



CHICAGO JOURNALS

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American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 119, No. 3 (November 2013), pp. 894-902

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/675062>

Accessed: 24/05/2014 16:12

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causality and sharpen their standards for judging explanations. Some, particularly microsociologists, might object that their theoretical positions are not accurately represented, but I suspect those charges will not stand up. It is not a book to dip into; even after two readings, I am not sure I fully appreciate it. Reading Martin will cause you to reset your bearings, reconsider long-held views, and reengage with core ideas in sociology. And the book is marvelously entertaining and well written; he seamlessly melds Iggy Pop and Max Weber into the same sentence. In a most curious and enviable manner, Martin is simultaneously humble, careful, and wildly provocative. This book deserves a wide audience and ample debate.

La philosophie sociale d'Ibn-Khaldoun. By Taha Husayn. Paris: A. Pedone, 1918. Pp. vi+222.

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Given the importance of Ibn Khaldun as a philosopher of history and a social theorist, it is surprising that the first full appraisal of his social thought in a Western language was written by a blind Egyptian exchange student. Taha Husayn's 1918 doctoral dissertation at the Sorbonne analyzed the *Muqaddimah*, the 1,200-page theoretical preface to Ibn Khaldun's immense *Book of Examples and Archive of History*, which attempts a universal history of the world. Husayn's reading was not only early, but also unique, for he was a traditionally educated Muslim studying a great work of his own heritage but in oral and translated form, and for a French dissertation supervisor who was—like Ibn Khaldun—persuaded that he had invented the true and universal science of social affairs. It is perhaps inevitable that so adventurous a young scholar would eventually become central to his country's political, educational, and literary life.

Taha Husayn was born in 1889 in Maghaghah, about 100 miles south of Cairo. Seventh of 13 children, he was blinded at three by poor treatment of an eye infection. After study in a local Koranic school—described with fond acerbity in his autobiography *The Days* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1997)—he enrolled in 1902 at al-Azhar, the great theological university of Cairo. Al-Azhar was then under the reforming control of Muḥammad 'Abduh, the leader of Muslim modernism. After eight years of study in the traditional manner at al-Azhar, following particularly the lectures of 'Abduh's protégé al-Marṣafī, Husayn discovered the new, secular Egyptian University (founded 1908), enrolled there, and

*Another review from 2052 to share with *AJS* readers.—*Ed.*

pursued a thesis on Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘rri, a medieval writer who like Husayn himself was blind, passionate, and unorthodox. Having received the university’s first doctorate, Husayn overcame numerous obstacles to travel to France for further education. This he pursued in Montpellier and Paris during the First World War, ultimately obtaining a first degree in history as well as (and at the same time as) a doctorate under the joint supervision of the orientalist Paul Casanova and the sociologist Émile Durkheim, who died shortly before Husayn defended his doctoral thesis in January 1918.

While in France, Husayn fell in love with and married a reader whom he called his “sweet voice”: Suzanne Bresseau. The couple returned to Cairo, where Husayn began to teach history and literature at his alma mater, now renamed the University of Cairo. In 1926 he published an analysis arguing that much of pre-Islamic poetry was in fact later forgeries, igniting a religious controversy that persisted even beyond his appointment as dean of faculty in 1929. In the same years, he published the first volume of his autobiography. By 1932, however, Husayn was forced out of the university and turned to journalism for a living. He also wrote novels: *The Call of the Curlew* in 1934 and *Adib* in 1935, the latter drawing on many aspects of his own life and painting a bleak picture of an Egyptian intellectual lost in the Western luxuries of France. In addition, he published translations from both Greek (Sophocles) and French (Racine, Voltaire).

Husayn returned to the university, however, and throughout the 1940s played a large role as a controversialist, strongly supporting the modernist position and publishing in the periodical press unforgettable fictionalized portrayals of poverty. (When these tales were gathered into a book—eventually translated into English as *The Sufferers* in 1993—it could not be published in Egypt, appearing first in Lebanon.) Husayn also spent much of this period writing on education, producing *The Future of Culture in Egypt* in 1938 and eventually becoming minister of education in 1950. Although he left office with his colleagues of the Wafd Cabinet in 1952, just prior to the Revolution, Husayn had by then helped spread primary and secondary education throughout Egypt. In later years he edited a daily newspaper and continued writing. He died in 1973.

The young Taha Husayn’s profound but idiosyncratic reading of Ibn Khaldun arose in part from the conditions under which he worked. He read the *Muqaddimah* in the summer of 1917, having fled war-torn Paris for the South of France. He was then in the first blush of a passionate love that would last until he died in 1973.

Here were a youth and girl in the first days of their engagement, filling most of the day with study, Latin in the morning, reading the French translation of Ibn-Khaldun’s *Al-Muqaddimah* in the forenoon, and then after a break at the table for lunch, Greek and Roman history. At 5 p.m., we left these for French

literature, continuing until we went for a stroll outside the village where we lived. (*The Days*, p. 358)

Blindness meant that Taha Husayn encountered the main body of Ibn Khaldun's immense text in the "sweet voice" of a young French woman, reading a translation done by an Irishman who came to France in 1830 to study Oriental languages. Aiming to make the work accessible, William McGuckin de Slane had deliberately made a free translation from the Arabic and had therefore translated crucial words in different ways in different places, trying to "render always in an exact manner the thought of the author." Thus, *asabiyah*—arguably the central theoretical term of Ibn Khaldun's analysis—becomes *morale*, *esprit de corps*, *grande influence*, *zèle*, and other things, depending on the context. By contrast, Franz Rosenthal, who undertook the first full English translation and who like de Slane was translating between two nonnative languages (he was German), made the opposite decision, translating *asabiyah* as "group feeling" throughout his text. The same happens to *mulk*, which Rosenthal renders throughout as "royal authority," but which in de Slane is most often *souveraineté*, but sometimes is *parti imposant*, *royauté*, or *monarchie*. This divergence of course reflects a central dilemma of translation: whether to reproduce the grouping of meanings in the origin language by employing a non-idiomatic but constant term in the target language (Rosenthal) or to privilege idiom in the target language at the cost of dismantling conceptual units in the original (de Slane). Husayn often criticizes de Slane's choice of the latter strategy (as well as many of his particular translations). As these criticisms indicate, Husayn must also have had Arabic readers who could read him portions of the text from the Arabic originals.

A second aspect of the de Slane translation also shaped Husayn's reading decisively. To hear a text is inevitably more linear than to read it, and it was therefore particularly consequential that—again aiming for popularization—de Slane inserted Ibn Khaldun's autobiography before the text of the *Muqaddimah*, even though the autobiography is usually considered the final segment of the *Book of Examples*. Husayn therefore encountered the man before his arguments, and he found Ibn Khaldun's life immoral, self-centered, even irreligious. Ibn Khaldun spent his early years seeking positions of power in the treacherous eddies of eighth-century North African politics. He wrote his great work only once his failures closed that world to him, retiring to a well-defended castle for four years of writing before moving to Tunis to continue his work's historical sections (and subsequently fleeing Tunis for Cairo). The opening chapter of Husayn's dissertation presents this story in a singularly unflattering light. For Husayn, Ibn Khaldun's autobiography is a middle-aged man's self-serving rewriting of his past as a timeserver and betrayer, a switcher of sides and breaker of promises. In Husayn's reading, Ibn Khaldun's Egyptian years

become a time of overreaching and self-aggrandizement. Ibn Khaldun's celebrated interview with the conqueror Timur becomes yet another piece of fast dealing. Worst of all, Ibn Khaldun's laconic reaction to the loss of his wife in a shipwreck becomes for the happily affianced Husayn a mark of inhumanity.

The intensity of Husayn's reaction, however, derives in part from strong similarities between the two men. Both were Arabs who had traveled far. Both were passionate and determined. Both were associated with al-Azhar (Ibn Khaldun taught there five centuries before Husayn was a student). Both had complex—perhaps ambivalent—relations with Islam. Indeed, Husayn's most striking accusation is that Ibn Khaldun was not really a committed Muslim. One wonders whether Husayn is not, in his critique of Ibn Khaldun's life, exorcising fears about himself.

The book on which Husayn bases his discussion of Ibn Khaldun's social thought is itself merely the *introduction* (Arabic—*muqaddimah*) to Ibn Khaldun's monumental *Book of Examples*. In the full *Book* it is followed by a lengthy history of the world, the North African Berber kingdoms, and the Arab kingdoms that surround them, each much longer than the *Muqaddimah* itself. Organizationally, the *Muqaddimah* begins with an introductory chapter and several prefatory sections. Chapter 2 concerns nomadic life and chapter 3 royal authority, the khalifate, and other forms of dominant politics. Chapter 4 turns to sedentary societies and chapter 5 to means of getting a living. The sixth and final chapter considers forms of learning and teaching, and constitutes nearly a third of the *Muqaddimah*.

In the simplistic view, this complicated design and these hundreds of pages all reduce to what has sometimes been called the Khaldunian cycle. Nomadic societies are tested and tried by the rigors of desert life. They are strong militarily because they are strong socially, because they are bound by intense blood ties of solidarity, and because they are selected by intense competition. They inevitably seize the goods, houses, and persons of sedentary societies, creating empires over these weaker if wealthier and more civilized societies. But they succumb with equal inevitability to the luxuries and ease of sedentary life and fall victim to later nomads. The substantive chapters of the *Muqaddimah* thus divide naturally into the “cycle chapters” on nomadic emergence, preeminence, empire, and fall (chaps. 2–3), the “society” chapters on sedentary societies as realities (chaps. 4–5), and the long final chapter on the nature of learning (chap. 6). (Ibn Khaldun, incidentally, demolishes such a “brief summaries” approach to knowledge in chap. 6, sec. 35. Your reviewer's remarks here and in other reviews are no substitute for your reading the entirety of these works.)

The second chapter of Husayn's thesis confronts the still open question of whether Ibn Khaldun was a historian or some variety of social scien-

tist. On the one hand, the main body of the *Book of Examples* is indeed an excruciatingly detailed history of the Berber and Arab kingdoms. On the other, Ibn Khaldun takes pains to say that one cannot understand that history without his new cultural science, for which he makes strong claims in both the first and sixth chapters of the *Muqaddimah*. Husayn sees both sides of this issue. He minimizes Ibn Khaldun's elaborate techniques for critique of past documents and histories, which he believes derive directly from the traditional Muslim discipline of *ousul el fiqh*, the formal critique of sacred legal texts. On the other hand, he virtually identifies the modern Western discipline of history with such positivist techniques, referencing not so much traditional Muslim sources as the historian Charles Seignobos, from whom he had taken courses in France. Or again, Husayn notes that Ibn Khaldun has created his science of culture precisely to provide grounds of plausibility and likelihood that will allow a critical historian to question reports and interpretations of past facts (if they don't seem theoretically likely, then they should be regarded as empirically questionable). But at the same time, he notes that the science of culture itself seems to be established principally by inductive analysis of historical materials.

On another aspect of Kahldunian history, Husayn is more clear and more unequivocally admiring. Ibn Khaldun, he tells us, is the first to abandon the idea of history as annals, that is, as lists of important events. What matters in history is the development and trajectory of peoples over time, not this or that event. In this Husayn chooses against Seignobos and the positivists. But there is a difficulty. Neither Ibn Khaldun nor Husayn sees that by so focusing on the trajectories of peoples, Ibn Khaldun ends up privileging a purely developmental and even internalist understanding of history, despite the fact that Ibn Khaldun's own histories show again and again that history—at least political history—is not determined so much by the internal trajectory of one people as it is by the conjunctures of such trajectories across different peoples: what matters is the encounter of one people at a certain stage of one trajectory with another people at a different stage of another.

In his third chapter, Husayn turns to the status of Ibn Khaldun's theory of culture. This chapter is firmly Durkheimian. Husayn asks whether Ibn Khaldun has founded a new science *sui generis*, using one of Durkheim's favorite phrases. He criticizes Ibn Khaldun for having relied too much on concepts of human nature (i.e., psychology), even though Ibn Khaldun repeatedly remarks that "man is the child of customs, not of nature" (*Muqaddimah*, chap. 3, sec. 5; this remark actually appears several times). He criticizes the psychologism implicit in Ibn Khaldun's use of life course metaphors for the "aging" of societies even though these are mere metaphors. He also chides Ibn Khaldun for ignoring nonpo-

litical “society” (e.g., the Sufi brotherhoods, which Ibn Khaldun did not in fact completely ignore) and speaks of the “faits sociaux dont on aperçoit aujourd’hui l’originalité et l’intérêt,” employing the terminological banner—“faits sociaux”—of the Durkheimian school. It is clear that Husayn learned the Durkheimian view thoroughly.

Husayn then turns to the prefatory remarks of the *Muqaddimah*, which address questions of climate and geography that would preoccupy later writers like Giambattista Vico and the Baron de Montesquieu. In his fourth chapter, Husayn calls these “extrasocial factors.” (The labeling and the placing of these are quite reminiscent of Durkheim’s similar placing of extrasocial factors in the first section of *Le suicide*.) Ibn Khaldun’s theories of the social impact of climate and geography are not unusual or forward-looking, and Husayn thinks them unimportant. But Ibn Khaldun’s last “extrasocial factor” (the term is Husayn’s, not Ibn Khaldun’s, of course) is one of Durkheim’s most important social factors indeed—religion. Ibn Khaldun’s analysis of religion is central for two reasons: first because religious issues permeate all of his later theoretical sections (as they do Husayn’s analysis of those sections), but second, and much more important, because, as Husayn says, “among Muslims [that is, among those Muslims whom Ibn Khaldun was studying], politics was part of dogmatic theology” (p. 134). That is, religion and politics are identical.

Husayn’s reading here is both ambiguous and ambivalent. On the one hand he writes as a religious insider. He cannot resist correcting Ibn Khaldun on points of interpretation relative to the Quran and to the actions of the first four caliphs; indeed he makes such corrections (often controversial) throughout his analysis. But on the other, he takes the outsider stance, believing that Ibn Khaldun has given a first general theory of prophecy. Even more important, he asks rhetorically “to explicate religion in studying the human spirit, is this not a step towards the modern idea which sees in religion a social phenomenon?” (p. 100). That is, because he is looking through the eyes of the Durkheim of *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Husayn to a considerable extent sees Ibn Khaldun as a modern, secular theorist of religion.

The relation between religion and politics was one of the central concerns of modernist Islam and is fundamentally different in Islam than in the secularized, nominally Christian countries of the Western metropolis. The strong Christian separation of public and private life makes little sense in Islamic thinking, and the modernism of Mohammed ‘Abduh and his peers had no such separation in mind. On the contrary they thought a modernist Islam could be the ideal religion for a modern world precisely because it could provide a public faith, not only providing models and governance for personal behavior, but also unifying the whole of experience in a single religious manifold, embracing phenomena like econom-

ics and science that had proved incomprehensible for Christianity under modern conditions.

It is to this feeling of the unity of life and in particular of Islamic life that we owe the recurrent argument by Husayn that there is nothing truly revolutionary about Ibn Khaldun. Husayn again and again traces Khaldunian themes and styles of argument to long-enduring Islamic concerns: to classical theological concerns still canvassed at al-Azhar, to *ousul el fiqh* and *tedjrih oua tâdil* (improbability and justification) as interpretive disciplines, to preexisting encyclopedias (pp. 62–67), and so on. For Husayn, it is merely the project of universal history itself that is new in Ibn Khaldun, a novelty particularly with respect to earlier writers like Plato and Aristotle, who were general political theorists, to be sure, but only theorists of a world of city-states. The reader comes away with the sense that Husayn believes that the universalizing project is Islamic in general rather than Ibn Khaldun's in particular, and indeed that it proceeds from the universalizing tendencies of Islam itself.

Yet even while he establishes this universalizing Islamic theme, Husayn also brings to his analysis of Ibn Khaldun a number of quite particular loyalties. He is a militant Egyptian patriot. Sometimes this appears in minor claims: that Ibn Khaldun's real insights come only when he arrives in Egypt, for example, or that only Egypt could provide the historical sources and support Ibn Khaldun needed. Yet eventually we get a full blown statement:

But there are many nations, of which the power has lasted much longer than that of the Arab empire, which have existed and have been able to resist all sorts of shocks and external invasions, not by means of links of blood [Ibn Khaldun's "group feeling"] but thanks to a sentiment more large, which itself constitutes the national spirit. The invincible resistance of these nations did not attract the attention of Ibn Khaldun.

What counted for him was the succession of reigning dynasties, not the nation itself, which lasts in spite of external changes, a complex ensemble of material and moral heritages, transmitted since far distant times. If, from the Muslim conquest down to the times of Ibn Khaldun, eight dynasties had succeeded to the throne of Egypt, for example, the Egyptian nation stayed always the same. (P. 125)

This is rampant late 19th-century nationalism. Yet at other times, Husayn supports not Egypt against the non-Egyptian Arabs, but Arabs against Persians (for Husayn, the Persians weakened the true nature of Arab Islam) or against the Turks (Husayn feels that if the Turks hadn't destroyed Egyptian intellectual institutions, Egypt would be as advanced as the West) rather than anti-Arab. Husayn's politics thus have a concentric quality, reaching out in circles from Egyptian nationalism, to Arabism, to Islamism; it is therefore surprising that he chides Ibn Khaldun for believing in only one social form (one "society," in the Durkheimian sense). That social form is the organized state, and Husayn himself notes

that Ibn Khaldun uses two words for it: *chab* (which Husayn renders as French *peuple*) and *ommah* (which Husayn renders as French *nation*). Yet the second is precisely the term usually used for the larger Islamic community of peoples taken as a whole and, in fact, used for that purpose by Ibn Khaldun.

Thus, the relation (or the identity) of religion and politics is in fact an open issue for both Ibn Khaldun and Husayn. On the one hand, Husayn, like his predecessor, considers Islam a single enterprise and unit. Both take it for granted that despite all apparent variation there is a single enterprise called Islam. Both also take it for granted that this enterprise involves indistinguishably those behaviors that later social thought would insist on differentiating as religion and politics. The question of their relation/identity is discussed in the *Muqaddimah* in chapter 3, sections 23–28. In discussing those central passages, Husayn argues that Ibn Khaldun was chiefly a theorist of politics. This is a Durkheimian critique; Ibn Khaldun has not really seen “society” as a whole but is preoccupied with kings and leaders. But in fact Ibn Khaldun’s discussion of the caliphate ranges quite broadly across not only the (later) political and religious spheres, but the economic and social spheres as well. Ibn Khaldun’s argument aims to show how prophecy and royal authority emerge separately, can (and do) sometimes then merge, and then finally how religious vitality ebbs away, leaving mere political authority, which then falls in the usual Khaldunian fashion. (This is Max Weber’s routinization of charisma argument, five centuries earlier and in more detail.) More important, this analysis involves central and long-contested questions of Islamic polity. Ibn Khaldun and Husayn both note that Muhammad declaimed against “group feeling” as well as against (the authoritative procedure of) taxation, and the *Muqaddimah* discusses in detail the issues of lineage, authority, and prophecy in the Mecca period that underlie the difference of Sunni and Shi’i. But Ibn Khaldun also draws evidence from the histories of the Abassids and the Umayyads. Yet in analyzing this discussion, Husayn gets lost in the matter of whether the caliph must be a Qurashite, an issue Ibn Khaldun himself left unresolved, despite its profound importance in the history of Islam. Ultimately, Husayn’s analysis seems less clear than the original.

This may reflect the modern situation in which Husayn found himself. For Husayn’s analysis of the “election” of the caliph is particularly striking. By the language Husayn chooses, he means clearly to suggest that the responsibility of the caliph to the people and the right of the people to “elect” a new caliph are signs of the inherent modernism of Islam, perhaps even of a compatibility with modern liberal government. Ibn Khaldun’s analysis of this “election” of the caliph, by contrast, is much more like the Chinese concept of *tianming*, according to which Heaven’s withdrawal of its mandate from an unjust ruler is paralleled by that rul-

er's fall from power (an analysis open to the interpretation that "the mandate of heaven" is simply a rationalization of material events). This is a much more general concept of "election." Yet Husayn tries to paint Ibn Khaldun as a divine right theorist of the Bossuet type (p. 122) Perhaps the simultaneous attempt to qualify in French literature and Islamic history led him to confusion.

Husayn's dissertation was his only foray into social thought. His later career would take him to literary studies, fiction, popular social commentary, and educational reform. But that one foray shows us how a modernist Islam juxtaposed Western secular thinking and classical Muslim historiography. The metropolitan and Christian appropriators of Ibn Khaldun have selected their themes very carefully, finding in the great philosopher only those ideas that comfortably correspond with modern metropolitan thinking. For they seek merely a forerunner, a prophet of modern social science—indeed, a prophet of themselves. Husayn's Ibn Khaldun is much more alive. He lives in his times, his place, his religion. Husayn judges him not only as a theorist and historian, but also as a Muslim, as a political actor, even as a husband. Whole areas of Ibn Khaldun that modern historiography has passed over—his detailed discussion of the caliphate, for example—become matters of controversy and importance for Husayn, precisely because they are seen within the living tradition of Islam.

This depth of interpretation happens because it was Husayn's gift to straddle different worlds: blind and sighted, Egypt and France, social thought and literary studies. In her memoir after his death, his widow left a picture of this gift:

Recalling today that morning [a Sunday during their later years], I think of that mysterious agreement which always unified us in the respect of our different religions. Some were astonished. Others understood that I could say my rosary while you were listening to the Quran in the next room. I still now turn on the radio to hear verses of the Quran when I start the rosary, and in any case I hear it internally. You spoke to me often of the Quran, translating favorite verses for me, you read the Bible, I spoke of Jesus. You often said, "One does not fool God." St. Paul said it as well. Certainly, one does not fool God. (*Avec Toi* [Paris: Editions de Cerf, 2011], p. 49.)

No, indeed. Only those are fooled who can see nothing but themselves.