

Islam and Politics: Reconfiguring the Ontology of Political Beings in Taha Abdurrahman's Thought

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ABSTRACT

This article explores Taha Abdurrahman's reconstruction of the political subject's ontology as a critical response to the secular foundations of modern political thought. In contemporary discourse, the political human is often conceptualized as a rational and autonomous agent (*homo civicus*), detached from any transcendent or moral obligation. Taha challenges this model by reintroducing two foundational Islamic concepts: *al-amanah* (divine trust) and *al-mīṭāq* (primordial covenant). He redefines the political subject as *homo moralis*, a moral-spiritual being tasked with ethical responsibility toward God and society. Through his *i'timāniyyah* paradigm, Taha offers a political ontology grounded not in power competition, but in moral accountability, ethical testimony, and self-purification (*tazkiyah*). This article situates Taha's ideas within broader currents in contemporary Islamic philosophy, comparing them to Seyyed Hossein Nasr's perennialism, Mohammed Arkoun's deconstruction, and Abdolkarim Soroush's epistemic pluralism. It argues that Taha's integration of moral theology, linguistic ethics, and spiritual epistemology presents a robust alternative to secular political rationality. Ultimately, Taha's thought lays the groundwork for a renewed Islamic political ontology where governance and citizenship are oriented toward transcendence, moral excellence, and divine remembrance.

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1. Introduction

Contemporary discourse on the relationship between religion and politics often adopts a secularism paradigm, which limits the spiritual dimension of public space in order to ensure state neutrality and citizen plurality [1]. In this framework, the political man is understood as *homo civicus*: a rational agent who exercises political rights and obligations procedurally under the law, without relation to transcendent values and religious morality [2].

However, in the contemporary Islamic world, including Indonesia, the representation of political humans is more complex. Key terms of religion and morality are often used as political mobilization

materials, both through populist narratives and identity symbolism. A study by Kansong et al. (2023) demonstrates how the media utilises religious symbols to foster emotional resonance among the public in political contests [3]. On the other hand, previous research has shown that modern Islamic politics often loses its spiritual substance, falling into shallow ideological pragmatism [4].

This phenomenon indicates a crisis in the ontology of political humanity, a state in which political humans lose their awareness as ethical and spiritual subjects. This critique becomes the focal point of Taha Abdurrahman's thought. In *Rūḥ al Ḥadāthah* (2006), Taha warns that modernity has alienated humans from moral responsibility rooted in transcendent relationships, making them profane beings without divine trust [5].

In Taha's thinking, the ontology of the political human must be re-read through two central concepts: *al amanah* (responsibility) [6] and *al mīṭāq* (primordial agreement) [7], which serve as a challenge and critique of the political human ontology built by modernity based on secularism. Humans are not agents competing for power, but rather *mas'ul* (responsible) individuals called to fulfil divine trust and maintain the ethical legitimacy of the existential agreement in the realm of the spirit.

In the map of contemporary Islamic philosophy, Taha occupies a unique position. Unlike Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who emphasizes the restoration of traditional metaphysics and the principles of perennial wisdom [8], and Mohammed Arkoun, who offers a deconstruction of classical Islamic episteme through a historical-critical approach and secular hermeneutics [9], Taha instead develops an approach to linguistic and spiritual ethics within the framework of the philosophy of language and moral action. If Abdolkarim Soroush emphasizes epistemic plurality and the relativity of religious knowledge within the framework of reflective modernity [10], Taha radicalizes morality as the foundation of epistemology and politics by placing ethical actions as the basis of all forms of discourse, including political discourse. Thus, Taha's approach is not merely normative and moralistic, but offers an integral ontological and epistemological framework. He combines spirituality, moral responsibility, and the logic of communication into one philosophical structure that challenges the dominance of instrumental reasoning.

This article aims to systematically explore and reconstruct the political ontology of humanity, as presented by Taha Abdurrahman. The main focus is: (1) how Taha formulates the political human as an ethical-spiritual subject through the concepts of *amanah* and *mīṭāq*; and (2) how these ideas provide an alternative to the moral-political crisis in the contemporary Islamic world. To answer that question, the following section presents a theoretical framework regarding the concept of humanity in contemporary Islamic political philosophy, before analysing the ontological reconstruction offered by Taha Abdurrahman.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative, philosophical-analytical approach that combines comparative analysis and hermeneutical interpretation within the context of modern Islamic philosophy [11]. Three primary paths comprise the methodological orientation: (1) comparative contextualization, (2) hermeneutic reconstruction, and (3) conceptual analysis. First, the conceptual analysis seeks to identify and elucidate the central ideas in Taha Abdurrahman's political ontology, specifically *i'timāniyyah* (trusteeship paradigm), *mīṭāq* (primordial covenant), and *amanah* (divine trust). To understand how Taha redefines the human being as *homo moralis* within the context of politics and ethics, these ideas are closely examined through a close reading of his major works, including *Rūḥ al-Ḥadāthah* (2006), *Rūḥ al-Dīn* (2012), and *Dīn al-Ḥayā'* (2017).

Second, Taha's linguistic-ethical approach is adapted to a philosophical hermeneutics framework. This step aims to reinterpret Taha's philosophical language as a systematic ontology of political being rather than just as theological claims. To understand how Taha's ideas manifest as a critique of contemporary secularism and a reformulation of Islamic metaphysics in response to current ethical crises, the analysis focuses on the dialogical relationship between the text and its context.

Third, the comparative contextualization places Taha's political man ontology in relation to the writings of Mohammed Arkoun, Abdolkarim Soroush, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Instead of trying to standardise their viewpoints, this comparative method aims to highlight the distinctive contribution of Taha's i'timāniyyah paradigm in providing an ethical-spiritual alternative to secular political rationality.

The study mostly draws from library research, utilizing secondary sources (commentaries and comparative studies, such as those by Hashas, Hallaq, and Suleiman) as well as primary sources (Arabic works by Taha Abdurrahman). Taha's political ontology can be methodically reconstructed through the use of textual exegesis, philosophical contemplation, and critical comparison in the analytical process. The study seeks to accomplish two goals using this methodological framework: (1) to elucidate Taha's philosophy's ontological underpinnings of political humanity, and (2) to draw attention to the ethical and normative ramifications of his ideas for current Islamic political discourse.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Ontology of Political Man in Contemporary Islamic Philosophy Discourse

The discussion about political man (*homo politicus*) in the classic Western philosophical tradition generally refers to the Aristotelian understanding that man is a *zoon politikon*, that is, a social creature that can only realise its potential through life in a polis [12]. In this framework, politics is understood as an arena for the actualization of rationality, deliberation, and engagement in the common good [13].

This understanding undergoes transformation in modernity. The concept of the political human is reduced to an autonomous subject operating within the contractual and institutional structures of the nation-state, with a disconnection from metaphysical orientation or spiritual values [1]. This concept dominates the secular political paradigm in many post-colonial Muslim countries, where modernization is understood as secularization [14].

In response to this, contemporary Muslim philosophers have developed various alternative approaches. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, for example, advocates a traditionalist perennialism approach that places humans as cosmic beings whose political task is to maintain the divine order and metaphysical harmonization through sharia and traditional wisdom [15]. Politics, in Nasr's view, is only legitimate if subordinated to the principle of sacredness. Meanwhile, Mohammed Arkoun offers a deconstructive approach to the intellectual heritage of Islam. He proposes demonstrative epistemic reconstruction as a method to dismantle the epistemic boundaries that silence critical reason in the history of Islamic politics [16]. In this framework, the political man is reinterpreted historically and pluralistically, but often without a strong, ethical, or transcendent commitment. Meanwhile, Abdolkarim Soroush emphasises epistemic plurality and interpretative hermeneutics of religion, positioning the political individual as a rational agent who interprets religion in accordance with democratic social and political dynamics [17]. However, this approach has also been criticized for relying too heavily on liberal rationalism and undermining the normative spiritual foundations in political practice.

In this context, Taha Abdurrahman presents a unique offer that combines linguistic approaches, transcendental ethics, and prophetic spirituality. His ontological framework is based on three main foundations:

- a. The Ontology of *Amanah* (Trust): Humans are not merely social or rational beings, but *Homo Moralis* who accept divine trust as the foundation of their existence. In politics, this means that every form of power is a moral responsibility and not merely a procedural right [18].
- b. Ethics of *Mītsāq* (primordial agreement): Human existence is bound by a primordial covenant that establishes an existential relationship between humans and God. Thus, political legitimacy does not solely come from the will of the majority, but from the alignment of political actions with the ethical spirit of that covenant.

- c. Filsafat *I'timāniyyah* (Trusteeship): Taha developed the philosophy of *i'timaniyah* which emphasizes that justice and political legitimacy are not solely based on 'individual rights', but primarily on 'ethical obligations' that stem from God [19].

From these three aspects, Taha reconstructs the political man as an ethical and transcendent subject, not merely a calculative agent or a procedural citizen. This renders his political ontology framework not just normative, but it also possesses spiritual depth and significant structural consequences for understanding power, law, and participation. Thus, this theoretical framework serves as the basis for critical analysis in the next section, specifically the reconstruction of the concept of the political man in Taha Abdurrahman's thought.

3.2. Reconfiguring the Ontology of Political Humans in the Thought of Taha Abdurrahman

For Taha, humans are ontologically moral beings (*homo moralis*), and this characteristic distinguishes them from all other animals [20]. He bases this statement on four arguments. First, he asserts that humans are beings who consciously strive for moral perfection, unlike animals that only follow biological instincts. Although animals can exhibit traits such as loyalty or cleanliness, these traits are instinctive and do not arise from a conscious effort to perfect values [20]. Second, every rational action of humans always contains a moral dimension. He criticizes the form of modern rationality that is instrumental and technical, which has subordinated humans to the logic of mere efficiency. According to him, technological advancement should not be the primary focus of Muslims, but rather the revival of moral values that will naturally lead to other advancements [20].

Third, Taha emphasises that ideal rational action always possesses a moral character because it originates from the heart, the centre of human spirituality (*al-khuluqiyya al-namūdhajiyya li-l-fi'l al-'aql*). Thus, rationality is not merely a theoretical tool, but an expression of ethics and virtues that can serve as a model for other actions [20]. Fourth, he offers a reinterpretation of the concept of *taklīf* in Islamic tradition, which has been overly emphasised on the elements of difficulty and burden [20]. In Taha's view, the essence of *taklīf* is responsibility (*mas'ūliyya*) based on freedom. The emphasis on trust in the Quran is not merely a reference to a heavy obligation, but an expression of humanity's moral capacity to accept responsibility freely. Thus, freedom is not an accessory in moral action, but an ontological condition for humans as ethical and political subjects [19].

Taha Abdurrahman explicitly rejects the view that reason is the only foundation of human identity. He argues that this belief, which has dominated the thoughts of classical philosophers in both Islamic and Western traditions, is not only reductionist but also problematic linguistically [19]. Using a linguistic approach, Taha employs three words that Arabic speakers exclusively use to refer to humans: humanity (*insāniyya*), manhood (*rujūliyya*), and virtue (*murū'a*) [21].

Taha Abdurrahman emphasises that the three main concepts in the moral structure of humans, *insāniyya* (humanity), *rujūliyya* (manliness), and *murū'a* (nobility), converge in the meaning of *iktisāb al-akhlāq al-karīma*, which is the attainment of noble character. Thus, according to Taha, human identity is not defined solely by intellectual ability or rational thinking (*ta'aqqul*), as is commonly believed in Western philosophical traditions and among some modern Muslim thinkers. On the contrary, humans are defined by their capacity and seriousness in *takhalluq*, which embodies and practices noble moral values. If a person fails in the process of *takhalluq*, they lose not only their humanity but also experience ontological degradation to the level of animals. Here, Taha reverses the modern anthropological paradigm: the true human is not merely an animal of rationality, but rather an animal of *akhlāq*, a being shaped by ethics, not just logic [4]. This idea has a strong resonance in classical Islamic ethics and Sufism, but also presents a sharp critique of the secular paradigm that separates reason from morality.

In his review of Taha Abdurrahman's Islamic political theology, Mohammed Hashas identifies five main foundations that explain Abdurrahman's metaphysical and existential framework concerning humanity and the world. First, Taha openly states that his intellectual project is deeply rooted in Islamic faith and aims to remain true to the spirit of Islam. Subjectivity is not a flaw, but a necessity that must be accompanied by recognition of the existence and truth of others. Second, Abdurrahman understands forgetfulness (*nisyān*) as a primordial characteristic of humanity. In the modern world

filled with "great forgetfulness," humans forget the vertical memory that connects them with their origin and God (al-dhikru wujudun wa al-nisyanu 'adamun) [6]. To address this, Abdurrahman offers a "spiritual and invocative" approach through the practice of dhikr, which he refers to as "existence" itself, while forgetfulness is termed as "non-existence". Third, Taha distinguishes between the world of testimony (ālam al-shahāda) or the world of transcendence (ālam al-ghayb), or in other terms, between the world of sovereignty (ālam al-mulk) and the world of divinity (ālam al-malakūt). This distinction is not an absolute dichotomy, but rather two sides of human existence that must maintain their connection.

Fourth, human existence is "expansive" and "two-dimensional"; humans not only live in this world but are also called to connect themselves to the transcendent world. A vertical human is one who maintains the trust (amanah) between the worldly and the hereafter, between the sacred and the profane, through their ontological and spiritual memory. Meanwhile, a horizontal human lives only on the level of empirical reality, limited to the present. Fifth, in Taha's view, the relationship between religion and politics is existential rather than legalistic. There are no absolute boundaries between the two, because in human existence, religion and politics are intertwined in the processes of becoming (inwijād) and experiencing (tawajjūd). When humans ascend towards transcendence, they manifest the sacred in the world, bringing the divine closer to life. Conversely, when they descend, they make the world the sole objective, obscuring and even eliminating transcendence. This is the ontological root of the modern ethical crisis: the forgetting of trust (amanah) and the severance from the transcendent world [18].

Taha Abdurrahman's metaphysical conception in Hashas reading views humans not merely as rational beings, but as trustful beings living in two worlds simultaneously: the real world and the transcendent world. In his view, humans carry a spiritual memory that connects them vertically to God (ascension). However, modernity has caused humans to forget; forget their origins (descent), the divine responsibilities they carry, and the higher world that they should aspire to. "Forgetting" is not just a negligence, but has become the root of the moral crisis we are experiencing today. For Taha, a true human being is not one who dominates the world, but one who can maintain the relationship between the sacred and the profane. He who constantly remembers, recites, and lives life as a spiritual journey will be able to present the divine in daily life. Conversely, humans who sever their connection with transcendence will fall into the dominance of the ego and power, making the world the only goal and losing the deepest meaning of existence [6].

The ontology of political humans within the modern paradigm presupposes humans as autonomous beings, free from transcendent bonds. This results in serious moral dislocation. Modern political subjects are detached from both vertical accountability (to God) and horizontal accountability (to the community). Wael B. Hallaq, in his study, mentions that the project of modernity creates a condition in which political subjects lose their moral orientation because they are constructed solely within the framework of positive law and formal rights [22].

The implication of the political separation from spiritual values is a legitimacy crisis. When politics loses its spirit, it becomes an instrument of domination that lacks ethical orientation. The political subject is no longer an ethical actor, but rather a bureaucratic tool. Therefore, Taha calls for a redefinition of political ontology based on the values of trust and moral responsibility. Politics must be restored not only through changes in institutional structures, but also with a conceptual reconstruction of who the political human is and what their moral responsibilities are. Taha also offers a radical reversal by emphasizing the paradigm of trust as the ontological basis of political humanity. Trust is not just a theological metaphor, but an existential principle that marks humans as beings who bear divine responsibility. Politics, within this framework, is not a field of competing interests, but a field of trust actualisation. Thus, the political human is not a calculative subject, but a subject who safeguards, rather than merely controls.

3.3. Collective Responsibility (Amanah) and Primordial Agreement (Mītsāq); The Epistemology of Political Humans

Taha proposed the concept of civilisation of action (*ḥadāratu al fi‘l*) or civilisation of ethos [4], [23]. A civilization formed from trust, ethics, and sharing [22]. This condition requires a prerequisite: when humanity can transform the image of 'sovereign' to 'responsible'. Starting from a deep reading of the epistemic framework of Taha Abdurrahman's theo-political thought, we find an ontological distinction between two fundamental ways humans organize social life: through the path of testimony (*tariq al-tashhīd*), which then becomes the path of religion, or the path of invisibilization (*tariq al-taghyīb*), which then becomes the path of politics. For Taha, the path of religion is not merely a system of values, but a way of seeing and experiencing the world that brings transcendence into human presence. It is built on three main principles: first, *fitrah* (*mabda' al-fitra*), which sustains the natural relationship of humans with the Divine through monotheism; second, *tafadul* (*mabda' al-tafaḍul*), which emphasizes the superiority of religion within a normative and rational framework while not belittling other faiths; and third, *takamul* (*mabda' al-takāmul*), which is the principle of integration that allows for a holistic understanding of ethical and religious law. The path of religion, therefore, not only offers rules but opens the way to the existential extension of humanity through ethics, spirituality, and happiness that transcends time [6].

On the contrary, in Taha's view, the political path obscures transcendence in order to deify presence. It is built on the principles of the secularization of power: first, *nisba* (*mabda' al-nisbah*), where humans claim absolute ownership over resources, knowledge, and authority, replacing God as the source of resources and meaning; Second, *sultān* (*mabda' al-sultān*), which allows a ruler to claim sovereignty based on political or social legitimacy, even when it suppresses differences and eliminates minorities; and third, *tanāzu'* (*mabda' al-tanāzu'*), which is the relentless power struggle, often justifying all means under the pretext of social contracts or the general will. Thus, the political path according to Taha is an expression of humans pursuing the fulfilment of their ownership desires, idolising presence, and even when mentioning the name of God, they only use Him as an instrument of their own ambitions. This path does not lead to liberation, but rather to existential plunder and a loss of the true roots of transcendence [6].

As an epistemic reading, the separation between *tariq al-tashhīd* (the path of affirming transcendence) and *tariq al-taghyīb* (the path of negating transcendence) in Taha Abdurrahman's thought represents two opposing knowledge paradigms: the spiritual-invocation paradigm and the secular-instrumental paradigm. In the spiritual paradigm, knowledge is obtained not only through rational observation or logical deduction, but also through *tadhakkur* (remembrance), *takhalluq* (formation of character), and *tadabbur* (existential contemplation). The principles of *fitrah*, *tafadul*, and *takamul* in the path of religion are not merely normative values, but epistemological foundations that position revelation and spiritual experience as the primary sources of knowledge. Knowledge within this framework is characterized by a *ta'abbudi* and *ta'arufi* nature, which means submitting to Divine truth and acknowledging human epistemic limitations. Thus, reason is not rejected, but rather subdued so that it does not close itself off from the light of transcendence.

Conversely, in the political path criticized by Taha, we find a form of epistemic violence, namely the violence of knowledge that arises when transcendence is dismissed and only profane rationality is acknowledged. The principles of *nisba*, *sultān*, and *tanāzu'* represent a knowledge structure based on the will to dominate and subjugate, not to understand and witness [6]. Knowledge in this framework becomes an instrument of power (power/knowledge), as portrayed by Michel Foucault, which enables the production of truth by the dominant regime. Taha criticizes that in this secular epistemology, humans lose the ability to recognize themselves as beings rooted in the transcendent. Thus, Taha's epistemic project is to restore the *ruh al-ma'rifah* (spirit of knowledge) to the orbit of tawhid as a primordial agreement and *amanah*, where truth is not defined by political consensus or the power of the majority, but by openness to the Divine and an ethical testimony to a reality that transcends.

3.4. Politics as Tazkiyah: Spirituality in the Practice of Power

The I'timaniyyah paradigm (Trust) is built on three principles: the Principle of Testimony and Observation (mabda' al-shahidiyyah), the Principle of Trust (mabda' al-amanah), and the Principle of Self-Purification (mabda' al-tazkiyah).

According to the Principle of Witnessing and Searching (mabda' al-shahidiyyah), humans strive to return to their original position. In this process, they discover their true identity and the meaning of their existence. Humans bear witness to the oneness of God, both within themselves and over all of humanity. The principle of shāhidiyya (testimony) offers a relational reformulation: that something is only identical to itself when there is another party witnessing it (al-shay' huwa huwa matā shahida 'alayhi ghayruhu). The witness (shāhid) can be God alone or together with Him: a Prophet, fellow Muslims, non-Muslims, or even other creatures. Although Tāhā 'Abd al-Raḥmān does not explicitly refer to it, the Qur'an reiterates the idea of universal testimony in various places, affirming that God and all His creations are witnesses to the revelation of divine truth [24].

The second principle refers to the concept of trust (amāna), which means that humans must purify themselves from the spirit of ownership (rūḥ al-tamalluk) and accept all the responsibilities demanded by reason. According to Taha, some scholars interpret amāna in Surah al-Ahzab verse 72 as reason ('aql), others as religious responsibility (taklīf), and still others as freedom (ḥurriyya). Since *taklīf* and *ḥurriyya* require the existence of reason, Taha concludes that the trust given by God to humans is reason, or at least encompasses reason essentially. Taha also stated that this principle of trust is equivalent to the law of non-contradiction in secular philosophy. However, unlike secular reason, which is free from ethical dimensions and can be used for selfish interests, the principle of trust demands a rational consistency (ittisāq 'aqlī) that is morally responsible. Thus, this principle is superior because it makes reason accountable for actions and their impacts on fellow humans and all of creation [24].

The third and final principle in the paradigm of trust is the importance of self-purification (tazkiya). Taha defines tazkiya as the process of cleansing the soul (rūḥ) from the veils of ego (nafs) and connecting it with the unseen realm. For him, tazkiya is the only way to discipline the ego to achieve the moral values and spiritual meaning revealed by God. Unlike education, which only changes external behaviour, tazkiya awakens the hidden moral and spiritual potential within human beings. Taha states that tazkiya is the most effective way to address the moral crisis and spiritual sickness in global society with three arguments:

- a. Tazkiya can expand the space of human existence from a narrow one to a broader existence, even transcending the limits of the social world towards a transcendent reality.
- b. The moral and spiritual wealth of an individual is the result of the interaction between education in the community (jamā'a) and personal struggle to renew oneself for the sake of renewing others, as a manifestation of commitment to the development of humanity.
- c. The moral and spiritual potential of humans, activated through tazkiya, surpasses modernist efforts that focus solely on controlling the symptoms of moral diseases.

Taha stated that the principle of tazkiya is equivalent to the law of excluded middle (the law of the closure of a third possibility in formal logic), but it is superior because it does not stop at rational abstraction, but is rooted in human action. This principle states that every action will certainly lead to either purification or the corruption of the soul (al-shay' imma huwa aw naqīḍuhu matā kāna al-'amal maṭlūban) [24]. The three principles of the trust paradigm are organised through the application of reason supported by revelation (al-ta'aqqul al-musanda) in relation to the sources of Islam.

For humans, active involvement in politics has the opposite effect of the process of self-purification (tazkiya). Individuals who constantly purify themselves spiritually always remember that there is no sustainer, ruler, or provider of sustenance other than Allah. Conversely, those who engage in political activities tend to nurture a desire for worldly power and take pride in their achievements, gradually forgetting these divine attributes, even though they still claim to believe in Him. As a result, Taha even equated politically active Muslim groups with those in the realm of polytheism [25].

For Taha, politics is categorized as a low worldly level and therefore must be completely avoided. Sensitivity to political issues is often viewed as a threat to society, as it diverts human attention from the primary narrative of history: God's covenant with His creation and the trust that humanity places in it. Within this framework, tazkiya (self-purification) is the only means to direct the course of history towards its divine purpose. According to Taha, anyone involved in politics demeans themselves to merely being a background actor, not a main player in the spiritual drama of humanity.

Taha interacts with various political ideologies, but always returns to tazkiya as the main alternative. He believes that the pre-modern European system of governance is cruel and authoritarian. Therefore, many consider modern democracy as 'light and grace amidst darkness and wrath' [26]. However, according to Taha, democracy has become an idol for its supporters, to the point of being imposed on other nations in the name of universal values.

Taha rejects the claim that democracy is universal, considering democracy as a system that undermines natural boundaries (ḥudūd ṭabī'īyya) and declines morally. He illustrates that democracy fails to prevent extramarital sexual relationships and even legalizes homosexuality and same-sex marriage. In fact, democracy is seen as supporting the social construction of gender and permits sex reassignment surgery, including the creation of a third gender identity. Democracy also seeks to overcome biological limits such as death, among others, through organ transplantation, cryonics, and cloning.

From a moral standpoint, Taha asserts that a democratic state establishes laws based not on religion, but on the will of the people. This causes democracy to be secular and reduces religion to a private matter. Moral values in a democracy arise from human desires and basic instincts, rather than from revelation. Therefore, democracy actually expands the space for *istifhāsh* (immoral behavior) manifested in its three main pillars: freedom of speech, voting, and protest actions.

Taha questioned the possibility of Muslims reforming the democratic system into *ḥālat al-i'timāniyya* (the state of trust) after gaining a majority of power. He answered that for the group of *i'timārīyūn* (those who act based on normative commands from God), this is possible. However, for *i'timāniyyūn* (those who live within the paradigm of trust), the answer is no. He provided four foundations for his view:

- a. Democracy is not just a political tool, but a system with inherent moral values.
- b. Democracy combines values that are considered ends (such as freedom and justice) and values as means, both of which can change.
- c. Moral values are not a product of humans, but rather rooted in *asmā' al-ḥusnā* (the beautiful names of God); to strengthen this, humans must return to God.
- d. Democracy stands on secular values, thus separating religion from politics and resulting in a system of values without spiritual dimensions, and without *ḥayā'* (sense of shame as a primary ethical value of Taha) [26].

Based on these four assumptions, Taha concludes that democracy cannot be transferred from its secular context in Europe to a religious context without losing the disconnection between values and religion. He distinguishes two forms of connection with religion: (1) *I'timārīyya*: actions built upon knowledge of God's commandments, with the mental concept of God as the Commander. This action is based on *bayān* (normative explanation). (2) *I'timāniyya*: actions also based on God's commandments, but accompanied by spiritual awareness (*shu'ūr wijdānī*) of God's presence as the Divine Actor. This action is based on *'iyān* (direct observation of spiritual truth).

Taha elaborates on his views by comparing the paradigms of *i'timārīyya* and *i'timāniyya* in understanding the values of democracy, such as freedom. According to him, a supporter of *i'timārīyya* will immediately refer to normative Islamic texts to prove that Islam has not only preceded but also surpassed Western democratic societies in guaranteeing freedom rights. However, these supporters, along with their readers, often engage in a discourse that has been conditioned by a secular framework. Even if they themselves do not fully believe in the arguments they present, they feel compelled to

defend Islamic traditions in a manner that meets Western rationality standards. In such conditions, according to Taha, they actually fail to respond to challenges from fellow secular citizens, because defenders of freedom from the West already have a more established and in-depth argumentative apparatus [26].

Overall, Taha proposes a major reorientation of the functions of the state and government. If, in the modern paradigm, the state is a rational institution that is neutral, then within the framework of ethical trusteeship, the state is a normative entity that is also responsible for the moral quality of its citizens. This does not mean that the state becomes theocratic, but rather becomes a spiritual mentor, bridging the gap between law and values. Thus, Taha offers a model of political ethics that positions power as a field for self-purification and societal improvement, not merely an arena for power competition.

4. Conclusion

Through his critique of modern politics, the offer of an *amanah* paradigm, and the formulation of ethical education, Taha Abdurrahman presents a model of Islamic political ontology that is rooted in transcendental values. This ontology is not only descriptive about the nature of political humanity but also normative; it states how political humanity should be formed, implemented, and held accountable. In this context, politics is not a neutral arena of power but a battlefield of ethics, where divine values must be the foundation and goal of all political activities.

Taha's contribution does not stand alone. When compared to Nasr, Soroush, and Arkoun, we see that Taha is more assertive in making spirituality the ontological foundation, rather than merely ethical. Nasr, for example, emphasizes the importance of sacred cosmology in the political value system of Islam, but does not develop a systematic political praxis. Soroush, with his hermeneutic approach, opens up space for the democratization of Islamic thought, but tends to loosen the spiritual aspect as a source of political truth. Arkoun, on the other hand, focuses on deconstructing classical Islamic epistemology and offers 'reasoned faith,' but does not construct an explicit alternative political ontology.

Taha presents a unique synthesis: he combines moral theology, ethical praxis, and spiritual epistemology into one systemic philosophical construct. He not only critiques modernity but also expands the conceptual horizons of Islam in responding to the contemporary world. This is what makes him one of the key thinkers in formulating Islamic political ontology in the 21st century. An Important contribution, especially when Muslims face the dilemma between the modern state and the ethical order of Islamic traditions.

Thus, Taha's project paves the way for further studies in the development of trust-based political ontology. This includes the need to design political institutions that are not merely legal-formal, but also reflect ethical and spiritual horizons. It also draws attention to the formation of political subjects that are not alienated from God and their community. The task of Islamic political philosophy moving forward is to continue the path opened by Taha: formulating the political human as a trust-based subject, not merely a citizen, and structuring politics as a path to purification, not just an arena of contestation.

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