred to as post-Islamist, as his emphasis on spirituality and ethics does not imply a prior political failure or a retreat from political issues. Mystical elements were inherent in his articulation of Islamism since the 1970s because, in a Moroccan context, they proved to be empowering. For this reason, "post-Salafism" may better convey the particularities of Yasin's epistemology. To achieve success, he broke away from the deeply entrenched Salafi prejudices toward mysticism.

POST-SALAFI RE-ISLAMIZATION OF SOCIETY

Post-Islamist theory touches on the religious substance of discourses but also addresses modes of action. In Roy's theoretical framework, Islamists are presented as activists whose top priority is the establishment of an Islamic state. It is true that since the 1970s many Islamists inspired by Qutb, al-Mawdudi, and Khomeini have argued that the process of re-Islamization should occur through the state—that is, from the top down. Yet in the wake of Hasan al-Banna, other Islamists continued to believe that re-Islamization could occur from the bottom up. For them, the establishment of an Islamic state is an ulterior step that should follow the reeducation of Muslim society. They engage in active advocacy in the public sphere, but their priority is not to gain political power. Post-Islamist theory tends to overlook this second group, as though al-Banna's strategy had reached a dead end everywhere by the 1970s. Through a semantic shift, Roy suggests that only the first group deserves the label "Islamist."[49] As a result, he uses the label "post-Islamist" to describe various contemporary activists who embark on the re-Islamization of society from the bottom up.

Yasin does not corroborate this analytical model. He became an Islamist in the 1970s but favored al-Banna's old strategy of re-Islamization instead of Qutb's state-oriented platform. Although the monarchy's coercion and intimidation certainly influenced him, historical conditions may shed light on his choice. Islamism in Morocco emerged for the first time in the late 1960s, four decades after the creation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. No large-scale re-Islamization of society had taken place in previous years. Nationalist Salafis such as al-Fasi had used Islamic symbols to muster the people into the anti-colonial struggle, but their achievements in terms of *daʿwa* were mostly limited to academic circles. This context bears a strange resemblance to Egypt in the late 1920s. Though separated by forty years, Yasin and al-Banna both advocated Islamism in reaction to the decline of modernist Salafis and their failure to reach the masses.[50] They both dealt with a population that, for the most part, had never experienced a systematic process of Islamic reform and mobilization. In such circumstances, Yasin's decision to emphasize education and grass-roots activities can hardly be branded "post-Islamist." These were appropriate means for implanting Islamism in Morocco in the early 1970s.

In any case, the label "post-Islamist" cannot capture the religious distinctiveness of Yasin's intellectual practice. According to Roy, any attempt to re-Islamize society can be subsumed under post-Islamism as long as it is quietist or de facto tolerant of current regimes. Thus, Sufism and puritanical neofundamentalism (or Wahhabi-inspired Salafiyya, as it is called in Morocco) may exemplify what he calls "post-Islamist Islamization" because they both target individuals rather than the state. While Sufi shaykhs impart theosophical knowledge to their personal followers within a closed circle, neo-fundamentalists issue strict legal ordinances (*aḥkām*) that men and women

should observe in their daily life.[51] To be sure, these two types of re-Islamization occur outside the political arena, yet they entail two very different articulations of Islam and imply different modes of religious education and intellectual work. The label "post-Islamist" is incapable of conveying such distinctions.

The Prophetic Method

Yasin's intellectual strategy of re-Islamization is complex and multi-layered. To understand its particularities, it is necessary to specify Yasin's religious standpoint. Because of his eclectic convictions and ambitions, he is difficult to categorize. Technically, he is not merely a Sufi, as one historian has contended.[52] Nor is he a typical Salafi, as another author recently suggested.[53] Rather, he is an Islamist who strives to merge two religious styles in an attempt to walk the surest path between the mystical and the legal dimensions of Islam—that is, between the *ṭarīqa* and the *sharīʿa*. This third way is what Yasin calls the prophetic method (*al-minhāj al-nabawī*). It proceeds from the assumption that one must combine Sufi spirituality and Salafi legalism to revive Islam and to respond to the problems of the contemporary *umma*. According to Yasin, Muslims must return to the comprehensive religious epistemology of the Prophet. While Muhammad interpreted and applied God's laws, he simultaneously cultivated his people's spirituality. Today, however, Yasin laments, the two aspects no longer intersect: Salafi legalism focuses only on the external aspect of human existence (*ẓāhir*), while Sufi spirituality emphasizes only the Muslims' inner soul (*bāṭin*).[54]

The prophetic method is a religious stance but also an Islamist blueprint for action. Yasin mentions that the word "*minhāj*" refers simultaneously to a path and the way one should walk it.[55] To illustrate his thought, he singles out a passage from the Sura *al-Balad* (The Land): "Have we not appointed to him [man] two eyes, and a tongue, and two lips, and guided him on the two highways? Yet he has not assaulted the steep."[56] While the two highways represent good and evil, the steep represents the challenge of human life. For Yasin, it implies a constant struggle against gravity or, metaphorically, against the various temptations of hedonism and egoism. The *minhāj* is an ascending path that requires effort and dedication. Assaulting the steep means that Muslims must act to improve their vertical relationship with God as well as their horizontal relationships with fellow human beings.[57]

Yasin's own religious discourse is one means of implementing the prophetic method.[58] His writings often serve as a tool of re-Islamization insofar as they provide guidance for readers who wish to improve their vertical relationship with God. Indeed, like a majority of Islamist intellectuals, Yasin considers that religious renewal (*tajdīd*) and proselytism (*daʿwa*) are essential for addressing the problems of Muslim society. Yet his eclectic convictions confront him with the burden of renewing both the inner and the outer aspects of Islamic life. As might be expected, Yasin chooses to concentrate on what he deems more important or urgent. Here he differs from most proponents of the Salafi epistemology in that he emphasizes faith (*imān*) rather than doctrine or jurisprudence:

> It is said in the tradition that faith is maintained by the tongue, belief by the soul (which is the heart), and practice by the pillars of Islam. Yet faith originates from the heart and resides there. So if the impulses of the faith are staggering in one's heart, practice becomes invalid and the

tongue speaks hypocrisy. In turn, whenever faith becomes stronger in one's heart, the impulses of practice are reinforced. Therefore, the renewal that the *umma* requires is the renewal of its faith's impulses.[59]

This reference to the primacy of faith summarizes Yasin's strategy of re-Islamization. In theory, his prophetic method implies that legalism and spirituality are equally significant for ensuring the revitalization of the *umma*. In practice, however, Yasin readily admits that his priority is to renew faith, as though to compensate for the lacunas of the Salafi-inspired agenda that most Sunni Islamists and many alleged post-Islamists share. As a tool of re-Islamization, Yasin's nonpolitical discourse tends to privilege spiritual guidance for the heart (*tarbiya*) over formal religious instruction (*taʿlīm*). Therefore, he transcends—and sometimes outflanks—the Salafi-oriented methods of re-Islamization that revolve around pragmatic exegesis, legal methodology, and legal prescriptions.

An Epistemological and Spiritual Daʿwa

Islamist intellectuals, be they politically moderate or radical, insist that the Qurʾan and the sunna can yield superior alternatives to the ideas and institutions of modernity. This scripturalist assumption, which is a legacy of the modernist Salafiyya, has led them to scrutinize the formative texts of Islam to find pragmatic solutions to the social, political, and economic problems of their community.[60] Perhaps the most representative example of this Salafi-inspired type of intellectual activism is Sayyid Qutb's seminal exegesis (*tafsīr*) titled *Fi zilal al-Qurʾan*. In it, Qutb set the tone for a very pragmatic and this-worldly analysis of the scriptures. His goal was not to renew faith per se, but to demonstrate the immediate applicability of the Qurʾan in the fields of politics, social justice, and religious praxis.[61] To be sure, Islamist intellectuals acknowledge that action requires firm belief. However, most of them—including Khurshid Ahmad, Hasan al-Turabi, Rashid al-Ghannushi, and many others—prefer to teach their readers what to believe and what concrete reforms to implement. Few embark on the abstract task of teaching their readers how to cultivate a deep and sincere faith. This option is indeed less congruent with the Salafi epistemology that tends to disregard mysticism. Therefore, most Islamists have been prone to limit their intellectual exertions to outer rather than inner reforms and to initiate the concrete re-Islamization of institutions, policies, creed, and behaviors.

Yasin applauds and, to a certain extent, emulates such pragmatic exegesis. Yet, as a post-Salafi intellectual, he refuses to treat faith as a residual question. Indeed, he has always been prompt to defend spirituality against materialist and atheist worldviews—especially Marxism–Leninism—because he embraced Islamism during a period of unprecedented leftist effervescence among the elite and the educated youth of Morocco.[62] However, his most elaborate strategy of spiritual proselytism dates from the 1990s, when he encountered postmodern literature and the critiques of the scientific method. In such works, Yasin found new intellectual ammunition to attack all Western philosophies based on secular rationalism. In his 1998 book *Islamiser la modernité*, he undertakes what can be called an epistemological and spiritual *daʿwa*, in which he attempts to debunk the rational assumptions that have characterized philosophical modernity since the Enlightenment. His intention is not merely to assert the superiority of Islam or to

criticize its detractors, as other Islamists have done. Instead, he wishes to liberate the advocates of modernity from their epistemological limitations while opening their hearts to spirituality and Islam.[63]

Yasin begins his epistemological *daʿwa* by denying modernity any quintessential value. In the wake of postmodern thinkers, he claims that its underpinning system of thought is a constructed reality—that is, a "Western-engineered building."[64] According to him, the philosophical foundations of modernity, including its rational-scientific axioms, are frail man-made myths: they may enjoy an aura of truth, but they are illusory assumptions of knowledge. Therefore, Yasin engages some of modernity's engineers, such as Descartes, Comte, Marx, and Freud. Questioning the epistemological foundations of their thought is critical, Yasin claims, because the normative power of ideas is the most dangerous and insidious weapon in the arsenal of modernity.[65]

Yasin views Darwinism as the main obstacle to faith and spirituality because it elevated a "bestial postulate" to the status of dogmatic truth. As a result, philosophical modernity assumes that human beings are merely a higher form of animal life resulting from a slow evolutionary process. According to Yasin, this bestial postulate implies a series of blind rejections: there exists no creator, no God, and no hereafter. The Darwinist mythology, as he calls it, strips life of its essential meaning and is tantamount to spiritual murder.[66] Yasin affirms that such rationalist secular ideas keep human beings away from the message of Islam and from *iḥsān*. In other words, modernity turns men and women into hostages of nihilism and leads them to spiritual chaos, sadness, and anomie. Clearly, Yasin's epistemological *daʿwa* stems from his conviction that the advocates of philosophical modernity will reject a standard call to Islam as long as they maintain their current epistemological assumptions; rather, they will continue to seek truth in the material world and to discard anything that is not scientifically measurable. Yasin admits that the bestial postulate is difficult to counter because it is rooted in a powerful dogmatic positivism that rejects metaphysical discussions.[67]

Consequently, he tries to oppose Darwinism—and, by the same token, all of philosophical modernity—by challenging the sanctification of positivism and rational secularism. For that purpose, he resorts to critical figures in the Western sociology of knowledge, such as the Austrian-born philosopher and scientist Karl Popper, the Belgian Nobel Prize-winner Ilya Prigogine, and the French sociologist and philosopher Edgard Morin. Yasin invokes these scholars because they themselves expose, to a certain extent, the social construction of modern epistemology and some of its limitations. Popper, for instance, is known as the main proponent of the theory of falsification, which he articulated in response to the dominant logical positivism of the 1930s. His basic argument is that empirical evidence cannot verify a scientific theory; it can only falsify or disprove it. Thus, Popper questioned the validity of scientific knowledge and the methods used to reach it. His argument implies that all scientific theories are speculations whose veracity is logically impossible to establish.[68]

By questioning modernity's dogmatic assumptions through Popper and others, Yasin wants to instill some sense of uncertainty in his readers. If the scientific method is not truly reliable, or if human rationality proves unable to provide definitive truths, then the entire edifice of modern knowledge may appear unstable. As a corollary, Yasin wants to legitimize irrationality and faith: "[t]he incoherence and limitations of those [modern thinkers] who reflect upon complex matters come from their confinement to rationality.

Yet questioning the epistemological value of modern knowledge is, in itself, a promising opening."[69] Yasin uses this epistemological breach to reintroduce existential questions concerning the raison d'être of the universe and the meaning of life.

At this point, however, Yasin abandons the Western thinkers who have helped him to shake the foundations of the Western-engineered building. He argues that such scholars lead to a dead end: they can expose the epistemological myths of modernity, but the anti-spiritual atmosphere of Western academia prevents them from providing real answers.[70] Thus, Yasin uses the critical sociology of knowledge, but only as a springboard for the reaffirmation of spirituality. The ultimate aim of his epistemological *da'wa* is to rehabilitate the *fitra*—a Qur'anic concept often associated with matters of conversion and repentance (*tawba*). The *fitra* is the essential and innate repository of faith and spirituality that lies in every human soul.[71] Yasin argues that if modern men and women reconnect with their *fitra*, the true meaning and purpose of life, which is to serve and love God, will become obvious to them. Yet this process can occur only if the hegemony of positivism and nihilism is undermined. Unless these individuals' hearts and minds are ready to welcome spiritual matters, the re-Islamization of society is doomed to fail. A rehabilitated *fitra*, however, would allow the hostages of modern worldviews to become receptive to the message of Islam.

In *Islamiser la modernité*, Yasin calls this message the "science of the Qur'an." It is not so much a body of specific regulations or commands as a series of prophetic paradigms. The science of the Qur'an includes the stories of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other exemplary figures worth imitating. Because of their virtue, these paradigms provide an essential source of spiritual guidance. Yasin has a particular predilection for the story of Noah and the deluge. It provides him with the necessary metaphorical vocabulary for defining his views and activism. The deluge is a constant theme in his work. It was already a key symbol in the open letter he sent to King Hassan II in 1974. In *Islamiser la modernité*, Yasin writes: "[this book's] other ambition is to invite an unfaithful modernity to settle down so that it can avoid the kind of shipwreck that was experienced by the unfaithful people of Noah during the deluge."[72] The same story fosters additional naval metaphors. Yasin warns that human existence is a challenging adventure at sea; that the Qur'an is a beacon; and that those who ignore God will get lost.[73]

Fiqh as a Residual Issue

Within the larger framework of the prophetic method, the specific determination of righteous actions belongs to the domain of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Yasin reminds his readers that anyone who reaches the stage of *iḥsān* must continue to follow Islamic law and the sound prescriptions of the jurists. Indeed, his insistence on faith and spirituality is not tantamount to a rejection of scripturalism. Yasin is often as fundamentalist as the proponents of the Salafi epistemology. However, he does not read formative texts for the sole purpose of finding legal regulations: "[t]hose who read the history of the first community and the Islamic texts looking only for the law will never reach *wisdom*. Law is the container; it is extremely important, but the content is the essential part."[74] Although Yasin does raise issues of Islamic jurisprudence, he more often prefers to delve into the Qur'an and the sunna to find sources of spiritual growth.

Undoubtedly, Yasin's agenda departs from another fundamental aspect of Salafi re-Islamization—that is, the rejuvenation and application of Islamic jurisprudence—which has been a major preoccupation of the modernist Salafis, Islamists, and neo-fundamentalists throughout the 20th century. In the wake of Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida, modernist Salafis were deeply concerned with the revitalization of *fiqh* and its adaptation to current conditions. In Morocco, 'Allal al-Fasi pursued these objectives in a number of elaborate, technical, and didactic books about Islamic jurisprudence. On the one hand, he addressed the nature of *fiqh*, its sources, the specificities of its implementation, and the functions of its executors.[75] On the other hand, he endeavored to renew jurisprudence on the basis of rational concepts such as *istiḥsān* (preference) and *maṣlaḥa* (utility).[76] To some extent, Islamists have built on the legacy of Islamic modernism and continued to advocate the adaptation and the implementation of the shari'a. Depending on their personal qualifications, they addressed these issues in a more or less erudite manner. An *'ālim* such as the Sudanese Islamist Hasan al-Turabi, for instance, was able to propose a deeper reform of *fiqh* than the one outlined by Sayyid Qutb, who had not received an advanced traditional education.[77] The typical Salafi predilection for legal issues also extended to rigorous neo-fundamentalists, whom Roy regards as post-Islamists. In Morocco, Taqi al-Din al-Hilali (d. 1987), a Wahhabi-inspired Salafi closely linked to the religious establishment of Saudi Arabia, was the intellectual forefather of this current. He preached in the mosques of Casablanca, issued fatwas, and published legal compendiums on proper devotional behavior.[78]

In opposition to all these proponents of the Salafi epistemology, Yasin tends to avoid re-Islamization through *fiqh*. He does not strive to develop a new theory of legal hermeneutics; nor does he issue legal ordinances on what is *ḥalāl*, *ḥarām*, or *bid'a*. However, like all other Islamists, Yasin cannot avoid calling for the implementation of the shari'a and its adaptation to changing conditions. Yet he does not present legal matters as a priority, and he does not introduce himself as the person who might undertake the reforms he is calling for.[79] Yasin does touch on some broad issues of legal rejuvenation but hardly goes beyond general statements about the necessity of informed legal reasoning (*ijtihād*). He remains evasive as to how these prescriptions should be implemented.[80]

When Yasin deals more extensively with the law, as in the 1990 book *Nazrat fi al-fiqh wa-l-ta'rikh*, he tends to focus on political jurisprudence (*fiqh siyāsī*) as a way to criticize despotic regimes and their state jurists (*fuqahā' al-quṣūr*).[81] Thus, the book is a manifesto rather than a treatise. One finds little technical discussion besides a few short sections devoted to the finalities of the shari'a (*'ilm al-maqāṣid*)—a branch of jurisprudential philosophy that was dear to 'Allal al-Fasi. Here again, Yasin is not particularly thorough or innovative. He invokes al-Shatibi (d. 1388), the foremost authority in the field, and reiterates the legal necessity of preserving religious life, soul, mind, family, and property, which are the five objects traditionally associated with *'ilm al-maqāṣid*.[82] Ironically, the most distinctive aspect of the exposé is its underlying spiritual concern. Yasin stresses that the finality of the shari'a is not merely social stability or the material welfare of the people. These are only intermediary objectives whose raison d'être is to relieve Muslims from the mundane preoccupations of daily life. Instead, the ultimate goal of the shari'a is to foster an environment that is conducive to *iḥsān* so that

Muslims can concentrate on spiritual growth and hope to secure their salvation in the hereafter.[83]

Yasin does not abjure the law and its specific regulations, but he clearly de-emphasizes them as an object of study and guidance. Overall, legal issues are marginal subject matter in his corpus. One may object that Sayyid Qutb was no different from Yasin in that *fiqh* was only one element within his grand totalizing ideology and never constituted the main focus of his intellectual work. However, Qutb never went so far as to claim that spirituality is superior to jurisprudence, as Yasin did. Indeed, as a post–Salafi intellectual activist, Yasin wishes to devote more efforts to reviving spirituality than to implementing or adjusting *fiqh*. He legitimizes his stance by underlining that, historically, faith and the love for God came before the Qur'an and its legal prescriptions.[84]

There are personal reasons behind his choice. Even though Yasin studied at the Bin Yusuf institute in Marrakech for four years, he never pursued advanced traditional studies in a major Islamic university, such as al-Azhar in Cairo or al-Qarawiyin in Fez. Indeed, he never portrays himself as a jurist (*faqīh*). On the contrary, he constantly reminds his readers that he is not a specialist of anything and that he does not write in a sophisticated jargon.[85] Since he cannot claim an expert status in legal matters, Yasin prefers to contribute to the Islamist cause through his Sufi experience—that is, by focusing on the renewal of faith and spirituality.

Historical conditions may have further discouraged Yasin from focusing on Islamic law, despite his lack of formal training. After the independence of Morocco, nationalist Salafis such as ʿAllal al-Fasi failed to re-establish the full jurisdiction of the shariʿa courts. Al-Fasi complained that the Western-oriented Moroccan elites—the products of French schools—had become the new exponents of Western ideas and institutions; they had used their influential positions within the government to restrict the codification of the shariʿa to matters of personal status and inheritance.[86] Therefore, according to al-Fasi, intellectual colonialism persisted in the mid-1960s even though the French had left Morocco in 1956. In this context, he viewed the renewal of Islamic jurisprudence as a critical response to the challenge posed by Western thought in post-independence Morocco. To compete with the foreign legal codes that the elite favored, the shariʿa needed adjustments to modern conditions.

Yasin still acknowledges theses problems but cannot share al-Fasi's former hopes. In the 1960s—under Muhammad V and during the first years of Hassan II's reign—al-Fasi may reasonably have thought that the implementation of a fully Islamic legal system was still possible. When Yasin became an Islamist activist, however, such hopes had already diminished. The ascendancy and resilience of Hassan II proved to be a major obstacle. The king controlled the religious field, which he used to enhance his legitimacy and silence opposition.[87] A revised Islamic jurisprudence—unless ordered by the king himself—would stand little chance of being implemented. The political context in which Yasin has operated since 1972 is less flexible than that of the 1950s and early 1960s.

CONCLUSION

A priori, the religious discourse of ʿAbd al-Salam Yasin appears to corroborate some elements of the French theory of post-Islamism, whose foremost theoretician is Olivier Roy. On the one hand, Yasin departs from the archetypal Islamist discourse of the 1970s in that he emphasizes the spiritual and ethical dimension of Islam. On the other hand, he undertakes the re-Islamization of society from the bottom up and targets individuals rather than the state. Yet post-Islamism—though superficially attractive—is not applicable to Yasin's religious discourse. Because of the vagaries of Moroccan history and Yasin's personal background, Yasin's approach to Islamism has promoted spirituality and spiritual guidance from the early 1970s onward—that is, before the alleged decline and failure of political Islam. Although post-Islamist theory is an attempt to systematize empirical data from the past thirty-five years into a coherent historical pattern, it relies on a narrow and selective definition of Islamism that cannot account for the particularities of the Moroccan context. Post-Islamism would probably prove more useful if its theoretical ambitions were to be reduced and its application restricted to specific contexts. It should remain a valid analytical device for understanding the political and ideological transformations that took place in Iran, for instance, where Islamists have been in power for more than twenty-five years. It also seems better suited to cases in which the rise and failure of revolutionary Islamism has been overt and pronounced, as in Egypt and Algeria.

One additional problem is that the label "post-Islamist" is based solely on political variables. For this reason, it fails to distinguish the various religious stances among quietist Islamic activists and cannot convey the distinctiveness of Yasin's message and *daʿwa*. The limits of such a political approach are particularly obvious with respect to the concept of post-Islamist thought, which has no inherent or precise religious meaning per se, even though it intends to shed light on spiritual and theological issues. Instead of providing specific keys for understanding the substance of religious discourses, it seeks to highlight the absence of explicit references to politics or, inversely, the explicit presence of non-political themes, whatever they may be. Thus, it appears that the concept's main purpose is to validate Roy's thesis on the failure of political Islam, and not so much to analyze the spiritual discourses that it initially targeted. In the end, political considerations alone continue to determine whether religious ideas are significant.

Therefore, a more appropriate way to qualify Yasin's religious discourse is to underscore how it transcends the standard Salafi understanding of Islam and religious guidance. It is possible to conceive of the Salafiyya as a broad scripturalist epistemology whose proponents—regardless of their political attitudes—disregard Sufism and theosophical ideas, privilege formal instruction based on scriptural positivism, and usually concentrate on the outer dimension of religious life. Yasin transcends this epistemology by attempting to rehabilitate mystical concepts and by focusing on the renewal of inner faith rather than on orthodoxy and orthopraxy. From a diachronic perspective, this is reminiscent of the approach adopted by previous Islamic activists and intellectuals who, like al-Banna (d. 1949) in Egypt, Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) in colonial India, and Saʿid Nursi (d. 1960) in Turkey, were receptive to the spiritual dimension of Islam.[88] From a synchronic perspective, however, Yasin's post-Salafi discourse is peculiar. Indeed, since the Islamic resurgence of the 1970s, most prominent Sunni Islamists have been strict advocates of the Salafi epistemology. Thus, Yasin's religious discourse is even more marginal because it endeavors to transcend an epistemology that has been relatively hegemonic within Islamist circles for the past thirty years.

NOTES

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[1]Olivier Carré, *L'utopie islamique dans l'Orient arabe* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1991); Olivier Roy, *L'échec de l'islam politique* (Paris: Seuil, 1992); Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: expansion et déclin de l'islamisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000). Olivier Roy, *L'islam mondialisé* (Paris: Seuil, 2002). Roy uses the terms "Islamism" and "political Islam" interchangeably.

[2]The most elaborate theoretical framework on post-Islamism is Olivier Roy, "Le post-islamisme," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 85–86 (1998): 11–30. Roy and his colleagues recognize that some post-Islamists choose blind violence over compromise to cope with the failure of political Islam.

[3]Olivier Roy, "Avant-propos: pourquoi le post-islamisme?" *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 85–86 (1998): 9. All translations are mine, except for Qur' anic passages.

[4]Ibid., 10. See also Sandra Houot, "De la religion à l'éthique: esquisse d'une médiation contemporaine," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 85–86 (1998): 31–46. This article, however, fails to demonstrate the historical and causal links between the failure of political Islam and al-Buti's spiritual discourse.

[5]Roy, "Avant-propos," 10.

[6]The few studies on ʿAbd al-Salam Yasin emphasize the political dimension of his discourse. In English, see Emad Eldin Shahin, "Secularism and Nationalism: The Political Discourse of 'Abd al-Salam Yassin," in *Islamism and Secularism in North Africa*, ed. John Ruedy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 167–86. In French, the most comprehensive and detailed analysis is the seventh chapter of Mohamed Tozy, *Monarchie et islam politique au Maroc*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1999). In Arabic, the standard work is Muhammad Darif, *Jamaʿa al-ʿAdl wa-l-Ihsan: qiraʾa fi al-masarat* (Casablanca: Manshurat al-Majalla al-Maghribiyya li-ʿIlm al-Ijtimaʿ al-Siyasi, 1995).

[7]The historical narrative is best articulated in Kepel, *Jihad*, 61–114. Its intellectual dimension is examined in Roy, *L'échec*, 52–83.

[8]Several individuals and Islamic movements throughout modern history have identified themselves as, or were branded, Salafis. From the late 19th century onward, the term "Salafiyya" referred to the revivalist thought of Islamic modernists such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad ʿAbduh. ʿAllal al-Fasi was heir to that tradition. He endeavored to reform Islam, to free Muslims from stagnation and past accretions, and to reconcile Islam with reason and modernity. More recently, literalist and puritanical Islamic militants have claimed an exclusive monopoly over the label Salafiyya, but their peremptory assertion is not valid historically. With respect to Morocco, one may avoid typological confusion by referring to al-Fasi's modernist brand of Salafiyya as a "nationalist" Salafiyya (*al-salafiyya al-wataniyya*) and to the more rigorist and literalist brand—which Roy calls neo-fundamentalism—as a Salafiyya of "Wahhabi" inspiration (*al-salafiyya al-wahhābiyya*). See Muhammad Darif, *al-Islam al-siyasi fi al-Maghrib: muqariba wathaʾiqiyya* (Casablanca: Manshurat al-Majalla al-Maghribiyya li-ʿIlm al-Ijtimaʿ al-Siyasi, 1992), 135.

[9]Amina Bekkali, "Le pouvoir et les islamistes au Maroc: dieu à partager," in *Les états arabes face à la contestation islamiste*, ed. Bassma Kodmani-Darwish and May Chartouni-Dubarry (Paris: Armand Colin, 1997), 169–95; Emad Eldin Shahin, *Political Ascent: Contemporary Islamic Movements in North Africa* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997), 172.

[10]The most serious threats to the regime came from ambitious officers in the Royal Armed Forces, who led two failed coups in 1971 and 1972. Other threats came from leftist dissidents such as Muhammad Basri (alias *le fqih*), who planned armed struggle against the state on several occasions between 1969 and 1973. Moroccan Islamists played no role in these events. See Pierre Vermeren, *Histoire du Maroc depuis l'indépendance* (Paris: La Découverte, 2002), 33–65.

[11]Dale F. Eickelman, *Moroccan Islam: Tradition and Society in a Pilgrimage Center* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), 7–10.

[12]Out of nationalism, al-Fasi claimed that Moroccan Sufis were orthodox until the 15th century. This led him to dispute a sweeping critique of Sufism that Rashid Rida (d. 1935) had published in the journal *al-Manar*. Yet both men agreed that Sufism was a superstitious and blamable form of religiosity in the 20th century. See ʿAllal al-Fasi, *al-Tasawwuf al-Islami fi al-Maghrib* (Rabat: Muʾassasat ʿAllal al-Fasi, 1998), 19–20. Details on earlier Moroccan Salafis and their relationship to Sufism are found in Henry Munson, Jr., *Religion and Power in Morocco* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 97–102.

[13]Tozy, *Monarchie et islam politique*, 234–35. Qutb's thought had clear Salafi underpinnings. Though his exegesis yielded revolutionary conclusions, he was a resolute scripturalist who disregarded and even rejected mysticism. See Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabiʿ, *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 99–100, 146–47.

[14]Darif, *Jamaʿa al-ʿAdl wa-l-Ihsan*, 63–64.

[15]ʿAbd al-Salam Yasin, *al-Ihsan* (Casablanca: Matbuʿat al-Ufuq, 1998), 7–8. This is the Sufi order of the Butshishi family from Madaq, in eastern Morocco. It is a 20th-century offshoot of the Algerian Qadiriyya order. The Butshishiyya is both elitist and mass-based. It attracts upper-middle-class disciples (university professors, engineers, bank executives, etc.) as well as illiterate followers. See Mohamed Tozy, "Le prince, le clerc et l'état: la reconstruction du champ religieux au Maroc," in *Intellectuels et militants de l'islam contemporain*, ed. Gilles Kepel and Yann Richard (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 82–83.

[16]As quoted in Darif, *Jamaʿa al-ʿAdl wa-l-Ihsan*, 64.

[17]Yasin, *al-Ihsan*, 10, 24.

[18]ʿAbd al-Salam Yasin, *al-Islam bayna al-daʿwa wa-l-dawla: al-minhaj al-nabawi li-taghyir al-insan* (Casablanca: Matbaʿat al-Najah, 1972), 360–61. On the limits of Islamic modernism and its rationalism, see ʿAbd al-Salam Yasin, *al-Islam ghadan: al-ʿamal al-Islami wa-harakiyya al-minhaj al-nabawi fi zaman al-fitna* (Casablanca: Matbaʿat al-Najah, 1973), 771–74. For more on al-Dubbagh and his posthumously published book *al-Ibriz*, see Bernd Radtke, "*Ibriziana*: Themes and Sources of a Seminal Sufi Work," *Sudanic Africa* 7 (1996): 113–58.

[19]Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 5–7.

[20]Yasin, *al-Islam ghadan*, 188–92.

[21]Ibid., 197.

[22]Yasin, *al-Islam bayna al-daʿwa wa-l-dawla*, 475.

[23]Ibid., 292.

[24]Ibid., 313.

[25]ʿAbd al-Salam Yasin, *La révolution à l'heure de l'islam* (n.p., 1980), 27. See also Darif, *Jamaʿa al-ʿAdl wa-l-Ihsan*, 26–27.

[26]ʿAbd al-Salam Yasin, *al-Minhaj al-nabawi: tarbiyatan, tanziman wa-zahfan*, 2nd ed. (n.p., 1989), 52–53. The first edition was published in 1982.

[27]Ibid., 32.

[28]Yasin, *al-Islam ghadan*, 208–18.

[29]Qur'an 16:90. This Qurʾanic translation and the subsequent one are from Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1955). The verse is quoted in ʿAbd al-Salam Yasin, *Nazrat fi al-fiqh wa-l-taʾrikh* (Beirut: al-Sharika al-Urubiyya al-Lubnaniyya li-l-Nashr, 1990), 7.

[30]Yasin, *al-Ihsan*, 17–21.

[31]ʿAbd al-Salam Yasin, *Islamiser la modernité* (Rabat: al-Ofok Impressions, 1998), 224.

[32]Ibid., 285.

[33]See Vincent J. Cornell, *The Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998).

[34]Tozy, *Monarchie et islam politique*, 72–73.

[35]Haraka al-Islah wa-l-Tajdid, "Mawqif sarih," reprinted in Muhammad Darif, *al-Islamiyyun al-Maghariba: hisaba al-siyasa fi al-ʿamal al-Islami, 1969–1999* (Casablanca: Manshurat al-Majalla al-Maghribiyya li-ʿIlm al-Ijtimaʿ al-Siyasi, 1999), 222–36.

[36]Yasin, *al-Islam bayna al-daʿwa wa-l-dawla*, 352. The exact same references are found in his second book, which was published in 1973: see Yasin, *al-Islam ghadan*, 777.

[37]Idem, *La révolution*, 200–201.

[38]Idem, *al-Ihsan*, 27, 32.

[39]Ibid., 22.

[40]Ibid., 29–30.

[41]Ibid., 11–12.

[42]Ibid., 47–49.

[43]Ibid., 28–29.

[44] Ibid., 370–74.

[45] There is a strong possibility that Yasin built on other arguments from al-Buti's corpus. Since the late 1950s, al-Buti has put forth strikingly similar ideas to those of Yasin's discourse. Like Yasin, al-Buti believes that orthodox Sufism is intrinsic to the true meaning of Islam; he also underscores the significance of *dhikr* and *ihsān*. A good example of al-Buti's position toward Sufism is found in his critique of the Wahhabi-inspired Salafiyya, which was originally published in 1988. See Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti, *al-Salafiyya: marhala zamaniyya mubaraka la madhhab Islami* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1998), 189–208. In English, see Andreas Christmann, "Islamic Scholar and Religious Leader: Shaikh Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti," in *Islam and Modernity: Muslim Intellectuals Respond*, ed. John Cooper et al. (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998), 57–81. It is worth noting that two of al-Buti's books figure in a list of readings that Yasin recommends to his readers and to the members of al-ʿAdl wa-l-Ihsan; see Yasin, *al-Minhaj al-nabawi*, 46–47.

[46] Yasin, *al-Ihsan*, 23.

[47] Idem, *La révolution*, 26–28.

[48] Idem, *al-Ihsan*, 7.

[49] Roy, "Le post-islamisme," 16–17.

[50] See David Commins, "Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949)," in *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, ed. Ali Rahmena (London: Zed Books, 1994), 128.

[51] Roy, "Le post-islamisme," 13, 20–27. Roy swiftly suggests that Islamization through Sufi brotherhoods is a recent sociological phenomenon that follows the modernization process of the 1950s and 1960s. Today, one's adhesion to a Sufi order may be a deliberate and individual religious statement in reaction to the disenchantment of the Islamic world. This was not necessarily the case in the past, Roy claims, when joining a Sufi order was a traditional expression of communal religiosity that implied no Islamization per se.

[52] C. R. Pennell, *Morocco since 1830: A History* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 353.

[53] Pierre Vermeren, *Maghreb: la démocratie impossible?* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 229.

[54] Yasin, *al-Ihsan*, 35–36.

[55] Idem, *La révolution*, 39–40.

[56] Qur'an 100:8–11, quoted in ibid., 50.

[57] Ibid., 54.

[58] The other means of implementing the prophetic method is al-ʿAdl wa-l-Ihsan. Yasin intended his movement to provide various forms of communal support, from medical services to financial help for marriages. The function of this organization is also to provide a structure for performing *dhikr* in groups and for finding spiritual companionship and guidance: see Yasin, *al-Minhaj al-nabawi*, 74–77.

[59] Ibid., 31.

[60] L. Carl Brown, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 141.

[61] See Abu Rabiʿ, *Intellectual Origins*, 166–219.

[62] See his attacks on Marxist philosophy in Yasin, *La révolution*, 38, 74–77. In the early 1970s, two Marxist–Leninist organizations—23 Mars and Ila al-Amam—were particularly popular on university campuses; their members and sympathizers eventually took control of the National Union of Moroccan Students: see Vermeren, *Histoire du Maroc*, 51–54.

[63] In *Islamiser la modernité*, the advocates of modernity include Westerners and the Westernized Arab elite. The book was clearly intended for a widespread audience and was translated into English and Arabic two years after its original publication in French. The English version is Abdessalam Yassine, *Winning the Modern World for Islam*, trans. Martin Jenni (Iowa City: Justice and Spirituality Publishing, 2000). The Arabic version is ʿAbd al-Salam Yasin, *al-Islam wa-l-hadatha* (Oujda: Matbuʿat al-Hilal, 2000).

[64] Yasin, *Islamiser la modernité*, 137.

[65] Ibid., 47.

[66] Ibid., 139–43.

[67] Ibid., 133.

[68] See Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1959).

[69] Yasin, *Islamiser la modernité*, 153.

[70] Ibid., 154.

[71] Ibid., 184–85.

[72] Ibid., 16.

[73] Ibid., 29, 55, 130.

[74] Ibid., 93; the italics are in the original.

[75] All these questions are addressed in ʿAllal al-Fasi, *Madkhal fi al-nazariyya al-ʿamma li-dirasat al-fiqh al-Islami wa-muqaranatuhu bi-l-fiqh al-ajnabi* (Rabat: Mu'assasa ʿAllal al-Fasi, 1985).

[76] Idem, *Difaʿ ʿan al-shariʿa* (Rabat: Matabiʿ al-Risala, 1966), 13, 32. See also Wael B. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunni Usul al-Fiqh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 224–26.

[77] Turabi promotes a new *fiqh* based on broader analogical analysis (*qiyās*). See John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 128–31. On Qutb and *fiqh*, see Abu Rabiʿ, *Intellectual Origins*, 196–98.

[78] Mukhlis al-Sabti, *al-Salafiyya al-Wahhabiyya bi-l-Maghrib: taqi al-din al-hilali ra'idan* (Casablanca: Manshurat al-Majalla al-Maghribiyya li-ʿIlm al-Ijtimaʿ al-Siyasi, 1993).

[79] See Yasin, *Islamiser la modernité*, 173–75.

[80] Idem, *Nazrat fi al-fiqh*, 48.

[81] Ibid., 15–16.

[82] Ibid., 70.

[83] Ibid., 60–67, 71–72, 78.

[84] Idem, *La révolution*, 118. Yasin may exemplify a more extreme form of post-Salafi re-Islamization. In Syria, al-Buti strives to rehabilitate the spiritual dimension of Islam but continues to issue legal opinions, even over the Internet: see: http://www.bouti.com.

[85] Yasin, *La révolution*, ii: see also idem, *Nazrat fi al-fiqh*, 56.

[86] Al-Fasi, *Difaʿ ʿan al-shariʿa*, 4–5.

[87] Rémy Leveau, "Réaction de l'islam officiel au renouveau islamique au Maroc," *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* 18 (1979): 205–18.

[88] Saʿid Ramadan al-Buti, who is Kurdish and was born in Turkey, acknowledged that he drew inspiration from Sa'id Nursi. Indeed, there are reasons to believe that Nursi was himself a post-Salafi intellectual and activist. While he criticized Muhammad ʿAbduh and the modernist Salafis for their condemnation of folk Islam, he resorted to mysticism as way to mobilize the population. Sa'id Nursi tried to combine spiritual guidance with dedication to social problems. See Serif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 55, 176. On Nursi's influence on al-Buti, see Christmann, "Islamic Scholar," 62.