VI. Modern Science and its "Islamic" Foundations

The preceding chapters have discussed Khan's changing approach to tackling the critique of Islam by missionaries and orientalists as well as a general encounter with science and its claim of a perennial conflict with religion. Khan develops a complex theoretical framework which allows him to resolve this conflict thesis by harmonising Islam in a rationalised fashion with science. On this basis, *dīn* is reified with Islam being its paradigmatic point of reference. Khan thus re-signifies the category of religion on the basis of Islam, while science is integrated as a mere subcategory. His approach rests upon seizing the concept of religion from European critique and reshaping it as *dīn* on the basis of a reinterpreted Islam. Science, however, has also been treated as a firm point of reference in the dichotomy of science and religion. In this chapter, I will discuss Shibli Nomani's approach to resolving this encounter from another angle: instead of bluntly reformulating Islam. Science becomes the contested category while Islam is presented as an untouchable point of reference.

1. Shibli Nomani's Encounter with Science

In his early career, Shibli (1857-1914) was a close fellow of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and a professor of Arabic and Persian at Khan's Aligarh Muslim University. However, after Khan's death in 1898, Shibli left Aligarh and finally became the principle of the Nadvat al-ʿUlamā in Lucknow in 1908. Like the Aligarh Muslim University, Nadvat al-ʿUlamā was founded as an institution to educate Muslims. Nevertheless, Nadvat al-ʿUlamā took up a rather critical stance towards the Aligarh Muslim University and Khan, both of which were blamed for a "westernised" orientation. Although Shibli's writing shows some critique of Khan, it still cannot be denied that Shibli was significantly influenced and inspired by Khan's reformist ideas. To a great extent, their ideas can be described as mutually compatible. Shibli's approach was therefore fundamentally shaped by Khan's work.

Shibli is mostly known for his historical and literary studies. His four-volume study of Persian poetry, *Šiʿr al-ʿajam* (1908-18), earned him much fame. His interest in history and critical historiography is reflected in several historical studies on eminent personalities within Muslim history – including his voluminous biography of Muhammad, *Sīrat an-nabī*, completed after his death by his pupil, Sulaiman Nadvi (1884-1953).

Nevertheless, his project of reviving *ʿilm al-kalām* is often overlooked in view of his historical and literary studies. Concisely summarised, *ʿilm al-kalām* is an Islamic theological tradition that developed in the course of its confrontation with Greek philosophy, which was very prominent in the newly conquered regions of early Muslim reign. This theological school is characterised by the adoption of the structure of argumentation found in philosophy: roughly generalised, *ʿilm al-kalām* takes the Quran as its touchstone, being substantiated only by philosophical arguments, while the philosophical tradition, which was also continued by Muslim philosophers, based its arguments first and foremost on authorities of Greek philosophy.[1] Shibli's project of reviving this tradition consists of two volumes: in his *ʿIlm al-Kalām* (1903?), he presents a treatise of eminent Muslim philosophers and their philosophies. It should be noted that, strikingly, Shibli does not apply the above described distinction of *ʿilm al-kalām* as a discipline separate from philosophy. Both are rather treated as a single unity, which becomes obvious from his discussion of philosophers such as Ibn Sina or Ibn Rushd, the latter of whom explicitly and vehemently distinguished himself from *ʿilm al-kalām*.[2] This noticeable equation will be discussed later in detail. In contrast to the merely historical outlook of Shibli's first volume, his second volume, *Al-Kalām* (1903), rather aims at appropriating *ʿilm al-kalām* to the modern South Asian confrontation with science – a situation reminiscent of early Muslims' encounter with Greek philosophy, as Shibli argues.

Shibli, like Khan, was confronted with the challenge of science positioning itself as an antagonist of religion. As has been discussed earlier, science emerged only at the turn of the 19th century as a distinct discipline. Comparable investigations of nature had hitherto been designated as natural philosophy or natural history. These disciplines viewed nature as a source of the divine, as God's "book" – equivalent to revelation. Natural philosophy and natural history were pursued with religious motives and received their legitimacy through their usefulness for religious issues.[3] The assertion of natural laws which govern nature, however, led to a steady disjunction of natural philosophy and religion, as any event came to be

1 *EI*: "ʿIlm al-Kalām."
2 *EI*: "Ibn Rushd."
3 Harrison: "'Science' and 'Religion': Constructing the Boundaries," 84-86.

perceived as caused either directly by God or by natural laws, finally resulting in the emergence of science as a discipline independent of the need for legitimation through religious doctrine.[4] While natural philosophy was still dependent on legitimation through religion, scientists positioned themselves as the antagonists of religion. They accused religion of irrationality. The thesis of a perennial conflict between science and religion was therefore established.[5] The legitimating point of reference was reversed and religion had to position itself as distinct from science: Religion was what science was not.[6] It received an inward understanding of belief in contrast to questions of the sphere of science.[7]

1.1 Universalising Religion

When science gained increasing importance in North India in the mid-19th century, roughly two approaches could be distinguished: scholars either disclaimed science as a whole or presented their particular religious tradition as compatible with science. With the example of Khan, I have discussed a representative of the latter approach. He interpreted Islam as a religion which was entirely in concordance with nature and science. His argument is largely based on a terminological reformulation. He gives the Quranic term *fiṭra* (nature) an extension in meaning as the Work of God. On this basis, Khan argues that natural laws are encompassed within Islamic beliefs and concludes that Islam does not contradict science. He denies a conflict between the Work of God and His Word. Both are His creation. As has been discussed, Khan introduces *dīn* as a supra-category with its two subcategories being particular religions (*maẕhab*) and science. Science is this subordinated to an abstract category of religion (*dīn*). This horizontal distinction of religion and science being covered by the umbrella category of *dīn* permits Khan to reject the thesis of conflict.[8] With the example of Shibli, I will discuss a related approach, arguing, however, from a different angle. Instead of addressing the thesis of conflict from the angle of religion, Shibli aims a to transform the Muslim conception of science.

In his *al-Kalām*, Shibli refers to the very same Quranic verse by which Khan legitimises his entire terminology. Shibli, however, presents a rather conventional interpretation of this verse:

4 Harrison: *The Territories of Science and Religion*, 79f.
5 Ibid., 171f.
6 Ibid., 169f., 187.
7 Bergunder: "'Religion' and 'Science'", 98.
8 Cf. Chatper V.

> Turn your face only to *dīn*. This is God's *fiṭrat* [nature] according to which He created man. There is no change in God's creation. This is the true *dīn*. But most people do not know.[9]

In comparison to Khan's interpretation,[10] one first of all notices the different translations of *fiṭra*. While Khan equalises *fiṭrat* and *necar* in order to charge *fiṭrat* with an extended meaning, Shibli leaves the Arabic *fiṭra* untouched and uses its Urdu-equivalent *fiṭrat*, merely designating the inner nature of man. Consequently, Shibli does not retain Khan's two-layered terminology with *dīn* as the supra-category. *Dīn* is rather perceived as synonymous with *maẕhab*.

Shibli therefore quotes this verse with a rather different intent: he argues for the naturalness and universality of religion. In the chapter "Religion is Part of the Human Nature" *(maẕhab insān kī fiṭrat meṉ dāḫil hai*), he argues that the human nature contains a specific power or faculty which produces a religious feeling in man:

> *[N]ūr-i īmān* [light of belief], consciousness [*kānšans*], *ḥāsah-i aḫlāqī* [faculty of perception of morals] […], this is the basis of religion [*maẕhab*]. This power/faculty [*quvvat*] is part of the human nature [*fiṭrat*].[11]

Shibli thus perceives religion as an inner feeling which guides and enables man to distinguish between right and wrong. It can be compared to consciousness, or *ḥāsah-i aḫlāqī* as he puts it in Urdu. This is an inborn faculty with which man is equipped and religion is viewed as a natural inclination in man. The idea of *nūr-i īmān* as a natural faculty in man is not Shibli's own invention, however, but can already be found in Khan's writings. The latter introduces this faculty as untrustworthy. For, in Khan's opinion, consciousness or *nūr-i īmān* is no inborn guide of an unchanging truth, but rather depends fundamentally on an individual upbringing:

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9 Shibli Nomani: *Al-Kalām: yaʿnī ʿilm-i kalām jadīd* (Dihlī: *Kutub Ḫānah-i Nazīrīyah*, s.a.), 18f. Arabic: *Faʾaqim wajhaka li-d-dīni ḥanīfan fiṭrata Allāhi allatī faṭara an-nāsa ʿalaihā lā tabdīla liḫalqi Allāhi ḏālika ad-dīnu al-qayyimu wa-lākinna akṯara an-nāsi lā yaʿlamūna.* (30:30).

10 Turn your face to the pure *dīn* which is the nature [*necar*] of God according to which He created man [lit. people], there is no change in God's creation. This is the stable/firm *dīn*, but most people do not know.

Urdu: *Sīdhā kar apnā muṉh ḫāliṣ dīn ke līye jo necar ḫudā ka hai jis par logoṉ ko banāya hai, ḫudā kī paidāʾiš meṉ kuch tabdīl nahiṉ hai. Yehī mustaḥkim dīn hai, va-lekin akṣar log nahīṉ jānte*; Khan: *Maqālāt*, Vol. XV, 147.

11 Nomani: *Al-Kalām*, 18.

> [T]his faculty is described by all authorities of the religions [*ahl-i maẕāhib*] as consciousness, i.e. *nūr-i īmān* and *nūr-i dharam*. But, in fact, it is not reliable and dependable. […] As much as praying to an idol is against a Muslim's *nūr-i īmān*, as much it is according to an idol-worshipper's *nūr-i dharam*. Hence, one thing can evoke two contradictory perceptions.[12]

Khan remarks that consciousness may be a natural faculty, but one without any inborn link to truth. Consciousness cannot guarantee a uniform distinction of right and wrong, as it merely reflects an individual's background and the resultant perception of right and wrong.

Shibli, however, does not refer to Khan's critique of consciousness as a religious guide. His interest is not founded on the establishment of consciousness as an ultimate, inborn faculty that distinguishes between truth and misbelief. Shibli only aims to prove that morals (*aḫlāq*) – in whatever variation they appear – are a natural human desire. Whether or not particular conceptions of morals are influenced by an individual's background and education – thus, not naturally given and, consequently, possibly misleading – is not of prime interest for Shibli. He only intends to present morals as a human predisposition which he recognises as the basis of religion.

In order to legitimise this idea of a natural faculty for religiosity, he quotes the aforementioned Quranic verse:

> Turn your face only to *dīn*. This is God's *fiṭrat* [nature] according to which He created man.[13]

As mentioned bove, Shibli treats the Quranic *dīn* synonymously with *maẕhab* in his subsequent discussion. In contrast to Khan, Shibli does not distinguish between *dīn* and *maẕhab*. This allows him to interpret the quoted verse as a proof for the universality and naturalness of religion (*dīn*/*maẕhab*): he argues that God has implanted a natural faculty for religiosity in man. In Khan's notion of a world order, however, *dīn* is not understood as being organised according to natural laws.[14] Khan's terminology acknowledges a distinction of the supra-category of *dīn* and its sub-category *maẕhab*, which allows him to reject the assertion of a perennial conflict between science and religion. Shibli, on the other hand, cannot refer to this vertical axis as a response to science. How, then, does Shibli counter the conflict thesis?

12 Khan: *Maqālāt*, Vol. XIII, 251.
13 Nomani: *Al-Kalām*, 18f.
14 Cf. Chapter V.

1.2 Ernest Renan

Shibli recognises science as a critical threat to Islam, and thus devotes a significant part of his reformist works to the reconciliation of Islam and science. Over and over again, he mentions the critique of Islam by Orientalists, while an exact identification of these authors is complicated by a lack of references. Ernest Renan (1823-1892), a French historian and scholar of religious studies is however one exception. He wrote influential studies on early Christianity as well as on Islam and its philosophical tradition. Best known in Europe for his *Vie de Jésus* (1863), wherein he aimed to present Jesus as a historical person, his fame in the Muslim world was based on his dissertation on *Averroès et l'averroïsme* (1852), which triggered a rediscovery of the philosophical works of Ibn Rushd (Averroes) in various parts of the Muslim world. Shibli also utilises Renan's *Averroès* as an important source for the biography and philosophy of Averroes.[15] No less influential was Renan's lecture on *L'Islamisme et la science* in 1883.

This lecture had immense repercussions in the Muslim world and caused several responses, most famously from Jamal ad-Din Afghani (1838-97). Despite significant similarities in his rationalistic reformist ideas, he was a strong critic of Khan. In her study, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn "al-Afghānī"*, Nikki Keddie that Afghani's disagreement with Khan was based less on their reformist ideas than their political motives. She writes: "His main role was rather to use Islam as an ideology – to strengthen its position as a focus of identity and solidarity against the attacks of the Christian West, and to use it as a rallying point for the repulsion of Western conquerors."[16] Thus Afghani's view vehemently conflicted with Khan's reconciliatory attitude towards the British, despite the fact that Khan fiercely rejected any charge of Muslim tendencies toward unrest.[17]

While Afghani's response to Renan was not printed in Arabic translation, the few who were able to read read French fervently criticised him for his overly affirmative stance. Keddie thus describes a division in the respective audience's response to his position. She states that while the "masses are moved only by reli-

15 Shibli Nomani: *Maqālāt-i Šiblī* (Lakhnaʾū: *Āsī Pres*, s.a.), Vol. I, 58; Shibli Nomani: *Maqālāt-i Šiblī* (Aʿẓamgaṛh: *Maʿārif*, 1938), Vol. V, 18.

16 Keddie: *An Islamic Response to Imperialism*, 97.

17 In contrast to Afghani's confrontational stance, Khan paid much attention to restoring the strained relationship between Muslims and the British in the aftermath of the 1857 upheaval, as Muslims were accused of being its main instigators, compelled to disobedience per creed – a charge Khan refutes time and again in his works, and most prominently in his *Asbāb-i baġāvat-i Hind*, as has been discussed in Chapter 2.

gious arguments, […] the more truthful rational and scientific arguments can appeal only to a small elite (and hence not be politically efficacious)."[18] Thus, Afghani affirms Renan's critical stance towards religion as an obstacle in the development of rational and scientific thinking. Yet, he acknowledges religion as a necessary step in an evolutionary progression towards rationalism, which will, however, eventually be abandoned eventually.[19]

Apart from Afghani, in her study on the "first debate on Islam" as she terms the controversy triggered by Renan's lecture, Birgit Schäbler mentions further critical responses from Namik Kemal (1840-88), a Turkish poet who was influential in Turkish nationalism, and Ataullah Bajazitov (1846-1911), a Russian Muslim intellectual. Beyond this, the controversy provoked at least one additional response: in the following discussion, I will present alongside Shibli another contributor to this debate who takes up a completely divergent position in comparison to Afghani. Nevertheless, I will first briefly present Renan's line of argument.

1.3 Construing a Conflict

In his lecture, Renan raises the question of whether there ever was a Muslim view of science:

> Was there really a Mohammedan science, or at least a science recognised by Islam, tolerated by Islam?[20]

Renan cannot entirely dismiss Muslim philosophy, however, and has to admit the existence of Muslim philosophers for 500 years during the period from the 8th to the 13th century. Yet, this statement, according to Renan, requires further historical examination. He argues that, during the first century of Islam, no instances of philosophy can be traced:

> There is nothing more alien to all that can be called philosophy or science, than the first century of Islam. The result of a religious warfare which lasted for several centuries, and held the conscience of Arabia in suspense between the different

18 Keddie: *An Islamic Response to Imperialism*, 89.

19 Ibid., 63, 86f.

20 Renan: "Islamism and Science," in *Readings in Orientalism*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (London: Routledge, 2000), 200f.

> forms of Semitic monotheism, Islam is a thousand leagues from all that can be called rationalism or science.[21]

Thus, Renan asserts that only after the succession of the Abbassid caliphs did philosophy begin to prosper in Muslim countries. He attributes this delay to the weak convictions of the Abbasids in Islam. In his view, they were rather nominal Muslims:

> All those brilliant caliphs, the contemporaries of our Carlovingian monarchs, Mansour, Haroun al-Raschid, Mamoun, can scarcely be called Mussulmans. Externally they practise the religion [i.e. Islam] […]; but in spirit they are elsewhere. They are curious to know all things, and chiefly things exotic and Pagan; they question India, ancient Persia, above all, Greece.[22]

Renan further states that Muslim philosophy was solely derivative, of Greek philosophy in particular. Thus, the designation of Arabic philosophy was entirely unjustified:

> Such is that great philosophical system which we are accustomed to call Arabic, because it is written in Arabic, but which is in reality Græco-Sassanian. It would be more precise to say Greek, for the really fruitful element of all this came from Greece. One's value, on those days of abasement, was proportionate to what one knew of ancient Greece. Greece was the one source of knowledge and of exact thought.[23]

Renan therefore argues that, excepting the language, nothing about Arabic philosophy can be described as Arabic. Yet, he furthermore dismisses its characterisation as Muslim philosophy, as well, for this philosophy is anything but a part of Islam. Philosophy is rather an inherent antagonist of Islam in Renan's view. He then argues that the single reason for tolerating philosophy was an initial weakness of Islam, whereas Islam *per se* and by definition rather excludes and contradicts philosophy:

> This science, then, is not Arabic. Is it at least Mohammedan? Has Islamism lent any tutelary aid to rational research? In no way. This splendid advance in learning was entirely the work of Parsees, of Christians, of Jews, or Harranians, of Ismaelians, of Mussulmans in internal revolt against their own religion.[24]

21 Ibid., 201.
22 Ibid., 202f.
23 Ibid., 204.
24 Ibid., 207.

And:

> Islam has been liberal in its day of weakness, and violent in its day of strength. Do not let us honour it then for what it has been unable to suppress. To do honour to Islam for the philosophy and science that it did not annihilate from the very first, is as though we were to do honour to the theologians for the discoveries of modern science. These discoveries are made in spite of the theologians.[25]

Eventually, Renan draws the conclusion that Islam and rationalism imply an antagonism and contradiction:

> But to the human reason Islamism has only been injurious.[26]

Renan's line of argument is thus characterised by two fundamental assertions: first, he assumes essential entities to be fixed to an "original" shape, while, secondly, on this basis, he argues that the conflict thesis of science and religion is a universal and perennial controversy in history.

Based on his assertion of antagonistic relations between Islam and philosophy, Renan construes the essence of Islam as being defined by its "original" appearance. Thus, by this definition, Islam becomes an invariable entity. Furthermore, because Renan deduces a complete absence of philosophy in Islam, he views Muslim contact with Greek philosophy since the 8th century as a clash of two self-contained systems which are mutually incompatible. With reference to the absence of philosophy in the "original" Islam of its first century, Renan designs Islam as a self-contained entity. He conceives of Islam as immutable and thus unable to adjust to varying circumstances. It remains insolubly tied to its "original" appearance. The limitation of the essence of Islam being tied to a particular time period allows Renan to present Islam as an unequivocally definable object. In other words, the very term "Islam" refers unequivocally to a unique referent. This referent can be characterised by a finite set of properties. An alteration of these properties would obstruct the unequivocal association of the signifying term and its signified referent. An alteration of the defining properties would therefore obstruct the relation of the signifier, Islam, and to the invariable essence found in its origin. This inextricable link to a particular appearance as the representation of Islam as a whole results in the assertion of immutability and its insoluble association with particular properties. On this basis, Renan defines Islam as having an inherent irrationality and an incompatibility with philosophy. He proposes a strict bifurcation

25 Ibid., 208f.
26 Ibid., 209.

asserting that Muslims do not have the ability to fully comprehend Greek philosophy. Thus, Muslims can merely imitate Greek philosophy at best:

> In default of the true and authentic Greek philosophy which was in the Byzantine libraries, it was incumbent to go to Spain, and seek there a Greek science translated badly and sophisticated.[27]

Thus, Renan likewise conceives of Greek philosophy as a self-contained entity, tied to a paradigmatic origin. Consequently, Muslim philosophy cannot be more than a mere derivative of the original. Muslim philosophy is then seen as inherently lacking, as Renan's paradigmatic point of reference is inextricably linked to the "original" Greek philosophy. Both Islam and Greek philosophy are therefore described as contradictory entities.[28]

This rhetorical framework of the "origin" serving as a paradigmatic point of reference has been described already with regard to Muir, who based his assertion of an immutable Islam on the Muslim creed of the Quran being God's word. While his critique was of a rather general outlook, Renan also focuses on the conflict between Islam and science. Renan's dichotomy, of Greek philosophy and Islam's lack of a true philosophical system, serves as a touchstone of a much broader claim: Renan deduces from this point the incompatibility of Islam with science and rationalism in general. His essentialist view denies Muslims any capacity for rational thinking.

Renan applies his terminology inconsistently, however: the title of his lecture already suggests a study of the relation of "Islamism and Science," while his study is based entirely on the relationship between Islam and Greek philosophy, and the question of a development of the latter by Muslims. He uses the terms rationalism, philosophy, and science interchangeably, thus suggesting their synonymy. The argued incompatibility of Islam and Greek philosophy is reified as an antagonism between Islam and any kind of rationalism. Renan's assertion of Muslims' inability to comprehend Greek philosophy is thus transferred onto rationalism in general and science in particular.

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27 Ibid., 205.

28 In a more recent publication, this view is formulated with even more sharpness: "In short, philosophical scepticism could not be genuine in Islam because philosophy itself – creative thought autonomously ranging everywhere and considering everything in the joy of perfect freedom – belonged to the Greek rather than to the Arab or Islamic genius" (Charles Malik: "Introduction," in *God and Man in Contemporary Islamic Thought: Proceedings*, ed. Charles Malik (Beirut: s.n., 1972), 15). Significantly, in the same breath, a revival of Greek philosophy in the Renaissance is mentioned. Hence, Greek philosophy seems to be argued as inherent only to the "European genius."

Renan universalises the conflict thesis of science and religion, projecting it onto Islam – as can be observed even more clearly in his *Averroès et l'averroïsme*. Standing outside of the area of specialisation which he became famous for in Europe, i.e. the history of the Old and New Testament, the closer investigation of his *Averroès* was neglected even by Renan specialists, and is often relegated to a mere side note.[29] Renan is described as an enthusiastic supporter of science, and in particular of human sciences and philology. Further, as a critic of any verbatim understanding of the Bible by religious authorities, he came "to have serious doubts about his faith – especially about the divinity of Jesus Christ."[30] In his article, "Ernest Renan and Averroism: The Story of a Misinterpretation," John Marenborn argues that Renan's fascination for Averroes was closely related to his biography:

> By one of those sudden turns of fortune which form the daily history of Mahomedan Courts, Ibn-Rushd lost, indeed, the good graces of Almansour who banished him to the town of Ellisana or Lucena, near Cordova.[31]

Renan also describes this unexpected disgrace of t the highly regarded Averroes, who had formerly held an influential position at court, as a triumph of religious orthodoxy over philosophy:

> [I]t is impossible to doubt, that philosophy was the real cause of the disgrace of Ibn-Rushd. It had made him powerful enemies who made his orthodoxy suspicious to Almansour.[32]

Renan therefore views Averroes' banishment as an instance of the perennial conflict of orthodoxy and religious fanaticism with the free-thinking of philosophy:

> The Arab-Spanish philosophy hardly counted two centuries of existence when it was suddenly arrested in its further evolution by religious fanaticism, political revolutions, and by foreign invasions.[33]

Marenborn argues here that Averroes' banishment was hitherto perceived merely as a matter of court intrigue while his philosophy served only as an excuse. Renan,

29 John Marenbon: "Ernest Renan and Averroism: The Story of a Misinterpretation," in *Renaissance Averroism and Its Aftermath: Arabic Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anna Akasoy and Guido Giglioni (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 273.

30 Ibid., 275.

31 Renan: *The Life and Writings of Averroes* (Secunderabad: Cheekoty Veerunnah & Sons, 1913), 13.

32 Ibid., 14.

33 Ibid., 2.

however, demonstrates this to be a conflict of "the 'religious party' over the 'philosophical party'."[34] This anecdote served him in construing a general oppression of philosophy by the orthodoxy of Islam. Averroes came to be perceived as "a champion of philosophy who contradicts religious orthodoxy and was persecuted for doing so."[35] But when Renan broadens his study beyond the limits of Averroes, and also includes his reception in Christianity wherein he equally identifies an oppression on behalf of religious orthodoxy, he comes to the conclusion of there being a universal conflict between philosophy and religion.

2. Shibli Countering Orientalist Critique

Shibli's works must be acknowledged alongside Renan's texts. In an article on Ibn Rushd, he quotes Renan's biography (titled as *Savāniḥ-i Ibn Rušd*) as a fully reliable source and describes his own text as being entirely based on Renan. While this reference does not allow any further specification regarding the language of reception or to what extent Shibli was acquainted with the book, his speech *Islāmī ʿulūm va funūn kī tārīḫ [va?] tartīb*[36] (The History and Order of Islamic Sciences), held in 1891, as well as his article, "Falsafah-i yūnān aur Islām" (Greek Philosophy and Islam), demonstrate his precise knowledge of Renan's *L'Islamisme et la science*.[37] Both, apparently triggered by this lecture, discuss the question of whether philosophy in Islam was a mere imitation of Greek philosophy. Renan's lecture is quoted in both texts and serves as a point of reference for his discussion. While

34 Marenbon: "Ernest Renan and Averroism," 276.

35 Ibid.

36 The title as given in print is *Islāmī ʿulūm va funūn kī tārīḫ tartīb*, which, however, seems to be an erratum perhaps for *... tārīḫ va tartīb* or *... tārīḫī tartīb*. In the original, the grammatical relation of *tārīḫ* and *tartīb* remains unclear.

37 According to David A. Lelyveld, the "British-Muslim friendship" between Shibli and T. W. Arnold (1864-1930), who taught at Aligarh from 1888 until 1898, was a mutually fruitful relation for both their scholarly activities. Arnold taught Shibli some French. Hence, Shibli might have known Renan's texts in their original: "In this historical work, Shibli was aided by T. W. Arnold, who came to Aligarh as philosophy professor in 1888. Arnold was a man of shy, scholarly temperament. At Aligarh he shifted his interest from Sanskrit to Arabic, and studied under Shibli. The two men developed a close working partnership – Arnold helped Shibli locate European sources, taught him some French, and acquainted him with the conventions of European scholarship. Shibli was Arnold's major guide to Arabic literature. This was the British-Muslim friendship of Sayyid Ahmad's dreams, and he helped both of them obtain books and manuscripts for their research" (Lelyveld: *Aligarh's First Generation*, 243).

Shibli's speech merely comes to the conclusion that this issue requires further investigation, his article elaborates further upon this topic from a historical perspective. He roughly distinguishes between a supportive and a rejective stance on the part of orientalists, while he has to admit that most of the former group lack any acknowledgment of primary languages. Their support is based merely on secondary sources (*taqlīdan*). With regard to the critics, however, Shibli finds their stance to be even more suspicious. He summarizes their point of view as a disregard of the philosophical tradition in Islam, without having any knowledge of Muslim philosophy:[38]

> Those people claim that Muslims did not do anything more than blindly imitate Aristotle [*Arisṭo kī kūrānah taqlīd*].[39]

Quoting Renan, Shibli recognises a position that generally rejects the conformity of Islam and philosophy. He acknowledges Renan's accusation of Islam's irrationality, and his exclusion of philosophy in general from its realm:

> Professor Renan gave a lecture wherein he stated that Islam and *ʿilm* [knowledge] cannot come together.[40]

And:

> Muslims are hundred miles away from anything which can be called rationalism/rational sciences [*ʿulūm-i ʿaqlīyah*].[41]

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38 Nomani: *Maqālāt-i Šiblī* (Aʿẓamgaṛh), Vol. VII, 1f. Interestingly, Shibli here applies a double standard to the work of Renan. We have seen that Shibli refers to the latter in his references to Ibn Rushd without any reservations, while the above described instance refuses him – along with all critics – any "knowledge of the peculiar works of Muslim philosophy" (Nomani: *Maqālāt-i Šiblī* (Aʿẓamgaṛh), Vol. VII, 1f.). Renan serves, on the one hand, as a profound source in authorising his argument, while, on the other hand, Shibli's critique is attributed to his ignorance. Having a similar approach to European sources, Harder notices with regard to Bankim a contradictory dealing with European sources, serving in one instance to provide legitimacy, but in another instance denied of any capability to comprehend Indian sources. Harder describes this as establishing a "hermeneutical border" (Harder: *Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's Śrīmadbhagabadgītā*, 228f.). Shibli does not deny Orientalists the capacity to understand the sources of Muslim philosophy, however, but he doubts their learning and acquaintance with Arabic.

39 Nomani: *Maqālāt-i Šiblī* (Aʿẓamgaṛh), Vol. VII, 1.

40 Ibid.

41 Shibli Nomani: *Ḫuṭbāt-i Šiblī* (Aʿẓamgaṛh: *Darul Musannefin Shibli Academy*, 1941), 10. The original print gives *ʿalāmah-i ʿaqlīyah*, which is in all likelihood an erratum for *ʿulūm-i* ….

Renan's lecture thus forms Shibli's point of reference for orientalist critique. This critique can essentially be summarised with the following two points: on the one hand, Islam is accused of being irrational, and thus of being incompatible with and contradictory to science. On the other hand, Muslims' participation in the philosophy based upon and evolved from Greek philosophy is denied. In fact, the Muslims' role in philosophy is reduced to being, at best, an imitation of Greek philosophy.

While his speech does not develop a response to this critique, Shibli continues his article, "Falsafah-i yūnān aur Islām," as a full series wherein he scrutinises the question of whether philosophy has been advanced by Muslims. The argument of the series is, however, presented in his *Al-Kalām* in more detail.

2.1 The Irrationality of Islam

In referencing his *Al-Kalām*, I will discuss how Shibli attempts to refute the charge of an incapacity for rationalism in Islam. In the chapter *ʿUlūm-i jadīdah aur maẕhab* (Modern Science and Religion), he compares ancient (*falsafah-i qadīmah*) and modern philosophy (*falsafah-i jadīdah*). Ancient philosophy, synonymously deployed with Greek philosophy, is recognised as a compound body of different disciplines: natural science (*ṭabiʿīyāt*), the knowledge of the primary elements (*ʿunṣurīyāt*), theology (*ilāhiyāt*), and metaphysics (*mā-baʿd aṭ-ṭabiʿīyāt*).[42] However, with the emergence of science and modern philosophy [*ʿulūm-i jadīdah aur falsafah-i jadīdah*], this body has been split up into two distinct spheres:

> In Greece, philosophy was a compendium [of different disciplines] […]. But Europe rightly has divided this body in two parts. Those matters which were perceived as exactly determinable by means of experience and observation [*tajribah aur mušāhadah*] were classified as matters of science.[43]

Shibli thus defines the realm of science through an observational approach, while the remaining matters – which cannot be decided on the basis of observation – do not apply to science and are therefore assigned to the sphere of philosophy. In its modern appearance, philosophy undergoes a significant restriction in its range of meaning, according to Shibli. While ancient philosophy was once a conglomerate of several sub-disciplines, modern philosophy is defined through its distinction from science. Shibli argues that modern philosophy therefore remains only the

42 Nomani: *al-Kalām*, 7.
43 Ibid.

counterpoint of science. Both are distinguished as separate spheres of knowledge. Science, however, applies to the sphere of exact knowledge which can be verified through experience and observation.[44]

Nevertheless, Shibli does not apply his terminology of a bifurcation between science and philosophy consistently. In a subsequent passage, modern philosophy rather comes to denote science.[45] When he compares ancient and modern philosophy, the former is criticised for its foundation on speculative knowledge (*qiyāsāt* [analogy] *aur ẓanniyāt* [opinion]), while the latter is distinguished by its observational approach: modern philosophy is thus deployed as a synonym of science. This synonymy is continued in the rest of his *Al-Kalām* as well as in subsequent texts.[46] Still, Shibli retains a bifurcation between modern philosophy/science vis-à-vis religion.

But what made Shibli establish modern philosophy as a synonym of science? In the following passage, I will discuss this move further with regard to Shibli's intent.

The claim for exact and certain knowledge (*qaṭ'ī aur yaqīnī*) in science was interpreted as a tremendous threat to religion:

> In the whole world, tumult has risen: 'Modern science [*ulum-i jadīdah*] and modern philosophy [*falsafah-i jadīdah*] trembled the foundations of religion [*maẓhab*].'[47]

The speculative knowledge of ancient philosophy therefore could no longer provide legitimacy for religion vis-à-vis the observational and exact knowledge of science. Like Khan, Shibli proposes a full compatibility of science and religion in arguing that they encompass entirely different areas of investigation:

> The truth is that the borders of religion and science are entirely distinct. The subject of science is divorced from religion and the subjects religion engages in are of no relevance for science.[48]

This distinction of religion and science is mentioned repeatedly in Shibli's works. He argues that religion only refers to the *aḫlāq* (morals) of people. Religion is also inherently internalised. This notion is again argued with the help of the Quranic verse quoted at the beginning:

44 Ibid.
45 Nayyar: *Urdū adab kī taškīl-i jadīd*, 346.
46 Nomani: *al-Kalām*, 7.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid., 11.

> Turn your face only to *dīn*. This is God's *fiṭrat* [nature] according to which He created man. There is no change in God's creation. This is the true *dīn*. But most people do not know.[49]

As has been shown, Shibli hereby aims to prove religion as a natural desire in man. Every man has been created with the inborn faculty of *nūr-i īmān* which Shibli recognises as the basis of religion. However, besides the faculty of *nūr-i īmān*, there is one more natural, inborn faculty in man: *ʿaql*. Both faculties enable man to face the difficulties of the world. If rationality enables man to substitute his physical weakness in comparison to animals, *nūr-i īmān* allows for the coexistence of man in society.[50] On this basis, Shibli asserts a natural distinction of two spheres represented by two inborn faculties: reason and religion. The approach and aim of both, however, are declared as distinct:

> In short, if it be scrutinised, it will usually be confirmed that Muslims never understood scientific investigations and inventions [*ʿilmī taḥqīqāt aur ījādāt*] as antagonistic to religion. Researchers rather stated clearly that the reasons of the cosmos [*asbāb-i kāʾināt*] or the matters of astronomy etc. do not touch the borders of prophetship [*nubūvat*] and prophets do not have any other task than the refinement of morals [*tahẕīb-i aḫlāq*].[51]

Shibli thus argues for the introduction of two distinct spheres of knowledge on the basis of a natural distinction between two separate faculties: *nūr-i īmān* and *ʿaql*. While the latter corresponds to the sphere of science, the former is described as the source of religion. Thus, the European dist distinction of each as separate disciplines and spheres is correct and natural. Even though Shibli seems to recognise this bifurcation as an innovation in comparison to ancient and perhaps Muslim philosophy, he acknowledges that it has been rightly propagated and must be adopted.

In contrast to this, however, Shibli does not accept the conflict of reason and religion in Islam. In fact, Islam does not only not engage in scientific matters, it is also the single religion which is in complete concordance with science, as Shibli proposes in a next step. The Quran itself argues on the basis of rational arguments. The tenets of Islam are herein not propagated to be merely accepted without understanding. Instead, they are presented in a comprehensible and verifiable way.

49 Ibid., 18f.
50 Ibid., 16ff.
51 Ibid., 14.

Although, now, Shibli argues, virtually every religion is presented as being in conformity with reason and science, only Islam has integrated this mode of argumentation inherently in its scripture:[52]

> Thus, be it the "essence" of religion [nafs-i maẕhab], be it Islam in particular, or be it any particular creed of Islam: whatever was propagated, was immediately proved with an evidence, while there is not even a single instance that one is supposed to believe in a creed without a proof.[53]

In Islam, Shibli asserts, belief is therefore always tied to evidence.

Regarding the most crucial question – the existence of God – Shibli argues for His natural acknowledgment. He presents a concise summary of the different philosophical stances in Muslim philosophy and focuses on the mutually shared assumptions. The world is perceived as ordered by chains of *ʿillat* (cause) and *maʿlūl* (caused, effect). Every occurrence is caused by a preceding cause. However, all of these chains inevitably require an initial point of departure, or in other words a final reason of reasons, which is identified with God. This general assertion is shared by all of the philosophers of Islam, such as Ibn Rushd or Ibn Sina – differing, however, in the details: they either disagree on the antecedence of the world, i.e. matter, or God.[54]

Shibli does not favour any of the mentioned philosophers, but rather suspends judgement. Instead, he reduces the complexity of the subject and focuses on their agreement on the existence and singularity of God. His personal approach rather addresses contemporary atheist critique:

> Their [atheists'] whole discussion can be reduced to the proposition: 'There is no proof for the existence of God', 'except matter, nothing exists in the world', 'the order of the world can remain without accepting God's existence'. Obviously, this is no line of argument but rather an admittance of a lack of knowledge.[55]

Deliberately, Shibli does not disprove this claim with philosophical arguments. For, in his opinion, contemporary atheist critique has rather weak arguments in comparison to former atheist critique. In order to not unnecessarily complicate the debate and reawaken buried quarrels regarding matters of philosophy, Shibli attempts to keep the argument as simple as possible. Thus, he shortens the philosophical discussions to their points of agreement and proposes the necessity of an ordering power of the world as sufficient proof for God's existence:

52 Ibid., 27-29.
53 Ibid., 29.
54 Ibid., 30-33.
55 Ibid., 40.

> [H]undreds, thousands of laws of nature [*qavānīn-i qudrat*] exist, but if only one of them deviates from the order, the whole order of the world will be subverted. This proves that there must be one arranging higher power which created the harmony, relation and unity between all the laws of nature. Materialists may state that matter came into existence by its own and by movement [of the matter] they were mixed, in the end, gradually resulting in the formation of many laws of nature. But they cannot give any reason for the harmony, relation and unity of the laws of nature. Harmony and unity is no inherent property of the laws of nature. […] This higher power which controls all the laws of nature and which created the harmony and unity between them is God.[56]

Thus, Shibli reduces the philosophical subtleties to the main points upon which all of the different philosophers in Islam agree.[57] This is, first, the existence of laws in nature which arrange the world and, secondly, a higher power as creator and organiser of these laws. This allows Shibli, like Khan before him, to acknowledge a sphere of science which engages in questions concerning the material world while, on the other hand, including God as a higher power which, however, does not contradict science but rather is the maintainer of its subject. In this way, any contradiction between science and religion is eliminated and both are separated into distinct spheres. Religion engages only in moral questions, whereas science only investigates questions of the material world. Thus, the issue of God's existence – as a power superior to the visible, material world – is not included in the realm of science. The acknowledgement of His existence is rather viewed as a natural insight.

2.2 Religion – Narrowed and Internalised

Shibli counters the charge of an inherent irrationality in Islam by reversing the argument and claiming that, instead, Islam is the single religion which is in complete accord with science. It is the single religion which claims to be verifiable by reason.[58] Shibli thus reverses orientalist critique and developing a counter-repre-

56 Ibid., 55f.

57 Another reason for this reluctance to expand on philosophical discussion is that the philosophical proof of God's existence can only maintain an impersonal Reason of reasons, yet no personal godhead. Cf. Ibid., 34.

58 As has been indicated already, Shibli confesses that there is a general tendency in his time to prove religions on the basis of their conformity with science. Yet, he emphasises

sentation of Islam. This reversal, however, inevitably implies an acknowledgement of several crucial presumptions of the critics' conceptions of religion. Shibli therefore admits an attenuated notion of *maẕhab* in comparison to the former realm of Islam, and present religion as fundamentally dependant on its separation from science. The confrontation with science apparently results in a restriction in meaning. In other words, the acknowledgement of science as a separate sphere reduces religion merely to the remaining matters not claimed by science – in particular, morals. Shibli himself describes this process as reductive. In a speech held in 1895, he criticised the *ʿulamāʾ* for narrowing their own responsibilities merely to the observance of ritual practices, and asked them to again take up more responsibility:

> The present situation of the *ʿulamāʾ* […] makes one believe that their remaining relation to the nation is only on a religious [*maẕhabī*] basis, i.e. that they only teach the way of prayer and fasting etc.[59]

Shibli clarifies here that, in former times, the *ʿulamāʾ* had had much more influence. But this situation is only a result of the British seizure of power:

> Now, since the government has changed and mundane matters have become the responsibility of the [British] government, we have to see what relation between the nation and the *ʿulamāʾ* still remains.[60]

Thus, in Shibli's view, this restricted influence of the *ʿulamāʾ* is rather a consequence of the British taking up several mundane matters. Consequently, even Shibli applies a very restricted notion of *maẕhab* – apparently referring only to ritual practices. However, since he recognises a restriction in the rights and influence of the *ʿulamāʾ* as the representatives of Islam, it seems to be reasonable that the realm of Islam and the *ʿulamāʾ* was formerly understood in a broader sense before the emergence of science and their loss of power to the British.[61]

Consequently, *maẕhab* appears to comprise a quite restricted realm when compared to former conceptions of Islam. On the one hand, *maẕhab* undergoes an internalisation and becomes a counterpoint to science. On the other hand, juridical matters had to be relinquished to the colonial power. Shibli utilises this restriction

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that these attempts are mere retro-active projections, while only Islam essentially inhered a rational line of argument in its scripture. Cf. Ibid., 29.

59 Shibli Nomani: *Rasāʾil-i Šiblī* (Amritsar: *Aḫbār-i Wakīl*, s.a.), 114.

60 Ibid., 114.

61 Reminiscent processes of narrowing could also be observed, for example, in Hali's *Musaddas*, arguing that governance is not an essential part of Islam and that its abolition would not violate the essence of Islam. Cf. Chapter 4, Shackle: *Hali's Musaddas*, 145.

to revert the orientalist critique of an incapacity for rationalism in Islam by dismissing any matter exceeding the sphere of morals from the realm of *maẕhab*. Moreover, religion and the acknowledgement of God's existence are naturalised and thus exceed the realm of science.

2.3 Criticising Essences

Having refuted the assertion of the inherent incapacity for rationalism in Islam, Shibli takes up the second critique that Muslim philosophy is, in fact, not Muslim, but solely an imitation of Greek philosophy without any innovation or advancement. As discussed above, this entire critique presumes an authenticity of Greek philosophy colliding with Islam. Greek philosophy is thus presented as a "Western" or European property which Muslims are genuinely incapable of permeating:

> There is nothing more alien to all that can be called philosophy or science, than the first century of Islam. […] Islam is a thousand leagues from all that can be called rationalism or science.[62]

As discussed, Renan assumes an immutable essence of Islam deprived of any ability for philosophical interpretation. He thus establishes a deep-rooted antagonism between Islam and reason in any form.

Shibli, however, argues against this assertion by stating the reverse: that, in fact, Muslim philosophy prepared the ground for modern sciences. The latter is, in his opinion, by no means a radical change, but rather a continuation of Muslim philosophy. In his aforementioned series of articles on Islam and philosophy, he discusses the importance of Muslim philosophy and doubts the assertion that science is a self-contained discipline without any predecessor:

> This article will make clear that Muslims brought ancient philosophy [*falsafah-i qadīm*] close to contemporary philosophy [*falsafah-i ḥāl*]. It is obvious that Greek philosophy and contemporary philosophy are in a relation to each other like the distance of east and west [i.e. the distance between sunset and sunrise: *buʿd al-mušriqain*]. According to the principles of evolution, nothing can progress all at once. Therefore, there must have been an intermediate stage between the Greek and contemporary philosophy and this stage was in fact Islam.[63]

62 Renan: "Islamism and Science," 201.
63 Nomani: *Maqālāt-i Šiblī* (Aʿẓamgaṛh), Vol. VII, 39.

As has been discussed above, when Shibli speaks of contemporary philosophy (*falsafah-i ḥāl*), which corresponds to modern philosophy (*falsafah-i jadīdah*) in other texts, he refers to science.[64] By presuming a synonymy of philosophy and science, Shibli presents a continuity of Greek philosophy which science which therefore denies a radical difference between the two. This move thus allows him to view Muslim philosophy as a catalyst for science. In one article, Shibli gives a lengthy list of innovative divergences from Greek philosophy by Muslim philosophers (*mutakallimīn*) – including, the dismissal of the basic elements for the sake of atoms (*dīmūqrāṭīsī*). However, this list shall not be discussed here in detail, for it refers to very subtle issues of Greek philosophy which cannot be examined within the scope of this project and are not crucial to the argument of this chapter.[65]

For the present study, however, it is of primary importance to note that Shibli emphasises the innovative role of Muslim philosophers and their decisive position as a stimulus for the emergence of modern science. He further underscores the proximity of Muslim philosophy to modern science (i.e. philosophy) as follows:

> [I]f Islamic philosophy is compared with Greek and contemporary philosophy, it will be apparent that Islamic philosophy is in greater proximity to contemporary philosophy than to Greek philosophy. Therefore, our *ʿulamāʾ* should feel more involved with contemporary rather Greek philosophy.[66]

Emphasising the proximity of Islamic philosophy to modern philosophy (i.e. science), Shibli, on the one hand, presents modern science as more easily acceptable for the *ʿulamāʾ* than Greek philosophy. On the other hand, he again doubts the radical nature of science and, instead, integrates it in a long tradition which is influenced heavily by Muslims.

Shibli hereby dissolves the close association of rationalism in general with the "West," as proposed by Renan. Instead, he presents a counter-representation of Islam which is not only in concordance with science as proposed in the first part of Shibli's argument, but is additionally also a crucial stage for the emergence of science. S Modern science, being viewed as only the recent chapter in a long tradition, is divested of its radical nature, and thus becomes more easily integrated into the sphere of Islam. Shibli does not argue this explicitly, yet it appears to be reasonable in that he presents science as a substitute for *ʿilm al-kalām*. Science shall take up the latter's position as a supplement or perhaps even as a latter part of the realm of Islam – as the position of science is not unequivocally clarified in Shibli's explanations.

64 Nomani: *al-Kalām*, 7.
65 Nomani: *Maqālāt-i Šiblī* (Aʿẓamgaṛh), Vol. VII, 40f.
66 Ibid., 39.

Shibli freely plays with concepts and relocates their notions by creating synonymies. His entire argument is fundamentally based on two equalisations: first, he deliberately adopts Renan's equation of philosophy and science under the heading of science, and, second, *ʿilm al-kalām* is equated with philosophy, and in fact viewed as denoting Muslim philosophy in general. As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, this equivocation is quite dubious from a historical perspective, as some philosophers vehemently distanced themselves from *ʿilm al-kalām*. In presuming their synonymy, however, Shibli can argue that science has to be viewed rather as a part of the realm of Islam, as a mere development of *ʿilm al-kalām*, thus replacing the latter in its position within Islam. This equivocation integrates science into Islam and, furthermore, inscribes Muslim philosophy as an integral part of a long tradition of science. Renan's thesis of perennial conflict of Islam with science, or rather rationalism and science, is reversed into a perennial conformity with Islam and, indeed, includes its crucial participation in the development of science.

This strategy has a noticeable resemblance to Dayanand Sarasvati's (1824-83) approach to tackling the challenge of science. In 1875, he founded his Arya Samaj in Bombay, which came to be most influential in north western India and was characterised by its engagement in the abolition of practices like idol worship, which were perceived as deviations from the original teachings of the Vedas. With respect to science, Sarasvati developed a peculiar stance and argued that, in fact, "India is the original homeland of science and technology and that Westerners ultimately owe their expertise in this field to Indian sources."[67] The adoption of science is thus described as a mere rediscovery of Hinduism's own roots. Reminiscent of Shibli's argument, science is presented as "dependent upon India".[68]

Despite its universal claim, however, science was inextricably linked with Europe:

> On the one hand, science was projected as a universal sign of modernity and progress, unaffected by its historical and cultural locations; on the other hand, science could establish its universality only in its particular history as imperial knowledge.[69]

Science was presented as universal, and yet was inseparably linked with its development in Europe. Any shared development on behalf of Hinduism or Islam is neglected by the colonial power, and science comes to be perceived as a singularly European property. As a means to countering this claim, science is thus integrated

67 Halbfass: *India and Europe*, 399.
68 Ibid., 245.
69 Prakash: *Another Reason*, 71.

into one's own religious community by pointing out its particular, influential developments. As Prakash argues, science is thereby dislocated:[70]

> Seizing on Orientalist research showing that ancient Indian culture could rightfully boast of significant achievements in fields ranging from mathematics to medicine, they declared that their ancient texts embodied scientific truths, that science was Hindu. The "corruption" and "irrationality" of contemporary Hinduism, they argued, were due to the loss of the ancient Hindu science.[71]

Similarly, Vivkenanda integrates science's claim for universality by "rediscovering" its archaic roots as being found in Hinduism:[72]

> The Hindu reaction consisted in viewing Western progress as being independent of Christianity [and perhaps Europe in general] as well as in attempts to show that the Indian tradition does not merely provide a potentially equal or superior substratum for such achievements, but was actually their historical basis.[73]

Thus, Shibli's approach of construing a continuous lineage of science from Muslim philosophy and Vivekananda's rediscovery of science in ancient Hindu texts both aim to divorce the strong link of science with Europe/Christianity and claim a crucial participation in its development. They argue that the dominant discourse of science could be separated from European intellectual hegemony and integrated into Islam or Hinduism in order to substantiate these religions' claim for rationality, a move which Prakash calls the "indigenization of science's authority."[74]

The encounter of Shibli and Renan provides crucial insights into how the dichotomy of science and religion constitutes the conception of Islam. Renan presented an overdrawn dichotomy of rationalism and Islam. He presumed a universalised concept of science and demonstrated an inherent incongruence between Islam and rationalism: Islam, perceived as an entity essentialised as its earliest expression, did not know anything of philosophy. Based on this early absence, Renan construes an inherent hostility of Islam towards any kind of rationalism, be it philosophy or science. He views those areas as genuine categories belonging solely to Europe. "Renan furthermore establishes "original" Islam as a representative point of reference for its essence. On the basis of this restricted time period, Islam is represented as a whole that can be defined by means of the particular properties associated with it.

70 Ibid., 72.
71 Ibid., 88.
72 Ibid., 8.
73 Halbfass: *India and Europe*, 246.
74 Prakash: *Another Reason*, 64.

Shibli counters this view, first in rejecting the incapacity of Islam to incorporate rationalism and, second, by inscribing Islam in this universalised concept of science. First, he argues for a natural distinction of the spheres of religion and science, which has been upheld first and foremost in Islam. Second, Shibli adopts Renan's universalised science, denying, however, a Muslim incapacity for the same. It is argued that, if science is a universal category, it cannot have appeared out of nothing, but required a preparatory tradition, which Shibli identifies with *ʿilm al-kalām*. Renan's fixed ties of rationalism with Europe are thus dissolved and linked to Islam. While Renan describes science and philosophy as European properties, to which Muslims do not have any legitimate claim, Shibli de-essentialises rationalism (i.e. science and philosophy) as a solely European achievement. He counters this essentialisation by integrating Muslim philosophy as a crucial stage in the transition from Greek philosophy to modern science. Both areas are thus deprived of their sole association with Europe.

In comparison to Khan, Shibli negates the necessity of a reformation or reinterpretation of Islam and rather argues from the angle of science.[75] Hence, Shibli presents Islam as remaining untouched, while only the representation of science has to be revised in order to bring Islam equally into the right perspective. But can Islam, in fact, be perceived as an invariable touchstone in relation to science? In other words, does the acknowledgment of science as a distinct sphere of knowledge affect the conception of religion, and Islam in particular? Can Islam

75 In his *Urdū adab kī taškīl-i jadīd*, Nayyar equally distinguishes between Shibli's and Khan's approaches as respectively revivalist and future-oriented or progress-oriented. While Khan aimed for a reclamation of the past (*bāzyāft*), i.e. its reinterpretation according to changed circumstances, Shibli argued for the revitalisation (*iḥyā*) of "the old and original form [*qadīmī va aṣlī šakl*]" (Nayyar: *Urdū adab kī taškīl-i jadīd*, 321). Even though the analysis given above generally supports this argument by Nayyar, one has to be cautious about his wording as given in the last quote. For, Shibli doubtless calls for a revitalisation of an old tradition and argues that science is merely a continuation of this Islamic tradition. Yet, one also has to be careful to not adopt this thesis unquestioned. The above-given analysis could also demonstrate that Shibli's revitalisation can by no means be described as a simple restoration of an "original" Islam. In fact, his interpretation of Islam is equally affected by the discourse of science to which his argument has to refer in order to be acknowledged. Thus, Shibli does not explicitly propagate a reform of Islam, as Khan does. Still, his interpretation of Islam is influenced by the discourse of science. Cf. Nayyar: *Urdū adab kī taškīl-i jadīd*, 321.

In another instance, Nayyar distinguishes Khan and Shibli respectively as *ḥikmat-i jadīdah se muṭābiqat* (creating a conformity with science) and *baṭlān* (a refutation) of science. However, from the above given explanations, it should be clear that Shibli is not at all trying to refute science but only trying to refute its association with Europe and link Islam into this lineage. Science and its truth-claim, nevertheless, are acknowledged. Cf. Nayyar: *Urdū adab kī taškīl-i jadīd*, 346.

claim to have any essential meaning which would allow for its unequivocal definition?

In this example of the encounter between Renan and Shibli, the representation of Islam is highly contested. Both of their conceptions are quite contradictory. In fact, their representations are fundamentally dependent on the respective counter-concept. In the case of Renan, he construes a dichotomy of rational Europe versus irrational Islam as its counter-culture with opposite properties. His perception of Islam is rather a negative projection of Europe. By contrast, Shibli aims to contest Renan's overly simplistic representation of Islam and presents a definition which entirely depends on the demarcation of Islam (or religion in general) in relation to rationalism/science. His Islam acquires meaning only through the assertion of distinct spheres of religion and science. Comparing both representations, one can discern a transition from a regional or cultural definition by Renan towards a definition in relation to science by Shibli. This trajectory implies the displacement of mundane and investigative matters from the realm of religion for the sake of an internalised concept of the same. That said, what is it that remains essentially the same in Islam? Does Islam (as signifier) have a referent allowing for one to ultimately define it?

The relative process of obtaining meaning rather implies a lack of positive signification: Islam does not refer to any referent, nor to anything signified. Its meaning is, in fact, fundamentally dependent on its correlative counter-concept. Ernesto Laclau argues that an empty signifier does not have any positive relation to a signified. This relation is rather a retroactive creation of a unity, which was non-existent prior:

> The basic problem of antidescriptivism is to determine what constitutes the identity of the designated object beyond the ever-changing cluster of descriptive features – what makes the object identical-to-itself even if all its properties have changed; in other words, how to conceive the objective correlative of the 'rigid designator', to the name in so far as it denotes the same object in all possible worlds, in all counterfactual situations. What is overlooked, at least in the standard version of antidescriptivism, is that this guaranteeing the identity of an object in all counterfactual situations – *through a change of all its descriptive features* – is the retroactive effect of naming itself: it is the name itself, the signifier, which supports the identity of the object.[76]

76 Slavoj Žižek: *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008), 95f.

An empty signifier therefore does not not have any fixed meaning, as it lacks any positive relation to a signified. Meaning is only obtained relationally by by its distinction from an antagonist signifier. Only out of this negativity can a unity be constructed in conjunction with a shared representative signifier.[77]

This relationship exemplifies the contingency of those definitions which fundamentally depend on discursive arrangement. Islam cannot be defined positively by reference to a real or "original" referent, but inevitably remains a contingent construction of unity. It always depends on the demarcation of an antagonistic signifier. The association of properties is not a preceding, but rather a subsequent, act. Hence, the definition constitutes its object only retroactively.

Consequently, even though Shibli claims to merely put philosophy and science in the right perspective in order to demonstrate Islam's capacity for rationalism and, in fact, its integral role in the development of these spheres, Islam does not remain unaffected by this movement. His reinterpretation of Islam is rather performed through the back door of science. For, in the moment, Shibli demonstrates a revised view of science while simultaneously acknowledging science as a fundamental point of distinction in the concept of religion. Islam thus experiences an equal shift in notion: Renan's contradiction of Islam and rationalism is reversed into a relationship of conformity, which nonetheless implies Shibli's acknowledgement of Renan's presumption of the distinction between religion and science as separate spheres of knowledge. Shibli thus aims to legitimate this narrowed notion of Islam by naturalising this dichotomy and projecting it back onto Islam as inherent and original. Hence, Shibli's revision of rationalism and his back-door reinterpretation of Islam is fundamentally related to a reversal of Renan, while nonetheless adopting some of his crucial presumptions.

3. Metaphysics

In the previous paragraph, Shibli's conception of religion was presented as being fundamentally based on its delimitation to science as a distinct, separate sphere. Consequently, religion and science are distinguished on a horizontal level as spheres of equal value. However, Shibli does not confine his approach to this conclusion. In his later work, *Savāniḥ-i Maulānā Rūm* (1904), he criticises an approach

77 Ernesto Laclau: "Populism: What's in a Name?," in *Empire and Terror: Nationalism Postnationalism in the New Millenium*, ed. Begoña Aretxaga, 103–14 (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 106.

which solely recognises the observation of matter as legitimate, thus overrating the sphere of science, as this approach dismisses arguments which lie outside its own realm, while its single proof is an absence of knowledge. As Shibli states:

> The answer to this critique [i.e. that only perceptions which are verifiable by observation can provide certain knowledge] is that those people who deny the existence of a faculty to metaphysical perceptions [*ḥāsah-i ġaibī*] can prove this only on the basis of unawareness of this faculty. But unawareness cannot suffice as a proof.[78]

Shibli criticises an overemphasis on observational investigation as the sole means of knowledge, in other words science, as well as any approach which neglects to move beyond this realm. He questions the assertion that knowledge can be achieved solely by experience and the observation of sense perceptions. Instead, he aims to introduce a counter-approach which is based on the inner (*ʿilm-i bāṭinī*) experience instead of externally acquired knowledge (*ẓāhir*).[79]

The former is related to *rūḥ-i insānī* (the human soul), which enables man in distinction to any other creature to transgress the merely observational approach of *ʿaql* (reason) and reach for divine knowledge. Shibli depicts the *rūḥ-i insānī* as arranged in an evolutionary order and perceives it as the highest faculty of perception (*idrāk*). In his reading of Rūmī's poetry, he recognises thoughts reminiscent of Darwin's evolutionary theory, which in his opinion has, in fact, been anticipated by Rūmī.[80] In Shibli's interpretation, Rūmī describes an evolutionary progress of the creatures that culminates finally in man, who alone possesses the faculty of *rūh-i insānī*:[81]

> [T]he things present in the world vary heavily in their stages. The lowest is the stage of primary elements [*ʿanāṣir*], i.e. those things which are not organised [in any form] [*tarkīb*] at all […]. This stage is called minerals [*jamād*]. After this, organisation begins; this stage can be called the first one of evolution [*taraqqī*] in the natural world [*ʿālam-i fiṭrat*]. The first stage of organisation is called plants [*nabātāt*]. […] [S]ince they do not possess any faculty of perception [*idrāk*], they

78 Shibli Nomani: *Savāniḥ-i Maulānā Rūm* (Lāhaur: *Majlis-i Taraqqī-i Adab*, 1961), 155.

79 Ibid., 211f. Still Nayyar perceives Shibli's *Savāniḥ* as a part of his engagement with *kalām*. Yet, the above given statements by Shibli should make clear that Shibli is trying to introduce here another approach with is independent of the observational knowledge, as he refuses an overemphasis of reason and observation. Cf. Nayyar: *Urdū adab kī taškīl-i jadīd*, 347.

80 Elsewhere, Shibli argues that Darwin must undoubtedly be seen as the originator of the evolutionary theory. Yet, Rumi has already indicated this theory much earlier in his poetry. Ibid., 240.

81 Nomani: *al-Kalām*, 17; Nomani: *Savāniḥ-i Maulānā Rūm*, 176-179.

> cannot transgress a specific stage. After plants, follows the stage of animals which are characterised by the faculty of perception; from here starts the stage of soul.[82]
>
> This stage is called the animal soul [*rūḥ-i ḥaivānī*]. The following stage is the human soul [*rūh-i insānī*].[83]

By pointing out that *rūḥ* is neither physical nor material, Shibli aims to establish *rūḥ* as a faculty of perception which allows one to acquire knowledge by a means other than observation, as the *rūḥ* is connected with a higher stage:

> [T]he soul [*rūḥ*] is a reflection of the Divine World [*ʿālam-i quds*].[84]

Rūḥ is thus a mediating faculty which connects the human being with the divine world. Above, Shibli reinterprets Darwin's theory of evolution by means of Rūmī's poetry. He states that Rūmī's ideas resemble Darwin's theory. Both assume that the world has passed through an evolutionary process of advancing stages. However, if in Darwin's theory this process culminates in the human being as its *telos*, Rūmī describes this process in regard to a soul which Darwin does not acknowledge. As a result, Darwin does not recognise any qualitative difference between man and animals. Rūmī, by contrast, bases his entire assertion of evolution on the progressing development of the soul in Above, Shibli stages. Consequently, he comes to a clear distinction between man and animal on the basis of their stages of *rūḥ*.[85]

Shibli interweaves and correlates these two approaches: by reading Rūmī in the light of Darwin, he ahistorically projects the theory of evolution onto Rūmī's writings, enabling him to reinterpret Darwin. Rūmī's evolutionary progress of the soul allows Shibli to integrate the soul as a crucial and distinctive element of momentum in this process. Thus, Shibli establishes the soul as a distinct entity and a unique faculty solely belonging to the human being, which allows for an approach to knowledge outside the realm of observation and deduction. Darwin's theory is hence presented in a "spiritualised," metaphysical garment. Evolutionary theory is reinterpreted in such a fashion that it no longer denies spiritual experiences, but is, in fact, fundamentally based on the soul. Thus, the threat of evolution, which apparently inspires atheism or agnosticism in that it does not acknowledge any divine influence and denies the existence of the soul, is dismissed – according to Shibli –

82 Nomani: *Savāniḥ-i Maulānā Rūm*, 176.
83 Ibid., 178.
84 Ibid., 180.
85 Ibid., 188.

by denying a lack of knowledge as sufficient and legitimate proof.[86] However, the structural premises of an evolutionary process of stages through which the world developed is acknowledged and reinterpreted in such a manner that it reverses the initial hypothesis of Darwin. The theory of evolution is translated into an Islamic framework, consequently transforming its initial implications.

Shibli does not further define this inner approach to knowledge. However, following his reference to Sufism, it appears to be reasonable to say that he hints to Sufi practices as providing such an approach:

> The Sufis say that as there are specific regulations [*ṭarīqah*] to learn the [practice of] external knowledge [*ʿulūm-i ẓāhirī*] without which this knowledge cannot be acquired, in the same way there are specific regulations for this knowledge [i.e. inner knowledge] as well […].[87]

Shibli here emphasises that that this approach is embedded in a framework of regulations and, from this, aims to imply a structural conformity of Sufi metaphysics with science. This allows him to present it as a legitimate counter-approach to science.

However, Shibli does not intend to replace science with this approach, but rather aims to question science's exclusive authority as a legitimate approach to knowledge. He attempts to broaden the variety of approaches beyond the materialist approach focusing solely on observation.

He further argues that any refutation of this counter-approach can again only be based on the argument of a lack of knowledge:

> As long as this approach is not experienced, there is no reason to deny it.[88]
> [I]f the people of external knowledge [*arbāb-i ẓāhirī*] deny this [i.e. inner knowledge], it compares to a child that denies the issues of philosophy or is unable to understand it.[89]

This puts his counter-approach on a level which excludes it from the realm of science and observation. By further emphasising that a lack of knowledge cannot suffice as disproof, it becomes irrefutable, for the Sufi approach of inner knowledge cannot be grasped by scientific or observational means. Consequently, inner knowledge cannot be disclaimed on the basis of rational or scientific reasons. Shibli hence presents an approach to a different kind of knowledge than that which

86 Nomani: *al-Kalām*, 51, 54f.; Nomani: *Savāniḥ-i Maulānā Rūm*, 176.
87 Nomani: *Savāniḥ-i Maulānā Rūm*, 212.
88 Ibid., 212.
89 Ibid., 212f.

science can produce. Yet, Shibli denies an opponent's refutation of this inner knowledge on the basis of structural premises that mirror a scientific approach. Shibli's approach to inner knowledge, then, is both part of the realm of religion and equally legitimate as science. It is perhaps even superior to science, given that it cannot be disproved by means of scientific reason.

If Shibli presented an equal distinction of science and religion on a horizontal level in his earlier texts, he subordinates science to his spiritual counter-approach of inner knowledge in his *Savāniḥ-i Maulānā Rūm*. Religion is, therefore, presented not only as a sphere distinct from science, but also as a superior approach to knowledge. While religion and science remain distinguished into two distinct spheres, Shibli now tilts their formerly horizontal orientation and elevates religion to a position somewhere between a horizontal and vertical orientation to science. Furthermore, because religion does not engage in the realm of science, its inaccessibility to scientific reasoning solves religion's former dependency on scientific sanction. Furthermore, because religion does not engage in the realm of science, its inaccessibility to scientific reasoning solves religion's former dependency on scientific sanction. By loosening this dependency, Shibli allows religion to take a superior stance which in turn undermines the necessity of interpreting religion entirely from a scientific framework, as Khan did before him. Shibli thus challenges science's uncontested sole authority, and presents religion as an equally legitimate approach.

Shibli therefore observes the distinction between the two spheres even more rigidly – which allows him to degrade science and confine it to its respective sphere. On this basis, the Sufic approach to knowledge is presented as an equally legitimate counter-approach to science which, moreover, transcends the realm of science.

Shibli thus releases religion from its dichotomous relation with science whereupon its definition is fundamentally based. His approach allows religion to obtain a self-sufficient and self-referential character, which is uncoupled from science. Yet, Shibli's view of metaphysics as an autonomous discipline cannot completely release itself from the role of counter-concept to science: while metaphysics is argued as being a discipline equal to science, Shibli has to base his thesis on structural parallels with science. The latter still reappears as the defining paradigm, however, but is projected onto metaphysics. Science is merely substituted by a discipline that incorporates the dichotomy of science and religion solely within the latter. The premises of science are, conversely, integrated into the sphere of religion. The dichotomy with science is thus dissolved, while its paradigms are reintegrated into metaphysics.

Furthermore, this attempt to establish a counter-approach to science on the basis of metaphysics reminds one to a certain extent of parallel Hindu reformist agendas: among them, first and foremost, is Vivekananda's distinction of a scientific, analytical body of knowledge versus a spiritual body of knowledge. He proposed a mutual complementation of Western, i.e. scientific, knowledge with Eastern, i.e. spiritual. The unrestricted authority of science was thus limited to external, observational knowledge, while, simultaneously, religious knowledge was elevated on a par with science:

> [E]uropeans [are recognized] as superior explorers of the external, physical world, but […] the Indians [are represented] as greater and equally scientific experts of the inner, mental sphere, the realm of consciousness and the self.[90]

Similarly, Shibli and Vivekananda delegitimate science's claim for single authority by confronting it with a counter-type of religious knowledge. Both types of knowledge require supplementation, which grants religion and spirituality a position of authority equivalent to that of science.[91]

Conclusion

Shibli makes one more important contribution to the debate surrounding the relationship of science and Islam. His position stands in contrast to Afghani, who took up quite an affirmative stance towards Renan's critique of Islam, and religion in general, as an obstruction and even a contradiction to rationalism. In his lecture, *L'Islamisme et la science*, Renan assumes a perennial conflict between science and religion. He universalises the category of science and perceives ancient Greek philosophy as its respective expression at the time of early Islam. Science, philosophy, and rationalism are used as interchangeable synonyms, thus implying their perennial conflict with religion. Renan further argues that there is no kind of rationalism genuine to Islam. He asserts that any philosophical aspirations in Islam are mere imitation or, strictly speaking, a corruption of Greek philosophy. Renan thus construes a strict dichotomy of Islam and rationalism as mutually contradictory.

90 Halbfass: *India and Europe*, 399.
91 Ibid., 225f.

Shibli questions this critique of the inherent incapacity for rationalism in Islam. First, he rejects the thesis of irrationality by emphasising a natural distinction between the spheres of science and religion. These spheres do not clash because of their divergent objectives. According to Shibli, Islam is the single religion which affirms this distinction and furthermore proves its doctrines based on rational arguments. Having dismissed the thesis of an inherent hostility towards rationalism in Islam, Shibli thus proceeds in challenging the fixed association of Greek philosophy and science as European achievements. Islam and Muslim philosophy are instead presented as an integral phase between Greek philosophy and the development of modern science. Muslim philosophy thus paved the way for science with fundamental improvements of Greek philosophy. Shibli thus refutes the claim for a close association of Greek philosophy with the modern European discipline of science. By integrating Muslim philosophy as a crucial link in this chain, he argues that science loses its character of a radical rupture. Furthermore, in adopting Renan's terminology of a synonymy of science, philosophy, and rationalism, Shibli reverses the former's conflict thesis into an emphasis on continuity. Greek philosophy and science are stripped of their fixed ties to Europe. Their exclusive character is abandoned, which allows for the integration of Islam into the dominant discourse of science.

At first sight, Shibli's approach differs tremendously from Khan's. The latter accepts science as a referential touchstone on which he orients his reformation of Islam. By adjusting Islam, he aims to harmonise it with science. In contrast, Shibli proposes Islam as its invariable touchstone. Islam is not understood as requiring adjustment or adaption. In fact, the understanding of science, as it is put forward by European critics, requires some revision in order for one to put Islam in the right perspective – for neither is Islam hostile to science, nor can science be described merely as a European achievement. As Shibli suggests, this reversal of Renan's conflict thesis into a continuity of Islam with science, with Muslim philosophy an indispensable contributor, does not leave Islam untouched, however. Even though a conflict of science and religion is refuted, the reversal compels Shibli to adopt the crucial thesis of science and religion as two distinct sphere of knowledge. Science as a counterpoint, consequently, also becomes a touchstone for defining Islam. Only in its negative distinction to science does Islam receive meaning. Shibli describes this dichotomy as a natural distinction and projects this understanding onto his view of "original" Islam.

Islam, in this approach, is thus a retroactive construction which cannot refer to a real or "original" referent. It is fundamentally based on its counter-concept of science. Consequently, when Shibli claims to merely revise the conception of science in order to demonstrate Islam's crucial part in this discourse, Islam is not left

untouched. Shibli's approach is rather a reinterpretation of Islam through the back door of science: the contradiction of Islam and science is reversed into a relation of conformity. But, as a result, the distinction of religion and science in separate spheres must be acknowledged, and reinforced as a natural distinction which was originally present in Islam.

If this understanding is compared to Khan's, Shibli deals with the encounter of science in a rather confrontational way. Khan aims for an approximation of science by interpreting Islam in a rational way which is appropriate to scientific premises, and thus acknowledges the discursive premises to a great extent. Shibli, however, starts from the angle of science and criticises the critique. Yet, this critical approach is equally reflected in his conception of Islam, for the relational dependence of religion and science as counter-concepts implies also a divergence of the concept of Islam.[92]

In his *Savāniḥ-i Maulānā Rūm*, Shibli takes up a different stance towards science and aims to undermine its superiority. In proposing a counter-approach to scientific knowledge, he questions the exceptional authority of the observational approach of science. Sufi practices are proposed as an approach to another kind of knowledge which, however, is structurally similar to science and thus equally as legitimate as science. Because Shibli's discipline of metaphysics is structured on the paradigm of science, however, his desired goal of releasing religion from its dependency on its counter-concept of science as a self-referential and autonomous category is undermined. The dichotomy of science and religion is thus perpetuated, but within the sphere of religion.

In Shibli's presentation of metaphysics as an equally legitimate sphere of knowledge, we can trace the first indications of turning away from Khan's thought by reformist authors. While the first part of the present chapter presented Shibli's

92 Wilfred Cantwell Smith distinguishes Khan's approach from Shibli's in the following way: "Sir Sayyid approached Isām from the values of the modern West; Shiblī approaches Western values from the view-point of Islām. His programme was not to reform Islām with some new criterion, but to revive it from within, his ambitious vision including the rehabilitation of Islamic learning in its entirety […]" (Smith: *Modern Islām in India*, 38).

His analysis can be accepted to a great extent. Yet, the specificity of Shibli's approach lies rather in his emphasis on a continuity, which allows him to inscribe Islam or Muslim philosophy within the tradition of science. On the other hand, Khan perceives science rather as a rupture requiring a reorientation to Islam. Nevertheless, as can be shown, this difference is rather nominal. For, despite Shibli's emphasis on a preservative view of Islam, neglecting any necessity of reform, his investment in the discourse of science and religion compels him to inevitably acknowledge its crucial premises. Hence, Islam, now being inextricably tied to its counter-concept of science, does not remain unaffected. Still, a more preservative view in Shibli cannot be denied in several respects, as for example in his stance towards miracles.

response to Renan an approach of countering the critique of science in a manner rather similar to what we have seen in the preceding chapter in Khan, the second part discussed Shibli's representation of metaphysics as a counter-approach to knowledge in opposition to science. This can be read as a critique of an overemphasis on reason and indicates the first signs of a divergence from or at least expansion of Khan's thought. This development shall be further discussed in Chapter 8 with the example of another author from the Aligarh circle, Nazir Ahmad, in whose texts Khan's thought seems to be referred to as fundamental point of reference, yet does not go unquestioned. Khan's thought thus acquires the status of a sedimented and hence legitimised interpretation of Islam.

But already the first part of the present chapter presented a certain divergence from Khan's writings in Shibli's response to Renan. Both Shibli and Khan differ in their respective viewpoints and focus on different aspects of the counter-concepts of science and religion. Yet, these are rather questions of the perspective, while their fundamental concern was largely consistent. While Khan argued from the point of view taking science as stable point of reference in order to reinterpret Islam, Shibli took Islam as his point of reference. It became obvious that neither of these concepts, science or religion, work as a stable point of reference for redefining its respective counterpoint. While Shibli questions the referential character of science, Khan takes it as a stable basis. Yet, in the same way as Shibli's conception of Islam was affected by his redefinition of science – due to the referential relation of science and religion as counter-concepts – it can reasonably be assumed also that Khan's conception of science is not a fixed entity which he adopted from Europe or elsewhere, but is equally affected by his representation of Islam. The following chapter shall, thus, analyse the concepts of science and reason in the writings of Khan and Shibli and question the impact of the impact of their methods of interpretation on their respective conceptions of religion, and particularly Islam.