

Al-Masiri's Framework in Understanding and Examining the Jewish Communities

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Abstract: *This paper deals with al-Masiri's framework in examining the Jews. Contrary to sweeping narratives such as the Jewish nature, the Jewish genius, the Jewish mischief, the Jewish conspiracy, etc., al-Masiri argues that the Jews or Jewish communities, as he prefers to call, should be understood within the social, cultural, religious, and political contexts of the societies they live in. To fathom the Jews or Jewish communities, al-Masiri claims, one should take into account the epistemological, civilizational, and socio-economic dimensions away from simplistic, one-dimensional or monistic narratives. Hence, al-Masiri brings forth a new framework that includes three paradigms, namely al-*ulĒliyyah al-KamĒniyyah al-WĒĪdiyyah* (i.e., monistic pantheistic immanence), al-*ĀlmĒniyyah al-ShĒmillah* (i.e., comprehensive secularism), al-*JamĒĒt al-WaĒĒfiyyah* (i.e., functional groups). These three paradigms, as al-Masiri argues, have analytical power that enables a thorough and genuine understanding and evaluation of the Jews or Jewish communities. It is a counternarrative approach able to display the epistemological underpinnings that lie beneath the common frequent narratives about the Jews and Jewish communities. Thus, this paper aims at critically exploring, explaining and evaluating the three paradigms devised by al-Masiri as analytical tools to define, understand, and analyse the Jewish communities. This paper adopts qualitative method of content analysis taking into account the framework of relevantization.*

Keywords: al-Masiri, Jewish communities, paradigms, epistemological underpinnings, comprehensive secularism, monistic pantheistic immanence, functional groups, framework

1. Introduction

This study comes at a time in which many Muslims around the world have almost developed a firm belief that the Jews are either omnipotent or omniscient. They believe that nothing can happen on this earth unless the Jews have a clue of it or most often mastermind it. Furthermore, they believe in the biblical account of the Jews being the chosen people by God over their fellow human beings. This belief, in fact, can also be said to have roots in the Quran where several verses state the preponderance of the Jewish people over the rest of mankind. However, this should be understood in the historical context of the Jewish communities at some point in the history of mankind. On the other hand, Jews are sometimes regarded by Muslims as eternal evil—they have no moral values whatsoever, treating them as the sons of monkeys and pigs. This view suggests that nothing good can come from them and that all the sufferings and afflictions that befall mankind are all due to the wickedness of the Jews. Likewise, this view claims that the occupation of Palestine by the Jews is a clear demonstration to the eternal and innate wickedness of the Jewish

communities throughout history. All these make this study significant and so relevant. It is an epistemological assessment of the Jewish communities in the eyes of al-Masârê (1938-2008). Hence, this paper examines al-Masârê's statement that the Jews have been influenced throughout history by different social, cultural, religious and psychological factors. In fact, this paper explores al-Masârê's framework, namely *al-×ulËliyyah al-KamËniyyah al-WËËidiyyah* (i.e., immanent monistic pantheism), *al-ÑAlmËniyyah al-ShËmilah* (i.e. comprehensive secularism), and *al-JamËÑËt al-WaÐËfiyyah* (i.e. functional groups) and how it led him to form his perspective vis-à-vis the Jewish communities. So, who is al-Masârê? What is his framework? How has his framework led him to believe that Jewish communities should be understood within the socio-economic, cultural, religious, and psychological contexts of the majority societies they have lived in?

2. A Brief Account of Al-Masârê's Life

ÑAbd al-Wahhab Muhammad Ahmad al-Masârê was born in Damanhur, the capital city of Buhayrah district, in 1938, Egypt. He received his early education –preparatory and secondary school in Damanhur, his birthplace. This period marks, as al-Masârê hailed it, “the period of “seeds” i.e., the early stage of al-Masârê's intellectual development. Afterwards, he enrolled in the English Department, Faculty of English Literature at the University of Alexandria in 1955. After graduation, he was appointed as assistant lecturer at the same university. In 1963, he was sent to the United States to pursue his postgraduate studies. He obtained his MA in 1964 at Columbia University, US. Then, in 1969, he earned his PhD at Rutgers University. The undergraduate and postgraduate period, both represent “the roots” i.e. the maturity stage in al-Masârê's intellectual life. After he had returned back to Egypt, he taught at Ain Shams University and several regional universities, the most important of which being King Saud University (1983-1988). He was invited as a visiting Professor at Nasser Higher Military Academy and International Islamic University Malaysia. He also worked as a member of Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies (1970-1975), and as a cultural advisor to the Permanent Delegation of the Arab League to the United Nations in New York (1975-1979). He was also a member of the Board of Trustees of the University of Islamic and Social Sciences, Blissberg, Virginia, USA. In addition, he was an editorial consultant in a number of periodicals, which are published in Malaysia, Iran, the United States, England and France. This stage is what al-Masârê labeled as “*Al-Thamar or fruit*” i.e. the productivity stage. al-Masârê was a prolific writer, hence, left several works—the most remarkable are his magnum opus “*Encyclopedia of the Jew, Judaism, and Zionism: a new interpretive paradigm*” (8 volumes), and “*My Intellectual Journey- Seeds, Roots and Fruits: non-subjective and non-objective biography*”. Other monumental works are: “*Partial and Comprehensive Secularism*” (2 volumes), and “*The Problematic of Bias: an epistemological view and call for ijihad*” (7 volumes). He wrote also on both Western and American culture such as *The Earthly Paradis, The Material Philosophy vis-à-vis The Deconstruction of Man, Modernity and Post-modernity*” and other studies on Western modernity. He is also an author of several linguistic and literary works, the most important of which are: “*Language and Metaphor: Between Tawhid and Pantheism or The Unity of Existence*”, “*Studies on Poetry*”, and “*Literature and Thought*”. He has a collection of poems entitled “*Songs or Lines of Experience, confusion and*

innocence: The Story of Poem”. He also has several writings on children’s stories and a collection of poems on children. Al-Masîrî died on the 3rd July 2008 after a long struggle with disease¹.

This intellectual evolution in al-Masîrî’s life informs the maturity stage. This evolution also includes how he went from literary criticism, his *métier*, to thought and philosophy. ØalÉÍ ×aÐËn thinks that this due to al-Masîrî’s view on unity of knowledge². Al-Masîrî believes that even though there is classification of knowledge, nonetheless, its branches are interconnected. ØalÉÍ may have lost sight that literary criticism is guided by a myriad of philosophical school of thoughts. Likewise, philosophy has a pervasive nature, that is, it permeates the whole body of knowledge. This is perhaps what explains this intellectual transition of al-Masîrî from literature to philosophy. In addition, al-Masîrî himself in his autobiography does not hide his affiliation to German critical school of thought³. So much so that he uses some terminologies that belong to Frankfurt school of thought such as his theory of reification, commodification, functional groups, *Gesellschaft vis-à-vis Gemeinschaft*, etc.⁴.

3. Theoretical Framework of Al-Masîrî

To study a phenomenon—be it natural or social—requires an analytical tool that can help one understand not only the different aspects of that particular phenomenon but also other many different phenomena. Such overarching analytical tool is referred to by al-Masîrî as *namÉdhaj*—paradigm, which is a complex, analytical and epistemological approach devised by al-Masîrî in an attempt to critically investigate human societies. He applies such analytical tool referred to as paradigm mostly to western modernity. Likewise, he uses it on studies related peculiarly to the Jewish societies and Zionism in its epistemological, civilizational, socio-economic and political dimensions away from simplistic, simple-minded, one-dimensional or monistic narratives about the Jews, Judaism and Zionism. *NamÉdhaj*, according to al-Masîrî, must be universal and abstract. Thus, al-Masîrî uses it on the Jews and Zionism as a case study in a comparative, universal and human context. This special case is not absolute and universal but rather belongs to a wide-ranging abstract archetype⁵. This, of course, does not imply ignoring the exclusive features that well epitomize Zionist and Jewish phenomena. In nutshell, it is an attempt to engage the Jewish and Zionist phenomena in the overarching range of human sciences, sociology, anthropology, sociology of knowledge, and the history of mankind. This paper aims, therefore, to explain, analyze, and relevelize these *namÉdhij* or paradigms—*al-×ulÉliyyah al-KamÉniyyah al-WÉliidiyyah* (i.e., immanent monistic pantheism), *al-ÑAlmÉniyyah al-ShÉmillah* (i.e., comprehensive secularism), *al-JamÉÑÉt al-WaÐÉfiyyah* (i.e., functional groups)—in order to analyze, deconstruct, and reconstruct some narratives about the Jewish communities.

¹ See al-Masîrî’s website: <http://www.elmessiri.com/showpage.php?page_id=1?i=1&selected_item_id=2> (accessed 30 October 2013)

² ØalÉh ×azËn, “RiËlah al-Masîrî min ÑÓlam al-Naqd al-AdabÉ IË ÑÓlam al-Fikr” in Abd al-WahÉb al-Masîrî fË ÑUyËn ‘AdiqÉ’ih wa NuqqÉdih, Edited by Ahmad Abdul ×alÉm ‘AlËyyah (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2007), 519.

³ Reading his works gives you the impression that he is influenced by the German school of thought particularly by Theodor W. Adorno. However, this needs more thorough study in order to prove it.

⁴ RiËlatÉ al-Fikriyyah Fi al-BudhËr Wa al-JudhËr Wa al-Thamar: SËrah Gayr DhÉtiyyah Gayr al-MaudËÑiyyah, Dar al-Shuruq, Cairo, 64.

⁵ Ahmad MirzÉq, “FË al-Manhajiyyah al-ÑIlmiyyah wa al-NamÉdhij al-’IdrÉkiyyah” in ÑAbd al-Wahhab Al-Masîrî fË ÑUyËn ‘AdiqÉ’ih wa NuqqÉdih, edited by Ahmad ÑAbd al-×alÉm ÑAlËyyah (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2007), 169-174.

4. Al-×Ulōliyyah Al-Kamōniyyah Al-Wó×Idiyyah (i.e., immanent monistic pantheism)

Most worldviews revolve around three or in fact two elements: on the one hand God, and on the other man and nature (i.e., the world). The *ÍulĒlĒ* (pantheistic) or *kamĒnĒ* worldview⁶—also referred to by al-MasĒrĒ as *al-ÍulĒliyyah al-kamĒniyyah al-wĒÍidiyyah* or *wáldat al-wujĒd* (i.e. Unity of Being or pantheism)—perceives God and the world (man and nature) as ensuing from one essence. All three together represent a solid organic and coherent world with no spaces and intervals, but rather characterized by a strict monism where all phenomena regardless of their diversities and miscellaneous features are attributed to one principle immanent in the world which is considered the source of the unity of the universe, its coherence, its life, and its energy—it is the driving force inherent in it through which everything can be interpreted. Al-MasĒrĒ differentiates between two different but joint concepts of *wáldat al-wujĒd* (Unity of Being): *wáldat al-wujĒd al-rĒÍiyyah* (i.e. Unity of Spiritual Being or spiritual pantheism) and *wáldat al-wujĒd al-mĒdiyyah* (i.e. Unity of Material Being or material pantheism). These may differ in some respects but remain the same in terms of principles and structure. Both perceive the world as resulting from one single essence⁷. Al-MasĒrĒ in away reiterates a point made by Crane Brinton (1898-1968) whereby he treats rationalism as parallel to Protestantism, materialism, positivism, atheism, unitarianism, even deism⁸. This is a representation of unity of existence expressed by western materialistic monistic *namĒdhaj*. It is this incorporation of what physical to what is metaphysical that al-MasĒrĒ regards as a manifestation unity of existence in the western mind. Atheism, materialism, rationalism, Sufi metaphysics and theism for instance are all incorporate subjects expressing both material and spiritual pantheism or spiritual materialism⁹.

This one essence or principle is known as ‘God’ or ‘the divine essence’ in belief systems related to *wáldat al-wujĒd al-rĒÍiyyah* or spiritual pantheism¹⁰ (*al-ÍulĒliyyah al-kamĒniyyah al-rĒÍiyyah*)¹¹. For example, in this belief systems they always say that ‘God is immanent in nature and man. *Wáldat al-wujĒd al-rĒÍiyyah* perceives God as the essence and reality while nature or the world is illusion. Even if there is a world, it is part of God and does not have an independent existence—denial of the universe. As for the worldviews that embrace *wáldat al-wujĒd al-mĒdiyyah* or material pantheism (*al-ÍulĒliyyah al-kamĒniyyah al-mĒdiyyah*) the essence or the principle is referred to as ‘Law of Motion’ or ‘Laws of Nature’ or ‘Nature/Matter’, or ‘Scientific Laws, etc.’¹² This law, as the proponents of this worldview perceive it, is all-inclusive, therefore,

⁶ Al-MasĒrĒ uses worldview and paradigm or *namudhaj* interchangeably. He uses worldview more to denote *weltanschauung* – a particular philosophy or view of life, while employing paradigm as an analytical tool. Thus, worldview is inert, and paradigm is active. For al-MasĒrĒ, paradigm is the dynamic form of worldview.

⁷ This is true because, as al-Masiri often reiterates, the range of vocabulary such as incarnation, emanation, immanence, emanatism, pantheism, animism, deism, anthropomorphism, materialism, humanism, Hegelianism, even spiritualism etc. express the same thing and have a common denominator, which is their belief is unity of existence. This range of vocabulary underpins the unity of god, man and nature, which is a manifestation of pantheism. See: ÑAbdu al-WahhĒb al-MasĒrĒ, *MausĒNat al-YahĒd Wa al-YahĒdiyyah Wa al-NálrĒniyyah: Náwa TafsĒr JadĒd*, (Cairo: Dar al-Sharq, 1999), 181-190

⁸ Brinton Crane, *The Shaping of Modern Thought*, 2nd ed, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1963), 82-84.

⁹ Stephen J. Gould (2006) *Cooptation Through Conflation: Spiritual Materialism is Not the Same as Spirituality*, *Consumption Markets & Culture*, volume 9, 2006, issue 1.

¹⁰ John O Maolearca, *Spirit in the Materialist World: on the Structure of Regard*, *Angelika*, volume 19, 2014, Issue 1.

¹¹ ÑAbdu al-WahhĒb al-MasĒrĒ, *MausĒNat al-YahĒd Wa al-YahĒdiyyah Wa al-ŌuhyĒniyyah: Náwa TafsĒr JadĒd*, (Cairo: Dar al-Sharq, 1999), 190-194

¹² Ahmad MirzĒq, “FĒ al-Manhajiyah al-ÑIlmiyyah wa al-NamĒdhij al-‘IdrĒkiyyah” in ÑAbd al-Wahhab Al-MasĒrĒ FĒ ÑUyĒn ‘AlđiqĒ’ih wa NuqĒdih, edited by Ahmad ÑAbd al-×alĒm ÑAlĒiyah (Damascus: Dar al-Firkr, 2007), 193-197, and ÑAbdu al-

able to interpret all phenomena, including man. The cliché here is a number of statements such as ‘the laws of physical motion apply to all things in the universe’ and ‘based on scientific laws, we can conclude so and so’. Here God is peripheral, that is, even if He exists, He is with no independent essence. He is, rather, inherent and immanent in nature and does not have an independent reality. Hence, nature or the world is self-contained and inheres all what it needs including God to interpret itself. There is no God outside the world—deification of the universe. This deification of the universe and material world is pervasive in western philosophy with all its various school of thought.

5. Al-Ņalmóniyah Al-Shómilah (i.e comprehensive secularism)

Secularism is a vague term. In fact, it has many connotations: anti-religion, atheism, state noninvolvement in religious matters, the separation of religion from state, the demarcation of what is holy from what is profane, and the expulsion of religious rituals and symbols from the public domain. This traditional definition of secularism is seen by al-MasĒrĒ as simplistic, and therefore he suggests a more sophisticated definition that take into account the epistemological, metaphysical and ethical underpinnings of secularism— he suggests an all-encompassing and philosophical definition.

6. The Philosophical Dimension of Secularism

According to George Jacob Holyoake (1817-1906) secularism:

“is the study of promoting human welfare by material means; measuring human welfare by the utilitarian rule and making the service of others a duty of life. Secularism relates to the present existence of man, and to action, the issues of which can be tested by the experience of this life—having for its objects the development of the physical, moral, and intellectual nature of man to the highest perceivable point, as the immediate duty of society: inculcating the practical sufficiency of natural morality apart from Atheism, Theism, or Christianity: engaging its adherents in the promotion of human improvement by material means, and making these agreements the ground of common unity for all who would regulate life by reason and ennoble it by service. The Secular is sacred in its influence on life, for by purity of material conditions the loftiest natures are best sustained, and the lower the most surely elevated. Secularism is a series of principles intended for the guidance of those who find Theology indefinite, or inadequate, or deem it unreliable. It replaces theology, which mainly regards life as a sinful necessity, as a scene of tribulation through which we pass to a better world. Secularism rejoices in this life and regards it as the sphere of those duties which educate men to fitness for any future and better life, should such transpire.”¹³

This quotation, in a nutshell, suggests explicitly the philosophical dimension of secularism. Moreover, it emphasizes that secularism manifests itself in three dimensions: philosophical (with all its three main branches: epistemology, metaphysics and ethics), sociological and political. In

WahhĒb al-MasĒrĒ, *MausĒŅat al-YahĒd Wa al-YahĒdiyyah Wa al-ŌuhyĒniyyah: NaĴwa TafsĒr JadĒd*, (Cairo: Dar al-Sharq, 1999), 196.

¹³ George Jacob Holyoake, *The Principles of Secularism*, (London: Book Store, 1871), 11.

philosophy, secularism is the rejection of metaphysics and transcendence with adoption of existential and empirical existence of the universe. In sociology, secularism relates to modernization, in particular that which gradually reduces the impact of religion in social institutions. In politics, secularism is attached to the separation of religion and state¹⁴.

Encyclopedia Americana also defines secularism in a more complex way that not only portrays secularism as an ethical system but also as philosophical one:

Secularism is an ethical system founded on the principles of natural morality and independent of revealed religion or supernaturalism. Secularism was first proposed as a formal philosophical system by George J. Holyoake about 1846, in England... secularism asserts the right to discuss and debate all vital questions, such as opinions regarding the foundations of moral obligations, the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the authority of conscience¹⁵.

The above definition shows secularism is by no means a simple term—the separation of the religion from state; it is rather a complex one. Furthermore, secularism according to this definition is an epistemological, metaphysical and ethical system that which is autonomous from supernaturalism and that which raises fundamental questions such as the existence of God, moral obligations, whether or not the soul is immortal, etc...

The same implication is observed by Britannica whereby it refers to that the central issue addressed by secularism is its tendency to focus on human and his total autonomy from religious restriction. That is to say human has in himself a self-governing power and does not need an outside or supernatural power to guide him. It maintains that human is the central point around which the world is based. In other words, it refers to humanism, which is the deification of man. It is, thereby, an ontological, epistemological, metaphysical and ethical issue *par excellence*¹⁶. The same implication is also expressed by Encyclopedic Dictionary of the World, which sees secularism as a social and ethical system¹⁷. Similarly, we can observe the same conclusion from Cox's 'dimensions of secularism'—the 'disenchantment' of nature, the 'desacralization' of politics and the 'deconsecration' of values¹⁸.

Al-Attas (1931) also emphasizes this philosophical dimension, especially when he refers to western civilization as a rationalistic worldview. He states:

Secularization is the result of the misapplication of Greek philosophy in western theology and metaphysics, which in the 17th century logically led to the scientific revolution enunciated by Descartes, who opened the doors to doubt and skepticism; and successively in the 18th and 19th centuries and in our own times, to atheism and

¹⁴ The Oxford Encyclopedia of The Islamic World, (ed*) "Secularism."

¹⁵ The Encyclopedia Americana, ed*, "secularism."

¹⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v. "secularism,"

<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/532006/secularism>> (accessed 17 September 2021)

¹⁷ Encyclopaedic Dictionary of The World, ed*, "secularism."

¹⁸ Harvey Cox, 19-32.

agnosticism, to utilitarianism, dialectical materialism, evolutionism and historicism...¹⁹

All these are hints by al-Attas at that secularism has a philosophical dimension, thereby, is a worldview, that is, it involves epistemological, sociological, metaphysical and political dimensions.

All these definitions implicitly demonstrate that secularism is a worldview, and it is not, therefore, reducible to political spheres alone. Moreover, it is a system that tries to understand nature, matter and human being and their relationship with God. However, they do not clearly and plainly highlight that fact. Hence, al-Mas^Ê^Ê²⁰ could be considered the first scholar who explicitly states out that secularism is a worldview, that it has epistemological, metaphysical and ethical dimensions, and that it is not reducible only to the economic and political dimensions²¹.

7. Secularism in the View of Al-Mas^Ê^Ê

It should be borne in mind that al-Mas^Ê^Ê looks at secularism as a ‘worldview’ or framework²² not as a partial phenomenon that is independent from other phenomena. Furthermore, according to al-Mas^Ê^Ê, secularism is a framework that deals with major issues. That is to say, secularism has epistemological, metaphysical and ethical underpinnings. Epistemologically, it asks three major questions: what are the key sources of knowing? How can we be certain of what we know? As human beings, is there any limit of what we can know? In response to these questions, we have two traditional schools—rationalism²³ and empiricism²⁴. As for the metaphysical problems, we have many trends: monism²⁵ as opposed to pluralism²⁶; immanence as opposed to transcendence²⁷; atheism; agnostic believe; and naïve realism²⁸ as opposed to metaphysical idealism²⁹. Finally, the ethical problems involve hedonism and eudemonism on the one hand, and teleology and deontology on the other hand. They also involve egoism, altruism, and so on and so forth... All these trends and schools are product of western society. All these phenomena that seem unrelated

¹⁹ Al-Attas, 17-20.

²⁰ Look at chapter five on the subheading ‘the rationale behind al-Mas^Ê^Ê proposition of a new definition for secularism’.

²¹ Al-Mas^Ê^ÊAbd al-Wahhab, “Secularism, Immanence and Deconstruction” in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*, Edited by John Esposito and Azzam Tamimi, (London: Hurst and Company, 2000), 53-58.

²² See the definition of the term in chapter one at footnote page number three.

²³ In general, the philosophic approach that emphasizes reason as the primary source of knowledge, prior or superior to, and independent of sense perceptions.

²⁴ All that we know is ultimately dependent on sense data. Reason cannot on its own provide us with knowledge of reality without reference to sense experience and the use of our sense organs. Thus, information provided by our senses serves as the basic building block of all knowledge.

²⁵ (from Greek, monos, single) the theory that all things in the universe can be reduced to (or explained in terms of) the activity of one fundamental constituent (God, matter, mind, energy, form)

²⁶ (from latin, pluralis, from plus, pluris, more than one) it is the belief that there are more than one and more than tow kinds of fundamental realities. That there are many separate, irreducible, and independent levels of things in the universe.

²⁷ A metaphysical question regarding the existence of God and his relationship to the world. Does God exist? If so, does he dwell in nature or is he separate from nature? Those who argue that God exists and dwells in within nature are said to believe in an immanent God; those who say that exists apart from or beyond nature are said to believe in a transcendent God.

²⁸ The belief that the world is as we perceive it. No distinction exists between what the world appears to be like (appearance) and what the world is really like (reality).

²⁹ The theory that (a) no object can exist without a mind (subject, self, ego) perceiving it, and (b) only minds and their content (ideas, images, perceptions, etc...) exist. See, Peter A. Angels, *The harper =Collins Dictionary of Philosophy*, HarperPerennial A Division of HarperCollins Publishers, 2nd edition, New York

and independent from one another have common latent denomination that makes them all one entity. In fact, each one of all these various trends, which sprang from western modernity, uses a range of vocabulary that describes different phenomena found in western societies without any realization whatsoever of any relationship between these vocabularies. al-Mas'ûrÊ, therefore, claims that there is relationship between these terms, and that they all, directly or indirectly express one thing—secularism.

8. Al-Jamóñót Al-Waúðfiyyah or Functional Groups

According to al-Mas'ûrÊ, this term— ‘functional groups’—is an analytical framework connected with the waves of reality and the curves of phenomena. It can establish relationships between different phenomena that may look disassociated and discursive. It is not a framework that restrict itself to objective reality or limit it to subjective reality. It is rather a framework where both subjective and objective realities reside. It is an all-inclusive framework that encompasses universal and partial realities. It is a term that gives the Jewish groups some characteristics, however, not exclusive. In fact, these characteristics are a product of the societies the members of the Jewish groups live in. Therefore, these characteristics and particularities are mostly shared by all minorities living in different societies—every minority within its own context. Thus, there is no such thing as a Jewish characteristic, a Jewish essence, a Jewish genius, or a Jewish crime. Jewish characteristics differ in time and place. That is, the values of the Jewish groups are guided by universal values as well as the values and principles of the majority societies they live in³⁰.

Al-Mas'ûrÊ, therefore, defines³¹ ‘functional groups’ as a term meant to describe human groups brought by human societies from outside in most cases or recruited from within the members of the same society—especially from ethnic or religious groups; they also can be brought from far villages or selected from among certain family groups. These human groups or functional groups are, therefore, assigned by the society to do some professions and involved in occupations the members of the majority society usually abhor and hate doing for different reasons³². It may be because the majority society wants to keep their communal values and principles. Therefore, they charge the functional groups with abhorrent professions such as moneylending and prostitution or even with skillful occupations such as lawyers, translators and medical doctors; because these occupations require high level professionalism, which means, dealing with people with no regard to social and communal relationship. Business, objective and contract-based relationship is what determines professionalism. That is why professional occupations as well as some repugnant jobs are mostly done by functional groups or what al-Mas'ûrÊ terms as ‘foreign contractors’—alien from the rest of majority society which wants to preserve what they consider to be communal and societal values: kindness, clemency and leniency, all which cannot help in occupational and contract-based encounters. Furthermore, a society may bring a human functional group in order to occupy vacant jobs or services urgently needed by the members of that society. Likewise, it may invite those functional groups in for settlement purposes. Similarly, functional groups may be brought in to occupy very sensitive posts in the ruling body of that society such as security guards and doctors charged to take care of a king or president. They may be assigned as ambassadors or

³⁰ Ibid, 361.

³¹ ÑAbdu al-Wahhab al-Mas'ûrÊ, TÊrÊkh al-Fikr al-ÓuhyÊnÊ: JudhÊruhÊ, Wa MasÊruhÊ, Wa 'AzmatuhÊ, 1st ed, (Cairo: DÊr al-ShurÊq, 2010), 643-644.

³² Lewis Bernard, *The Jews of Islam*, (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2008), 90-91.

intelligence agents. Moreover, immigrants usually turn into functional groups especially when they first arrive in their new society because most of the common jobs are normally occupied by the members of the majority society. This forces immigrants to fill in vacant jobs that are most neglected by the majority society³³.

9. Conclusion

The Jewish communities according to al-Mas'ûdî have been influenced by Western modernity and all its ideals. This explains why many Jews have pantheistic and monistic worldview vis-à-vis God, man and nature. This pantheistic worldview is a byproduct of western modernity. Therefore, the pantheistic behaviour we see in some Jews is a manifestation of western worldview. Comprehensive secularism al-Mas'ûdî believes is a set of Western modernist and postmodernist ideals aimed at dehumanizing man, desacralizing nature, condemning God to death. Atheism, materialism, humanism, hedonism, Darwinism, colonialism, Zionism—to name few—are all manifestations of Western ideals—Western *weltanschauung*. As such, the secularist behaviour including atheist, materialist, secular-humanist, hedonist, Darwinist, colonialist, and Zionist conduct we see in Jewish communities today is an offshoot of Western *weltanschauung* and social order. Functional group is a sociological and anthropological framework that serves as an approach to understanding minority groups living in larger majority societies. This is a sociological view that treats the Jewish communities as part of functional groups living in a larger majority host society. Therefore, to have better understanding of the Jewish communities one should look at them as minority groups that have lived in majority societies throughout history. Minority groups, although they have their own cultures known in sociology as sub-cultures, nonetheless, mostly tend to be influenced by majority cultures and norms. They Jewish communities, as a result, are not an exception of that rule of the thumb. For al-Mas'ûdî, the Jews of today have internalized Western ideals, hence, Zionism is a manifestation of Western Darwinist and colonialist behaviour.

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³³ Ibid, 90-91.



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