

TA'ARRUF AS A PHILOSOPHY OF MUSLIM EDUCATION: Extending Abu Bakr Effendi's pragmatism, by Yusef Waghid. Stellenbosch: SUNPress, 2020, 157 pages ISBN 978-1-928357-76-6.

“O humankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allāh is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allāh has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).”

The above verse as quoted from *The Apartments* (chapter 49: verse 13), explicates the notion of *ta'arruf* (associated knowing), which Waghid uses as a central theme in defence of a philosophy of Muslim education that is rooted in scripture, the Qurān, itself. *Ta'arruf* (associated knowing) “promotes teaching and learning in pluri-culturally diverse communities where the question of critical rigour based on reasoned judgments guides responsible and just human actions” (59).

This prised book, *Ta'arruf as a philosophy of Muslim education. Extending Abu Bakr Effendi's pragmatism*, provides a thoughtful, layered and well-argued justification of a philosophy of Muslim education that is premised on Qurānic scripture as the source of absolute truth. The world as we know it today, battered by the turbulent onslaught of an invisible virus since early 2020, exposed deep division in the global world, amongst others, along country, poverty, ethnicity, religious and gender lines. The deeply rooted divisions were always with us; yet, the global corona virus pandemic exacerbated the clearly defined lines of difference. Rightly, one could argue that, in a time where the global world, inclusive of humans and non-humans, are in mourning, the publication of a book that could possibly promote division or isolation or which is only applicable to a certain category of educational scholars is inapt. Yet, that would be a superficial and an imprudent judgement, as through the arguments Waghid proffers throughout this book in defence of a philosophy of Muslim education, he inadvertently (or intentionally) creates a pathway towards building a community without borders; a community of difference and dissonance, en route towards human flourishing and care (inclusive of the earth).

The book makes a valuable contribution, as it argues for learning and teaching practices in higher education that are inclusive of human consciousness and human interrelationships to the extent that it will lead to a university that “engages its scholars openly, freely and

pluralistically in an atmosphere of intellectual hospitality and cooperation urging one another towards new openings and possibilities” (67). Waghid argues that such a university “evokes teachers and students towards a thinking that is constituted by *tadabbur* (contemplative thought), *ijtihad* (intellectual exertion), and where *ta’arruf* (associated knowing) is everywhere” (154). By evoking emotive care through self-reflection, intellectual reasoning and thought could be focused on solving societal ills and eliminating atrocious policies that aggravated the alienation and dehumanising of marginalised individuals and communities. The global world is in desperate need of change – ultimately, to preserve human life on this planet – and the educational landscape could act as incubator for thoughtful, open and caring leaders and experts. Waghid’s justification of a philosophy of education that is established on the notion of *ta’arruf* (associated knowing), inclusive of the fostering of the required conditions for human engagement, takes the global world one step closer in addressing the desperate need in search of social cohesion, peace between humans, but also peace between humans and non-humans.

These overarching ideas find expression in the layout of the book. The book consists of two parts. In Part I, Waghid explores the seminal thoughts of Abu Bakr Effendi, the great-great-grandfather of his spouse, through a preface and five chapters. After having established an understanding in Part I of a philosophy of Muslim education in the Cape, Waghid continues by providing a defence of *ta’arruf* (associated knowing) as a Muslim educational philosophy, in Part II, through a preface and ten chapters.

In Part I, the preface provides an introduction and some insight into the educational philosophy of Abu Bakr Effendi. The ensuing chapters accentuate a different dimension of this educational philosophy, namely that of a critical educational paradigm (Chapter one); on the cultivation of a community of thinking (Chapter two); on reflective thought to instigate practical action (Chapter three); and on gender and social liberation (Chapter four). In the concluding Chapter five, the author captures the essential value of Abu Bakr Effendi’s educational philosophy for today, hence providing a solid foundation upon which to re-think a philosophy of Muslim education that will be critical, pragmatic, rational and just.

In the preface to Part I, the author provides valuable historical information on Cape Muslim education. Of significant importance is the explication on the scarcity of Islamic literature, especially in written form and in the language spoken by the Cape Muslims at the time (mid- to late 1800s). In 1873, Abu Bakr Effendi produced an Arabic-Afrikaans exposition on Islam, called *Bayān al-Dīn*. Some scholars portray Abu Bakr Effendi as someone who caused dissent, specifically because of the guidance he provided through his *Bayān al-Dīn*. Waghid however strongly argues that Abu Bakr Effendi provided an opportunity for enhanced deliberation on religious matters, whilst engaging with the Cape Muslim community through

their spoken language. Abu Bakr Effendi “advocated for a critical understanding of Muslim education” (13) as he pursued both *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) and *qiyās* (analogical reasoning). Through the publication of his *Bayān al-Dīn*, he provided the Cape Muslim community with an invitation to assess dissimilar perspectives in order to engage deliberatively with scripture from the Qurān. Of importance for Abu Bakr Effendi was the importance of the Cape Muslim community to “deepen their thinking about religious matters and to act with discernment” (28). Consequently, some of Abu Bakr Effendi’s pronouncements were pragmatic in nature to address real-life societal ills, such as the exclusion of women from the educational landscape. These ills were often viewed to have a political orientation. In sum, Waghid establishes in Part I that Abu Bakr Effendi espoused a pragmatist philosophy of education in the Cape Muslim community. From this foundation, Waghid continues to Part II, with the central thesis of *ta’arruf* (associated knowing).

The preface and the ten chapters in Part II evolve from the notion of *ta’arruf* (associated knowing), which is evident in the chapter headings. Each individual chapter assists in progressing the concept of *ta’arruf* (associated knowing).

- Chapter one proffers the argument that *ta’arruf* is an extension of the notion of *ta’dib* (good education)
- Chapter two connects *ta’arruf* to the quest for *dhikr* (remembrance) and the pursuit of *tadabbur* (contemplation)
- Chapter three explicates how *ta’arruf* is enhanced through *ijtihād* (intellectual exertion)
- Chapter four explains the interrelationship between *ta’arruf* and *’adl* (justice)
- Chapter five presents an exploration of *ta’arruf* as teaching and learning
- Chapter six illuminates caring and compassionate action in the pursuit of *ta’arruf*
- Chapter seven elucidates the cultivation of *ummah* (community) in service of humanity through *ta’arruf*
- Chapter eight presents a further exploration of *ta’arruf* in a quest for justice among humanity
- Chapter nine elaborates on *ta’arruf* and a non-dichotomous understanding of knowledge
- Chapter ten concludes with a defence of a university of associational knowing (*jāmi’atu al-ta’arruf*).

In each of these chapters, the author argues compellingly for a renewed perspective on a Muslim philosophy of education. Each chapter provides a further layer regarding the concept of *ta’arruf*

(associated knowing) until the justification of the argument for a Muslim philosophy of education culminates in the apex, namely that of a relevant Muslim university concerned with “truth and justice” that will “make judgments about global cataclysms that cause humanity’s self-destruction” (153).

Explicit arguments that fittingly could contribute to higher education that is meaningful and influential towards a more cohesive society and human flourishing are provided throughout the book as the author proffers his defence of a Muslim philosophy of education. I briefly refer to some of these. Firstly, the author aptly argues that this is a book of potentiality. Religion, similar to education, is forward-looking by nature through a pathway of inward-looking. Both religion (the return of the Almighty) and education (the becoming of the individual into her or his full humanity) offer an invitation to a future promise. The author specifically argues for *ta’arruf* (associated knowing) that could lead to human flourishing. Yet, Waghid states, “human flourishing has an internal connection to what it means to become thinking, virtuous, purposeful, aspirational, relational and changing or renewable beings”; thus, to “become morally just beings” (59).

Secondly, the author reasons that scripture (see *The Apartments* chapter 49 verse 13 as quoted above) accentuates three key aspects pertaining to *ta’arruf* (associated knowing), namely:

- the intertwined connection with commonalities, differences and diversity;
- the inclusion of those outside of the Muslim faith; and
- the knowledge that is yet to come to fruition.

Education and hence a philosophy of education should “extend the parameters of cultural, political and economic boundaries on the basis that humanity is pluri-cultural and enacts differently and divergent ways of being” (64). Humanity therefore needs each other, to grow, to live justly as they, together, cohabit the earth and are reliant on each other, and the planet, to flourish. Furthermore, *ta’arruf* (associated knowing) offers a way to counteract dystopias in society, which is essential for social cohesion and human and non-human flourishing. Waghid specifically argues how, through the responsible utilisation of *ta’arruf* (associated knowing), atrocities committed in the name of autocracy, patriarchy, profit-above-all and dehumanisation practices – that lead to poverty, hunger, damage to the environment or torture – could be mitigated.

Thirdly, *ta’arruf* (associated knowing) requires an openness to one’s internal borders

through self-reflection, but equally so to others, whether from otherness in difference in religion, culture, gender or ethnicity. Only under such conditions will deliberate encounters with others “be legitimate as one does not engage with others on the basis of prejudice towards one’s own ways of being and acting” (76). Such an openness, a willingness to traverse the internal borders of the self, exemplifies “an expectation of alterity”, meaning that one is willing that one’s thoughts, views, perspectives and actions are re-shaped through the expanding potential of the encounter with another, rather than to be “just confined to what presents itself in a narrow known way” (86). Such a contemplative position, the author argues, allows for the potential to “be influenced by reasons in a persuasive way” in order to derive at “thoughts not yet thought of before”, which ultimately could lead to new just policies and just actions to address the excruciating complexities and inequalities in the present global world (86). Practicing *ta’arruf* (associated knowing) should therefore move beyond mere thoughts (knowing) to practical action; in other words, *ta’arruf* (associated knowing) promotes a philosophy of education that is intrinsically pragmatic.

Fourthly, *ta’arruf* (associated knowing) as pedagogical practice should involve both a provocation to think independently and evocation to act justly. Such pedagogical practice requires of teachers and students to listen attentively in order to “construct and reconstruct meanings” (110). Listening, although attentively, also requires an openness to reflection on both knowledge to date and new knowledge being initiated into, as discernment is required to gain deeper insight into matters. Only when deeper insight into knowledge has been developed, has learning gained the required critical component. Critical thinking is a necessity in the present-day turmoil that is the global world reality, yet, for critical thinking to develop as a competency, teachers and students first need to attend to listening, reflection and discernment. Pedagogical practices that exhibit such opportunities of provocation and evocation extend an invitation to humans to care compassionately. “The very practice of knowing together (*ta’arruf*) has to be guided by care (*ri’āyah*), cooperation (*ta’āwun*) and compassion (*rahmah*) on the basis that humans would avoid animosity and hatred whenever they encounter one another” (124). Without care and compassion, it will be impossible to move from thought to just action; it will be impossible “to be in service of all of humanity” (129) and the earth.

Lastly, Waghid claims that such a Muslim philosophy of education, that of *ta’arruf* (associated knowing) based on Qurānic scripture, will and should lead to a university where teachers and students gather to encounter each other, but also gather around knowledge; willing to engage deliberately with one another about knowledge. Such a university of knowing “ought to advance the pursuit of knowledge on the basis of critique, mutuality and reasoned dissent, and the quest for truth and justice” (153). Waghid elucidates that critique allows for thinking

that will provoke teachers and students to think the unthinkable and provide new and just solutions through new raptured opportunities consequential to stretched imaginations. Mutuality and reasoned dissent allow for meaningful deliberation, while truth and justice allow the university to be relevant in society through addressing “ethico-juridical problems that face humanity” (153). Such an active university of associated knowing will lead to philosophical thinking that will culminate in new incursions in all fields of knowledge. “Through transversality a university would be able to organise knowledge beyond the integration and intersection of established disciplines of knowledge” (154).

In engaging with a book as this one, which is infused and inspired by Qurānic scripture, accompanied by thoughtful and justifiable arguments in defence for a renewed Muslim philosophy of education based on the notion of *ta’arruf* (associated knowing), critical reflection in itself becomes a pedagogy of discomfort. Put differently, what the book argues for as a sound philosophy of education, is precisely what the book does to the reader. Yet, only by engaging in and with critical self-reflection in an encounter with new knowledge, such as the arguments offered in this book, beckons the potentiality of deeper learning.

To me, the threat for such a philosophy of Muslim education, as argued by Waghid, lies within the faith community itself. Firstly, concepts of *tarbiyyah* (rearing that is concomitant with socialisation) and *ta’līm* (learning that is concomitant with individuation) were historically associated with Muslim education. Socialising a Muslim student into Muslim education refers to an introduction to knowledge of the faith, studying of scripture and the principles of living the faith. Individuation on the other hand requires of a student to question and challenge the knowledge of the Islam faith and traditions what she or he has come to know. Undoubtedly, the emphasis is still predominantly on socialisation within the Muslim educational fraternity; thus, on memorising scripture and the accumulation of knowledge about scripture and principles for living a principled faith-filled life. Such a narrow perspective could lead to scholars with diverse or different perspectives to be branded as a “voice-of-dissent”, similar to the fate of Abu Bakr Effendi. Yet, Waghid argues for a philosophy of Muslim education that is inclusive and which promotes just action towards all humanity, inclusive of the earth; thus, just social praxis is not confined to those of the Muslim faith. Such a philosophy of Muslim education should intrinsically be open to dissonance, in other words, to *ta’līm* (learning).

Secondly, the premise of *‘ilm al-yaqīn* (certainty of mind) that the knowledge contained in the Qurān is without any doubt certain and the absolute truth because Allāh provided the scripture as guidance and he alone has authority of the understanding of scripture. Through reading of scripture, knowledge is inevitably constructed, since the reader makes inferences and derives at meanings that will guide actions and judgements. The paradox within is exemplified

in this apex moment, that of the mutually exclusive concepts of an absolute certain truth and a human deduction of the “truth” in the construct of knowledge. See below the quotation from *The Family of Amran* (chapter 3: verse 7) that displays this paradox:

“He it is Who has sent down to you the Book: in it are verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning); they are the foundation of the Book: others are not of well-established meaning. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is not of well-established meaning. Seeking discord, and searching for its interpretation, but no one knows its true meanings except Allāh, and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: ‘We believe in it; the whole of it is from our Lord’; and none will grasp the Message except men [people] of understanding.”

Waghid’s philosophy of Muslim education, centred on *ta’arruf* (associated knowing), founded in and on Qurānic scripture, argues for education, which firstly denounces and secondly addresses through just action, exclusionary practices, such as autocracy, patriarchy, and dehumanisation. However, as is evident from the significant exclusionary practices resulting in a dearth of women in leadership positions in the business, religious and higher educational landscapes today still or the frequent acts of violence committed by religious extremism, a different meaning is constructed through the readings of the same scripture. Waghid alludes to this problematic aspect when he states his “interpretation of the Qurānic guidance is limited to [his] own witnessing” (62). However, the difficulty shows when the individual interpretations result in complete opposing perspectives and actions: that of harm rather than that of human flourishing.

Despite the paradox of absolute truths from a divine being that are interpreted by fallible humans, this book should be on the bookshelves of all Muslim scholars as a source with which to engage frequently as this book can (and will) act as a reflexive surface on implemented pedagogical practices. This book can also be a valuable resource for the Muslim community at large. Nonetheless, even though this book was written with the Muslim community in mind, to provide a defence of a meaningful and influential philosophy of Muslim education, this book has greater potentiality than just such a narrow interpretation. Firstly, I am not from the Muslim faith community myself; yet, the justification and argumentation for a pragmatic philosophy of *ta’arruf* (associated knowing) as presented in this book did not alienate or isolate me as it is written in a caring and inclusive manner that demonstrates and resembles the philosophy it explicates. As such, the book is relevant for all scholars with an interest in philosophy of education.

Secondly, this defence of a pragmatic philosophy of *ta’arruf* (associated knowing) Muslim education could be very useful for scholars with an interest in decoloniality, democratic citizenship education (DCE) and global citizenship education (GCE). In Part I, through Abu

Bakr Effendi's *Bayān al-Dīn*, written during a time of colonialism in the Cape, the principles underlying decoloniality are portrayed. In addition, Abu Bakr Effendi's specific challenge of gender inequality and societal ills further demonstrates Derrida's (1982) notion of deconstruction; that is to look for the hidden exclusionary voices, which in a time of colonialism was rife. Throughout Part II, but specifically in Chapter one, Waghid extensively argues for diverse teachers and students "to engage in deliberative encounters that can result in justifiable speech" (76). Intrinsic to DCE is the ability for teachers and students to deliberate through the articulation of thought, listening to the voice of another, critical reflection and the re-elucidation of thought. Furthermore, in Chapter eight (Part II), Waghid argues that an educational philosophy of *ta'arruf* (associated knowing) is required to thwart the violence of dehumanisation in order for humans to live cohesively together and to act responsibly towards the earth. Such an argument complements the propositions underlying the notion of the global commons as per GCE, namely that the planet as our only earth, that global peace has immeasurable value, and that equal, yet diverse people, should live democratically together (Torres and Bosio 2020).

I recommend this book, *Ta'arruf as a Philosophy of Muslim Education. Extending Abu Bakr Effendi's pragmatism*, to all scholars within the field of philosophy of education and the Muslim community at large.

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