



Classical Arabic, the 'Arabi Tongue,ⁱ and the Qur'an

Randa Hamwi

Classical Arabic and Etymology

What Arabs call today 'Classical Arabic/*al-Fuss-haa'* is the formal literary language for more than 400 million Arabs. ⁱⁱ It is what many people of Arab culture and upbringing would read and write, ⁱⁱⁱ listen to in broadcasts, and sometimes sprinkle into their vernacular. Its highest form, or paradigm, is the language of the Qur'an, venerated by almost 1/4th of the world's population; about 1.97 billion Muslims. ^{iv}

Classical Arabic is not easy to learn. Its grammatical structures and formal, diacritic^v system are no longer followed in speech, and much of its terminology does not correspond to the colloquial dialects spoken by present-day Arabs. Moreover, classical Arabic is no longer the language of conversation it was more than ten centuries ago; people today only speak it on formal occasions and for specific purposes.

This difference between classical and colloquial makes learning quite challenging for the novice. In fact, Arab children who begin schooling feel that they are learning a 'second' language which little resembles what they speak at home, despite the shared vocabulary. Adults in literacy programs face the same challenge, a point constantly brought up during the preparation of curricula. ^{vi} We can therefore say that today, *Classical Arabic is nobody's first language.*

Despite this, Arabic still retains sounds and phonemic structures which, in the opinion of many, hark back to earliest human communication. According to the 'Imam of the Arabic language,' Ibn Jinni (941-1002 C.E.),¹ the Arabic language actually retains the original association of human sound to meaning. Before symbolic language evolved, earliest human communication consisted of uttered sounds, *each sound indicating a distinct meaning. This association can still be found in the 'Arabic' letters/sounds, as they relate to meaning.*^{vii}

Another opinion is that of historian, Ahmad Yusuf Daoud (1942-)^{viii} who compiled a treasure-trove of information in his many books on early Syrian history and ancient Arabia. He detailed the culture and the languages, showing how the spoken word would traverse ethnicities at a time when many communities were mutually intelligible. He spoke of the roots to the Arabic language, naming both the Assyrian (Syriac), and the Phoenician languages as 'Old Arabic.' He also illustrated their impact upon world languages, including Greek and Latin.^{ix}

As for French scientist Pierre Rossi (1920-2002), dubbed 'historian of the Arab world,' it is he who says in *'The True History of the Arabs'* that Western linguists purposefully obscured the relationship of Greek civilization to its mother civilization, ancient Arabia:

"The Greek language is Arabic inasmuch as the Arabic is Greek, in this there is little difference, the noticeable difference is that the Greek language is no more than a language of transmission, because the fundamental cultural, scientific and religious heritage was provided to us by the Arabs. We should not reverse these positions, rendering the Greeks, who were no more than heirs, the fathers of their spiritual ancestors, the Arabs." ".to this end we beg the pardon of distinguished scholars, for the annals of linguistics are full of hasty theories rather than built on strong foundation. Studies on the language of the Greeks and the history of the Greeks must be revisited from the roots.

¹ Abul-Fateh Othman Ibn Jinni (941-1002 C.E.), renowned grammarian and phonetician, author of the famous 'Al Khasa'is- الخصائص'

It behooves us, in this information age, to integrate these findings into our schools, even if we present them as theories. Teaching our children the origins of words and the meanings of sounds would make it easier for them to learn, not only Arabic, but also other languages that share similar words and sounds. Such experience would help them gain a universal outlook of a shared humanity, which is what we should revive in our communities today.

Languages transform through time

Utterly unrecognizable is the following line of Old English poetry '**hû þa äðelingas ellen fremedon,**' part of the epic, *Beowulf*,^x written about a thousand years ago. In modern English, it would read: '*How princes displayed then their prowess-in-battle.*' Not a single word of this old language seems similar to today's English or today's German, which is surprising since Germanic was the origin of both languages.^{xi} The reason for this is that languages must evolve and transform with time.

At the time when *Beowulf* was written, Old English was similar to other European languages;^{xii} they were *mutually intelligible*,^{xiii} in that a tribe from one region could understand what tribes from other regions were saying despite the difference in language. Moreover, populations borrowed words and expressions from one another in a natural intermingling of the spoken word with neighboring lands, sometimes after incursions into each other's territories or through the literature and sciences they were exposed to. At any rate, European languages continued to evolve until the 15th century when they finally became standardized with the introduction of printing presses to Europe.^{xiv}

As for the Arabic language, let us simply consider this incredible fact:

Our generation can readily read and understand almost anything that was written in Arabic five centuries *prior* to Beowulf; 1500 years ago. Moreover, we can also look up the definitions of unfamiliar words in the scrupulously detailed lexicons left to us from that very same era, giving us now -in this day and age- every Arabic word alphabetically compiled, defined, and offered with examples. Finally, not only is the 'Arabi Qur'an still read today, it arguably is the most popular book of all time.²

The Standardization of Arabic

Manuscripts that were written in Arabic 1500 years ago can be read today because the 'standardization' of Arabic had already taken place at that time, albeit through a completely different route.

From the earliest time of Qur'anic revelation, the Faithful were reciting the Qur'an and memorizing it for prayer recitals and daily guidance. They carved its verses onto pieces of wood, leather, palm-fronds, and wrote it on parchment, and their descendants did the same. Meanwhile, Islam was rapidly spreading:

"Only a century after its inception in Mecca i.e., A.D. 622, the new religion dominated an area extending from the Iberian Peninsula in the West to the steppes of Central Asia in the East."^{xv}

As Islam spread into regions of different ethnicities, Arabic naturally intermingled with the local languages. Classical Arabic, however, having been standardized by the Qur'an, did not yield to similar transformation. There was a parting of ways, as spoken Arabic transformed on its own. But the parting

² In 2014, the *Qur'an*, came first as the most popular book, with over 3 billion prints.
<http://blog.lovereading.co.uk/special-features/08/the-most-popular-books-of-all-time/#.VIca7zGsV8E>

of ways did not go very far, for the Qur'an had also set a standard for the articulation of sounds. When Muslims anywhere learn to recite the Qur'an, they are taught the art of 'Tajweed' or 'proficiency,' a timeless voiced technique that applies original emphasis and resonance upon each recited sound as it joins another. Thus Arabic enunciation too was standardized by the Qur'an.

When the Chinese craft of papermaking arrived at their frontiers in Samarkand followed by printing in 932 CE, Muslims began to mass-produce and distribute identical texts of the Qur'an, and its readership expanded. By some accounts, this was around 500 years before the printing press^{xvi} was first used in Germany.^{xvii} But unlike the impact which the printing-press had upon other languages, it was not printing which standardized the Arabic language for its speakers. What the printing-press did was simply help record and transmit what had already taken place three centuries earlier:

Three hundred years earlier, the Arabic language had already been 'standardized' in a unique relationship between the Faithful and the oral Qur'anic compilation. In fact, no sooner had they embarked upon memorizing the Qur'an in 610 C.E. than the standardization of the language began.

Epitome of Eloquence, then and now

Arabic had reached the peak of its maturity and eloquence in the Arabian desert by the time the 'Arabi Qur'an was revealed more than fourteen centuries ago to the Messenger MuHammad.ﷺ His tribe Qureish, although known to have been '*the most eloquent among all the Arabs,*'^{xviii} was in such awe of its majestic eloquence that they described it as magic. One nobleman^{xix} had to admit -despite his antagonism- that it was of unmatched sweetness, beauty and splendor.

The Qur'an has always been the epitome of 'Arabi eloquence, its words and verses never ceasing to enthrall with sounds and meanings that elevate the heart and soul. Thanks to the Qur'an, Arabic is still a living language to this day despite the fact that many Arabs are no longer proficient in their language and certain important concepts have shifted from their original definitions.

It is through linguistic research into the Qur'an that one uncovers amazing findings, not only in the beauty of its concepts and the wisdom of its guidance, but also in the timelessness of its message. The Qur'an is revealed 'in the now' for those who approach it as such.

The 'Arabi' Qur'an and the First command

It may be common knowledge among most Arabs and Muslims that the Qur'an preserved the Arabic language, but what many do not realize, is that Arabic -or rather 'Arabi- has helped preserve the original meanings of Qur'anic words. This is because each Arabic word is derived from a distinct root-verb, and these root-verbs have all been defined and compiled in lexicons. These definitions, recorded more than a thousand years ago, have been preserving the meaning of each word. This makes it easy for Arabic readers today to grasp original intent, even after centuries have passed, and even after the spoken language has adapted to its users, and even after the connotations of many words have changed. It is for this reason that we find in the Qur'anic compilation, no less than 11 verses asserting that the Qur'an is 'Arabi,' delivered in an 'Arabi' tongue, in Arabi exclusivity.³

³ There are eleven assertions that the Qur'anic compilation is 'Arabi;' seven directly naming Qur'an as 'Arabi, three that it is delivered in an 'Arabi' tongue, and one that it has been delivered in Arabi exclusivity/hukm حكماً عربياً. I try to differentiate between 'Arabi' and Arabic because 'Arabi -as the lexicons tell us- does not mean 'Arabic.' 'Arabi' means self-expressive and eloquent, which is what the Qur'an is, in a caliber all its own. I make the distinction by calling it 'Arabi, while calling the changing language of Arabs 'Arabic.'

It is these *exclusive*, original meanings, which we are in dire need of recovering. We can do so by simply opening the ancient lexicons which are downloadable and easily readable. There is absolutely no excuse for ignorance when everything is at our fingertips. There also is no justification in accepting today's divergent 'Islamic' practices and narrowed-down connotations. Many Qur'anic words have diverged in our minds from their original definitions, and being misunderstood they are also misapplied.^{xx}

As an example here, let us consider the narrowed-down understanding of the word 'rijaal,' which in people's usage today is the plural of 'rajul,' meaning 'man/adult male.' However, older lexicons⁴ would show us that the word is the plural of not one, but *three* singular nouns, 'rajul' (masculine), 'rajlah' (feminine), and 'rajulah' (feminine). What this means is that, unbeknownst to most people, the plural 'rijaal' has always had three singulars, two of which are feminine! Unfortunately however, ever since these two feminine singular nouns became defunct and dropped out of use, Muslims understood this Qur'anic verse (9:108)⁵ as speaking highly *only of the men* who were attending the Prophet's mosque. Utterly overlooked was well-known history which spoke of the throngs of women attending the mosque. Lost was the fact that the Qur'an here was commending ALL the 'active persons/rijaal' who made up the congregation.^{xxi}

The Qur'an is 'Arabi,' but the word 'Arabi' is not about ethnicity. 'Arabi does not refer to the Arabs, rather, it was the other way around at one point

The Qur'an has also been delivered as 'Hukm Arabi.' The root-verb 'Hakama' means 'to prevent or exclude,' and is first and foremost about the prevention or exclusion of wronging others, which is what the Qur'an is delivered for (Ibn Faris, d. 1004). حكم: أصل واحد، وهو المنع. وأول ذلك الحكم، وهو المنع من الظلم.

⁴ Such as Zein el Deen Al Razi's (d. 1261 CE) 'Mukhtar al Sihah.

⁵ لَا تَقُمْ فِيهِ أَبَدًا لَمَْسْجِدٍ أُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْ أَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَقُومَ فِيهِ فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَتَطَهَّرُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَهَّرِينَ (التوبة: 9:108)

“Do not ever stand therein. Indeed, a mosque founded upon Awareness from the first day is more worthy of your standing therein; in it are ‘rijaal’ who love to be purified, and God loves those who purify themselves.”
(9:108)

in time. `Arabi, from the root-verb `araba, denotes eloquent self-expression which is what the Arab tribes prided themselves on, and how the Qur'an describes itself. Today, although the Qur'an's eloquence might not be as discerned as it could be by those whose own eloquence has diminished, yet its marvels endure, awaiting to be discovered by those who read it today with the same appreciation and ease in which it was read 1400 years ago. Scholars of various disciplines shall continue to find accurate details within its verses regarding humanity, nature, and the universe around us, as if their predecessors were reading into the future. When early reciters of the Qur'an read that the mountains were `pegs' laid deep in the earth (Q.78:7)⁶ they probably did not fully comprehend what that meant. This information was to come to light twelve centuries later as `scientific theory,'⁷ although today it is considered common knowledge.

Muslims already know that the more scientifically advanced humanity becomes the more we can derive from the Qur'an provided it is appreciated in its unique, self-expressive `Arabi.^{'xxii}

I am hoping that dedicated `readers/qari' of the Qur'an can now come forward to renew the activation of a dynamic that has lain inactive for more than a thousand years. This life-changing dynamic, packed into the first command `Iqra,' is a directive to proceed, processing and disseminating information, growing, functioning at our best in real time, and being of service to everyone around us. This is a quest that -when undertaken with love and selflessness- could ultimately bring the entire world together in peace and brotherhood.

⁶ / أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ مِهَادًا ﴿٦﴾ وَالْجِبَالَ أَوْتَادًا ﴿٧﴾

“Have we not rendered the earth a smoothened cradle (6) And the mountains pegs?” (78:7)

⁷ In 1855 CE, George Biddell Airy, (1801-1892), English scientist and astronomer royal, was the first to propose the theory that mountain ranges must have root structures of lower density, proportional to their height in order to maintain isostatic equilibrium.

Required: Unbiased research of language origins

It is important at the outset to note that even as Arab specialists consider many Western studies of the Arabic language and its origins biased, Western specialists consider many Arab studies biased as well. If the perception of bias is not due to each side missing out on information known to the other, then their bias most likely has political foundations. It is well-known how 'powers that be' tend to dictate what it is 'advisable' for people to be interested in and concerned about, often presenting material to support their goals. The importance of this topic is in the fact that the Arabic language and the Qur'an are inseparable, and anything that weakens the role of one among the people will weaken the role of the other, and this is what has been lately happening in Arab lands, as we know. Weakening the role of the Arabic language among its people did not bring peace; quite the opposite.

The fact is that the Qur'an will never be absent from the lives of Muslims.

The fact is that those who embrace Islam will continue to increase.

However, in the absence of knowing Arabic, many will miss much of the Qur'an's articulateness, its wisdom, and yes, its peace. If that were allowed to continue, there will be more people who would interpret its words according to their own perspectives, their needs, and even their grudges.

Today there is a revival of ancient rhetoric which claims that the language of the Qur'an is Aramaic, with Aramaic definitions being put forth as explanations to certain Qur'anic words that are clearly Arabic.⁸ Some Muslims

⁸ Such as the word 'marHab/marHaba/marhaban,' which is from the Arabic root verb 'raHaba' meaning 'to welcome.' It follows the grammatical form 'maf'al/مفعول' which is 'issm makaan' or the name of a place, hence it refers to a place or state of welcome. This grammatical form is similar to 'maktab,' which we use today to mean 'office/study,' desk, or bookshelf, from the root-verb 'kataba,' to write or to compile.

However, there are those who say it is of Assyrian origin, 'mar' referring to God or Master, and 'Haba' to love, which combined translate loosely as God's love/ God is love. That might be what this word means in Assyrian, but according to the Arabic language, the word 'marHaba' is by all means an Arabic word.

who don't know much about the Arabic language have accepted these definitions, and understandably so, since the interpretations found in some traditional exegeses were not seen to be as acceptable or beautiful compared to the Aramaic alternative.⁹ But this disarray, along with others, has contributed to a large number of young Muslims' disenchantment and abandonment of their faith, and to an increase in young Arabs' contempt for the history of their forefathers.

Responsibility for all this, too often, has been laid on the heedlessness of youth, which is so far from the truth. It is we adults who are most responsible. Furthermore, in this age of open information, the more knowledgeable we are the more responsibility we carry:

Qur'an search engines are now at our fingertips, together with the oldest lexicons on the origin of the Arabic language.

It has become very easy to browse through entire Islamic books and history books, as well as the compilations of researchers –bygone and contemporary– a feat impossible for our parents' generation.

Yet the fact remains that, contrary to open or fair-mindedness, most of us who go on the internet seek that which reaffirms and validates our preconceived notions. Devoid of objectivity, we tend not to seek the truth but rather to echo the opinions we are accustomed to while belittling other voices and opinions. This is exactly what the people of 'Ignorance' were doing during the Prophet's time!

Since we are seeking the truth here, there is another fact that has been revealing itself gradually during my search for accurate renditions of Qur'anic words into English, and that is related to the approach taken by specialists in the study of English etymology. I say it frankly:

⁹ These Qur'anic words can be found in the lexicons with interpretations quite different from what exegetes had chosen.

Studies made by specialists in the field of English etymology are incomplete and unscientific because of their complete disregard of Arabic as the possible origin of many English words. The absence of Arabic from the list of languages to which many English words can trace their origins is highly conspicuous. Countless English words are of Arabic origin, crystal-clear to the discerning eye.^{xxiii}

I consider Western etymology stripped of credibility as long as there are no unbiased studies that reposition the Arab-Muslim civilization where it deserves to be within the larger frame of human civilization which is neither Western nor Eastern. Although it is eventually up to specialists to see this through, we -as lovers of knowledge- must demand these truths regardless of differences of opinion.

Pierre Rossi had pinpointed the need for honest, unbiased research, saying:^{xxiv}

"It is unacceptable, this invented theory of ethnicity of language, which arbitrarily divides the world into Semites and Aryans, whose existence no scientific investigation has been able to prove, it is a claim and vulgarity... and it is a spirit of patriarchal colonialism trying to impose itself." p. 10.

I believe that it is essential today for us Muslims to retrace our steps and readjust our concepts to the original Arabic, or 'Arabi of the Qur'an, and in doing so recover what we have missed. In doing so, we would also discover the true origin of many familiar European words, giving a favorable meaning to the word 'globalization.' It is interesting to note that, despite the difference of opinions between those who might be called 'orientalists' or 'westernized' by their opponents, and those who are dubbed 'Arabists' by theirs, the consensus remains: Spoken words are free, ethereal expressions that know no borders.

Let us therefore open our eyes and contemplate our single, multi-cultural world. Such an endeavor is a peace project in itself, needing energetic, determined people.

Humanity itself is structured around the air we all share, inhaling and exhaling in living communication, and it is time we realized that.

Whatever we build today is based on the foundations laid for us by those who went before us.

Upon the Shoulders of Giants

It is common knowledge that the Arab-Islamic culture had a large hand in delivering the Renaissance to Europe after what some have dubbed its 'dark ages.'^{xxv} Although as Muslims we might take pride in the achievements of our ancestors,^{xxvi} it is undeniable that every thinker, inventor, scientist, or expert in any field at any time would have based their work and derived inspiration from those who came before them -regardless of ethnicity or background. Humanity is but one unit. This is what each of us should acknowledge in repetition of the words of the great physicist Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1726 CE):

"If I have seen further, it is because I stand on the shoulders of giants."

Many think that the giants upon whose shoulders he said he stood were the Greeks, while Newton was probably referring to those who had preceded him, important figures in Arab-Muslim culture -after the earlier Greeks- whose works had been translated, built upon, and often eclipsed.^{xxvii} Isaac Newton was known to have read their works and been influenced by many, especially Ibn al Haytham whose magnum opus 'Book of Optics/ Kitab Al-Manathir' Newton had kept in his personal library. What many do not realize is that Newton's world-famous book 'Opticks' had a predecessor dating back 700 years, and that Newton's name never appeared on the title page of the first edition!

It behooves us, as Newton did, to acknowledge all previous works that make our endeavors even possible. We should also highlight the fact that

knowledge, which spreads far and wide enough to change the world, does so on the wings of a 'lingua franca,' a common language among speakers whose native tongues are different.

Arabic was the lingua franca for more than six centuries, stretching across ethnicities and faiths as the language of theology, philosophy, arts and sciences, similar in popularity to English today.

Arabic was the language of the world's most famous polymaths of the medieval era, some giants of which Newton spoke. Here we name just a few of these Arabic speaking giants, not all of which were Arab.

- Jaber Ibn Hayyaan (722-804 CE) the father of chemistry known for his works on alchemy and metallurgy.
- Al Khwarizmi, or 'Algoritmi' (780-850 CE) introduced the world to Arabic numerals, concepts of algebra, and 'algorithms,' which is the Arabic system of computation named after him.
- Al-Jaahizh (781-869 CE) wrote about environmental factors influencing organisms to develop new characteristics to survive, said to be the *"biologist who first developed the theories of evolution and introduced the world to concepts like natural selection, the food chain and animal psychology, a thousand years before Darwin was born."*^{xxviii}
- Al Kindi (801-873 CE), philosopher and scientist, wrote hundreds of treatises on metaphysics, ethics, logic, psychology, medicine, pharmacology, mathematics, astronomy, astrology, meteorology and even introduced new methods of breaking ciphers.
- Ibn Qurrah (826-901 CE) was a mathematician, physician and astronomer; the founder of statics in physics and the reformer of the Ptolemaic system of cosmology more than six centuries before Copernicus was born.

- Al Battani (852-929 CE) was a mathematician, scientist and astronomer whose work improved what was known about the length of a year and its seasons.
- Abu Bakr Al Razi (865-925 CE) was an alchemist and philosopher, father of pediatrics, pioneer of obstetrics and ophthalmology, and was considered one of the greatest physicians in history. Centuries before Newton, he had made a strong distinction between absolute and relative space.
- Al Faarabi (872-950 CE) was a jurist, scientist, philosopher, cosmologist, mathematician and music theorist. A preeminent thinker, he also wrote in the fields of political philosophy, metaphysics, ethics and logic.
- Ibn Al Haytham (965-1040 CE), known as Alhazen, was an astronomer and mathematician, the father of modern optics, with writings on calculus and gravity that preceded Newton.

It was he who invented the camera obscura. His 'Book of Optics/Kitab al-Manathir / كتاب المناظر' was a seven-volume treatise on optics and other fields of study which hugely influenced thinking across disciplines, beginning with the theory of visual perception. The impact his work had on the very nature of perspective was obvious for centuries in the art of medieval Europe.

- Ibn Sina (980-1037) was a physician, astronomer, philosopher and scientist, father of early modern medicine whose most influential theories involved the concepts of mechanics and projectile motion. He discussed the relationship of velocity to weight, a precursor to the concept of momentum.
- Abu Haamid Al Ghazali (1058-1111) was a philosopher, theologian, jurist, logician, and ascetic. It was Al Ghazali who combined theology with 'Tasawwuf,' arguing against many thinkers of his time in his book 'Tahaafut al Falaasifah/ Incoherence of the Philosophers.' His book

'Ihya' al-'Uloom al Deen/ Revival of the Religious Sciences' is considered the greatest work of Muslim spirituality, still one of the most popular Islamic books today.^{xxix}

- Ibn Zuhr, known as Avenzoar (1091-1161), was a physician, surgeon, and poet who emphasized the rational, empiric basis of medicine, his major work concerned with 'Therapeutics and Diet.'
- Omar Al Khayyaam (1048-1131) was a mathematician, astronomer, and poet, known for both his scientific achievements and his Rubaa'iyat/ quatrains.
- Ibn Rushd, or Averroes (1126-1198 CE), was 'the father of rationalism,' a philosopher who authored more than 100 books and treatises, commented on Aristotle and Plato's works, and wrote a rebuttal to Al Ghazali's book called 'tahaafut al Tahaafut/ The Incoherence of the Incoherence.' He also was the first physician to describe the signs and symptoms of Parkinson's disease, his medical book (Al-Kulliyat fi al-Tibb) known as 'Kulliyat,' translated into Latin as the 'Colliget,' came to be taught in Europe for many centuries.
- Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (1201-1274 CE), philosopher, astronomer, and mathematician, who gave the world important works on philosophy and ethics. It was he who established trigonometry as a mathematical discipline after it had only been an astronomical tool. What is now known as the 'Tusi couple,' the solution for the latitudinal motion of inferior planets, appeared in his 1247 in 'Tahrir al-Majisti/ تحرير المجسطي / Commentary on the Almagest.'^{xxx} In his major astronomical treatise, al-Tathkira fi'ilm al-hay'a/ التذكرة في علم الهيئة / Memoir on astronomy,' he employed a theorem he had invented which appeared 250 years later in the work of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543).^{xxxi}

"Al-Tusi's influence, especially in eastern Islam, was immense. Probably, if we take all fields into account, he was more responsible for the revival of the Islamic

sciences than any other individual. His bringing together so many competent scholars and scientists at Maragheh resulted not only in the revival of mathematics and astronomy but also in the renewal of Islamic philosophy and even theology."^{xxxii}

- Ibn Al Shatir (1304-1375 CE), astronomer, mathematician and engineer who worked as a Muwaqqit/ timekeeper of the call to prayer/ (مُوقِّت) at the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus. The sundial he constructed in 1371 for its minaret is still there. Ibn Al Shatir's work marked a turning point in astronomy; his concern, unlike other astronomers, was with producing a model that would be more consistent with empirical observations and contemporary theory than with theoretical principles of natural philosophy.
- Ibn Khaldoon (1332-1406 CE) philosopher, social scientist and historian, and the developer of one of the earliest philosophies of history. He is considered a forerunner in modern historiography, sociology, demography and economics, best known for his famous 'Al Muqaddimah/Prolegomena/the Introduction' (1377 CE) in which he spoke of how civilizations rise and then start sowing within themselves the seeds of their own downfall. It was he who first introduced the concept known now as 'the Laffer curve,' which states that tax increase only causes a decrease in tax-revenue in the long run. What many might not know is that he also spoke about creation starting from minerals and evolving in time into multitudinous species of plants and animals in a continuing process until humankind appeared. Almost 500 years later, when Charles Darwin (1809–1882) published his theory, European scientists were adamant against it, having recognized a similarity to what they called the '*Mohammedan theory of the evolution of man from lower forms.*' There are, of course, huge differences between Muslim thought and Darwinian theory. The most important

difference is that Muslims believe that -although Humans had been brought out of the earth- it is the Divine 'RooH/Spirit' of God quickened in us -with the intellect and accountability that accompanies it- which gives the Cognizant Human/Al Insaan higher status above other creatures.

It is during this period of 'Arab-Islamic' prominence that much Arabic terminology became firmly entrenched in European languages, far surpassing what little is mentioned in the Etymology of European words.^{xxxiii} It is a known fact that by the time Europe rose from its slumber, Islamic universities had already witnessed the graduation of countless European scholars from their hallowed halls of learning. Having learnt the sciences in Arabic, they returned in the gowns and headdresses of their teachers to spread their knowledge within their communities.

Realizing how rich the 'Islamic Library' was at that time we feel saddened by what was lost.¹⁰ Despite the losses however, what has reached us is astounding, thanks to eminent scholars of different backgrounds who made every effort to study and preserve the knowledge for future generations.

That era of enlightenment is often called 'Arab-Islamic' because of the prominence of the Arabic language and the Muslim faith, but I would like to highlight the fact that it was during this period of enlightenment that Jewish philosophy developed, and it was from this period that the Christian Revival emanated.

Perhaps the greatest Christian philosopher to emerge was Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274 CE), 'Doctor of the Church,' who took from -and

¹⁰ It still is impressive, despite the loss of so much of its heritage. The House of Wisdom, from the 9th-13th century Baghdad, was home to 400,000 books, at a time when Europe's best-stocked libraries held a few dozen. It was destroyed by the Mongols in 1258 C.E., its books thrown into the Tigris river which ran black with ink.

criticized- the Muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd (1126-1198 CE). Influenced by Aristotle and Muslim philosophers, Aquinas' works were considered a central point of reference by the Catholic Church, earning him canonization.^{xxxiv} His masterwork, 'Summa Theologica,' was a compendium of all of the main theological teachings of the Catholic Church, and is considered the pinnacle of scholastic, medieval, and Christian philosophy. Thomas Aquinas' legacy also created a philosophical school called 'Thomism.'

Knowing what we now know, we are not surprised to find the Spanish philosopher, theologian, and missionary, Ramon Llull (1232-1316 CE) –also canonized by the Pope- penning his books in Arabic. His most famous books are '*Book on the Contemplation of God*/*كتاب التأمل في الله*' and the '*Book on the Shirker (of God) and the Three Sages*/*كتاب المشرك والحكماء الثلاثة*,' commonly known as "*Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men*,"^{xxxv} all written by him in Arabic.

Arabic was the lingua franca of the time, a fact sadly forgotten by many.

That is why -simply because they had Arabic names, and also spoke and wrote in Arabic- eminent Jewish philosophers were often mistaken by western historians to be Muslim, and thus ignored.

Here are a few giants with whose names we conclude our list:

- Saeed Ibn Yusuf Al Fayyumi (892-942 CE), known today as Saadia Gaon, was born in the Fayyoun district of Egypt. Saadia wrote in Arabic and his philosophy leaned towards Mu'tazali thought. His influence was greatest upon the Jews of Yemen.
- Abu Ayoub Suleyman Ibn YaHya Ibn Gabirol (1022-1070 CE), born in Andalusia, was a Jewish philosopher with important works written in Arabic on exegesis, philosophy, and ethics. He also was a poet with over a hundred poems. It was he who wrote the origin of the now famous Latin *Fons-Vitae*, the original believed to have been lost until Solomon

Munk discovered it in 1846, written in Arabic by Ibn Gabirol, titled *Yunboos al-Hayat* (ينبوع الحياة) the Source or Spring of Life.

- Bahya Ibn Yusuf Ibn Bakuda (1050-1120) who wrote the first Jewish treatise on ethics *Guide to the Duties of the Heart* in Arabic, originally titled *'Al Hidayah ila Faraidh al-Quloob*. In his introduction he said that neither the Talmudists nor the Jewish philosophers had been able to bring the ethical teachings of Judaism into a cohesive system. ^{xxxvi}

He leaned towards ascetics and contemplative mysticism, seeking what was then known as the methodology of the 'Brethren of Purity/ Ikhwaan al Safaa.' Another of his works, also in Arabic, was discovered in the French National Library titled *'The meanings of the Soul/Ma3aani al Nafs,'*

- Yehuda Ibn Samuel Al-Lawi (1075-1141 CE) was born in Andalusia but traveled to Egypt and then Jerusalem just before his death. He wrote all his works in Arabic, except for his poetry which he composed in Hebrew following the meters and of Arabic poetry.
- Musa Ibn Maymoon (1135 -1204 CE), better known as Maimonides wrote *The Guide for the Perplexed in Arabic (Dalaalat al-Haa'ireen)*, among many other works.

Dispelling Grief

It is heartening to see intellectuals studying the Qur'an and helping us appreciate its wisdom and beauty so that we might grow in motivation towards our Source, fulfilling our God-given potential in this life while looking forward to the next. As for Arabs, regardless of their faith, the Qur'an remains a source

of linguistic pride to them, the eloquence it preserves adding a unique depth to their identities.¹¹

Many people do not realize that anyone who claims to have studied the Arabic language through the ages, whether at scholarly gatherings, or in schools^{xxxvii} and colleges, *anyone with a proper claim to the knowledge of Arabic would have had to study the Qur'an, the highest literary form in the Arabic language.* During the 'Golden Age' of Islam, this would also have applied to each and every philosopher, scientist, thinker; in short, anyone who partook of knowledge from its source.

"Alas!" lamented Bishop Alvarus Paulus of Cordova:^{xxxviii} All talented young Christians read and study with enthusiasm the Arab books; they gather immense libraries at great expense; they despise the Christian literature as unworthy of attention. They have forgotten their language. For everyone who can write a letter in Latin to a friend, there are a thousand who can express themselves in Arabic with elegance...."^{xxxix}

But he need not have grieved. It was these young scholars who heralded a new era of Christian thought, as we now know.^{x1} It is a known fact in theological circles that the pearls of wisdom in Christian and Jewish thought derived inspiration from the literature of Islamic Arabia.¹²

¹¹ As Amin Maalouf said: *'The fact of simultaneously being Christian and having as my mother tongue Arabic, the holy language of Islam, is one of the basic paradoxes that have shaped my identity. Speaking Arabic creates bonds between me and all those who use it every day in their prayers, though most of them by far don't know it as well as I do.'* Malouf, (*On Identity,*' p.14.

Amin Malouf (1949-) is a prolific author of fiction and non-fiction, whose works have been translated into over 40 languages. Born and raised in Lebanon, he witnessed the onset of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), and sought refuge in France in 1976, where he has been living ever since. His books include titles such as *'Samarkand,' 'Leo the African, 'The Crusades Through Arab Eyes,' 'On Identity,' 'In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong.'*

¹² Islamic era studies about creation, had such influence, that a position taken by Thomas Aquinas was called the 'Media Via' meaning 'the middle way between Avicenna and Averroes.'

"The impact of Arabic philosophers such as al-Fārābī, Avicenna and Averroes on Western philosophy was particularly strong in natural philosophy, psychology and metaphysics, but also extended to logic and ethics" (D. N. Hasse, 2008).

To those of us who see humanity on a single plane, that interaction in itself is a source of pride: Humanity advancing as one unit, each generation of diverse people building upon their predecessors, the pearl of knowledge growing larger and more valuable as layer grows upon layer of luminous nacre.

It is such human interaction and acceptance¹³ that is sought by many today, a unique model for mutual livelihood, 'La Convivencia,' commonly translated with much less warmth as 'Coexistence.'

Bishop Alvarus' words can be repeated today by many of us in many parts of this world where, for everyone who can 'text' their friend in their mother-tongue there are a thousand who better express themselves in English. But perhaps there is no need for us to grieve seeing that our languages are not 'read with enthusiasm' by today's youth. Things change, as we have seen, and English happens to be this era's 'lingua franca,' the language of the sciences and human interaction.

Young people learn quickly, which is where we come in.

Rather than grieve, let us empower them with the self-confidence derived from their noble heritage so they might experience the life-changing power of the 'Arabi Qur'an.

Rather than grieve, let us overcome our shortsightedness and help them become the magnanimous persons they could be.

Rather than grieve, let us put the Qur'an's wisdom into practice, and by doing so, help bring peace as we change the world for the better.

إن شاء الله

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¹³ The Arabic word 'taqabbul'/acceptance is the word used when discussing relationships with others, unlike the word 'taHammul' which means tolerance. Tolerance/taHammul is related to the bearing of hardship, a word not used in Arabic to describe relationships except in the direst of personal circumstances and events.

ENDNOTES

¹ According to Saliba a major reason for modern historians of science to have missed the large amount of scientific production in Islamic world in the post-Ghazali period is the damage caused by the classical narrative. Most historians simply weren't looking for it because the classic narrative stipulated that science in Islam was dead after Ghazali. Even though some new discoveries have been made, there are still many scientific works waiting to be studied from that period. As an example of these omissions, Berggren, the author of *Episodes in the Mathematics of Medieval Islam*, says that he used this title for his book as opposed to *The History of Mathematics in Medieval Islam* simply because "*Such a book could not be written yet, for so much material remains unstudied that we do not know enough of the whole story*" (Berggren, 1986).

<https://fountainmagazine.com/2012/issue-87-may-june-2012/did-al-ghazali-kill-the-science-in-islam-may-june-2012#:~:text=Contrary%20to%20the%20classical%20narrative%2C%20scientific%20advancements%20in,achievements%20in%20the%20Islamic%20world%20well%20after%20Ghazali.>

ⁱ There is a rarely highlighted distinction between 'the 'Arabi tongue (which is the 'tongue/ lissaan' of the Qur'an) and 'Classical Arabic' (which is the 'language/ lughah' of the Arabs, which they call 'al Fuss-Haa').

-The word 'Arabi/عربي, from the root-verb 'araba/عَرَبَ, is about high eloquence and articulate self-expression. The 'Arabi tongue is epitomized by the 'Arabi Qur'an and is the standard to which Classical Arabic aspires even as it falls drastically short.

-Classical Arabic is the official written language of the Arabs. After Qur'anic revelation, it crossed the ages with the generations that spoke and wrote Arabic, its words developing according to people's regard or disregard as it became less correctly spoken with time. In writing however, until the advent of smartphones, great care was taken to write well. As the concepts of some words shifted away from their origins, new words were created -all with proper Arabic origins- to cater to the needs of the times. Classical Arabic did not stray very far from the Arabi tongue simply because the Qur'an has always been the direction of its compass.

ⁱⁱ Many in the west consider written Arabic to be of two categories: Classical Arabic, which is the language of the Qur'an and texts written close to that time frame, and 'Standard Modern Arabic,' which is a more recent rendition which abides by the grammatical rules of the language. As you saw above, that's not the terminology Arabs would use.

ⁱⁱⁱ 'Many,' not 'most,' because half this number are under the age of 25 who, even when educated, tend to write exactly as they speak, without following any rules.

Smartphones -with the abandonment of rules- helped simplify communication; many Arab youth now either put their colloquial spoken language into writing using Arabic script or use Latin letters to write words 'phonetically.'

^{iv} <http://www.islamicpopulation.com/>

"Today there are nearly 65 states or countries with significant or majority populations who are Muslim" (http://www.islamproject.org/education/Africa_Mideast_etc.html).

^v Called 'Tanween' in Arabic, where words have different diacritic marks added to them, often changing meaning and part of speech.

vi "The teaching of reading and writing faces the challenge of the dichotomy in the Arabic language between the spoken (colloquial) and the classical language. The latter seems today no longer the "language of conversation," it is rather the language of reading and writing, while the former is the language of cordial, spontaneous expression, emotions, feelings and everyday communication. Therefore, teaching illiterates reading and writing in classical Arabic faces the crisis of the growing neglect of the functional aspects of (Arabic) language use. On the other hand, another aspect of the crisis is the relation between the Arabic language and the transfer and absorption of technologies which necessitate the renewal of Arabic language by expanding its functional use in everyday life and the strengthening of its relationship with other languages to avoid the risk of being marginalized from new informational and technological developments." (Arab Human Development Report (AHDR), 2003, p.125-126).

vii Viewing below the intrinsic meaning of the 'rr' sound will give us a clue to where the 're' in 'redo' (rewrite, renew, etc.) originally came from. Its relationship to the origin of human sound is clear, despite the fact that English Etymology does not mention that, saying that 're' is dated c. 1200, from Old French and directly from Latin re- "again, back, anew, against." There is no mention of anything dating further back. Furthermore, knowing the original meaning of two other human sounds helps us understand the inherent cry of human babies voicing the two sounds, 'ma-ma.' Isn't it amazing to realize that babies are actually saying: "Gather me, come back to me, gather me, come back to me!"

Here are six sound meanings:

- When early humans put their lips together and made a sound, the sound which they held in '-mm'- denoted: *Gathering; coming together*. That is why, in Arabic, a place of 'gathering or bringing anything together' would generally be formed by adding the 'm' before the verb. Examples: NZL= to disembark/reside. DRS=to study. So a place of residence is MNZL, and a school is MDRS.
- When they pressed their upper teeth against their lower lips, and breathed out as they opened their mouths, the whooshing sound they made '-ff'- denoted: *Opening out*. That is why, in Arabic, things that 'open; go forth' would generally have the 'ff' as an initial sound, going forth (FTH=to open; FKR= to reflect; FSR= to explain).
- When they opened wide their mouths and made a sound, the sound which emerged '-aa'- reverberated. Unlike all other sounds, it echoed back at them, denoting: *Return, coming back*. That is why, in Arabic, 'return' would generally have the 'aa' sound (BAAB=a door, constantly returning to closure).
- When they put their tongue to the roof of their mouth, the -rrrrr- sound, unlike any other, would roll and repeat itself, denoting: *Repetition, something ongoing*.
- On the other hand, the deeper -gh-غ sound (like the French or German 'r'), was deep, hidden, denoting: *Obscurity*. That is why, in Arabic, most things 'obscure' would generally have the '-gh' sound (gham= gloom; ghafrah= oblivion; ghaim= clouds).
- When the deepest, glottal -Q- sound was made, it denoted the uttermost depth, the very core (Arabic (Q-R/ قعر ; heart= QLB).

Let us now put three of those sounds together, and see if we can understand the concept which early humans might have intended by the three-sound combination:

1. Deep, disappearing: GH
2. Repetitive, ongoing: R
3. Reaching base, core: Q

Many would be surprised to learn that the sounds denoting 'disappearance + ongoing + to the core' would indicate 'drowning' which corresponds to that exactly: *Drowning in Arabic is GH-R-Q= غرق*.

viii "هناك ظاهرة الأسماء العالمية المتداولة للأشخاص، والتي ليس لها أي معنى بأية لغة في العالم إلا في العربية القديمة. ومعظمها من أسماء عهود عقيدة الخصب السورية، مثل: جورج= المغري، الجذاب، المثير .. ومؤنثه " جورجيت" وجورجينا وهذه الصيغة في التأنيث تنفرد بها اللغة العربية

دون غيرها. إن تاء التأنيث العربية هي التي انتقلت إلى اليونان وإيطاليا وإسبانيا ثم إلى بقية الأصقاع الأخرى." (للمؤرخ أحمد داود، الصفحة 70، تاريخ سوريا الحضاري القديم- 1- المركز، 1997).

^{ix} For example, on page 70, Daoud shows us how the particularly distinctive Arabic 'T' of femininity/ تاء التأنيث is what, early on, imposed femininity on masculine names, such as George becoming Georgette. He says that 'George' is an 'Old Arabic' name, dating back in ancient Syrian history to the time when the God of Fertility was worshipped, and meant 'he who is handsome, attractive and exciting' (*The Ancient History of Syrian Civilization: 1-The Center, 1997*).

It is important here to note, that many Western studies on the Arabic language and the origins of other languages are considered biased by Arabs. My own efforts in explaining the Qur'anic terms in English, and the ensuing research, has shown that the studies on English Etymology are indeed lacking. Nevertheless, I leave this matter to specialists.

^x 'Beowulf' is an epic poem describing the adventures of a great Scandinavian warrior of the sixth century.

^{xi} The word 'milk' is one example of the Arabic language being the origin of many English and German words: The English word 'milk' and its German counterpart 'Milch' are from Germanic origin, where the end was pronounced with the emphatic sound 'kh/خ' (like 'Bach'). Western etymologists say that the word is from a hypothetical prehistoric root which they call 'Indo-European,' and they say the name refers to the movement of the hand during the milking of the animal:

"Proto-Indo-European root meaning "to rub off," also "to stroke; to milk," in reference to the hand motion involved in milking an animal."

But had etymologists sought the origin of 'milk' with sincerity -as well as the origins of thousands of other words - they would have identified its Arabic origin:

That is because the earlier Arabic name for 'milk' is 'malikh,' from the root-verb 'malakha.' This is what the lexicon of Lissaaan al-'Arab by Ibn Manthoor (1233-1312 CE) said more than seven hundred years ago:

"Malkh: Is about your taking hold of a muscle, squeezing and pulling it. They say: He forcefully pulled/imtalakha his hand out of the other's grip. And al-Malikh: Is (thick) milk that does not dribble from one's hand."

المَلْخ: قبضك على عضلة عضاً وجذباً؛ يقال: امتلخ يده من يد القابض عليه.
والمَلِيخ: اللبن الذي لا ينسل من اليد. انتهى.

The English 'milk' and the German 'Milch' therefore share the same Arabic origin. Western etymologists should not have searched farther than the Arabic and hypothesized at what might have been a prehistoric origin until they had completely exhausted the evidence in front of them!

^{xii} Especially Old High German and Old Dutch. The *hypothetical* common ancestor (proto-language) of all the Germanic languages (modern English, Dutch, German, Danish, Norwegian, Icelandic, and Swedish) is referred to as Proto-Germanic, or Common Germanic. It is 'hypothetical' because there is no surviving text; information has been reconstructed using the comparative method (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Germanic>). It would be interesting to know whether Arabic was ever included in such a comparison, seeing that Arabic was the lingua franca of academia at a time when European languages were still developing.

^{xiii} Mutual intelligibility: a relationship between languages in which speakers of different but related languages can readily understand each other without intentional study or extraordinary effort.

^{xiv} Devised by German craftsman Johannes Gutenberg.

^{xv} Dictionary of the History of Ideas: <http://etext.virginia.edu/cgi-local/DHI/dhi.cgi?id=dv2-72>

xvi Discovered in excavations at Fustat (old Cairo), archaeological context made it possible to date these manuscript texts to the 10th century.

xvii Geoffrey Roper <http://www.khnt.net/person-578-en.html>

xviii

The famous linguist and lexicographer Ibn Faris (deceased 395 AH/1004 CE) in his book 'Al-SaaHibi' quotes early scholars of the Arabic language unanimously agreeing on the tribe of Qureish having the purest Arabic in all Arabia. Whenever Qureishis were visited by Arab delegations, they would showcase their eloquence by choosing the most articulate words and the most powerful poetry, to the admiration of the other tribes. Furthermore, it is the Arabic of Qureish which was accent-free, whereas each of the other tribes had its particular accent.

يقول ابن فارس (المتوفى 395هـ/1004م) في كتابه 'الصاحبي' في فقه اللغة العربية ومسائلها وسنن العرب في كلامها' في باب القول في أفصح العرب عن إسماعيل بن أبي غنيد الله أنه قال: "أجمع علماءنا بكلام العرب، والرؤاة لأشعارهم، والعلماء بلغاتهم وأيامهم ومحالهم أن فريشا أفصح العرب السنة وأصنافهم لغة...". إلى قوله "وكانت قريش، مع فصاحتها وحسن لغاتها ورقة أسنتها، إذا أتتهم الوفود من العرب تخيروا من كلامهم وأشعارهم أحسن لغاتهم وأصفي كلامهم. فاجتمع ما تخيروا من تلك اللغات إلى نحانهم وسلاقتهم التي طبعوا عليها. فصاروا بذلك أفصح العرب. ألا ترى أنك لا تجد في كلامهم عننة تميم ولا عجرية قيس ولا كثكشة أسد ولا كنگسة زبيعة ولا الكسر الذي سمعه من أسد وقيس..". انتهى

xix Al Waleed Ibn Al Mugheerah

الوليد بن المغيرة الذي قال :
"إن له لحلاوة وإن عليه لطلاوة وإن أعلاه لمثمر وإن أسفله لمغدق وأنه يعلو وما يُعلو عليه".

xx As originally defined, the word 'Salaat' is about communion/relationships in general, and the word 'Zakaah' is about self-purifying generosity, but both have been narrowed down in common Islamic terminology, so the first came to be understood only as 'contact prayer,' and the second as a percentage of one's wealth to be given in alms. This restricted understanding, among others, has caused Muslims much loss, and not just in relationships. It has led to a deficient explanation of Qur'an.

When the Qur'an blames (and warns) people who are actively engaging in 'Salaat,' yet at the same time are apart from, and totally oblivious to *their own* 'Salaat,' it speaks of the general communion/relationships which people maintain, often for show or convenience, while ignoring relationships of their own, which are often dutiful. Yet this beautiful meaning is lost on most, who think these verses are about keeping one's mind from drifting away during contact prayer! Also, notice here that 'deen' does not mean 'religion,' as it is commonly translated. 'Deen' is related to 'accountability,' not to 'faith.'

'Did you see him who belies in the Accountability/Deen?

For that is the one who pushes/thrusts away the orphan.

And does not urge the feeding of the helpless indigent.

Therefore, 'Wailing/ Woe' to the MuSalleen/ Those who are maintaining Relationship/ Salaat.

Those who are themselves oblivious of their own Relationship/ Salaat.

Those who are themselves showing off and obstructing the Relief (process).'

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالذِّينِ (١) فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدْعُ الْبَيْتِمْ (٢) وَلَا يَحْضُ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمُسْكِينِ (٣) قَوْلًا لِلْمُصَلِّينِ (٤) الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ (٥) الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاعُونَ (٦) وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ (٧)

xxi The lexicon also indicates that 'rijaal' is not simply about 'men' or 'women,' but rather about *active* men/*active* women; persons 'in stride/on foot/رجل' independent of a mount. See Q.2:239 where the word 'rijaal' is opposed to 'rukbaan/riders' and Q.22:27 where 'rijaal' is opposed to those carried 'upon every lean mount/camel.' # رجال ركبان/على كل ضامر

xxii A vivid example is Q.96:2, which speaks specifically of the Cognizant Human being created out of a 'clinging connection/alaq.' We have early records of Muslims explaining 'alaq' as a 'blood-clot' because that is what they saw in aborted fetuses. When microscopes were invented, the explanation would be that humans were created from a leech-like form (because a 'alaqa' is the word which pertains to a clinging leech, and the resemblance under the

microscope is uncanny). Later, with the invention of laparoscopes, the explanation was that it is about the fetus clinging by a cord to the womb, just like a chandelier hung by its cord (chandelier is 'allaaqa' in Arabic). Most recently, the explanation of 'alaq' would be posited to be about the clinging strands of DNA.

But this verse, if read carefully, would be found to be specific to Cognizant Humans, and no other creature!

While everything changes and grows, and all creatures 'learn' by demarcation and distinction/qalam, none but the Cognizant Human is said to have been created out of 'alaq.' None but the Cognizant Human self was created from God's 'RooH.' None but the fulfilled, tranquil and serene Cognizant Self returns to its source, its Creator. Hence, the 'alaq' here understood as the unique *clinging relationship of our Cognizance, to the Creator Himself*, something which no other creature has. This raises the status and importance of human awareness to unimaginable heights! This also offers a vivid example of the eloquence of the Arabi tongue (the eloquent 'language' of the Qur'an which superseded even the inimitable eloquence of the Qureishi Arabs) and of how different generations would understand the Qur'an:

Their *understanding* of a word might evolve through the ages, but its original definition -if adhered to- would keep their understanding within linguistically sound parameters. Another, stricter parameter, is Qur'anic context, but since it would require cross-referencing, not many will be up to it. People will always understand as per their degree of knowledge, their compliance to their peers, and their susceptibility to preconception and bias.

^{xxiii} Here are two examples where Arabic was not mentioned in the etymology of English words despite both the meaning and the sound being near identical:

The first is the English word 'cover,' which translates literally into the Arabic 'kufir' and sounds very similar.

-In English etymology we read that 'cover' is from Latin cooperire, to cover over, overwhelm, bury.... to put something over (something else). Now listen to the Arabic:

-In the 10th century Arabic lexicon we read that 'kufir' is about concealing and covering, a 'mukaffir' is one whose weapons cover him, and a farmer is a 'kaafir' because he sows the seeds by covering them with soil. The Qur'an mentions 'kuffaar/farmers' in (Q.57:20).

" يدلُّ على معنى واحد، وهو السُّنَرُ والتَّغْطِيَةُ. يقال لمن غَطَّى درعه بثوبٍ: قد كَفَّرَ درعه. والمُكْفِّرُ: الرَّجُلُ المَتَّعِطِي بِسِلاحه.. ويقال للزَّارِعِ كافرٍ، لأنَّهُ يُغْطِي الحَبَّ بِثَرابِ الأَرْضِ. قال اللهُ تعالى: {أَعْجَبَ الكُفَّارُ نَبَاتَهُ} [الحديد 20] "

The second is the English word 'column' which translates literally into the Arabic 'qalam,' and also sounds very similar. With diacritics it becomes qalamun, qalamin, qalaman, giving us the 'n' sound.

-In English etymology we read that 'column' is from Latin 'columna,' meaning pillar, collateral form of *columen* .. and top, summit, from Proto-Indo-European root kel- "to be prominent; hill." Now listen to the Arabic:

-In the 10th century Arabic lexicon we read that 'qalam' is about shaping something when filing or fixing it. From that comes the sentence, "I filed/qallamtu my nails and shaped them." Also, a pen is called 'qalam' because it is trimmed and filed, similar to the shaft of an arrow.

يدلُّ على تسويةِ شيءٍ عند بَرِّيه وإصلاحه. من ذلك: قَلَمْتُ الظَّفْرَ وَقَلَمْتَهُ. .. ومن هذا الباب سَمِّي القَلَمُ قَلَمًا، قالوا: سَمِّي به لأنَّهُ يُقَلَّمُ منه كما يُقَلَّمُ من الظَّفْرِ، ثُمَّ شَبَّه القِدْحُ به فُقِيلَ: قَلَمٌ. ويمكن أن يكون القِدْحُ سَمِّي قَلَمًا لما ذَكَرناه من تسويته وبَرِّيه.."

^{xxiv} In my translation of an Arabic translation of his French text.

^{xxv} Europe -outside the Iberian Peninsula- was in darkness at the time when Iberia was seeing its brightest and most productive era, especially in Andalusia.

^{xxvi} Which is in a way tragic seeing how little we have achieved since.

^{xxvii} <http://www.medievalarchives.com/2010/11/22/1001-inventions-uncovers-a-thousand-years-of-science-and-technology/>

^{xxviii} <http://ibrahimsa99.blogspot.com/2012/03/1001-inventions-and-library-of-secrets.html>

^{xxix} Something must be mentioned here. It is the view of most orientalists -and many Muslims- that Al Ghazali's work delivered a blow to scientific thought, due to which there was a sharp decline among Muslims in interest and scientific advancement. That assumption follows the European paradigm of 'conflict between religion and science' which, as we have seen, does not relate to Muslim polymaths, many of whom were religious authorities as well as scientists. Muslims have always studied and respected the laws of nature -and indeed all creation- as the manifested Signs/Ayaat of The Creator. Furthermore, had that been the case, there would not have been much scientific advancement after Al Ghazali. The decline in scientific advancement that took place later has multiple reasons, but that is another story. After Al Ghazali, there was no scarcity of polymaths, and the advancement of sciences continued, as we shall see.

^{xxx} The 'Almagest' of Claudius Ptolemy (c. AD 100 – c. 170). Famous as the 'Almagest' (from the Arabic 'al majesti/المجسطي') its original name in Ancient Greek was 'Mathēmatikē Syntaxis.'

^{xxxi} Copernicus' book on the heliocentric theory, titled '*De Revolutionibus/ On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*'.

^{xxxii} *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (New York 1970-1990).

^{xxxiii} Most of the material recorded in European etymology as having an Arabic origin relates to the thousands of words that entered or influenced the Spanish language during the Islamic rule (92-897 AH / 711-1492 CE). European etymologists should begin to consider Arabic as the likely origin of many 'Proto Indo-European rooted' words.

^{xxxiv} Canonization, or being canonized, is when the Pope officially infers sainthood upon someone deceased, making them known hereafter as Saint.

^{xxxv} This book is a dialogue in which the Shirker (Denier of God) argues with people -a Jew, a Christian and a Muslim- who are all convinced of their faith, without any of them changing their opinion. The Church considers Ramon Lull the first Christian missionary to the Arabs. His missionary endeavor took him to Tunisia and Algeria where his preaching was unwelcome. Interestingly, he had focused on God as seen by Muslims, 'not being a God of love' (this I unequivocally differ with, offering a rebuttal in my study of the Divine Attribute 'Al- Wadood,' which is much more than mere love). Lull's book on the art of evangelization (*Ars Magna/The Great Art*) became famous, and today a university is established in Barcelona in his name.

^{xxxvi} "The Guide to the Duties of the Heart was intended to be, and became, a popular book among the Jews throughout the world, and parts of it were recited in prayer services during the High Holidays."
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/bahya-ibn-pakudah/>

^{xxxvii} The word 'school' in Arabic is 'madrassa.' This name was misused by some in the West, who attached to the word (and to schools in Muslim communities) the connotation of being a 'breeding ground for fundamentalists and terrorists.' As consumers, we should all become more aware of what we are being fed.

^{xxxviii} Deceased 861 C.E.

^{xxxix} Southern, R.W., *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*, Harvard University Press, 1962, (p.21)

^{xl} From '*Christian Philosophy*:'

"There has been considerable interaction between Christian philosophy, Jewish philosophy and Islamic philosophy. Many Christian philosophers are well read in the works of their Jewish and Islamic counterparts, and arguments developed in one faith often make their way into the arguments of another faith."
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_philosophy)