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Radical Islamic Democracy

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ABSTRACT

Can democracy be at once radical and Islamic? In this paper I argue that it can. My argument is based on a comparison and contrast of certain aspects in the social-political thought of two contemporary authors: Axel Honneth who defends a particular conception of radical democracy, and Rached al-Ghannouchi who defends a particular conception of the Islamic state. I begin with Honneth's early articulation of his model of radical democracy as reflexive cooperation, which he presents as an alternative that reconciles Arendtian republicanism and Habermasian proceduralism while avoiding their weaknesses. I also refer to his more mature conception of democracy by way of highlighting his understanding of democracy as a process of constituting civil society. This is significant for the purposes of this paper since it forms the most important link between Honneth's radical democracy and Ghannouchi's Islamic model of political rule. I then introduce Ghannouchi's theoretical account of the Islamic state with a focus on his conception of shura (consultation) in order to bring to the fore both the similarities and dissimilarities with Honneth's theory of democracy. By this point I will have identified Islamic resources for a conception of democracy that, like Honneth's democracy as reflexive cooperation, shares with proceduralism an instrumental view of democratic procedures, and with republicanism a strong connection between the pre-political social level and politics. Next, I ask whether this conception of radical Islamic democracy can square its dual commitment to pluralism and Islamic unity. Again, I draw on Ghannouchi's thought to respond to the challenge, doing so in a way that brings out the agonistic dimension in radical Islamic democracy. I conclude by making explicit how radical Islamic democracy carves out a conceptual space in which proceduralist, republican and agonistic features are combined.

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1 Introduction

Can democracy be at once radical and Islamic? In the following I argue that it can. I use the term ‘radical’ in a broad sense to characterise a normative theoretical approach to democracy that seeks to extend citizen participation to many areas of public life not considered by democratic theories that focus on elections and the protection of individual rights. The kind of participation I envisage involves public reasoning. By a radical conception of democracy that is ‘Islamic’ I mean a conception founded and articulated on the basis of resources internal to the Islamic tradition.

My argument is based on a comparison and contrast of certain aspects in the social-political thought of two contemporary authors: Axel Honneth who defends a particular conception of radical democracy, and Rached al-Ghannouchi who defends a particular conception of the Islamic state. Axel Honneth is a prominent critical social theorist in the Frankfurt School tradition. Ghannouchi is a Tunisian Muslim thinker and activist, head of *Haraket Annahada* (The Renaissance Movement), and the main dissident voice in Tunisia for a couple of decades before the uprisings of 2011 (Esposito and Voll, 2001; Abu-Rabi’ 2004; Tamimi 2001). Since the uprising, after winning the first democratic elections, *Annahda* under Ghannouchi’s leadership has become a major political actor in the only Arab country where the hope of the uprisings has neither been crushed nor pre-empted. Ghannouchi’s thought and politics have been well-respected and widely debated in Islamic and non-Islamic circles, both inside and outside the Arab world, and he is considered to be representative of a contemporary trend in Islamic revivalist thought and movements. In this discussion I engage with Ghannouchi as a social and political thinker who has something to say on the relationship between democracy and religion, rather than as a politician or an activist.

My aim is to open conceptual space for a radical Islamic democracy by identifying some investigative threads that connect radical democratic thought with an Islamic model of political rule. My motivation for doing so is twofold. On a theoretical level, I see radical Islamic democracy as a step towards developing a model of non-secular democracy. Such a model would rethink the place and role of religion in the democratic public realm in accordance with emancipatory ideals of freedom and equality. It would speak directly to the rise of religious influence in public life and mounting criticisms of the neutrality of secular politics. On a more practical level, I seek to contribute to the debate regarding the political future of the Arab world, a future that calls for a political vision that would be desirable by, or at least acceptable to, Islamists, secular Muslims, and non-Muslims.¹ For such a vision we need a political model that is both sufficiently democratic and sufficiently Islamic.

In Section 2 I introduce Honneth's early articulation of his model of radical democracy as reflexive cooperation (Honneth, 2007). Here Honneth presents his model as an alternative that reconciles Arendtian republicanism and Habermasian proceduralism while avoiding their weaknesses. I also refer to his more mature conception of democracy by way of highlighting his understanding of democracy as a process of constituting civil society (Honneth 2014). This is significant for our purposes since it forms the most important link between Honneth's radical democracy and Ghannouchi's Islamic model of political rule. In Section 3 I start by presenting Ghannouchi's theoretical account of the Islamic state. I then focus on his conception of *shura* (consultation) in order to bring to the fore both the similarities and dissimilarities with Honneth's theory of democracy. By the end of the third Section I will have identified Islamic resources² for a conception of democracy that, like Honneth's democracy as reflexive cooperation, shares with proceduralism an instrumental view of democratic procedures, and with republicanism a strong connection between the pre-political social level and politics. In Section 4 I ask whether this conception of radical Islamic democracy can square its dual commitment to pluralism and Islamic unity. Again, I draw on Ghannouchi's thought to respond to the challenge, doing so in a way that brings out the agonistic dimension in radical Islamic democracy. In Section 5 I conclude by making explicit how radical Islamic democracy carves out a conceptual space in which proceduralist, republican and agonistic features are combined.

2 Democracy as reflexive cooperation

In the earlier formulation of his conception of democracy Honneth locates his radical democracy between Arendtian republicanism and Habermasian proceduralism. While both models criticize liberal democracy for the same reasons and look for a solution in the same place (i.e. the democratic public sphere), they significantly differ in

the ways in which they normatively justify the principle of a democratic public sphere. Whereas republicanism takes its orientation from antiquity's ideal of a citizenry for whose members the intersubjective negotiation of common affairs has become an essential part of their lives, proceduralism insists that citizens' virtues are not needed to reactivate the process of democratic will-formation, but simply morally justified procedures. Thus, for republicanism, the democratic public sphere is the medium of a self-governing political community, while for proceduralism, it is the procedure through which society attempts to solve political problems rationally and legitimately (Honneth 2007, 218-219)

On the republican view, the democratic public sphere is the medium for an already self-governing political community to express and preserve its self-understanding and identity, which are at the basis of social solidarity (the glue of the political community) and makes that community what it is. Here the state is the outgrowth of this self-expression, and the law is the reflection of that community's solidarity. On the procedural view, the state is a separate and independent entity from the political community. Here we do not have a self-governed political community unified in solidarity, and thus the public sphere does not function as a medium but as a procedure for solving political problems common to different social constituencies and

members with all their differences and disagreements. The state's role is to guarantee that no one individual or group is denied equal and fair participation in public deliberation and that common political problems are addressed rationally and legitimately, that is, free from domination. Honneth criticizes both views before he introduces his own alternative.

On the republican understanding of the public sphere certain political virtues are required in order for the political community in question to form its will democratically. With this requirement, democracy comes to depend on citizens possessing these virtues, "for it is only to the extent that political participation itself becomes a central part of the lives of all members of society that the democratic public sphere can maintain itself as an end for itself" (Honneth, 2007, 233). This establishes a strong connection between politics and ethics. Here Honneth locates the first weakness of the republican view, noting that it is "scarcely compatible with the actual value pluralism of modern societies" (Honneth 2007, 233). The second weakness results from putting all the emphasis on political participation and conceiving of the public sphere as an end in itself, hence leaving us with no adequate critical perspective for assessing the various institutional forms that the public sphere may take (Honneth 2007, 234). The worry is that some institutional forms are inimical to equality and freedom, not free from domination, authoritarian, discriminatory, etc. If all the emphasis is on political participation, we could have a political community that scores high in solidarity and political virtues but hold values and norms that are discriminatory and oppressive.

Proceduralism does not face these problems since it neither requires political virtues nor does it construe the public sphere as an end in itself. Nevertheless, Honneth points out two weaknesses of proceduralism, taking the Habermasian variant as his example. The first is its inability to account for social and economic inequalities as they take place on the pre-political social level. On the procedural view, social inequalities can only be addressed if they make their way to, and get articulated in, the political public sphere (Honneth 2007, 234). That is, "Habermas...cannot grant the demand for social equality conceptual priority over the principle of democratic will-formation; he has to make it dependent upon the contingent state of politically articulated goals" (Honneth 2007, 235). The second weakness is its inability to account for citizens' motivation to participate in the public sphere and contribute to democratic will-formation. Honneth writes, "Habermas...has to be able to assume more than just the establishment of democratic procedures for the success of democratic will-formation. For citizens to be motivated and interested in participating in public opinion and will-formation, they have to have made democratic procedures as such a normative element of their daily habits" (Honneth 2007, 235).

With these weaknesses in mind, Honneth draws on John Dewey's work to identify a third radical democratic alternative, democracy as reflexive cooperation, which, he claims, reconciles republicanism with proceduralism while avoiding their shortcomings. The central Deweyan contribution that Honneth draws upon by way of developing democracy as reflexive cooperation is that of connecting politics to the pre-political level of social life. As we shall see shortly, Honneth will rely on such connection to both, allow socio-economic inequalities to be directly addressed without having first to be articulated on the political level, and account for citizens'

motivation to participate in the public sphere. With that said, however, Honneth is aware that connecting politics to the pre-political social level threatens to bring ethics back in. The question, thus, is how to connect the political with the social level without assuming a political community in the strong sense, in which the self-governing of the community is tightly linked to that community's collective expression of its identity and conception of the good.³ Honneth holds that Dewey can help in this regard:

Dewey locates the prerequisite for a revitalization of democratic publics in the pre-political sphere of the social division of labor, which has to be regulated in a fair and just manner such that all members of society can understand themselves as active participants in a cooperative enterprise. Dewey correctly assumes that without this sense of shared responsibility and cooperation, individuals will never manage to see democratic procedures as a means for joint problem-solving [...] [O]nly a kind of division of labor that grants each member of society a fair chance in accordance with his or her autonomously discovered abilities and talents to assume socially desirable occupations will allow this consciousness of communal cooperation to emerge. Only in this way will democratic procedures necessarily become the best instrument for rationally solving common problems (Honneth 2007, 233)

By replacing the republican demand for political virtues by “a sense of shared responsibility and cooperation,” this approach can accommodate pluralism: “within networks of groups and associations that relate to one another on the basis of a division of labor, the factual pluralism of value orientations has a functional advantage because it ensures the development of an abundance of completely different interests and abilities” (Honneth 2007, 233). Furthermore, Dewey sees the democratic public sphere as constituting “the medium through which society attempts to process and solve its problems [...]” (Honneth 2007, 234).

Thus, the public sphere is not an end in itself but a means for rational problem-solving which can be used to evaluate and assess the "institutional form of intersubjective opinion formation." Moreover, citizens' motivation to participate in the public sphere and contribute to democratic will-formation is accounted for by "a sense of shared responsibility and cooperation," hence allowing for a democratic ethical life without connecting politics to ethics.

By reading Dewey in this way, Honneth evidently understands democracy as a process of constituting civil society. Honneth has not abandoned this understanding of democracy in his more recent book *Freedom's Right*, where his normative justification of democratic legitimacy continues to emphasize the conditions for the organization of civil society (Zurn 2015, 182-183).⁴ Consider the following quotation:

This reversal of the logical relation of justification and dependency – according to which the state does not found and create the public, but the other way around – results in the claim that all constitutive elements of the modern constitutional state, especially with regard to its legal composition and the division of powers, must be understood in terms of the tasks accruing to the state by virtue of the fact that it must presuppose, protect and implement the will-formation of the citizens – all at the same time (Honneth 2014, 305)

This is the most significant link between Honneth's radical democracy model and Ghannouchi's theoretical model of the Islamic state. I turn to that now.

3 *Shuristic* democracy as reflexive cooperation

The fundamental core of Islamic political philosophy, according to Ghannouchi, is the vicegerency theory: the human being is held to be God's vicegerent on earth (Ghannouchi 1993, 97). Endowed by God with reason, will, freedom, and responsibility, the task of humans on earth is to establish justice, good, and freedom in accordance with God's revelation. On the basis of the vicegerency theory, Ghannouchi derives the two sources of authority in the Islamic state: *al-nass* (*qur'an* and *sunna*)⁵ and *shura* (consultation) (Ghannouchi 1993, 322). *Al-nass* represents the absolute authority of God, and *shura* represents the authority of humans. It is because the Islamic state is the state of *al-nass* and *shura*, that Ghannouchi refers to it as the state of God and the people (Ghannouchi 1993, 148).

The distribution of authority is a particularly important political problem for Ghannouchi. Being the appointees of God on earth, humans have the legitimate authority to carry out the task of establishing justice in accordance with God's revelations as embodied in *al-nass*. Given, however, that it is practically impossible for *all* humans to directly manage that appointed authority, *some* will have to do so. As a result, political power gets concentrated and could be misused and turned into an oppressive tool, undermining the authority of "all." But to fully understand why the distribution of authority is so important for Ghannouchi, we must consider another feature of his thought: the priority of the social over the political.

In response to the Tunisian state's oppressive and exclusionist measures Ghannouchi called for a re-introduction of Islam in the public realm in the name of equality and justice rather than of the superiority or truth of Islam. He sought to do so by way of social activism. His methods for changing society can be characterized as bottom-up rather than top-down, and as based on persuasion rather than force. In sum, Ghannouchi advocates political change through social change, and social change through convincing and persuasion. His methods are the offshoot of his view that the social takes priority over the political. This priority is based on both pragmatic and intellectual grounds. For consideration of space, I will focus on the latter.⁶ Ghannouchi argues that society is the foundation for legitimate political authority. Criticizing authoritarian and oppressive regimes he points out that in such regimes "[s]ociety is...not the source of authority but its field of action" (Ghannouchi 2000, 99), implying that society *should* be the source of legitimate political authority. More explicitly, he writes: "We, the Tunisian Islamists, value human dignity and civil liberties, accept that *popular will is the source of political legitimacy* and believe in pluralism and in the alteration of power through free elections" (Ghannouchi 2000, 100, emphasis added). On Ghannouchi's view, it is the role of politics – specifically, the government – to serve society to the point where the people become independent from it. Hence, even if Islamists achieve political power, social activism should not subside. "Government is a small part of the institutions of civil society. It is there to support and

strengthen society. There must be more institutions of civil society, enough so that the people don't need the state" (Ghannouchi 1999, 2; Ghannouchi 1993, 297 and 299-300). The government is an instrument in the service of society, rather than the other way around.

Ghannouchi crucially argues that management of divine authority must be carried out under the surveillance of the people via *shura*: "the spinal cord of the *umma*'s [community] authority in establishing political rule on the basis of participation, cooperation and responsibility" (Ghannouchi 1993, 109). According to Ghannouchi, *shura* is mandatory and its results are binding. He contends that although Islam did not specify the forms that *shura* can take, making it a matter of controversy and debate among Muslims, it did assert the importance and significance "that public affairs be managed through *shura*" (Ghannouchi 1993, 125). In the most general terms *shura* is supposed to guarantee that no one person, group, or institution can have a monopoly on human authority. Authority belongs to the vicegerent '*umma* and not to any one particular human or institution. This function of *shura* as the distributor of authority is clearest when Ghannouchi talks of Islamic rule. He writes: "Islamic rule is based on *shura*, and *shura* is the distribution of authority and prohibiting the latter's concentration in the state" (Ghannouchi 1993, 299). He also says: "The more distributed political decision is, the wider the base of participants in political decision making, the more the Islamic rule is achieved, and the same goes for the democratic rule" (Ghannouchi 1993, 62). The whole point of the Islamic state, its *raison d'être*, is "to realize *shari'a* [as embodied in *al-nass*], to instantiate the absolute in the course of history, and to connect the divine with the human..." (Ghannouchi 1993, 104). The mission of the jurists, the experts on the text, is to transform the "Book into an '*ummah*'" (Ghannouchi 1993, 297). They are to derive from the text specific rulings and interpretations, which are then picked up by the Muslim community. Crucially, for Ghannouchi, it is completely up to the people to decide which and whether to abide by this or that interpretation. So, while jurists determine the legitimacy of interpretations, the Muslim community determines the success of interpretations (Ghannouchi 1993, 123 and Ghannouchi 2000, 114).

Ghannouchi holds, further, that citizenship in the Islamic state is based on allegiance to the state and is open to people of all creeds (Ghannouchi 1993, 137); to accept someone's creed implies acknowledging their right to defend it and to show its advantages over, and the disadvantages of, what differs from it. Thus, citizens of all faiths, atheists included, are encouraged to engage in public debates, to defend their views, criticize others, etc. (Ghannouchi 1993, 292).

Ghannouchi urges different groups, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, to organize themselves in the way they see fit in order to express and defend their identities. That is why groups do not need a license to form political parties or establish newspapers, magazines and other forms of expression (Ghannouchi 1993, 300). The organizing ability of political parties on Ghannouchi's model is fundamental because without it *shura*, and hence human authority, would remain a slogan lacking the mechanisms that allow society to become a power to check and control political authorities.

And when it comes to the limits on public debates, Ghannouchi's explicit requirement is that "all parties of the debate must abide by the general morals of dialogue" (Ghannouchi 1993, 293). Thus, no one is excluded on the basis of the content of her views but only on the basis of how she defends her views. The constraint is that debate contenders are to engage with one another respectfully and on the basis of arguments aiming at convincing and persuading others rather than shaming or coercing them.

There are important similarities between Honneth's conception of radical democracy and Ghannouchi's conception of the public sphere as *shura*. The key to these similarities is the dual dimension of *shura*: (a) *shura* as mechanisms, and (b) *shura* as habits and a way of life.

Ghannouchi's conception of *shura* applies to a broad swathe of the social and political spectrum. *Shura* is best understood as a principle rather than a particular system of governance – a principle that applies not only to formal mechanisms and procedures for decision-making and will-formation, but also to social norms and habits on a pre-political level. As a principle, therefore, the scope of *shura* has both a formal procedural dimension and a pre-political social practice dimension.

According to Ghannouchi, the procedural mechanisms of *shura* can take many forms. Elections are one of them. Members of parliament and other social and political representatives are chosen through *shura*, and elections are a suitable mechanism. Justifying his claim about the appropriateness of elections, Ghannouchi observes that although *al-nass* does not mention elections, it does specify that *shura* must be used. He continues to say that "any allowed path [not in contradiction with *al-nass*] that can indicate or show who gets the trust of the 'umma is acceptable, and there is no doubt that elections in these times are among the acceptable ways that we can use under the condition that there be no tricks and deceptive means" (Ghannouchi 1993, 125).

The significance of Ghannouchi's position here is twofold and goes beyond the appropriateness of elections. First, it puts in relief the instrumentality of elections and the importance of gaining the trust of the people. Second, it makes it clear that various methods may be adopted. Elections are simply one means for forming and translating the authority of the people into political rule and, as such, an instrument for enhancing *shura*. Today elections are effective and so can be adopted. And if elections have defects we should correct them, and if elections are insufficient we should supplement them. Any procedural mechanism that enhances *shura* is in principle acceptable, and to say that x enhances *shura* is to say, not only that x is a good measuring rod for the trust of the people, but also that x enhances "participation, cooperation, and responsibility" – the basis on which the community is to establish political rule. Ghannouchi is in principle open to all *shura*-enhancing procedures in opinion-measuring, decision-making, problem-solving, representative-choosing, or will-formation, be they in formal or informal forums.

In addition to this proceduralist dimension of *shura*, Ghannouchi also appeals to *shura* as a basic principle that should underlie everyday social interaction – communicative interaction on a pre-

political level. He talks of the "habits of *shura*" and a *shuristic* "way of life", writing that "*shura* is not merely a style in managing political matters...but is a way of life that springs from the general vicegerency of humans, the primacy of the collective over the individual, and considering the individual to be weak on his own but strong with his brother, and mistaken on his own but enlightened towards his best with his brother" (Ghannouchi 1993, 190-191). Furthermore, because participation, cooperation and responsibility on a pre-political social level hinge, at least in part, on the economic and educational status of citizens, the social practice of *shura*, for Ghannouchi, has direct implications on economic and educational policies. The habits of *shura*, for example, would suffer in an uneducated, ignorant, unexposed, and economically impoverished social base. This is not to say that without education and wealth a citizen won't have a say in public affairs, but that education and income affect the flourishing of the habits of consultation. Without informed and independent thinking, the power of the people can be easily hijacked and manipulated. And without a minimum of economic independence and a decent standard of living, the people can be easily pressured and indirectly coerced to make choices and decisions not reflective of their own self-understanding and will. On the educational level, Ghannouchi argues for mandatory education "so that people won't remain the slaves of an authority that controls their minds" (Ghannouchi 1993, 326), and on the economic level he argues that "to the extent that the circle of ownership expands, so does the circle of *shura*, i.e. political participation and vice versa" (Ghannouchi 1993, 326).

Thus, like Honneth, especially in *Freedom's Right*, Ghannouchi is essentially concerned with the social conditions for the realization of democracy. I would like to argue that *shura's* dual dimension corresponds in Honneth's work to the mutual dependence between democratic procedures of will-formation, on the one hand, and the just organization of division of labor, on the other hand. For Ghannouchi, political parties organize civil society and allow social members to exercise their right to self-determination by freely expressing, asserting and preserving themselves and their identities; thus, parties play a role similar to the one played by the social division of labor regulated in a fair and just manner in Honneth. Through the organization of civil society different group members can come to see themselves as active participants in the cooperative enterprise of strengthening civil society so that they can live under a political rule they have established on the basis of cooperation, participation and responsibility, while not losing their ability to resist it if need be. This in turn allows social members to see the procedural mechanisms of *shura* as the right method for addressing their disagreements and common problems.

Both Honneth and Ghannouchi see democratic procedures as instruments (here they agree with the Habermasian version of procedural politics), and they connect the political level with the pre-political level (here they agree with the Arendtian model of republican politics). There are significant differences between Honneth and Ghannouchi, however, primarily in the way they connect politics to society. In both models, shared responsibility and cooperation on the pre-political level feeds back into the political level by motivating citizens to participate in the public sphere and democratic will-formation. But Honneth relies on the social division of labor and the sense of shared responsibility and cooperation it creates in social members, while Ghannouchi

relies on the organization of civil society and the sense of belonging to a self-determining community. Put differently, Honneth's model revolves around individuals and their achievements and talents, while Ghannouchi's model revolves around groups, their identities and rights to self-determination. For Honneth, the fair and just social division of labor creates a sense of shared responsibility and cooperation among individuals. For Ghannouchi, the fair and just distribution of authority creates a sense of shared responsibility and cooperation among groups.

Put in this way, Ghannouchi can be seen to be closer to the republican conception of politics than Honneth. On Ghannouchi's model, politics on the level of political parties has a strong connection with ethics and political virtues, something that Honneth avoids in his reliance on the social division of labor. Ghannouchi's reliance on groups rather than individuals raises two main problems. The first concerns its ability to deal with modern value pluralism.

But let us consider this problem a bit more carefully. A great deal depends on how value pluralism is approached theoretically. There is a danger of imposing a 'Western' celebration of multiple lifestyles as a condition for the legitimacy of non-Western political arrangements; to do so would be paternalist, even imperialist. This is not to deny the fact of pluralism or to assume that Muslim societies are homogeneous. They are not. Nor is it to take a principled stand against pluralism with regard to individual conceptions of the good. However, it is important to make a distinction between a) pluralism-as-an-outcome of a certain political arrangement and b) pluralism-as-a-success-criterion for political arrangements. Different political arrangements produce different forms, degrees, and scopes of social diversity. This diversity captures pluralism-as-an-outcome of this or that political arrangement. Pluralism-as-a-success-criterion, however, refers to a particular understanding of social diversity (form, degree, and scope) that gets employed, implicitly or explicitly, as a condition for the legitimacy of political arrangements. Adopting this distinction, and favoring the pluralism-as-an-outcome criterion, we will be less concerned with whether a certain political arrangement meets this or that particular understanding of diversity, and, consequently, less prone to fall into the paternalism trap. Instead, we will be more concerned with the conditions and opportunities for social diversity that a certain political arrangement makes possible. Following that line of thought we get to the second problem raised by Ghannouchi's reliance on groups rather than individuals. Given Islamic politics' commitment to Islamic unity and solidarity, the question arises as to how Islamic solidarity may be preserved in a society organized around political parties as the preservers and defenders of different creeds and cultures? Wouldn't a reliance on groups coupled with a commitment to Islamic solidarity, on the one hand, thwart a commitment to pluralism, on the other hand? I turn to this now.

4 The dual commitment to pluralism and solidarity

The Islamic state is committed to its Islamic character. Without such commitment there would be no robust sense that the state is Islamic. In the Islamic state, non-Muslim communities are encouraged to publicly express their identities and defend their existence and ways of life.

Ghannouchi, however, is not explicit on how broad the scope of his party pluralism is supposed to be. We saw that *shura* as a conception of public reasoning includes atheists, different religions and cultures, but what about anti-Islamic groups, sentiments, and expressions?

The Islamic state's commitment to *al-nass*, to preserving the Islamic identity and protecting the Islamic character of the state, puts restrictions on both equality and freedom. While Ghannouchi defends equal citizenship, this does not mean that citizens of the Islamic state can do and say what they want. In addition to the above mentioned "respecting the morals of dialogue", Ghannouchi calls for restrictions using formulations that include: "the requirements of the general system or social identity and the higher values that society abides by" (Ghannouchi 1993, 46); "general opinion...of the majority" (Ghannouchi 1993, 47); and "the feelings of the majority" (Ghannouchi 1993, 47). What all these have in common is that they refer in one way or another to Islam as the identity that characterizes the society that the Islamic state is to serve and protect.

These restrictions, however, neither imply a restriction on questioning juristic rulings, nor making Islam a taboo topic. Instead, these restrictions imply that political parties cannot set *as their goal* getting rid of the basis of society, in this case Islam (Ghannouchi 1993, 294). This sort of restrictions has to do more with the underlying *intention* behind one's reasoning – as opposed to the *content* and *way* of one's reasoning. In that sense, Islam as the basis of social solidarity is also a limit on parties and public reasoning. Targeting Islam as the social glue for the sake of undermining it is not to be allowed in the Islamic state.

While protecting social solidarity and unity might seem to provide a legitimate justification for limiting public reasoning, it is problematic. Consider Ghannouchi's position on apostasy where his intention-based limit on public reasoning is clearest. He takes the view that in the Islamic state apostasy is not a theological but a political crime. As a political crime apostasy is punished by political authorities only if it gathers significant momentum as part of an organized attempt to overthrow the Islamic regime; i.e. when it becomes part of a campaign to undermine the foundational basis of state and society. Ghannouchi explicitly maintains that from a theological point of view, and absent the political dimension, apostasy would not be punished by the authorities though it would be socially reprehensible, and thus indirectly controlled by the majority of social members in an Islamic society. Although apostasy is not officially punished, it is socially punished through the frowns of Muslim citizens. How damaging "social punishment" is depends on the context; Islamic societies differ in their degree of tolerance in that regard. In this vein, Ghannouchi flags the distinction between those who are born and raised Muslims and then abandon their faith, and those who join Islam for pragmatic considerations, say to marry a Muslim woman, and then abandon the faith after they separate or divorce. To each of these cases, and to each degree and sort of political mobilization against Islam, there would be a different kind and degree of state punishment or social reaction, which in turn would depend on the socio-cultural context and on those who have political power (Ghannouchi 1993, 50).

The most troubling feature of the intention-based limit concerns the criteria for determining when the public expression of apostasy reaches a momentum and organization that warrants punishment by political authorities. It is important to emphasize that under "organized attempt" we should not include the different attempts by non-Muslim groups to show where and how Islam is lacking. Doing so is, on Ghannouchi's view, part and parcel of those groups' struggle for self-determination and preservation. Thus, the intention-based limit hinges on the distinction between a critical engagement with Islam, on one hand, and an intentional hostile attack on Islam, on the other. Without such distinction, we would not be able to differentiate between a political crime against Islam and a constructive critical engagement with Islam – an engagement that is entailed by the Islamic state's acceptance of different creeds including atheists. If political authorities interfere under the pretext that "social punishment" is not enough, they would be determining for society the adequate degree and response to apostasy. In that way they would be running against popular will and to that extent acting illegitimately. Recall that for Ghannouchi the social takes priority over the political. Taking this idea seriously implies that when an Islamic society changes to the point of being no longer willing to support the state, the legitimacy of the state is called into question. To be sure, this does not mean that popular will is always right. Political authorities can interfere to stop society becoming increasingly discriminatory and violent, for example. The point is that by allowing political authorities to punish apostasy, we allow the political to take priority over the social. The Islamic state would be seeking its preservation irrespective of, indeed contrary to, its social base. This shows clearly the slipperiness of the distinction on which the intention-based limit hinges. Intentions are subject to varying interpretations and are resilient to measurement and verification. Any intention-based limit on public reasoning presents a serious threat to an all-inclusive public sphere. To prevent Ghannouchi's conception of public reasoning from turning into an exclusionist public sphere, it is not enough to design a list of clear, verifiable, and public criteria of what counts as an attack on the social glue of an Islamic society. The intention-based limit should be dropped altogether.⁷

Our discussion of the intention-based limits points to a deeper and more general difficulty, one that has to do with the tension between pluralism and solidarity in the Islamic state. To put it simply, letting go of the intention-based limit is not as easy as one might think. The Islamic state is much more committed to acknowledging the Islamic character of the state than is apparent. Although Ghannouchi supports pluralism he is explicit in maintaining that the Islamic state is fundamentally committed to unity and solidarity. Pluralism and solidarity, however, are typically considered to be in tension. While solidarity tends towards exclusion, pluralism tends towards inclusion. Acknowledging the Islamic character of the state is supposed to grant solidarity, and the intention-based limit aims at preserving it. Given group pluralism and the tension between solidarity and pluralism, letting go of the intention-based limit would effectively dilute the Islamic character of the state. Can the Islamic state preserve its commitment to pluralism given its commitment to solidarity?

By way of answering this question, consider Ghannouchi's rejection of Hassan al-Banna's one party Islamic state. Ghannouchi contrasts his defense of party pluralism with Banna's rejection of pluralism in favor of strict Islamic unity. Banna called for dissolving all parties and replacing

them with just one party that unifies the forces of the *'umma*, and rejects connecting *shura* with party pluralism (Ghannouchi 1993, 256). Ghannouchi's argument is based on a distinction between the particular and the universal, and on the importance of guarding against a tendency to take what applies under specific conditions, generalize it and apply it under all conditions. According to Ghannouchi, this mistake led many of those who were influenced by the works of Banna and Sayyid Qutb to reject political party pluralism and to understand pluralism as inimical to Islamic unity (Ghannouchi 1993, 256-257).⁸ Ghannouchi argues that Banna's call for a single Islamic party results from the sort of oppression and repression the Egyptian state was exercising against the Islamists at that time. The mistake is due to a failure to distinguish the particular from the universal in Banna's defense of a one-party state. This type of mistake should be avoided in general, and not only in the case of party pluralism. Such avoidance requires a constant and rigorous awareness of what is universal and what is particular in rulings what has to do with our contingent sociopolitical, historical, and subjective situatedness, on the one hand, and what has to do with divine will and intention, on the other. This awareness is crucial in not allowing human imperfection to take over divine perfection and speak in its name to dominate and oppress in the name of God. Doing so would amount to authoritarianism from the Islamic perspective (Abou el-Fadl, 1997 and 2009).⁹

Thus, the tendency to be guarded against is that of confusing what is universal with what is particular in the different rulings and opinions in the Islamic tradition, starting with the Prophet, his companions, the great jurists of the jurisprudential tradition and other influential Islamic thinkers. Any human understanding of *al-nass* or juristic ruling, be it a ruling that has the consensus of the *'umma* or of a single jurist, will have some elements that pertain to *al-nass* and others that pertain to the particular context of interpretation which includes both the particularity of the interpreter and the particularity of the situation or object of application.

Being committed to avoiding that tendency and maintaining that humans are fallible, Ghannouchi cannot but hold on to pluralism. He acknowledges this when he refers to a conception of Islamic unity that "can only be achieved and established through acknowledging and respecting pluralism, and organizing the methods of dialogue and convincing and negotiation to resolve conflicts" (Ghannouchi 1993, 139), and when he speaks of rejecting all uses of force and coercion for "deleting or silencing the opinion of the other under the pretext of preserving unity" (Ghannouchi 1993, 139). Not surprisingly, the achievement of this construal of Islamic unity is crucially dependent on *shura*. This is so not only because *shura* aims at consensus, but also because *shura* is "the spinal cord of the *'umma*'s authority in establishing political rule on the basis of participation, coordination and responsibility" (Ghannouchi 1993, 109), and because all procedures for problem-solving and conflict-resolution fall under its jurisdiction. So, Ghannouchi's solution is to conceive of unity *in terms of* pluralism, and to achieve it through *shura*. That is an interesting and promising solution that is worth investigating. What Ghannouchi has to say about this solution, however, is rather hand-wavy. The most informative thing he says is: "it is better to understand Islamic unity not in terms of simple unity but in terms of unity that is produced by variety through *al-nass* and *shura*, or commitment and freedom" (Ghannouchi 1993, 256-257). This is suggestive but too vague. The basic idea is that

solidarity and pluralism do not have to be in tension, in fact they should complement one another. Further, solidarity should not be construed in terms of harmony and homogeneity where there are little or no differences in opinions, views, etc. That would be "simple unity." So, it is some sort of complex unity that Ghannouchi envisages and it is to be "produced by variety through *al-nass* and *shura*, or commitment and freedom." But how are we to understand this claim?

Conceiving of unity through pluralism relies on a distinction between two *kinds* of social disagreement and conflict, which in turn corresponds to a distinction between social division and social pluralism. Pluralism on Ghannouchi's model cannot imply social division or fragmentation. Yet his model acknowledges and welcomes social disagreement, and social disagreement can and in most cases does lead to social fragmentation. Ghannouchi's solution then depends on a distinction between two kinds of social disagreement: (a) disagreement that is conducive to social fragmentation (and inimical to Ghannouchi's pluralism), and (b) disagreement that is conducive to social unity and solidarity (conducive to Ghannouchi's pluralism). Disagreement of kind (b) lends itself to cooperative, participatory and responsible resolutions, while disagreement of kind (a) lends itself to competitive might-makes-right resolutions. But where exactly lies the difference in *kind* between disagreements (a) and (b)?

The difference is not captured in terms of the intensity of the disagreement. That would be a difference in degree, not in kind. The intensity of disagreement is neither something we can control nor something we should control. A married couple committed to their union could have intense disagreements on certain issues without affecting their commitment to their relation; in fact, it might even strengthen and give meaning to that commitment. Nor can the difference relate abstractly to the subject matter, or object, of the disagreement. Disagreements regarding particular subject matters are always attached to the attitudes of the parties involved. Parties must care about the object of their disagreement in order for that disagreement to be meaningful. A dispute on where to build a public garden, for instance, is meaningful to the extent that the parties in question care about public gardens. A disagreement about whether to put your cross under or over your shirt is meaningful to the extent we care about the public expression of religious symbols.

In attempting to answer the question of the difference in kind between disagreements (a) and (b), it is helpful to recall Ghannouchi's insistence on the need for constant and rigorous awareness of what is universal and what is particular in rulings: on what has to do with our contingent sociopolitical, historical, and subjective situatedness, on the one hand, and what has to do with divine will and intention, on the other. This awareness is crucial for preventing human imperfection from laying claim to divine perfection and speaking in its name to dominate and oppress others. Doing so, from the Islamic perspective, amounts to authoritarianism (Abou el-Fadl 1997 and 2009). It is not the acceptance of the authority of *al-nass* that leads to authoritarianism but the individual's taking her voice to be the authority of *al-nass*. Ghannouchi asks rhetorically: "does not the closing of prophecy means ruling with the guidance of man and the human ability for driving the boat of life on his own in light of the general rules of

driving?" (Ghannouchi 1993, 120). In addition to acknowledging human freedom and autonomy, this is a warning against losing one's compass in the midst of navigating concrete human situations, that is, losing one's grounding in *al-nass* and *shura* as one makes accommodations for, and is immersed in, human particularities. Drawing on the requirement of a constant and rigorous awareness of what is universal and what is particular, we can identify the loci of the difference between disagreements conducive to unity and those to fragmentation. Disagreements in the Islamic state should be conceived as disagreements between different interpretations of concerns and commitments that are held in common. To be sure, public debate contenders will have different and maybe incompatible specifications and concretizations of *al-nass* and *shura*. But, these differences and incompatibilities will be conducive to social solidarity so long as all participants are aware not only that they share common concerns and commitments, but also that their disagreements are the result of different specifications of the concerns and commitments. If we add to that the claim that human knowledge is always fallible, then debate contenders cannot dismiss others on the basis that they themselves have privileged access to truth. Instead, they will acknowledge that they must continue to cooperate responsibly in order to find the most suitable resolution to their disagreements. Thus, the kind of social disagreement that is conducive to social solidarity is that which occur against an overarching common background where no one has privileged access to truth. Disagreement is a means to sharpen, improve and revise our own particular way of specifying our concerns and commitments to the ideals we share with our contenders. On this view, the underlying conception of social conflict is one according to which conflict is an opportunity for growth and development, and is embedded in social dynamics and public debates, be they formal or informal. This fits with Ghannouchi's recommendation to Muslims that when they feel the openness of public debates is undermining their faith, they should try to develop and provide stronger and more cogent arguments (Ghannouchi 1993, 47-48). In this way, difference and pluralism can be conducive to solidarity.

In theory this looks neat. In practice, however, a "common commitment," be it to *al-nass* and *shura*, to a Habermasian constitutional patriotism, or to a Rawlsian political liberalism, can only go so far since type (b) disagreements are likely to turn into type (a) disagreements. Let me explain.¹⁰

To the extent that individual identities get constructed and are constituted by the set of communal norms and practices, individual identities find their safe haven within these norms and practices. By not closing ourselves to challenging arguments, being willing to reconsider our position, and taking debate contenders seriously and respectfully, we open the door for shaking and dislocating the safe haven of our individual identities. Realizing that these parts of communal norms and practices that have infiltrated our identities and inform our reasoning are contingent, historically situated, shaky and in need of revision and revamping, is not comfortable and might even feel threatening. Given the challenge to identity that disagreement with those who hold alternative and conflicting substantive instantiations of the ideals and principles we are committed to, public reasoners might opt for fixing rather than loosening their own particular substantive instantiations of ideals and principles – maybe because they want, consciously or not, to stick to the security of what they know and how they do things. In a nutshell, it requires existential

courage to actually face our contingency, reconsider our position, and step towards what is alien and unknown to us. On the other hand, taking refuge in our convictions is the easy way out of confrontations and disagreements, and exhibits existential cowardice.

Consider the following illustrative scenario: an American and a German citizen, both committed to freedom of speech, get into a disagreement as to whether neo-Nazi groups should be protected. If both are deeply committed to their respective society's *particular* way of concretizing freedom of speech, then their identities might be attached to that particular concretization. And since their disagreement poses a threat to who they take themselves to be, their disagreement might very well lead to division and not solidarity.¹¹ Over and above a common commitment, a conception of solidarity through pluralism requires an existentially courageous citizenry. With that said, I want to shed some light on the elements involved in the structure of existential courage by briefly going back and commenting on Ghannouchi's attempt to square pluralism with solidarity.

Let us consider again the gap between the universal general and concrete particular. On Ghannouchi's view, figuring out the meaning of the universal general is a human effort mediated through fallible human reason, and the application of the universal general is sensitive to the situation and the human context. As Muslims try to live out (concrete particular) *al-nass'* prescriptions (universal general), Muslims are to be diligently aware of the distinction between the voice of man and the voice of God. And whereas Muslims do not put in question the authoritativeness, universality and validity of God's law, Islamic law as a man-made law is the product of human effort and so cannot but be an approximation of God's law; in consequence, it can never achieve the status of certainty, validity, or truth. In everyday life, however, Muslims are to act *as if* juristic interpretations, man-made law, were epistemically certain; i.e. they act with *practical-certainty*. Nevertheless, they are to simultaneously keep their commitment to epistemic fallibilism on a more theoretical level; i.e. *theoretical-uncertainty*.

I suggest that what matters with regard to social and political interaction is one's awareness of, and attitude towards, practical-certainty in instances of conflict, challenge, and disagreement. This awareness and attitudinal dimension operates on the level of "being" and not merely on the level of words or beliefs; that is, the manner in which one embodies and lives out the relational space between practical-certainty and theoretical-uncertainty when interacting with others. Does one dogmatically hold on to practical-certainty when challenged? Or does one instead mindfully, gently and carefully loosen their hold on practical-certainty by recalling and leaning towards theoretical-uncertainty in order to soberly assess the situation before they react to the challenge at hand? Existential courage is best articulated in terms of a position between theoretical-uncertainty and practical-certainty. Only when we can occupy this space, will we be able to distance ourselves from our own convictions, from what is particular in our own reasoning, and from our community's substantive instantiation of ideals and principles, without feeling insecure or experiencing a threat to our identity in such a way that makes taking refuge in our already held convictions appear as the only way out.

We can distinguish here between the fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist attitudes. When the fundamentalist attitude is at work, one dogmatically holds on to their and/or their community's concretizations of ideals and principles by way of taking refuge from challenging conflicts and disagreements. With such an attitude, one exhibits existential cowardice. The non-fundamentalist attitude, on the other hand, does not entail that one ignores or has no attachment whatsoever to their or their community's substantiations of ideals and principles. When the non-fundamentalist attitude is at work, one is diligently aware or mindful of their reactions to challenges so that in their responses they are less prone to take refuge in particular substantiations of ideals and principles. The non-fundamentalist attitude is a dynamic state of being towards, or relating to, one's own identity and ways of reasoning that supports and facilitates the development and the exercise of democratic civility broadly construed. In this way it is best understood in terms of a meta-civic-virtue – an attitude towards oneself that underlines and plays a significant contributing role in a variety of civic virtues without itself having the status of civic virtue proper.

Thus, squaring a dual commitment to pluralism and solidarity by relying on an understanding of solidarity that is achieved through pluralism, requires that social disagreements and conflicts occur, and are engaged in, against an overarching common background where no one has privileged access to truth. On this view, social conflicts and disagreements as embedded in social dynamics and public debates turn into vehicles for social constituencies to improve and revise their substantive specifications of shared concerns, ideals and principles. In this way disagreements become opportunities for growth and development, and hence conducive to social solidarity rather than fragmentation. However, in order to realize this normative ideal, we need existentially courageous social constituencies that are not dogmatically attached to their own particular convictions, and do not take refuge in these convictions when faced with challenging and differing debate contenders. The overarching common background against which social disagreements are to take place should be complemented with a citizenry that shuns the adoption of a fundamentalist attitude and strives for exhibiting a non-fundamentalist attitude.¹²

To create and maintain the conditions that a citizenry must have in order for it to achieve solidarity through pluralism, we need to develop appropriate philosophies of education and put in place the right sort of educational policies, institutions, etc. The conception of Islamic radical democracy under construction, thus, constitutively depends on pedagogy. What form, structure, method, and content pedagogy takes in radical Islamic democracy will determine whether citizens and social constituencies will be able to engage in ongoing public contestation battles in a way that is conducive to their growth and development. Only then will Islamic radical democracy succeed in maintaining its commitment to both unity and diversity, to solidarity and pluralism.

Radical Islamic democracy's dependence on education generally, and civic education more specifically, should not be perceived as dodging the social and political challenges it faces. Rather, such dependence should be commended as a corrective measure to a derailment that political philosophy is suffering from. Such commandment would be supported by Honneth

given his recent attempt to put contemporary political philosophy back on track after having “lost the insight that a thriving democracy must continually reproduce the cultural and moral preconditions of its own existence by way of general educational processes” (Honneth 2015). The same can be said about Ghannouchi. Recall that Ghannouchi talks of an educational dimension of *shura* (Ghannouchi 1993, 195), and of the importance of education for bolstering the power of the people and protecting it from being highjacked and manipulated. And more recently he writes: “The legacy of dictatorship continues to weigh heavily on us—changing this culture of despotism to one of critical thinking and political engagement will require long-term educational reform” (Ghannouchi 2016). Dependency on a citizenry adept in reasoning with differing and challenging others publicly organically fits within the thought of both Ghannouchi and Honneth. With that said, and leaving the more specific implications of radical Islamic democracy on education to another paper, I would like to move to the last section of the paper to put in place the various pieces of the conception of radical Islamic democracy I am constructing.

5 Conclusion

I have compared and contrasted certain elements in Honneth’s model of democracy and Ghannouchi’s model of Islamic rule to open conceptual space for a radical Islamic democracy. This space is constituted of two integrated investigative threads that combine proceduralist, republican, and agonistic features.

The first thread concerns the normative justification of the principle of a democratic public sphere. The normative justification of the democratic public sphere in radical Islamic democracy combines republican and proceduralist features: It shares with a Habermasian version of procedural politics a rather instrumental understanding of democratic procedures, while simultaneously sharing with an Arendtian model of republican politics a connection between the political level with the pre-political social level. Democratic procedures are construed in terms of *shura*-enhancing procedures – i.e. procedures that function as good measuring rods for the trust of the people while being conducive to participation, cooperation and responsibility – and can include procedures in opinion-measuring, decision-making, problem-solving, representative-choosing, as well as will-formation in both formal and informal forums. *Shura*, however, has a dual dimension and includes, over and above democratic procedures, a dimension pertaining to everyday social interaction. *Shura* as habits and a way of life, calls for cooperation and responsibility on a pre-political social level, which in turn has economic and educational implications. *Shura*-enhancing procedures and *shuristic*-habits are mutually dependent on one another. It is through democratic procedures that different social constituencies get to exercise their right to self-determination by freely expressing, asserting and preserving themselves and their identities. And in doing so authority gets distributed among them as well as between political rulers and social powers. In turn, a fair and just distribution of authority on the pre-political social level creates a sense of shared responsibility and cooperation among social constituencies in strengthening civil society, which feeds back into the political level by motivating citizens to participate in democratic procedures. Radical Islamic democracy, like

Honneth's model of radical democracy, is concerned with the social conditions for the realization of democracy and construes democracy as a process of constituting civil society.

With this first investigative thread in view, radical Islamic democracy faces the challenge of squaring its dual commitment to pluralism and solidarity. By way of addressing that challenge I developed Ghannouchi's hand-wavy remarks regarding a conception of solidarity that is achieved through pluralism. In doing so I made explicit the agonistic feature of radical Islamic democracy, and thus identified a second investigative thread between radical democratic thought and an Islamic model of political rule.

How is radical Islamic democracy to maintain a robust sense of pluralism while simultaneously being committed to Islamic unity in a society organized around political parties as the preservers and defenders of different creeds and cultures? The answer I provided is in terms of an understanding of social conflicts and disagreements occurring against an overarching common background where no one has privileged access to truth, and where conflict and disagreement are embedded in both formal and informal social dynamics and public debates, and present an opportunity for growth and development. The successful realization of such an understanding of social conflicts and disagreements depends on having the right sort of citizenry, one that exhibits a non-fundamentalist attitude in processes of public reasoning. This, in turn, constitutively connects radical Islamic democracy to pedagogy and civic education, a connection that Honneth hopes to see spread and regain its central place in political philosophy.

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Notes

¹ Within these categories, there will be some who categorically and dogmatically refuse to entertain the possibility of a radical Islamic democracy (or any combination between Islam and democracy more generally) either because they reject democracy or because they reject Islam or political Islam in any shape or form. Against such refusal, I doubt that the argument in this paper will be effective.

² While the resources in Ghannouchi's work that I draw upon, and develop, are internal to the Islamic tradition, they are neither the only ones that the tradition provides, nor is the way Ghannouchi understands them, and how I capitalize on them, beyond debate or contestation. It would surely be interesting and important to look, in further work, at other Islamic thinkers as well as juristic, philosophical and political elements within the Islamic tradition to connect with, and further develop, radical Islamic democracy and the different investigative threads I identify in this paper.

³ Jumping ahead, a central difference between the models of Honneth and Ghannouchi lies in the way in which they connect the political with the social level. Now given that Ghannouchi's model is for an Islamic society, an additional challenge arises which I articulate below in terms of squaring solidarity and pluralism.

⁴ I thank Paul Giladi (Manchester Metropolitan University) for bringing this to my attention.

⁵ *Al-nass* for Ghannouchi includes both the *qur'an* and *sunna*. The *qur'an* is believed by Muslims to be the word of God as revealed to Muhammad, the last of the prophets. And *sunna* refers to the life of Muhammad, taken to be exemplary and admirable by Muslims. *Hadith* refers to the sum of reports of what Muhammad had said or done, and so it is the sum of the specific accounts of the life of the prophet. The literature on what exactly constitutes *sunna*, and which *hadith* is authenticated is vast. The debate about such matters is old but the important thing to keep in mind for our present purposes is that such debates are internal to the Islamic tradition and do not affect my arguments here. For simplicity's sake I will then use "*al-nass*" to refer to the ultimate source of truth and validity in Islam, which is available to us in the form of a text.

⁶ For the pragmatic grounds, which relates to his rejection of violence and endorsing peaceful means for social change, see Ghannouchi 1999.

⁷ It is worth clarify here that rejecting intention-based limits on public reasoning is not a rejection of the importance of social solidarity and unity, but of a particular way of protecting and preserving social solidarity and unity. The challenge this raises, and which I now address, is that of squaring pluralism with solidarity; a challenge that is not particular to radical Islamic democracy, but to any conception of politics that is simultaneously committed to pluralism and to social solidarity.

⁸ Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb are two central figures in recent history that have influenced and shaped modern Islamic revivalist movements. Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928 and Qutb was among its most influential figures.

⁹ While I will say more about this important distinction, it is worth noting here that it does not preclude one from maintaining a robust affirmation of *al-nass* and being firmly committed to it. What I say below about practical certainty, theoretical uncertainty, fundamentalist attitude, and non-fundamentalist attitude should bring further clarity to the connection between the two elements of this distinction.

¹⁰ For more on this, please refer to Sadek 2019.

¹¹ Similar cases can be made for the wearing of the *hijab* (Islamic veil), the building of mosques, state funding of religious schools, etc.

¹² It is important to clarify here that by adopting a non-fundamentalist attitude one does not necessarily have to abandon or reject one's own particular convictions. The point of adopting such attitude is not to cling to particular convictions dogmatically or as a mere defensive strategy against the different other.