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Religion as a Pillar for Establishing a Civilization: Al-Māwardī's Perspective

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Abstract

This study examines religion in terms of establishing and maintaining a civilization based on Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī's (d. 1058) contribution, "*Kitāb adab al-dunyā wa-al-dīn.*" In this paper, the central argument is that religion is a pillar for establishing and maintaining civilization. There are no possibilities for a civilization to be constituted and maintained without a central role for religion. I will elaborate on the meaning of religion from al-Māwardī's perspective and its role in constructing a civilization. This paper considers several religious notions and concepts proposed by al-Māwardī for this purpose. For instance, '*al-Targhīb wa al-Tarhīb*' (persuasion and intimidation) and *al-ulfah* (social affinity) indicate how religion can affect individual behaviors and actions and helps create and maintain civilization. As a methodology, this paper analyses al-Māwardī's contribution and compares it with significant contributions to civilization Studies. It concludes that a profound understanding of religion's role in any civilization gives a proper direction for understanding civilization and how religion can enhance and improve people's behavior and manners, which reflects positively on religion's role in establishing and preserving a civilization.

Keywords: religion, civilization, Islamic civilization, *Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī*

Introduction

The relationship between religion and civilization[1] is a subject of dispute. Some scholars, like Sigmund Freud, reject associating religion with civilization.[2] However, others debate the nature of these relationships. In this paper, the main argument is that there are no possibilities for a civilization to be established and maintained without a central role for religion. To strengthen and prove this argument, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī's[3]

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[1]Ibn Khaldūn uses the term ʿ*Umrān* (civilization) frequently. However, ʿ*Umrān* already existed and was used in Arabic even before Ibn Khaldūn. For instance, al-Māwardī and al-Iṣfahānī used it.

[2]Freud considers religion in concern to civilization as "mass delusion." Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 19.

[3]Many academic resources described al-Māwardī's scholarship, personality, and political, academic, and juridical professions. For instance, al-Baghdadi describes al-Māwardī's life, positions, scholarships, and the historical background of his thought and circumstance. (Ahmad Mubarak al-Baghdadi, *The Political Thought of Abu Al-Hassan Al-Mawardi* (Ph.D. Thesis.

contribution, "*Kitāb adab al-dunyā wa-al-dīn,"* will be investigated and analyzed. There are many works on al-Māwardī; however, there is none exploring al-Māwardī's contributions about religion and its relation to civilization. Thus, it is essential to uncover his ideas and thought in this respect.

This paper endeavours to discover the meaning of religion from al-Māwardī's perspective. Al-Māwardī suggests two concepts: persuasion and intimidation "*al-targhīb wa al-tarhīb."* which supports the understanding of what stimulates individuals to behave in specific ways within society. Following on from this, the paper carries out a thorough review of the role of religion in constructing a civilization. Lastly, al-Māwardī's concept *al-ulfah* (social affinity) is scrutinized, which reveals how religion helps create and maintain a civilization.

An insightful comprehension of religion's role in civilization provides a more appropriate and greater understanding of civilizations and how religion enriches and moulds people's behavior and conduct, reflecting positively its role in instituting and maintaining civilization.

2. Religion

Al-Māwardī uses the expression *dīn* to indicate Islam. For instance, in "*Kitāb adab al-dunyā wa-al-dīn,"* he uses the word *dīn* as a synonym of Islam. Likewise, he clarifies in his commentary on the Quran that the word *dīn* means "the [religion of] Islam."[4] The concept of *dīn* is translated into English as religion[5]; however, there is a difference between these two concepts. The concept of *dīn* derives from verbal roots that have various

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Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1981), 1-54. Also, Alboğa spent more than a hundred pages he exposes in detail al-Māwardī's life, publications, and positions. Bekir Alboğa, *Lehranalytische Betrachtung bei Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (974-1058): Oberster Richter des 4./10. Jahrhunderts im islamischen Kalifat der Abbasiden; sein Leben und seine Gedankenwelt* [Teaching-Analytical Examination in the Case of Abu al Hassan al Mawardi (974-1058): Chief Judge of the 4th/10th Century in the Islamic Caliphate of the Abbasids; His Life and his World of Thought]. (Köln: Divanverlag, 2014), 1-129.

[4]Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Al-Nukat wal- Uyūn* Vol. V (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2007), 114.

[5]In his study, on tradition and modernity in the Muslim civilization and the West, Salvatore elaborates on the difference between *dīn* and religion. He says: "The Islamic keyword '*dīn,*' usually considered the closest equivalent to 'religion,' is more complex and diffuse and less functionally streamlined than its Latin counterpart. Instead of designating a functional bond between men and gods beneficial to the health of the state, '*dīn'* indicates the somewhat open partnership between man and God and the potentially constructive moral tension emanating from it. Starting from this basic meaning, '*dīn'* also encompasses other layers of signification, one of which denotes the way to be followed for human beings to reach God {…}" Armando Salvatore, "Tradition and Modernity within Islamic Civilization and the West," In *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates,* ed., Muhammad Khalid Masud, Armando Salvatore and Martin van Bruinessen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 13.

connotations. Two special meanings related to the construction of civilization are noteworthy. First, there is "to owe," which indicates that humans are indebted and bound by the Creator's duty. Secondly, there is "to be subjected," which means that humankind has various ethical commitments and obligations, which pave the way for them to deal and act in particular ways.[6] Al-Attas associates these two meanings of *dīn* together. He states

> The verb *dāna,* which derives from *dīn* conveys the meaning of being indebted, including various other meanings connected with debts, some of them contraries. In the state in which one finds oneself being in debt […], it follows that one subjects oneself, in the sense of *yielding* and obeying, to law and ordinances governing debts and also, in a way, to the creditor, who is likewise designated as a *dã'in*.[7]

However, "to be obligated" or "to be subjected" does not indicate a limitation of human's will and prospects.[8] On the contrary, for al-Māwardī, religion is intended to be for the advantage and benefit of human beings, reflecting Divine preference for humans over other creations.[9] Religion is God's grace on humankind, and God aims to privilege people by making religion mandatory for them.[10]

I argue that religion has a normative message and provides conclusive arguments which elaborate on what is right and what is wrong, what is allowed, and what is not, and why, what are the consequences of deeds, whether there is a kind of punishment or a reward, and why. Indeed, the answers to such complicated questions are based not only on human reason and rationality but also on how it interacts with religion. Therefore, this combination of both reason and religion offers original means and perspectives for understanding the self and others.

So, why is religion a grace for humanity? in al-Māwardī's expression, it brings "happiness in the two abodes, this life, and the hereafter." To give some practical illustrations, to al-Fārūqī, religion brings many benefits, such as happiness in life. Through religion, people become aware that their life has a meaning and is not in vain, which beneficially influences people's thinking, manners and their social relations.[11] Also, Islamic society is not restricted or oriented based on ethnicities such as specific nation,

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[6]Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānīl-*Al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, ed., by Muhamad Khaliel (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ma'ārifah, 2010b), 181.

[7]Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: IKIM, 1993): 52.

[8]Compare this with Guizot's statement that "For religion to accomplish what they attempt, they must make themselves acceptable to liberty itself; it is needful that man should submit, but he must do so voluntarily and freely, and must preserve his liberty in the very heart of his submission. This is the double problem which religions are called upon to solve." (François Guizot, *History of Civilization in Europe*, trans. William Hazlitt (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Inc., 2013), 123.

[9]Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Ādāb al-dunyā wa-al-Dīn* (Bayrūt: Dār ibn Kathīr, 2012), 139-40.

[10]Ibid., 139.

[11]Isma'il R. al-Faruqi, *Al Tawhīd: Its Implications on Thought and Life* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1992), 15.

race, or tribe,[12] which implies that no racism or discrimination between man and his fellows can exist under Islam.[13]

Al-Māwardī shows that religion contains distinctive principles and values, which can shape individuals' deeds and behaviors in a constructive manner.[14] Thus, religion should not be understood narrowly as restricted only to specific rituals: it should not be understood only as rules demonstrating how to perform worship and related issues. On the contrary, religion has to be perceived as distinctive principles, values, and moral standards, which regulate human life. For instance, through its recommended regulations and ethical standards, religion can influence one's personality by giving personal reasons to act based on responsibilities and commitments. Al-Māwardī suggests that religion has structures, which have three levels of duties:

The First Level: i'tiqād (belief.) Al-Māwardī uses the concept of *i'tiqād*, which means a deterministic judgment that corresponds to reality.[15] *I'tiqād* inspires and encourages individuals to have and to maintain their commitments. This belief has two sides. First, the affirmative aspect entails, for instance, the acknowledgment of the oneness of God and the belief that God sent Prophets to humankind to guide and teach them. Second, the denial aspect means negating any kind of ill characteristics relating to God or His Prophets, disavowing that God has a companion or son, and rejecting the contention that God needs anything or anyone.

These pertain to the individual's private beliefs, which are a matter between humankind and God. The commitment to these kinds of beliefs (affirmative and negating aspects) are the first things that God has obligated upon a person of sound sense from al-Māwardī's standpoint. Khān′zādah comments on why these are the first things for an individual to believe in; he insists that a person will not be obligated to perform or not perform something without knowing the "Sovereign and the Preventer" (i.e., God).[16] This *i'tiqād* is the foundational element that affects all of the individual's actions and conducts. Since deeds and actions are to be constructed as consequences of these beliefs; thus, it is safe to argue that this type of belief inspires people to have the confidence to act and deal in particular ways.

This belief creates a common ground of faith for the individuals in society and creates a potential for understanding each other. It reflects what ought to be or ought not to be in society. When religion orders people to believe in something, it means that religion desires these beliefs themselves to be existing in society. However, when religion negates something, it should not exist in society. *I'tiqād* assists in answering such important

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[12]Ibid., 96.

[13]Ibid., 98.

[14]Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Ādāb al-dunyā wa-al-Dīn*, 142.

[15]Uways Wafā ibn Muḥammad Khān′zādah, *Minhāj al-Yaqīn: Sharḥ Ādāb al-dunyā wa-al-Dīn* (Istanbūl: Mahmūd Bey Maṭba'āsi, 1910), 136.

[16]Ibid., 139.

questions with confidence and clarity. For such a reason, the political theorist and psychoanalyst Erich Fromm explains the positive role when there is a common ground of belief in society. However, he warns that the absence of belief leads human beings to become unproductive, hopeless, and terrified to the core of their being.[17]

The Second Level: ethical conduct, is related to the individuals' action. There are three types of action at this level: first, duties associated with the body, i.e., efforts based only on the physical abilities and capacities of the body; praying and fasting are a case in point. Secondly, duties that are related to wealth or capital. An example of this is almsgiving, i.e., bestowing charity upon orphans or needy people. Lastly, actions that combine both of these efforts, the aspects of the physical and the pecuniary together. For instance, the pilgrimage to Mecca for Muslims necessitates the physical body's efforts to endure the hardship of travel and afford the expenses for the journey.

So, why are there different types of ethical conduct? The variety of these types for al-Māwardī is to facilitate people performing virtuous actions and it opens for them more possibilities in conducting decent deeds. For example, suppose a person cannot perform fasting in Ramadan (as social solidarity with poor people). In that case, he can give charity to poor people, so he can accomplish the objective of fasting by giving charity. If a person cannot perform a moral action for a specific excuse (e.g., being sick and not being able to fast in Ramadan), he has many alternatives.

The Third Level: prohibitions, regulations, and restraints, which comprise three categories. The first relates to the 'concept of life' and maintaining 'the body's quality.' This includes the prohibition of killing or the prohibition of eating toxic foods or intoxicants for possible harms it will bring to the body, which means that anything that leads to death or could destructively influence the quality of life is prohibited. The second relates to improving friendship and harmony among people. This category aims to encourage human solidarity and the improvement of humans' relationships by inhibiting such things as hatred, rage, and injustice. The last restraint is concerned with protecting humans' lineage from any impurity. This implies the prevention of fornication, to preserve the family lineage and keep its cohesion and thus maintain society's stability. Al-Māwardī explains in detail the overall meaning of religion; he concludes by emphasizing that there is wisdom and blessing in what God has permitted, commanded, and forbidden.[18]

The blessing of God" helps humankind organize the order of their lives and societal relationships. Again, these three levels of the above-mentioned ethical conducts, duties, and commitments reflect the religion's essence from al-Māwardī's perspective. Thus, religion is about what to believe and what not to believe in; it is about how to act and

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[17]Erich Fromm, *Haben oder Sein: Die seelischen Grundlagen einer neuen Gesellschaft* [Having or Being: The Spiritual Foundations of a New Society]. (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005), 61.

[18]Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Ādāb al-dunyā wa-al-Dīn*, 143.

behave and how not to act; and it is also about restraints, regulations, and the justifications for that.

Again, for al-Māwardī, these three levels of duties are not meant to limit and hinder human beings; rather, these commitments function as an instrument for organizing and regulating individuals' roles within a social unit. For instance, the first-mentioned level, *i'tiqād*, serves as a common ground on the basis of belief in society. The second level serves to open the possibility of conducting decent actions and deeds; however, the last level functions to preserve the Self and others from harming and to increase social solidarity. So, the significance of religion is in guiding people's intentions and deeds and regulating their relationships. Religion can influence every aspect of human acts, manners, and behavior.

Accordingly, religion is an intellectual framework that disciplines individuals in a society. For al-Māwardī, religion increases the understanding of how significant it is to deal with and act morally. Al-Māwardī states that "when hope and wish fade and need grows intense, hatred takes place and hostile envy increases, and leads to isolation of the poor from the rich until that leads towards severe unconstructive competition for grabbing wealth by both {…}".[19]

The main objective of the payment of *zakāt* ensures the well-being of the entire society since everyone benefits from its consequences. This again reinforces how religion can create motivations, which can be reflected in the way people organize their daily life. Religion commands people to help each other in righteousness as well as commands them to refrain from transgression; al-Māwardī quotes from the Qur'ān ,help ye one another unto righteousness and pious duty."[20]

Thus, when a person is honest, behaving decently as the religion guides him, it is likely to relieve the Self from depression, hatred, envy, and pessimism. Religion grants the individual inner peace and makes him tolerant towards others. Religion deters people from committing immoral and evil actions. That is why, for al-Māwardī, religion encourages people to promote virtues and prevent evil. For such reasons, Bekir Alboğa rightly argues that al-Māwardī's understanding of religion has an ethical nature and that rational considerations and justification characterize al-Māwardī's definition of religion. Alboğa elaborates that rationality and logical explanation are presented throughout al-Māwardī's analysis of religion.[21]

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[19]Ibid., 147.

[20]Ibid., 295.

[21]Alboğa, *Lehranalytische Betrachtung bei Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (974-1058): Oberster Richter des 4./10. Jahrhunderts im islamischen Kalifat der Abbasiden; sein Leben und seine Gedankenwelt*, [Teaching-analytical examination in the case of Abu al Hasan al Mawardi: Chief Judge of the 4th/10th century in the Islamic Caliphate of the Abbasids; his Life and his World of Thought], 360-62.

3. Religion as Persuasion and Intimidation[22]

After elaborating on the conception of religion, it is essential to understand what stimulates individuals to deal and behave in specific ways in society. Indeed, answering this question allows us to better understand the intentions behind doing good and shunning wrong within the context of civilization. Al-Māwardī proposes two concepts that enable solving this question; persuasion and intimidation. On the one hand, "*al-Targhīb*" encourages the individual to have obedience and submission to certain moral principles and commitments. This has internal aspects guiding a person to act in specific ways (even in the absence of any human authority to observe and control him.)[23] On the other hand, "*al-tarhīb*" is based on the notion of deterrence that leads individuals to avoid behaving unethically by thinking of the consequences of immoral deeds and behavior. [24]

For al-Iṣfahānī, "*al-tarhīb*" does not mean being scared as a man can be scared, for instance, of a lion. Instead, "*al-tarhīb*" indicates what makes an individual stop performing unethical acts; therefore, for him, the individual who conducts immoralities has no *tarhīb*.[25] "*Al-targhīb,*" on the other hand, is desiring something, which motivates in performing particular behaviors to reach a wanted objective(s).[26] Both have impulses, restrictions, and motivations to influence an individual, and both are formed not only based on religious principles, and commitments but also on rationality.

The significance of persuasion and intimidation for individuals is to have inner encouragement and motivation,[27] which originate from specific ambitions such as having rewards – whether in the worldly life or the hereafter (or in both). These ambitions determine the way individuals act and behave. Simultaneously, individuals ought to have inner deterrents, which originate from fear of punishments, whether in the worldly life or in the hereafter, which causes them to shun behaving unethically. I argue here that this

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[22]In Arabic "*al-Targhīb wa al-Tarhīb,*" the formal can also be translated as "promise of reward in this life or the hereafter" and the latter as "a threat of punishment, of suffering and ill." Al-Faruqi, *Al Tawhīd: Its Implications on Thought and Life*, 236.

[23]The Qur'ān as a main source of the religion Islam repeats this kind of persuasion to motivate people to deal and behave in the best manners. For instance, verse (al-Baqara 2: 25) "And give glad tidings (O Muhammad) unto those who believe and do good works; that theirs are Gardens underneath which rivers flow; as often as they are regaled with food of the fruit {…}". Translated into English by M. M. Pickthall. This part combines belief and doing good works, based on individual motivated to be award.

[24]For instance, verse (an-Nisa 4: 14) "And whoso disobeyed Allah and His messenger and transgresseth His limits, He will make him enter Fire, where he will dwell forever; his will be a shameful doom." Translated into English by M. M. Pickthall.

[25]Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Al-Dharī'ah ilā Makārim al-Sharī'ah*. Edited by Abu al-Yazid abu Zied al-Ajami (Al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Salām, 2010a), 234.

[26]Al-Iṣfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qur'ān,* 204.

[27]Encouragements are not limited to materialistic aspect but it can entail psychological also.

balanced relationship of seeking rewards and evade punishments can encourage individuals to be entirely responsible in every action and behavior they perform.

Al-Fārūqī, in his book *Al Tawḥīd: its Implication for Thought and Life*, elaborates on the concepts of *al-Targhīb* and *al-Tarhīb* and their relationship to conduct. He states, "Every page of the Qur'an contains either an element of *targīb* (a promise of reward in this life or the hereafter) for the good conduct, the good deeds or works of man, or an element of *tarhīb* (a threat of punishment, of suffering and of ill) for misconduct, the works of evil. This continues a tradition of morality as old as man. Islam only paints its scenarios more vividly and strikingly than they were ever described before."[28]

For the French historian François Guizot, only persuasion exists in Christianity, without intimidation. He claims this in his study on the history of civilization in Europe. He states that "{...} Christianity was established by persuasion alone, by simply moral means; it was never, from the time of its birth, armed with force. In the early ages, it was conquered by the Word alone, and it only conquered souls {...}.[29] Moreover, Guizot goes further and explains the role of the church in influencing individuals without possessing physical power; "{...} Her origin, purely moral and merely by means of persuasion, was found impressed in her condition. She has much influence, but she had no power {...}".[30]

Al-Māwardī's concept of persuasion indicates desires and wishes, which motivate individuals to perform specific actions. That is comparable to the Christian conception mentioned above by Guizot. Al-Māwardī's second concept, intimidation, indicates a punishment, which similarly drives individuals to do or not do particular deeds or behave in a specific manner. However, to al-Māwardī, these two concepts are always related to personality and the individual's nature. Thus, if an individual is brave, intimidation can influence him more. However, if a person is pious, persuasion can affect him more.[31] These concepts might also influence individuals simultaneously.

After a historical inquiry of what he calls "the civilizing process" in several European countries from 800 AD to 1900 AD, Norbert Elias reached almost the same conclusion as al-Māwardī: that there are two concepts which directly and indirectly influence the course of the civilizing process. Elias names these the "inner fear" and the "outer fear." These concepts play a significant role in building civilization, or what he explicitly terms 'the civilizing process.' Unlike al-Māwardī, Elias observes that the increase of inner fear was proportional to the decrease in external anxiety.[32] For Elias, the civilizing process moved in the modern time to a more civilized stage, one in which inner fear is stronger than the outer one. In the past, physical violence was used directly to influence and lead people to

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[28]Al-Faruqi, *Al Tawḥīd: Its Implications on Thought and Life*, 35.

[29]François Guizot, *History of Civilization in Europe*, 187.

[30]Ibid., 187-188.

[31]Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Ādāb al-dunyā wa-al-Dīn*, 152.

[32]Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2000), 420-21.

behave in specific ways. In modern times, inner fear has become dominant in the civilizing process. These two concepts are inseparable for Elias in the civilizing process. In the meantime, they can be experienced in different ways depending on the civilizational contexts.[33]

Persuasion, and intimidation, as suggested by al-Māwardī, can influence and motivate individuals to have efficient, practical norms that facilitate them to have normative ethics in their deeds. To conclude, I claim that *al-Targhīb wa al-tarhīb* are like "inner wishes" and "inner fear," and the balanced relationships between them lead individuals to act based on normative principles and commitments to take full responsibility for their actions and behavior.

4. Religion's Role in Constructing a Civilization

Civilization means an organized society based on virtue, good conduct, and cooperation among humans and not on the idea of clash and conflict.[34] The core of civilization here is not materialism but rather discipline, good conduct, and commitments to society. Through religion, an individual improves his personality, manners and conduct, which leads to an improvement in the society Religion can, thus, improve the conduct of both individuals and the collective.

In Western civilization, Victor Riqueti Mirabeau was the first to coin a term for the concept of civilization in the French language in 1756. What is remarkable in his perception of civilization is that he believes that religion is the central component of civilization. He argues that it is the first and most useful constraint - the mainspring of civilization.[35] Attaching religion and civilization together demonstrates how the concept of civilization from its first appearance related to the French language was associated with religion and how religion represented the central cornerstone of civilization. Bruce Mazlish highlights how Mirabeau's concept of civilization was associated strongly with religion. He states that "{...} there is, in the original formulation by Mirabeau, an assertion that religion was "the principal source" of civilization, because of the softening of manners."[36]

Two factors can impact the behavior and deeds of human beings. On the one hand, there are external physical constraints, or what Norbert Elias calls "Fremdzwänge,"[37] in which an individual or a group of people can practice physical violence or use power to

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[33]Ibid., 421.

[34]The idea of the clash of civilizations appeared before Samuel Huntington's article, which was extended to his famous book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking the World Order*, in an essay entitled "The Roots of Muslim Rage," by Bernard Lewis in 1990.

[35]Otto Brunner, Reinhart Koselleck, and Werner Conze, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* [Basic Historical Concepts: Historical Lexicon on the Political-Social Language in Germany], Vol. 7. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2004), 717.

[36]Bruce Mazlish, *Civilization and its Contents* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 18.

[37]In English "foreign constraints."

force others to act and behave in specific ways. On the other hand, there are also internal spiritual constraints, producing spiritual discipline and self-control, or what Elias calls "*Selbstzwänge.*"[38] However, Elias fails to associate these two concepts with religion, which plays a central role in this regard. Even his notion of *Selbstzwänge* is merely a developed stage of what he calls *Fremdzwänge*.[39]

For al-Māwardī, actions are constructed internally based on spirituality, intention, and self-decision. Therefore, this paper argues that religion can provide internal and external constraints, influencing both the individual and the collective. Internal and external constraints might lead the individual and the collective to behave following the best norms and moral principles. It means, religion has an essential role in human interactions. Al-Māwardī elaborates on the constructive role of religion and how it influences human behavior:

{…} Religion makes inward thoughts better, and it prevents from committing sins. Furthermore, religion motivates toward doing justice and being good. Similarly, it encourages *al-ulfah* and social harmony, and these are rules and principles, which without it, the realm {civilization} cannot be instituted. Moreover, people will not be doing the right deeds without religion.[40]

This citation clarifies how religion can amend humans' conduct and personalities and how, for al-Māwardī, humans will not perform the right deeds without religion. Al-Fārūqī likewise reaffirms that the question "what ought a man to do?" meaning how to deal with others and how to live is only answerable through the religion of Islam.[41] Further, al-Māwardī demonstrates that it is not only for the benefit of the individual to have a religion but also for the collective since religion plays the role of reunifying people and bringing about social coherence and harmony; al-Māwardī articulates:

Thus, it is the interest of the people to have religion, which can lead them to have unity and agreements, also through religion the antagonisms among people vanish, and their greed and disagreements eliminate. Consequently, their intentions will be good, and the loyalty will be maintained.[42]

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[38]In English "Self-constraints," however, since Norbert Elias ignores the role of religion throughout his theory of civilization, that makes his term "*Selbstzwänge*" limited to internal constraints, which is unoccupied of any kind of spirituality.

[39]Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen.—T. I: Wandlungen des Verhaltens in den weltlichen Oberschichten des Abendlandes*. Vol. II, [About the Process of Civilization. Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Studies: Changes in Behaviour in the Secular Upper Classes of the West] (Amsterdam: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), 354-55.

[40]Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Tas'hīl al-naẓar wa-ta'jīl al-ẓafar*, Edited by Ridwan al-Sayyid (Beirut: Ibn Al Azraq Center for Political Heritage Studies, 2012), 247.

[41]Al-Faruqi, *Al Tawhīd: Its Implications on Thought and Life*, 65.

[42]Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Tas'hīl al-naẓar wa-ta'jīl al-ẓafar*, 248.

Unlike al-Māwardī, who explains how religion encourages individuals to act justly and deal with others based on ethics, Durkheim focuses on the individual's internal feelings. He states that "The worshiper who has communed with his god is not only a man who sees new truths that the unbeliever does not know; he is a man who is *capable* of more. He feels more strength in himself, either to cope with difficulties of existence or to defeat them. He is raised above human miseries because he is raised above his condition as a man; he believes he is saved from evil, in whatever form he conceives of evil."[43] He goes further and argues that "The man who has obeyed his god, and therefore believes he is on his side, approaches the world with confidence and feeling of accumulated energy."[44] These positive effects of religion on individuals feelings construct stronger individuals in society, in which people are encouraged to act justly and ethically.

For al-Māwardī, religious ethics have supremacy over ethics and morals in general, which can be generated merely based on the capacities of reason. This is because ethics and morals, which are based only on such rational foundations, have an almost subjective reasoning process, are self-interested, and continuously shifting. This instability and subjectivity can destructively influence behavior and actions.[45] Religion has a potentially destructive role in society. For instance, it can be used and misused by some people, especially by political authority and elites. Therefore, al-Māwardī warns of some destructive aspects of religion on society, leading to mutual hostility. This is not only within one religion, meaning different sects within a religion will conflict with each other but also among religions in general.[46] Al-Māwardī, thus, does not presume that religion leads only to social integrity and solidarity; instead, he admits the possibility that, in some cases, it might lead to conflicts.

In his book, "Islamic Civilization: Its Foundational Beliefs and Principles," Mawdūdī warns of the negative impact of having false religion and beliefs in society. He phrases it in the following manner: "False beliefs affect their mindset in such a negative manner that their best energies are exhausted. Neither is their loftiness in their aspiration nor a sharpness of ambition; there is no breath of vision, no illumination in the mind nor courage in the heart. Finally, these are attributes that become the cause of perpetual disgrace and enslavement."[47]Comparably, Arnold Toynbee, who is known for his comprehensive and insightful study of history and human civilizations, refutes the position that religion plays

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[43]Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,* trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 311.

[44]Ibid., 157.

[45]Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Ādāb al-dunyā wa-al-Dīn*, 54.

[46]Alboğa, *Lehranalytische Betrachtung bei Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (974-1058): Oberster Richter des 4./10. Jahrhunderts im islamischen Kalifat der Abbasiden; sein Leben und seine Gedankenwelt,* 378.

[47]Sayyid Abul A'lā Maududi, *Islamic Civilization: Its Foundational Beliefs and Principles*, trans., Syed Akif (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 2013), 72.

the role of social cancer or that religion is responsible for the state's declination.[48] On the contrary, – identical to al-Māwardī but from a historical perspective – Toynbee argues that all civilizations have had religious backgrounds. Toynbee proved this historically by stating that:

If we cast our eye over the civilizations that were still alive in A.D. 1952, we shall see that every one of them had in its background some universal church through which it was affiliated to a civilization of an older generation. The Western and Orthodox Christian civilizations were affiliated through the Christian Church to the Hellenic civilization; the Far Eastern civilization was affiliated through the Mahāyāna to the Sinic civilization; the Hindu civilization through Hinduism to the Indic; the Iranic and Arabic through Islam to the Syriac. All these civilizations had churches for their chrysalises.[49]

Many modern philosophers and social theorists have acknowledged religion's significance in constructing a civilization and its persistence and perseverance. For instance, Malik Bennabi argues that a civilization's life cycle starts when the notion of religion emerges; meanwhile, a civilization declines when religion vanishes.[50] Bennabi emphasizes the necessary or even pre-conditional relationship between religion and civilization's construction.

Other similar opinions emerge from within Western Civilization. Guizot also stresses the role of theology and the church's significance in Europe strongly, and argues that the church "{…} exercised a very great influence upon the moral and intellectual orders in modern Europe, upon public ideas, sentiments, and manners". Even more, he argues that the theological spirit is "{…} the blood which ran in the veins of the European World {…}".[51] This means that for both Guizot and Bennabi, a civilization cannot emerge without a religion. However, neither of them answered how religion leads and facilitates the construction of a civilization.

It is safe to argue that religion is one of the mainsprings of civilization. It is even a predominant component in defining civilization.[52] The construction of civilization is centered, to a certain extent, on the perception and interpretation of the role and centrality of religion. Since religion suggests countless normative values, principles, and criteria, which influence the individuals' behavior, for such reasons, Maududi accurately concludes

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[48]Arnold J. Toynbee, *Study of History*, Vol. II (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 76.

[49]Ibid., 82.

[50]Malek Bennabi, *Mushkilat al-Thaqāfah*, trans. Abad al-Sabur Shahin (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2014), 78.

[51]François Guizot, *History of Civilization in Europe*, 121.

[52]Compare this with Huntington, who considers religion as "a central defining characteristic of civilizations." Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the Modern Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1996), 47.

that "The process of a civilization gaining independence from its religious foundations ultimately leads to moral decay and destruction."[53]

Elaborating upon the role of religion in the construction of civilization, this paper explains how certain religious concepts can influence and inspire the process of constructing a civilization. I argue that al-Māwardī's notion of "*al-ulfah*" (social affinity) facilitates improving individuals' manners and motivates them to behave on the basis of the best ethics. The centrality of this specific concept is apparent due to its profound influence on the collective. However, this does not mean that religion has only a few concepts relevant to this purpose. On the contrary, religion possesses plenty of ideas that can play different roles in constructing civilization.

5. The Concept of *Al-ulfah*

The concept of *al-ulfahh* (social affinity) has several connotations. First, it indicates joining hearts together within a social unity, reflecting qualities that help soften the manners and etiquettes on both individual and collective levels. Secondly, *al-ulfah* advocates mutual social solidarity and cooperation, merging the individual into the collective in a social affiliation based on mutual love.[54] Thirdly, *al-ulfah* plays the role of inhibiting people from breaking their associations and social solidarity and being hostile to one another.[55] The first two aspects of *al-ulfah* have positive sides, in which *al-ulfah* encourages people to actualize particular normative ethical principles, which are reflected in their deeds and behavior. However, the last aspect deters people from malicious and unethical actions. Thus, this balancing between the promotion of social integrity, solidarity, and the impediment of evil deeds inspire people to behave decently.

As a practical example of the role of *al-ulfah* in Muslim civilization, al-Māwardī expounds how the tribes and clans before the advent of Islam in Arabia were in constant conflict and hostility. A case in point were the hostile relations between the tribes of *al-Aws* and *al-Khazradj*; however, when they converted to Islam, they became firmly bound by the principle of fraternity, and their hostile relations largely vanished. Through *al-ulfah,*[56] they started to have mutual social solidarity and protected each other from aggressiveness and injustice.[57] For al-Māwardī, religion produces the essential foundation of *al-ulfah*, which brings people to social unity and solidarity. That is why, for him,

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[53]Maududi, *Islamic Civilization: Its Foundational Beliefs and Principles*, 76.

[54]Al-Iṣfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 30.

[55]Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Ādāb al-dunyā wa-al-Dīn*, 237-38.

[56]Al-Māwardī was directly inspired by the Qur'ān (al-e-Imran 3: 104) "{…} remember Allah's favor unto you: How ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became as brothers by His grace {…}". The verb "*Ala'fa''* was translated into English by M. M. Pickthall as "He made friendship between your hearts," however, this definition still very insufficient.

[57]Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Ādāb al-dunyā wa-al-Dīn*, 239.

disputes in religion are the main reason for division and degeneration.[58] Therefore, religion constitutes the primary source of *al-ulfah*, inspiring individuals to maintain their cooperation and social solidarity.

Ibn Khaldūn uses the concept of "*'Aṣabīyah*" instead of *al-ulfah*; the former is equivalent to the concept of social solidarity. This leads to the question: what is the difference between these two concepts? Al-Māwardī's notion of *al-ulfah* contributes to normative ethical, social unity, i.e., it has only a positive aspect in society. However, Ibn Khaldūn's concept of *'Aṣabīyah* could have both positive and negative aspects. For instance, Ibn Khaldūn maintains that different *'Aṣabīyahs* can weaken the state (or the civilization),[59] for the reason that every social group attempts to oppose others, based on its own differing interests, and desires. Because of this, society's unity will be difficult to accomplish.[60] However, religion, according to Ibn Khaldūn, unites all of the different *'Aṣabīyahs* in one, since religion eradicates all of the evil attributes and proposes a unified path for behavior.[61]

Even though *'Aṣabīyah* is a central theme in the Khaldunian analysis, the main focus of Ibn Khaldūn was limited to the political side of it only. 'Aṣabīyah, therefore, is limited[62] in comparison to *al-ulfah*; the latter contains other aspects such as social, political, and religious elements. Unlike *al-ulfah*, *'Aṣabīyah* is a two-sided feeling: positive feeling towards the same tribe, and hostile towards others.[63] To Ibn Khaldūn, *'Aṣabīyah* is related predominantly to Bedouin[64] communities.[65] Thus, it is safe to argue that *al-ulfah* is broader than *'Aṣabīyah* since it is not limited to Bedouin communities.

Toynbee distinguishes between what he, on the one hand, calls the love of fellow countrymen, which is embodied in nationalism or "the solidarity of a state," similar to *'Aṣabīyah*, and the love of Humanity, on the other hand, which is identical to *al-ulfah* in meaning. For Toynbee, the former is a primitive instinct; however, the latter is to be reached through God, which hints at the importance that Toynbee gives to religion in civilization. Toynbee puts it in this way, "{…} one loves one's fellow countrymen because one hates foregners. {…} we still feel a natural love for our relations and our neighbors, whereas love of Humanity is a cultivated taste. We reach the former direct, the

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[58]Ibid., 240.

[59]This study prefers to use civilization for many reason such as that civilization is not limited to particular ethnicity, as the case with modern concept of state.

[60]'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah,* ed., 'AlīA'Abd al-Wāḥid Wāfīāfīḥid WaAl-Qāhirah: Nahḍat Miṣr, 1981), 536.

[61]c.f. Ibid., 527.

[62]Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, *Al-'Aṣabiyya wa-Dawla - Ma'ālim Naẓariyya Khaldūniyya fī al-Turāth al-Islāmī* (Bayrūt: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-'Arabīya, 2014), 166.

[63]Ibid., 169.

[64]Ibn Khaldūn discusses *'Aṣabīyah* in cities; however, it has a different form such as political parties.

[65]Ibid., 173.

latter only a second hand, for it is through God alone that Religion leads Man to love the Human Race {…}".[66]

Toynbee appreciates God's role and religion in embedding the love among peoples based not on nationality and solidarity of a state but humanity. Love in humanity or for humanity can be grounded merely in religion. Even though Toynbee's idea of "love of Humanity" appears like al-Māwardī's concept of *al-ulfah,* however, unlike al-Māwardī, Toynbee's notion in this regard is grounded on nationalism and the idea that one loves his fellow while hating foreigners. Indeed, for al-Māwardī, this is not the case since his conception of *al-ulfah* is built on Islam, humane values and not nationalism.[67]

Following al-Māwardī, many late Muslim scholars have acknowledged religion's substance with respect to constructing a strong civilization. For instance, Ibn Khaldūn recognizes that religion's significance is related to its influence on people's internal spiritual aspects, while religion can stimulate individuals in two ways. It leads individuals to discard depraved characteristics such as arrogance and hostile rivalry, which are the source and cause of hate and disrespect. Besides, after eliminating evil traits, religion plays the role of uniting individuals in a social unit by encouraging them to act in the best and most just way.[68] Thus, the more *al-ulfah* exists in a society, the more constructive influences over humans exist, bringing more stability and growth to their civilization.

Al-ulfah plays a leading role in connecting and uniting individuals in social unity and solidarity, which is fundamental for society in order to maintain its improvement. For Durkheim, *al-ulfah,* or what he calls collective feelings, is an essential element in uniting society, and without this collective feeling, a society cannot exist. He states that "No society can exist that does not feel the need at regular intervals to sustain and reaffirm the collective feelings and ideas that constitute its unity and its personality."[69] This is to argue that *al-ulfah* is not only an objective to be achieved and an ambition to be fulfilled but also a powerful instrument to keep social solidarity and coherence strong within society.

6. Conclusion

This paper attempted to demonstrate al-Māwardī's understanding of religion and its central role in instituting and preserving a civilization. Religion has principles and proposes certain notions in order to establish a civilization and cultivate it for the future. *Al-ulfah* is an example of such a religious concept that preserves, and enhances morality and social solidarity. Thus, this paper endeavored to prove that religion is a pillar for establishing civilization. There is no structured and organized civilization without religion having a central place since the latter can suggest norms, standards, and moral principles at the collective and the individual level. These norms and ethical codes are necessary for

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[66]Toynbee, *Study of History*, 106.

[67]Needless to say, that in al-Māwardī's time, the idea of nationalism was not established.

[68]Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, 516.

[69]Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 322.

instituting and maintaining the life-world order. Thus, without religion, there is no possibility for virtuous civilization to be constructed.

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