# A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, POLICIES AND DISCOURSES IN EGYPT

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## ABSTRACT

A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, POLICIES AND DISCOURSES IN EGYPT

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In thesis, I intended to sociologically examine the perceptions and practices of the state and different Islamist groups about the religious education in Egypt from the 1970s onwards. I define the religious education as a religious course to which several hours a week are devoted in the curriculum of mass education, and which teaches moral instructions based on the Qur'an, and basic information about Islamic culture and history. Since the 1970s, the rise of Islamism in Egypt has created strife between the ruling elites and dissident Islamist groups to capture the religious discourse and control the religious socialization in the mass education. This strife has resulted in the emergence of alternative Islamic educational areas (private Islamic schools and Al-Azhar schools). In this context, I used hermeneutic method to analyze the religious educational discourses and institutions of these two main agents –ruling elites and Islamist groups. The Mubarak regime in Egypt seeks to institutionalize a particular state discourse in religious education in accordance with its own interests. However, the important thing is the reactions of different Islamist (moderate and radical) groups to this state discourse and institutionalization; because, today, these reactions of opponent Islamist groups generates unintended consequences which are subversive to the legitimacy of the regime.



Keywords: Egypt, education, religion, Islamism and discourse.

# ÖZ

MISIRDAKİ DİNİ EĞİTİM KURUMLARININ, POLİTİKALARININ VE DİNİ EĞİTİME İLİŞKİN SÖYLEMLERİN SOSYOLOJİK BİR ANALİZİ

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Bu tezde, 1970'lerden günümüze, Mısır'daki devletin ve farklı İslamcı grupların din eğitimine ilişkin algı ve pratiklerini sosyolojik olarak incelemeye amaçladım. Din eğitimini, yaygın-örgün eğitim müfredatında haftada birkaç saat ayrılan, Kur'an'a dayalı ahlaki öğretilerle İslam tarihine ve kültürüne ilişkin temel bilgiler öğreten bir din dersi olarak tanımlamaktayım. 1970'lerden beri Mısır'daki İslamcılığın yükselişi, yönetici elitler ile muhalif İslamcı gruplar arasında, yaygın-örgün eğitimdeki dini söylemi ele geçirmeye ve dini sosyalizasyonu kontrol etmeye yönelik bir çatışma yaratmıştır. Bu çatışma, alternatif İslami eğitsel alanların (özel İslami okullar ve El-Ezher okulları) ortaya çıkması ile sonuçlanmıştır. Bu bağlamda, iki temel toplumsal aktörün – yönetici elitlerin ve İslamcı grupların– dini eğitime ilişkin söylem ve kurumlarını analiz etmek için hermeneutik yöntemi kullandım. Mısır'daki Mübarek rejimi, kendi çıkarlarına uygun olarak, din eğitiminde belirli bir devlet söylemini kurumsallaştırmaya çabalamaktadır. Fakat, önemli nokta, farklı İslamcı (ılımlı ve radikal) grupların bu devlet söylemine ve kurumsallaşmaya verdikleri reaksiyonlardır; çünkü bugün, muhalif İslamcı grupların bu reaksiyonları, rejimin meşruiyetini sarsan beklenmeyen sonuçlar yaratmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Mısır, eğitim, din, İslamcılık ve söylem.

**DEDICATION**

To My Parents

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I am thankful to Prof. Dr. Bahattin Akşit to introduce me to the very interesting subject of religious education. When he suggested it to me, I should confess that the idea of studying religious education in Egypt did not seem that exciting to me at first. I was thinking of studying advanced issues such as civil society, nationalism and Islamism. However, as I read the critical educational theories and field works about religious education in Egypt, I discerned that the issue of education is a very specific field with which such advanced issues are subtly concerned.

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Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to my mother and father, Gülenay and Sadık Aşık, because they have always supported me through my ongoing and unpredictable academic journey, even when I sometimes seemed to lose my way in the depths of hopelessness. It is very hard for me to describe my gratefulness to them. Their support during my graduate education at the METU was so important that without them this thesis would not have been written, and I would not even have the chance to thank the many others I did for their support.

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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s, the positivist meta-narrative of secularism has been in noticeable decline in social sciences. I share the criticism of Andrew Davison that some scholars such as Bernard Lewis and Daniel Lerner (See his book, *Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*) argue the common dilemma lies in the constituents of public sphere, such as governmental structure, economy and law, taking a secular form, whereas religion is circumscribed and constrained into private sphere. Implicitly assuming the two spheres as completely disparate social realities, Lewis and Lerner suggest a historicist prediction that the religious sphere would be eclipsed by the secular sphere in terms of values, institutions and norms, and would eventually come to an end (Davison, 2006).

However, the dichotomy between the religious and secular has entered a different process. It is no longer possible to speak of a relationship between the religious and secular from a positivist and evolutionary historical perspective which assumes that social change starts in the stage of a traditional/religious society, and ends in the stage of a modern/secular society. One of the most important examples of this is the Islamic revivalism in Egypt.

Islam, as a cognitive map -consisting of symbols and meanings- and as a normative value system which is immanent to the Egyptian culture and history, and also directs the societal relations and institutions, is an indispensable cultural unit to be studied in understanding contemporary Egyptian society. Furthermore, the Egyptian society has been witnessing the growth of Islamism as a hegemonic world-view and life style since the 1970s. The main ideas of fundamentalist

Islam, *returning to the true Islamic path* and *being a better Muslim* in words and deeds, has turned out to be the basic pillars of the human consciousness among the majority of Egyptians.

Bryan Turner argued about Weber's view of modernity, saying that "Modernization brings it with the erosion of meaning… Rationalization makes the world orderly and reliably, but it can not make the world meaningful" (Turner, 1990: 6). In the case of Egypt, to what extent that secular ideologies have penetrated into the Egyptian society is frequently discussed. During his tenure, Gamal Abdul Nasser launched top-down secular modernization projects on a grand scale. As a result, certain peculiar ideologies such as Pan-Arabism and Arab socialism, which have a significant secular basis, became popular in Egypt. However, the defeat of the Egyptian army in the Six-Days War against Israel under Nasser, the death of Nasser –a charismatic authority who was identified with these quasi-secular ideologies– and Sadat's reconciliatory policies towards Islamist groups combined to bring about the enervation of these ideologies, and paved the way for the emergence of a breeding ground to be utilized by Islamists. That process is interpreted as a consequential failure of secularization led by Nasserist projects. In this sense, Ayubi and Ibrahim argue that in the aftermath of these failures, Islamic tradition and culture started to provide a social identity and value system as a part of reaction against the failure and controversies of modernization in Egypt (Ayubi, 1990; Ibrahim, 1993).

Within this framework, the primary aim of this thesis is to scrutinize the state and various alternative discourses and mass educational institutions with respect to the religious education in contemporary Egypt. In the relation between Islam and education, Islam will be tackled as an ideology presenting people the feeling of belonging, social identity and a cognitive map to be appropriated in signifying and directing social reality. The analysis of ideological discourse about education is so vital to this study, because schools not only teach knowledge, skills, science and technology, but also provide values, norms, a meaning of life, and a purpose of social relationships and identity, all of which constitute an

ideology. What is taught in the school and how it is taught become manifestations of what is considered legitimate body of knowledge (Giroux, 1992).

Ideology typically refers to meanings, ideas and symbols in social life. In human consciousness, it is a kind of formulation and perception of social reality which is constructed in an abstract way, but exists in the material world. Consciously or unconsciously, it is embodied in all our relationships and individual behaviors. It shows up in religious rituals and worship, political parties, schools, marital relationships, and the like (Althusser, 1991:55). In the ideological construction of educational knowledge on the discursive level, educational knowledge is ideologically selected, classified, distributed, transmitted and evaluated in particular ways which reflect the power struggle and the principles of social control in society. Education is a battleground for acquiring the ideological dominance, because the control of knowledge is conducive to produce and preserve institutions of a particular community or class (Kazamias, 1966; Cook, 2001: 399; Starrett, 1998: 11; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

In the power struggle, each group –the state in mass public education and non-governmental politically-oriented opponent groups in their own private schools– seeks to establish, expand and sustain a particular notion of truth. As Aziz Talbani argues, while the state attempts to legitimize and maintain its power through the control of the production of discourse, opponent groups resist the state by creating their alternative discourses (Talbani, 1996). As can be seen in this thesis, alternative discourses first aim to reach and present their particular understandings and notions of truth to the people in their own groups and networks. Then, as Bradley J. Cook stresses in his works, they may start to struggle for capturing public discourse in order to shape the political structure of society. Hence, the mass educational system becomes the battleground on which this struggle takes place, because mass education is one of the most effective arenas for the production and dissemination of public discourse (Cook, 2000b).

I here define religious education as an instruction that aims at inculcating particular moral values in students based on the Qur'an and Sunna. It is institutionalized within a type of religious course to which several hours are devoted in the curriculum of modern mass educational institutions. When speaking of mass education, I refer to state and private (foreign or native) schools which follow the same official curriculum approved by the ministry of education, and give their graduates officially approved primary, secondary or higher education certificates. Religious education plays an important role in constituting the relation between knowledge and power, thereby reproducing and establishing specific discourses of power. In his book, *Putting Islam to Work* (1998), Gregory Starrett makes a critical analysis of the usage of religious education by the ruling elites of Egypt. Since the nineteenth century, the regimes in Egypt have been utilizing this relation to control the public discourse on Islam. They have been seeking to establish and disseminate a particular state discourse in religious education in accordance with their own interests and ideologies. Today, the Mubarak regime in Egypt has waged a war against Islamism and Islamist groups on the pretext of suppressing terrorist activities carried out by Islamist groups. In this sense, the knowledge in religious education are utilized by the regime as an instructive material which is full of specific discourses condemning *Islamic fanaticism* and *Islamic terrorism*, as the regime calls them.

The state can not ensure its existence without ideological apparatuses, because ideological apparatuses provide a connection between the state and society. In this sense, the educational relationship in modern life has become an apparatus for surveillance and control over people (Althusser, 1991: 42-43). By the means of mass educational institutions, the state tries to inculcate particular values, norms and identities in their people in order to guarantee a particular mass mobilization.

However, all the critical works of Talbani, Cook and Starrett imply a crucial point about the people's perception of the state discourse in religious education. The chief question is whether the state can manage to reach their

political goals through the religious education, or if it will face unintended consequences? It is the reaction of individuals of how they appropriate educational systems for their own purposes. Individuals go through the socialization process at schools not as passive receptors, but as social agents capable of affecting the cultural and political structure. Therefore, the important thing is the responses of different groups to the religious discourse and institutions in state mass education. For instance, since the 1970s, the rise of Islamism in Egypt generated various opponent Islamist groups and discourses to the ruling elites, and as a result, they have permeated state schools or established their own alternative mass educational institutions like Al-Azhar and private Muslim Brotherhood schools.

Apart from the issue of power struggle, another key point is the characteristics of the education (the content and methods of instruction, materials, school atmosphere and the like) in these alternative mass educational institutions. The above-mentioned differentiation between the religious and secular as a result of secularization process seems so critical, because these schools requires their students to memorize the Qur'an and *hadith*, to master extra and heavy Islamic corpus, and to participate in certain communal rituals, all of which are not related to the requirements of the official curriculum. It can be inferred from this picture that the religious education delivered in these schools does not solely comprise moral instructions as is the case in state schools (Neither do these schools aim at providing for their students the same value system and social identity which are promulgated by the state).

Therefore, there is an exigency coming to sight for re-defining the relation between secular and religious education. I here define secular education typically as a modern schooling that educates individuals for a particular social life, and teaches them both secular values and scientific knowledge through the perspective of a modern/secular nation-state for training towards a secular profession. As I mentioned above, religious education is defined as moral instructions based on the Qur'an and Sunna in modern schooling. However, the

aim and character of religious and secular education should be re-considered in the context of this alternative Islamic schooling.

As for methodology, I will use a sociological analysis of the ideological constructions of the state and alternative educational discourses regarding Islam, and of the institutional establishments of the state and the alternative Islamic schooling with respect to the duality between religious and secular education. In this study, debates, conjectures and consequences concerning with the thesis' topic are formulated based on the findings of my field research (in-depth interviews and participant observation) that was conducted for three months (April-July 2005) in Cairo/Egypt (the details of data gathering will be given in Chapter 2, Section 2). During the in-depth interviews, I sought to understand (*verstehen*) the thoughts and perceptions of people (students, teachers, professors and experts) and to investigate various discourses about the religious and secular education in state and alternative Islamic schools, about the Islamization of educational system and about Islamism in Egypt in relation to the issues of modernity and secularism.

In this inquiry, I will take the issues of modernization and secularization into consideration, relying on some binary codes such as religious-secular, modern-traditional, state-individual and Islamic-Western. The impact of modernization on this framework is very important in evaluating the role of mass educational system as a means of mass mobilization from a broader perspective. In particular, the debate on the modernization as a top-down socialization process, which creates unpredictable, irreversible and open-ended social transformations, appears to be very significant in order to understand how the ideal and material outcomes of modernity are perceived and appropriated by the Islamist discourses and institutions in Egypt. In this sense, the concept of secular pluralization will frequently be questioned so as to understand the responses of the different Islamist discourses to the pluralistic aspect of secularization as a result of modernization process. As can be seen in this study, mass education as an ideological state apparatus –an educational outcome of the modernization

process– might cause not only the emergence of the multiple forces that contest the state's authority, targets and ideology, but also the new possibilities for reproduction and dissemination of Islamic knowledge and tradition in the face of secular knowledge.

# CHAPTER 2

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The overall goal of this chapter is to explain the certain approaches and concepts that I employ in this thesis, and to clarify my research problem. In the section of "Islam and Modernity", what I seek for is to provide a deeper and critical perspective to understand the relationship between Islam and the relevant aspects of modernity. With respect to this relationship, I think it should be posed some questions such as how should we accommodate certain modern concepts and formations such as *secularization*, *secularism, Westernization* and *modernization* in the context of the growing Islamization in the Muslim world, what is the impact of these concepts and formation on the Muslim society, and how has the Muslim world reacted to the impact of these Western concepts.

Discussing these concepts proves to be so significant to understand the socio-political framework in which mass educational system in Egypt operates. Delineating this framework gives us some clues to answer such questions in the next chapters: Is it possible to speak of a secularization process or secularism as an ideology in Egypt? If yes, how Egyptians today react to secularization and state-led modernization attempts? How do Egyptian people appropriate the concepts of secular, modern and the West? In particular, understanding the perception of the West and Westernization in Egypt is so vital in order to answer these questions, because contemporary Islamists in Egypt define secularization and modernization in relation to the conceptualization of the West and Westernization which are viewed inimical to Egyptian culture and identity. Islamism generally appears to establish itself as an ideology on discursive level as opposed to the Western culture, but the actualization of the Islamist campaign in reality may exhibit particular shiftings and controversies, especially in the case

of religious educational institutions in Egypt. Therefore, this conceptualization and framework inevitably reflects on the state and various Islamic groups' perception of religious education today.

## 2.1. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review: Islam and Modernity[1]

### 2.1.1. Defining a Two-Fold Process in the Middle East: Modernization and Westernization

Westernization is a concept that first emerged and began to be debated in the Middle East during the colonial period in the nineteenth century. According to one of the most well-known modernist definitions, Western culture and civilization is the most *evolved* experience and consciousness, so that all others are lagging behind it, and will come to realize the same experience and consciousness in due course of time. This was the same impetus behind the reform movements in the Middle East from the nineteenth century to the mid-1960s. Having this impetus, ruling elites were eager to modernize (or Westernize) their societies on the ground that they lagged behind the West.

However, these reform movements caused the rise of some debates, triggering the question of whether the reform movements were a modernization or a Westernization process? Many ruling elites and reformers advocating modernization were accused of imitating the West, of paving the way for the assimilation of the Arab or Muslim culture into the Western culture, and of serving the Western colonial hegemony.

[1] When speaking of the concepts of the modern and traditional in this study, I do not try to make a critique of modernity. When I use the duality between traditional and modern education, I refer to a temporal conceptualization of two educational periods: Before and after the nineteenth-century modernization. However, it is a typical conceptualization implying certain and inherent characteristics of traditional and modern education; so, as can be seen in this study, its reflection in practice today may change significantly in the case of religious education which might have the particular characteristics of both the traditional and modern education in Egypt.

In the nineteenth century in Egypt, ruling elites found themselves in a battle for applying modern aspects of social life in their countries. The *ulama* saw this process as a disease and an encroachment to the Muslim world, i.e. to the integrity of *ummah*, because it brought about the West's alien values which were seen as inimical to Islam by the *ulama*. Since Egypt has begun its modernization attempts in the nineteenth century, it has been coping with a dilemma: whether to protect its religious and cultural identity, or to embrace modernity and the results of modernization as a whole. This dilemma reflected on Muhammad Abduh's attempts to reform the bastion of traditional Islamic education, Al-Azhar. Muhammad Abduh, who was a professor (*hoca*) at Al-Azhar University in the early years of the twentieth century, suggested reform projects for the establishment of secular, modern, scientific faculties within the educational body of Al-Azhar. He tried to integrate the notion of traditional Islamic education with the notion of Western scientific education (Rahman, 1982). However, these attempts drew severe criticism and outrage among the *ulama* at Al-Azhar.

Today, one of the most popular solutions articulated by the scholars of the Muslim world is to accept the technological and scientific developments, i.e. the material culture; but to deny the spiritual and cultural characteristics, i.e. the value-system, of modernity. This denied spirituality or philosophy of modernity is sometimes defined either as Christianity, secularism or as a materialism which is alleged to engender moral decadence because of the lack of spirituality in its intellectual body.

This dilemma has still been on the agenda of the Islamic intelligentsia.[2] Atur-ur-Rahman claims that Muslim countries must prevent *the poison of materialistic dogma* from seeping into their educational institutions. "The technique must remain a technique, must not be allowed to be taken as a philosophy of life" (Atur-ur Rahman, 1981: 168). Furthermore, isn't it possible

[2] What I mean by the Islamic intelligentsia is Islamist scholars who suggest proposals and solution, or who conduct their research and form their perspective on the basis of the notions of *Tawhid* and *Ummah*. I use quotations of some of these scholars, such as Al-Faruqi, Sayyid Husein Nasr, Osman Bakar, Atur-ur Rahman and Al-Attas.

that the technique may cause some changes and transformations in the ideology of Islam? As Bradley argues, "how to solve the issues related to modernity and development while at the same time maintaining the cultural and religious integrity of the *ummah* remains an elusive and monumental task" (Cook, 1999: 342). In order to restore the dignity of the *ummah*, how far Western culture and technology can be assimilated without compromising the integrity of Islam? (Cook, 2000a: 478). Seyyed Husain Nasr, who is known for his hard-line anti-Western arguments, avers that it is possible to speak of a Muslim world as distinct from other elements of a completely non-Islamic and even anti-Islamic nature, especially those elements which have crept into the Islamic world to destroy its unity and homogeneity (Nasr, 1975: 83).

As can be seen later, contemporary private Islamic and Al-Azhar schools, which may be seen as a remnant of medieval age, utilize the technical and institutional possibilities of modernity. Therefore, it is very important to scrutinize how Islamic schooling today in Egypt accommodates such a dilemma. The above-mentioned anti-Westernism is one of the mainstream ideologies which has shaped the religious education and reproduction of Islamic ideology in contemporary Egypt. Islamic schooling establishes itself as an alternative not only to the state system, but also to the Western educational system.

In this respect, while discussing the works of Davari and Sorush –two prominent Iranian scholars–, Mehrzad Boroujerdi takes the issue into consideration with such questions as the following: "1) What is the West? 2) How should the Muslims analyze and encounter the West? 3) Do the Muslims have anything to learn from or to offer to the West?" (Boroujerdi, 1993: 239). By the word *Western*, I typically mean an ideally constructed type of society which consists of some stereotypes: a society that is developed, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular and modern (Hall and Gieben, 1992: 276). Regarding the different emic concepts of the West, Davari views "the 'West' as a 'totality,' a 'unified whole'… an essence from which the non-Westerners can not pick and choose… [and] as the absolute 'other' against which an Islamic identity

must be constructed… [and then he] moves to a repudiation of modernity" (Boroujerdi, 1993: 239).

On the other hand, Sorush criticizes Davari's propositions, asserting that the West does not constitute a unified and homogenous totality. He does not see the issue as a submission or denunciation, but rather an analysis and nourishment. Because of that, Sorush insists that "non-Western societies can not face the *West*, but rather individual Westerners… the West is not necessarily contaminating; one can embrace Western thoughts, politics, as well as technology without inflicting self-harm" (Boroujerdi, 1993: 242-243).

Discussion about the different perceptions of the West and modernity is concerned with different Islamist approaches in Egypt. Radical groups may suppose modernity completely as an inherent feature of the alien Western culture, and repudiate modernity, whereas relatively moderate Islamic circles appropriate some features of modernity (democratic and transparent governance, human rights, private property, freedom of speech and free market policies) as the earnings for the improvement of Egyptian society. Then, naturally, these different approaches reflect on their separate perceptions about religion and education as well.

The argument that Islam is essentially compatible with modern civilization rooted in Western societies is adopted by the founders of the ideology of Islamism like Cemaladdin Afghani, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida in Egypt (Berkes, 1998: 222). Al-Azmeh gives a quotation from Rashid Rida:

> God instituted the laws of nature in spite of us, and He entrusted to institute the laws of the shari'a and gave us freedom of choice concerning it. So if we with our freedom of choice do not reconcile the two sets of laws [modern/secular and *shari'a*], then that which has now become obligatory will remain fixed, and that which is now optional [*shari'a*] will become obsolete. (Al-Azmeh, 1993: 110-111)

This first Islamist[3] wave –*Salafiyya* movement– (established between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries) has a reformist mainstream, and shows a considerable effort in reconciling the religious with the secular. For Afghani, Abduh and Rida, Islamic tradition in essence is compatible with modernity.

Al-Azmeh argues that the first Islamist wave sought for a possible equivalence between the reality of a secular age and normative religion. For that, they wanted to liberate Islam from its ancient legacy, and this attempt was a calling to *ijtihad*, a return to the fundamentals or roots of Islam which was defined and written at the Prophet's time. Hence, they came up with the idea of purging all the superstitions and certain other beliefs, in contemporary Islam, which are alleged to be non-Islamic and controversial for the compatible essence of Islam with rationalism and modernity, but which seeped into Islamic tradition throughout history (Al-Azmeh, 1993: 135). In this account, after the Rashiduun period (the time of Prophet Muhammad and the four caliphs), Muslim societies begun to gradually deviate from the *true Islamic path* throughout the history, and they eventually fell under the colonial rules of Western powers. The reason for the foreign occupation in Egypt and other Muslim countries during the colonial period was seen by these first Islamists as the aberration from the *true Islamic path* and prevailing non-Islamic beliefs insinuated into Islamic tradition in historical course.

This Islamist perception paves the way for the understanding of Islam as a normative unity. This normative unity, including ideals and constructed histories, has become a political sign (Al-Azmeh, 1993: 106). Afghani puts emphasis on Islam as a force for militant anti-colonialism, which continues to influence Muslims and Islamists deeply. The movements of rebellion against colonialism were based on this normative unity, and the hostility towards colonialism was conducive to the emergence of the official Islam that colonialism had created

[3] The terms *Islamic fundamentalists* or *Islamic modernists* can be used here, but I prefer to use *Islamists* as a more general term, which also encompasses contemporary Islamists.

(Al-Azmeh, 1993: 221). As a result, colonialism undermined and destroyed the existence of different local interpretations of Islam at the periphery (Gellner, 1994: 21).

I think it is possible to explain this social change in the reproduction and dissemination of Islamic knowledge through referring to the concept of *High Islam* proposed by Ernest Gellner. Gellner suggests a differentiation between *Low Islam* and *High Islam* to explain the practicing of Islam in different ways. The former stresses magic and ecstasy; it is more related to traditional folk Islam. It is emotional rather than authoritarian, local rather than central, particularistic rather than holistic, heterogeneous rather than homogeneous, and rural rather than urban (Gellner, 1992).

However, I should admit that Ernest Gellner's theory is based on an ahistorical conceptualization, and the aim of this thesis is not to investigate the validity of Gellner's conceptualization in this historical context by using archives. On the other hand, by the eighteenth century almost every Muslim belonged to one or more of the Sufi orders (Gilsenan, 1973: 3) who asserted their Islamic ideology and knowledge in the form of *Low Islam*. Regarding the educational system in Egypt, Al-Azhar itself, a bastion of orthodoxy, had from the sixteenth century been a center of Sufism (Gilsenan, 1973: 12). Gilsenan argues that:

> In education until the early nineteenth century *tariqas* appear to have been in many ways the most significant medium of instruction in the doctrines and values of Islamic society, of even wider significance indeed than the mosques, *madrasahs*, and *kuttabs*, where formal teaching was carried on… The religion of the masses was thus absorbed into the form of the *tariqa.* (Gilsenan, 1973: 189)

For instance, Hasan Al-Banna, who founded the Muslim Brotherhood (one of most important pioneer organizations of Islamism in the Muslim world) in 1928 and interpreted Islam in a strict orthodox, normative and scriptural manner,

was a school teacher and formerly a member of a Sufi order in Egypt (Gilsenan, 1973). In this sense, the duality between *High Islam* (scriptural/monolithic/official/orthodox Islam) and *Low Islam* (traditional/multivocal/folk Islam) may be found very explanatory in the matter of Islamism after the 1970s.

Overall, the first encounter of Islamic tradition and Muslim societies with the modernization process generated Islamism, and it changed the perception of Islam. This change brought about the re-formation of Islamic knowledge based on the orthodox interpretation of the Qur'an in accordance with *High Islam*. *High Islam* appears to be compatible with the modernization project (the key aspects of which are centralization, unification and order), because this kind of interpretation of Islam claims to be the sole single, rational and hegemonic truth. The corresponding of the modernization project with the new formation of Islamic knowledge and culture seems very significant, because understanding this correspondence helps us understand the perception of religion and religious education among the different groups in Egypt today.

Afghani, Abduh and Rida asserted Islamic culture and tradition as an ideology in opposition to the hegemony of the colonial West, but they did not completely repudiate the aspects of modernization. The first Islamists such as Muhammad Abduh embraced the educational notions and institutions of the West to some extent for the sake of the development of Egyptian society. However, the ideology and discourse of Islamism was to be re-formed and to vary after the 1970s in terms of the perception of modernization and the West in Egypt.

### 2.1.2. The nature of Islamism and Islamization in the Face of Modernity

Islam is deeply immanent to the cultures of the Middle Eastern societies. As a religion, it is one of the most important agents which shape the social reality and human consciousness in the region. However, S. Sayyid argues that the objective existence of a discourse does not entail the validity of it. The existence

of Islam can not explain Islamism (Sayyid, 2004: 959). Islamism is the political ideology of the fundamental Islamist world-view, which explicitly or implicitly assumes a political, economical and cultural project by referring to certain scriptural precepts. Islamism defines an ideal Muslim as he who has been created for one purpose: to embody the will of God by leading a righteous life. The adherence to the five pillars of Islam is not enough in the sense that every Muslim should struggle to build and maintain the righteous Islamic community. Roughly, the final project would be accomplished when all aspects of the Muslim societies are Islamized on the basis of the Qur'anic precepts and a transnational Islamic community –*ummah*– is founded, destroying the national boundaries in the region.

This point seems very significant for understanding the goal of Islamic schooling, because Al-Azhar and private Islamic schools may be seen as the channels for the recruitment of new members, and as the educational circles for the socialization of the next generation who are expected to embody the will of God, and to found *ummah*. Since the 1970s, the number of private Islamic schools has drastically been increasing, but why has Islamic schooling been demanded by more and more people?

The Enlightenment thinkers proposed that science would replace religion as a basis for moral values, and thus provide the foundation for a new culture, a modern civilization. However, Weber argued that the problem of meaning, of suffering and justice can not be satisfactorily solved by modern science alone (Hall and Gieben, 1992: 259). This meaninglessness is claimed to be one of the main reasons of Islamic revivalism in Egypt. It is obvious that after the end of Nasser's tenure, with the general religious revivalist trend all over the world, secular nationalist and so-called *socialist* rhetoric was replaced with Islamist rhetoric. Islam operates not only as a religion, but also as a means of social identity and reaction to the contradictions of modernization; and this type of understanding of Islam has become the form of politics of identity to fill an

*identity void* which has been revealed in the process of modernization (Tapper, 1991: 18).

To sum up, there are two types of Islamism: The first, which I mentioned in the last section, occurred during the early colonial period as a response to colonialism. The second Islamist wave emerged in the 1970s in relation to globalization and the unfulfilled promises of modernization (Daun and et al., 2004: 8).

In the second wave, Abdul Hamid Abu Suleiman recapitulates the rise of Islamism in the second half of the twentieth century by emphasizing these two points:

> 1) All the past and continuing efforts inspired by non-Islamic sources which have been brought forth to solve the problem of Muslims have failed to move or mobilize the *ummah* to support them, 2) The main principles of modern Western civilization have in fact led humankind to tragedy despite all its positive achievements. (Abu Suleiman, 1981: 101)

As can be inferred from this passage, the second type of Islamism, which has been proliferating since the 1970s, has established its ideology on the basis of repudiation of modernity as a conceptual framework that is associated with colonialism and secularism –the enemies coming from the West of the Muslim world and Islamic culture. As I mentioned before (Chapter I, Section I), Islamism ideologically reconstructs history by omitting or exaggerating certain parts of the historical process in a subjective fashion, distorting historical reality. For instance, the Medinan Regime is viewed by Islamists as the Golden Age. It is this Golden Age which every Muslim should work for, and fight to bring back the Muslim world at that time. This ideal Muslim world would be completely immune to the negative impact of the West and modernization. Al-Attas asserts that Islam and the time of the Prophet Muhammad is always relevant, adequate, completed and perfect, is always *modern* and *new*, ahead of time because it transcends history (Al-Attas, 1985: 28).

This perspective reflects the tendency of essentializing Islam as an unchanging, undifferentiated, complete, self-enclosed and absolute entity. By excluding any external or alien –secular and Western– models in rhetoric, this perspective assumes Islamic life-world and world-view on the basis of that essentialist notion of Islam as the anti-thesis to modernity. In this context, Islamism comes to sight as a political and cultural campaign that is carried out sometimes in the form of a political rule, like the theocratic regime in Iran today, or sometimes in the form of violent armed groups or non-violent civil organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Hamas in Palestine, which provide welfare services unfulfilled by the states.

Al-Azmeh takes a critical position to this rhetoric in the sense that we can not talk about a *sui generis* Muslim world. The presumptions of Muslim cultural homogeneity and continuity do not correspond to social reality (Al-Azmeh, 1993: 4). Is it possible to view Islamism only as an antithesis of the project of modernity? It is the fact that Islamism borrows its notions from the modern ideologies of European origin that pervade contemporary Arab culture and politics such as Arab nationalism. Such ideas like utopian order and recoverable authentic past are very similar with various European right-wing nationalist and populist movements. Political Islam (I would rather use the word, Islamism, in the same context) "is the product of a highly specific reading of a small range of [*shari'a*] sources interpreted politically to favor right-wing, fascist and hyper-nationalist ideology [or ideologies]" (Al-Azmeh, 1993: 51-52). Therefore, from a conceptual framework, Islamism means re-arranging modernism by means of Islamic values and rules. It is not a traditional, archaic social reality that is doomed to disappear in the contemporary age, but is a very result and a part of modernity. In the form of knowledge, Islamic knowledge used by Islamists bears the features of *High Islam* which corresponds with the modernity. Hence, as can be seen in this study, it would be tenuous to assume such a clear-cut dichotomy between the Western and Islamic, and the modern and traditional. However, the entrenchment of the Islamist interpretation of Islam in the people's perception

causes the growth of mass support for the Islamization of the societal institutions as opposed to the Western culture and systems in Egypt.

Islamization as a process refers to the growth of Islamic symbols, discourses and references in society as the most appealing signifiers in the minds of people. Al-Azmeh claims that campaign waged against the secular West has produced a tendency, the *over-Islamization of Islam*: The view that Islam is a single, clearly established, unchanged and unchanging fact from which the everyday Islam practiced by ordinary people is very different (Al-Azmeh, 1993: 56). The *over-Islamization of Islam* is triggered by the Islamic educational projects which aim at shaping Egyptian society with all its aspects based on a scriptural, orthodox and normative understanding of Islam, i.e. *High Islam*. As I discuss in the Chapter 4 and 5, today in Egypt where Islamism has become very apparent, there is an important issue on which many Egyptians contemplate and public discussions are held. The matter is whether the national educational system is Islamic enough. According to my research, the majority of people answer "no, it is not enough."

During my interviews, it seemed to me as if this negative answer was a common sense entrenched in the collective consciousness of the people. Under this condition, the propensity to Islamist ideologies can make Islamic schools demandable for many Egyptians. At first glance, it seems very clear-cut that Egyptian people prefer Islamic schools (private Islamic schools and Al-Azhar schools) because of their extra religious courses, Islamic atmosphere and administration. Regarding this preference, a generalized Islamist discourse of Egyptian people is usually expressed with a statement such as "we are sending our children to Islamic schools, because these schools deliver an Islamized education and prevent our children from the negative and devastating effects of the West." Therefore, this framework is significant for understanding the goals of private Islamic schools and their propositions about the Islamization of the Egyptian mass educational system. After the issue of Westernization, the reaction of Islamism to secularization needs to be handled.

### 2.1.3. Re-considering Secularism and Secularization

Al-Attas defines secularization as "the disenchantment of nature, the desacralization of politics, and the deconsecration of values" (Al-Attas, 1985: 15). It is the deliverance of man from religious control over his reason and his language. It encompasses not only the political, but also inevitably the cultural aspects of life. Talal Asad argues that it does not simply insist that religious practice and belief be excluded from politics, but it builds on a particular conception of the natural and social worlds (Asad, 2003: 191). Referring to secularization in that sense, I mean not only a political process –separation of the state and religious affairs–, but also a cultural process which weakens the religious symbols and meanings in people's world-view and cognitive map.

In their definition of secularization, Hall and Gieben argue an evolutionary approach which assumes a linear historical evolution or transition from traditional to modern society in Durkheimian sense (Hall and Gieben, 1992). Actually, different interpretations of secularization stem from the various distinct ideologies which explain the historical process in different ways. In that sense, I use the concept of secular*ism* here as a modernist *ideology*, a kind of doctrine, which views the secularization process as an evolutionary path that is taken by the people of developing countries level-by-level in an upward direction as developing countries ascend on the ladder of modernization. It is useful to make a distinction between the process of secularization and the doctrine of secularization. The two are often interrelated, but the latter is not a necessary accompaniment or a necessary product of former.

In the *end of history* theses such as that Fukuyama proposes, secularism assumes that every society will become more and more secularized during the modernization period, and the state of being secular is inevitably the last societal stage for nations in historical course. Secularism constructs the historical process "in a simple linear fashion and emphasizes new developments without reference

to continuities which may still command a large scale assent not considered worth of note" (Martin, 1969: 52).

This historical timeline, whether cyclical or linear, fast or slow, is normally treated not as parts of a system of conventions, a cultural code of representation, but as something more objective, something belonging to *nature* itself. This kind of historical understanding assumes a natural, homogenous, secular and calendrical time. In this calendrical time, the religious is identified with that which is unchanging and separate from or opposed to that which is changing. The religious is perceived as being *static*, *old* and *traditional* while the secular is understood to be *changing*, *new* and *modern* even though the sources may be partially or wholly religious in nature (Berkes, 1998: 109). The duty of secular-modern reason is to prevail over all that is unchanging, irrational, backward and superstitious, or religious. This secularist historicism has a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier, so as to achieve a radically new departure and build up a society from scratch by reducing the past and tradition to an irrational and backward nullity (Chakrabarty, 2000: 18). However, the religious has been changing institutionally since the nineteenth century in Egypt, and its sacred form of knowledge has also been exposed to a transformation in this historical course; yet, these changes sometimes exhibit a significant correspondence with the outcomes of modernization.

This kind of evolutionary perspective, which views the religious world view as a backward aspect of traditional societies, draws severe criticism, because of the fact of religious revivalism all over the world after the 60s and 70s. The idea of secularism refers to the ways of producing and classifying knowledge based on scientific observation and experimentation which privileges the human mind over the words of God at the expense of metaphysical and theological approaches. It depends on the premise that religion is not true: It has historically involved beliefs which can be shown to be incorrect and doubtful. During the 1950s and 1960s, intellectuals both in the West and in the Middle East were confident that in the contemporary Arab world, Islam had been simply

bypassed. They thought that once people were educated properly in a supposedly neutral scientific atmosphere, religion would lose its grip and disappear (Martin, 1969: 2-18).

In this sense, it might be assumed that secularization would deprive religious education of its meaning and aim, and without any aim and meaning, religious education would come to an end in the course of secularization. However, in modern mass education in Egypt, religious education retains its place in the curriculum, and its importance in the eyes of the ruling elites. On the other hand, Islamic schools cling to religious education more zealously than the state, because it constitutes the most important part of their educational notion.

Religious symbols and references are increasingly growing in the social life not only in the Middle Eastern, but also in the Western countries. Counter-modernizing trends and movements have frequently been characterized by the powerful reaffirmation of transcendence. Mystery, awe and transcendent hope seem hard to eradicate from human consciousness (Berger, 1977: 70-80), and therefore religion has staying power because it presents a mythical framework which is beyond being incorrect, irrational or nonsense, since it can set all the major and minor events of life within a profoundly coherent system of meaning for the sake of social cohesion. Religion forms a representation or an imagination which integrates social reality and human consciousness with the sacred (Berger, 1993: 66-67).

Modern thought and secularism use dichotomies to explain human consciousness and social reality. With respect to the dichotomy between the religious and secular, the religious is associated with the sacred, irrational, traditional, backward and superstitious, while the secular supposedly refers to the profane, rational, advanced and modern. In that sense, a dichotomy means a duality in which each polar negates and excludes the other, leaving no room for any mutual penetration between the two. However, I think this approach confounds the attempts to understand the Islamic schools in which modern scientific education is also delivered together with extra heavy religious

instructions and Islamic atmosphere. In Al-Azhar and private Islamic schools, students are required to master Islamic sciences –*hadith*, *fiqh*, *tafsir* and *siar*–, what are more than religious education. It is an important task for this study to scrutinize the co-existence of secular and religious sciences within the body of Islamic schools.

It seems more plausible to suggest that the sacred and profane division is not certainly absolute; because, there is ample ambiguity, flexibility, permeability, and often outright confusion between the boundaries. The religious and secular are not essentially fixed categories. There is a close affinity between the sacred and profane, which depend on each other[4] (Al-Azmeh, 1993; Asad, 2003). However, what kind of affinity is there between secular and religious sciences in the Islamic schools of Egypt? Is there a parallelism of them, or is it possible to speak of the existence of integration? How do Egyptian people perceive this co-existence?

Considering the lexicological meaning of the word of secular, it refers to the *now* or *present* time, and to the temporal world as to location. It is about something which belongs to, and occurs in *this world*; and from the dichotomic approach, the religious is constructed as opposed to this material world (earth). Hence, the religious belongs to *the other world*, or spiritual world. In his book, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Jose Casanova criticizes this conceptual compartmentalization of these two worlds, and the idea that Christianity and churches belong to the spiritual other world. He claims that "there were not two worlds, but actually three. Spatially, there was 'the other world' (heaven) and 'this world' (earth). But 'this world' was itself divided into the religious world (the church) and the secular world proper" (Casanova, 1994: 15).

[4] For instance, in the *Formations of Secular*, Talal Asad argues that secularism as hegemonic universal reason constructed itself against medieval ecclesiastical authority. At the very moment of becoming secular, the claims of secularism, or *profanation*, were transcendentalized, and created its own sacred and myth, "…and they set in motion legal and moral disciplines to protect themselves as universal…So the 'sacred right to property' was made universal after church estates and common lands were freed" (Asad, 2003: 36).

Casanova argues that with the modern differentiation of institutions and roles, religion underwent a process of differentiation and institutional specialization similar to that of other domains (Casanova, 1994: 36). He avers that "the more religion wants to transform the world in a religious direction, the more religion becomes entangled in 'worldly' affairs and is transformed by the world" (Casanova, 1994: 49). If Casanova's statement is extended to the matter of Islam, it would be easier to explain the problematization of the positivist dichotomy between the religious and secular in the Middle East. For instance, the Muslim Brotherhood waged a holy war against the Egyptian regime because it saw democracy and the parliamentary regime as an anti-Islamic notion or a blasphemy in the 1960s and 1970s. Then, the Brotherhood contested in elections, and succeeded to gain eighty-eight seats in the parliament (which the Brotherhood repudiated formerly) after the 2005 elections, to some extent, thanks to the Bush government's warnings and pressures for political and constitutional reforms.

It should be noted that the growth of Islamic schools, which is a part of the general religious revivalism, is a significant indicator of the attempts of Islamist circles to create an alternative life-world in *this world* for building their own Islamic community as the forerunner of the *ummah*. Carrie Rosefsky Wickham defines alternative formations as Islamic alternative domains, a parallel society in which new values are being cultivated and new styles of participation are being forged (Wickham, 1994: 508). The Muslim Brotherhood as a quasi-civil society organization is one of the most *this worldly* religious organizations and alternative institutional domains in Egypt. The Brotherhood's investment companies conduct economical transactions in the capitalist market, and its professional members, lawyers, doctors and teachers sometimes have upper hand in the Egyptian professional associations so as to be leading figures in the country to some extent.

While founding private schools or dominating state schools, the Brotherhood uses modern educational institutions to provide a particular kind of

schooling mostly based on orthodox Islamic principles. They seek to carve out an alternative educational space for Islamic socialization within the modern mass educational system through Islamic schooling. In this way, the Muslim Brotherhood has become quite *this worldly* as a part of the modern world. It is a concrete product of modernity; beyond a utopian account, it has institutionally been entrenched in the modern structure of society.

### 2.1.4. The Pluralist Impact of Secular Modernity on the Islamist Project

The modern structure of society typically has some inherent characteristics such as the development of the capitalist market, bureaucratized state, urbanization, mass communication and specialization, all of which cause a differentiation in the social world. As I mentioned above, Casanova argues that modernization causes a differentiation and specialization in the institutional structure of society. This process is also a secularizing one which breaks the all-encompassing dominant character of a sole religious authority. In this sense, it is possible to speak of a differentiated and specialized political and administrative body, liberal market economy, public education and civil society in Egypt. The case of the Muslim Brotherhood even seems to prove the Casanova's argument, but institutional differentiation is not the sole character of secularization. Apart from Casanova's argument, David Martin asserts the pluralism as the key character of secularization. He argues that secularization makes religion a private matter in a pluralist society where different perspectives and metaphysics compete on equal terms (Martin, 1969: 49-50).

It is crucial to distinguish secular differentiation from secular pluralism. I think secularization engenders multiple nation-state institutions, such as parliament, public schools, market and nucleus family, which are somewhat independent from a sole religious authority in contemporary Egypt and even within Islamist circles. However, it is debatable whether secularization in Egypt ensures various competing ideas and values. Islamism views secular pluralization

as a threat to the notion of *tawhid*, the oneness of religious harmony and all-encompassing character of Islam. The notion of *tawhid* (the oneness of God) is the essence of Islamic thought. Secularization is inimical to the Islamic doctrine of *tawhid* (oneness), where all aspects of life, whether spiritual or temporal, are consolidated into a harmonious whole. Sayyid Qutb held that there could be no separation of religion and the world (Akhavi, 1994: 133; Asad, 2003: 340).

Ironically, the Muslim Brotherhood turns towards the secular differentiation and render itself *this worldly* by forming a differentiated civil society consisting of media, health, charity organizations, schools, investment companies, political groups and syndicates to cope with their Western counterparts. It is a strategy of the campaign of Islamism at the disposal of Islamists. Today, calling itself as a spiritual worldwide organization, the Muslim Brotherhood claims to be "a *Da'wah* from the Qur'an and *sunna* (tradition and example) of the Prophet Muhammad, a method that adheres to the *sunna*, a political association, an athletic association, an educational and cultural organization, and an economic enterprise" (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999: 45).

Re-thinking of Azmeh and Gellner's arguments about the relation between Islamism and modernity, I think it is plausible to speak of the institutional differentiation of Islamism, even though most Islamist groups denounce the idea of secular pluralization as the most devastating threat to Islamic culture and identity. Despite the fact that Islamic institutions appear to be pluralistic structurally, Islamization is not turning out as a liberating and pluralistic process on ideological level. Berger argues that the secularizing pluralization brought about a kind liberation that human life, which was previously considered to be dominated by fate, now come to be perceived as occasions for choice –by both the individual and collectivities. Things could be other than what they have been (Berger, 1977: 169-170). From this point of view, pluralization is inevitably expected to pave the way for different interpretations of Islam, some of which are Sufi, magical and mystical. However, Islamism, bearing the characteristics of *High Islam*, seeks to eradicate this pluralization by totalizing Islamic world-view

in an orthodox form. In that sense, *shari'ah* rather seems to suppress than promote freedom.

Today, in contrast to secularist narratives, it is obvious that Islamic ideology is so viable and popular that secularism can reach a very small minority in Egyptian society. On the other hand, it does not mean that it is not possible to speak of secularization in the case of Egypt. However, what I see in Egypt is not secular pluralization in the Islamist mindset, but rather, an institutional differentiation which the Islamist groups need to survive and pursue their Islamic *Da'wah* in *this world*.

In this chapter, I tackled the rise and growth of Islamism in Egypt within a theoretical framework. I established this framework on the basis of three main arguments: The transition of the perception of Islamic knowledge from *Low Islam* to *High Islam*, the discursive repudiation of secular Western modernity as an enemy -an *other*- and the reaction of Islamists to the pluralistic character of secularization. All three are used in order to analyze the religious educational institutions and discourses of Egypt, because they appear to deeply affect the contemporary Islamist understanding of Islam.

On the other hand, neither epistemologically nor in reality can this truth create a *sui generis* Muslim identity or life-world in Egypt. Rather, this truth is put into practice so as to form a symbiotic relation with pluralistic institutional outcomes of modernization as well as in the case of the proliferation of Islamic non-governmental institutions (the carriers of the Islamist campaign), including schools, which deliver both secular and Islamic science together in their curriculum, and which do not refrain from using the instrumental possibilities of modernity and advanced technology.

## 2.2. Methodology

In this section, firstly, I try to explain the two aspects of the epistemological base of the methodology: The analysis of social change from the perspective of complexity theory, and the interpretation of religious discourses and institutions from hermeneutic approach. First approach provides me with an epistemological basis to understand the changing political and cultural framework of contemporary Egypt within which contesting religious educational discourses and institutions occur and result in unintended and unpredictable consequences. The second approach lets me to discover: 1) What kind of mirror images do different religious discourses construct in language, 2) Which meanings, motives and moods do exist behind these representations, 3) What kind of religious values, norms and thoughts do Islamic educational institutions inculcate in their students?

Secondly, I roughly define my main research question again, and then sorts the arguments that I intend to debate through the thesis. Lastly, I clarify my research and sampling methods, and answer such questions: how did I conduct the in-depth interviews, what are the demographic data about my interviewees, and what kind of challenges did I face during my field research?

### 2.2.1. Analysis of Social Change and Transformation

Throughout this entire thesis, I discuss the processes such as modernization, Islamization, Westernization, secularization and colonization which provide a historical background to evaluate the roles and meanings of various religious educational discourses and institutions in Egypt. Indeed, there is approximately a fifty-year colonization period (1882-1926) in Egypt on the one hand, and I think any scientific work on contemporary Egypt, focusing on meanings, values, identities and symbols but not dealing with this colonial period more or less,

would be incomplete and deficient. On the other hand, there is a fact that alternative Islamists discourses and Islamic schools have been proliferating by going hand in hand with the over-Islamization of Egyptian society since the 1970s. Additionally, it is possible to speak of other significant social changes such as the nineteenth-century and Nasserist modernization projects, the rise of secular Pan-Arabist and socialist ideologies and rhetoric, and the open-door policies under Sadat and Mubarak, which has built strong economic, political and cultural ties with the Western countries (i.e. which has exposed Egypt to the Western culture to a larger extent).

I do not embark upon a deep historical analysis, but discuss these particular social changes which are conducive to investigate the cultural and political framework of Egypt within which an educational transformation. The crucial point for this thesis is the intended and unintended consequences of this educational transformation. John Urry argues in his book, *Global Complexity*, that "[t]ime and Space are internal to the processes by which the physical and social worlds themselves operate, helping to constitute their very powers. Such a view leads to the thesis that there is not a single time but multiple times, and that such times appear to flow" (Urry, 2003: 20). In this sense, flow is used as a metaphor implying unpredictable, irreversible and open-ended social transformations which emerge according to disproportionate, multiple relations between cause and effect, and which create "a disorder floating on an order" (Urry, 2003: 21).

When speaking of dichotomic binary codes such as between the secular and religious, the modern and traditional, the state and Islamist sphere, the secular/ colonial West and the Muslim East, and *Low Islam* and *High Islam*, each polar is combined with the other one rather than is superseded by it in the course of social change. I use these binary codes as ideal types, which are not presumed to actualize in social reality, but are expected to provide us a kind of framework to understand social change. The combination of contesting dichotomic dualities

generates inherent formations, all of which pass through unintended and unpredictable social changes (Davison, 2006: 65).

For this reason, it is more plausible to deal with different Islams produced, preserved and articulated in religious educational institutions and discourses in Egypt. This approach is so vital to handle the two main subject matters of this thesis as I mentioned in the Introduction Chapter: the power struggle between the contesting state and alternative Islamist educational discourses and mass educational institutions, and the interpretation of the varying Islamist educational discourses and institutions (Indeed, these two issues are not separate subjects, but the latter is necessarily the accompaniment of the former). Related to the existence of different Islams, the content and form of religious education change according to different agents –the Egyptian state and Islamist circles– at the same time, and according to the historical process in the person of the same agent.

Besides that this change and other relevant social transformations do not occur in line with the above-mentioned evolutionary historical process, it also creates contesting and differentiating religious educational discourses and institutions between the state and Islamist circles. This contest turns out to be a power struggle for capturing the public religious discourse to pursue a particular political goal or project –maintaining the legitimacy and power of the regime, or building the *true Islamic society*. Furthermore, this contest or struggle may be a trigger of unintended consequences. When speaking of Althusserian structuralism, which presumes a dominant role for the state over individual in the state-individual duality, Althusser defines schools as an oppressive and ideological state apparatus, while not putting substantial emphasis on human agency. However, it is problematic to depict individuals as passive receptors of particular educational paradigms. While, in this view, "local populations are denied agency, centralized governments are depicted as the bodies that efficiently control schooling without confronting forces of adaptation, appropriation, or resistance" (Herrera, 2004: 318).

### 2.2.2. Hermeneutic Approach

To overcome this problem, I invoke interpretive sociology to understand the Islamist educational discourse and institutions in relation to not only the state discourse and schools, but also the other different Islamist educational discourses and institutions with respect to the religious education in Egypt. While focusing on the analysis of religious discourses and institutions, I use the means and conceptions of hermeneutics. There are two aspects –discoursive and institutional– of this hermeneutic analysis. Discourse analysis in terms of hermeneutics holds language as a body consisting of symbols, which is an important agent in the construction of social reality. For that, what I sought for during my in-depth interviews in Cairo was to create a conversation, a real dialogue or a communicative event to interpret and understand the ideological discourse. The analysis of ideological discourse in this study is conducted based on the interpretation of certain symbolic representations (or mirror images) regarding religious education by discovering and recognizing particular meanings and values.[5] Symbols are used to explain social phenomena by men; in this way, the world becomes comprehensible, explainable and even endurable in the eyes of men (Geertz, 1973: 101). The main mirror images that I use are: *Modern*, *secular*, *Islam*, *Muslim identity*, *Egyptian identity*, *the state*, *colonial* and *religious education*. These symbolic representations in the minds of people refer to both a particular history and ideology, and come to sight as images on discourse (Risser, 1997: 133).

Risser argues the totality of meanings that reveal themselves in the occasionality of human speech as a logical expression of the living virtuality that "brings totality of meaning into play [performance], without being able to express its totality" (Gadamer in Risser, 1997: 134-135). Therefore, when

[5] Relating to Şerif Mardin's conceptualization, the term *soft ideology* (cf. Mardin, 1992), I mean by ideology a cognitive map consisting of symbols, meanings and values.

conducting occasional semi-structural interviews, I tried to foster the living virtuality of speech and maintain the play of meanings in order to grasp the meaning. Clifford Geertz argues that the researcher "turns social discourse from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscriptions and can be consulted" (Geertz, 1973: 19).

There is a consensus in hermeneutic consciousness between subjects (interviewees) and objects (and their images) in the minds of people, which precedes us (researchers). The matter of interpretation is ontological: What do they know and think? As pursuing this kind of interpretation, I aim not to find the right representation that would have to be based on agreement with the object (thing) which is actualizing in social reality, but to be able to explain or, at least, illuminate the plurality of representations on discourse.

However, in this plurality, when I say what one means, I aim to recount what is said together with an infinity of what is not said to ensure that it be understood in this way. The mirror images of *modern*, *secular*, *Islam*, *Muslim identity*, *Egyptian identity*, *the state*, *colonial* and *religious education* are presented on religious educational discourse not as a copy of the object, but as a *speculative unity* of the mirror image and object, which displays a paradox of being one and the same yet different (Risser, 1997: 135). On the other hand, oral discourse is a world of everyday speech; it is *here* and *now*. Therefore, it is possible to speak of a discontinuity, because everyday reality is mostly metamorphosed by imaginative variations (Ricoeur, 1981).

In hermeneutic terms, the reason for this contesting plurality on the religious educational discourse of Egypt, in which Islam is deeply entrenched in all aspects of the society, seems to be this speculative unity. Therefore, I find significant the notion of *speculative unity* in order to interpret the unpredictable and unintended new possibilities of the meaning –ostensive or non-ostensive– of religious education on discursive level. This point re-emphasizes the importance of the notion of *perception*. The overall problem in this discourse analysis is how different Islamist groups perceive and react both the actual object and process

(changing cultural and political framework), and the mirror images with respect to the issue of the religious education in Egypt. Language has both a reference to reality and a self-reference. There is a double reference: intentional and reflexive, turned towards the thing and towards the self (Ricoeur, 1981: 168).

As Geertz argues, the anthropological study of religion has two dimensions: "First, an analysis of the system of meanings embodied in the symbols which make up the religion proper, and, second, the relating of these systems to social-structural and psychological processes" (Geertz, 1973: 125). The different perceptions of religious education in language articulated by Egyptian people are directly affected by psychological situation of the interviewees "in a way surrounds the dialogue, and its landmarks can all be shown by a gesture, or by pointing a finger, or designated in an ostensive manner by discourse itself" (Ricoeur, 1981: 201). This psychological situation consists of the thoughts and senses that emerge within dialogue, within living language (Risser, 1997: 138). To think of the sense of discourse as a new way of looking at things helps the researcher in interpreting the perception.

Defining the psychological situation as a disposition, Geertz argues two different sorts of disposition are induced by religious activities: motives and moods (Geertz, 1973: 96). A motivation is an inclination to perform certain sorts of acts and experience certain sorts of feelings in certain sorts of situations (Geertz, 1973: 96). Moods spring from certain circumstances, but they are fluctuating. However, they are totalistic, and made meaningful with references to the conditions from which moods spring, while motives are made meaningful with references to the end, a final project. Motives are interpreted in terms of their consummations, but moods are interpreted in terms of their sources (Geertz, 1973: 97). The perceptions of various Islamist groups about the reality and mirror images are constructed under the influence of their dispositions –motives and moods.

Regarding the socio-cultural process, one of the important social dynamics is the current political framework of Egypt overwhelmed by the struggle between

the regime and Islamists in public sphere. The other is the historical process –the Egyptian modernization, Westernization, secularization and colonization. Geerzt says that:

> The culture concept… denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life. (Geertz, 1973: 89)

As can be seen on the discourse of the interviewees, the Egyptian nineteenth-century modernization period, its colonial past and the historical role and impact Nasserist quasi-secular ideologies and policies forged and transmitted certain patterns of meanings and symbols to contemporary Egyptian society. Without interpreting this historical inheritance, I think it is not possible to conduct such a hermeneutic analysis.

Return to the issue of motives and moods, the interpretation of motivation of the Islamist groups is also important, because what I seek for in the living language of the conversation is also the propositional acts and references. In the unique spatio-temporal networks of meanings and references that are shared by Islamist groups, I also tried to interpret these networks consisting of meanings and references as a *proposed world*, in Heideggerian sense, which various Islamist people desire to inhabit and wherein they could project new possibilities of modernity with respect to their understanding of Islam.

What is the proposed world, i.e. final project, on the discourse of Islamist groups is the *ummah* in general and Islamization of educational system in particular. Their mirror images about the religious education in language indicate the particular and changing mirror images of an ideal Islamic community, Muslim identity and religious (or even Islamized) education which are proposed by different Islamist groups. In this sense, Al-Azhar and Islamic schools come to sight as the educational institutions for the socialization of an ideal Muslim

generation by means of which Islamists would actualize their proposed world. In the institutional analysis of these Islamic schools, I searched for the answers to such questions: What kind of values, norms, thoughts and identities do these schools provide for their students? What kind of a social atmosphere is there at these schools? What kind of educational methods, textbooks, curriculum and other regulations and activities do these schools employ? It would be not incorrect to assume Islamic schools as the attempts for putting the proposed world on religious educational discourse into practice. The schools are the places through which particular mirror images and meanings are produced, preserved and disseminated, and in which students are imbued with particular moods and motivations. In this sense, Islamic schools appear to be indispensable institutions for the proposed world.

Speaking of the last point, Geertz argues that, as social scientists, we do not have direct access to raw social discourse, or whole cultural world, but only that small part of it which our informants can lead us into understanding (Geertz, 1973). To some degree, it is the result of the disposition of researcher themselves, which has a significant impact on interpretation process for hermeneutic analysis. Ricoeur argues that "to understand a text is at the same time to light up our own situation to interpolate among the predicates of our situation" (Ricoeur, 1981: 202). As an interlocutor, naturally I had a pre-understanding about the issue, and it is that point from which my condition of relativity inevitably starts.

An interpretive decentered approach drastically has a significant role in establishing a dialogue between researcher and research subject. As Andrew Davison argues, during our conversation with people, our research subjects, if we do not make any attempts to change our understanding, it means that we have not expanded the possibilities (or limits) of our comprehension actually. While reading the text or conversation, we assume an inter-subjective relationship between researcher and interviewee or text, and consider on the meaning as an inter-subjective form in such relationship. To understand multiple modern and Islamic realities, we should fundamentally reconsider and change our opinions

and judgments about modern possibilities, because changing is the basis of understanding. Interpretive and insightful research provides us an opportunity to constantly forge and re-forge the forms and limits of our understanding (Davison, 2006: 68, 134). In this sense, I discuss nor objective neither subjective truths but inter-subjective formation in this thesis. Mirror images and meanings have nor objective neither subjective meanings, but intersubjective meanings among people and researcher.

### 2.2.3. Research Problem

In this thesis, the overall research problem is the perceptions and practices of the state and alternative Islamist groups about the religious education in Egypt from the 1970s onwards. In this context, discourse and institutional analysis of these two agents –ruling elites and Islamist groups– from an interpretive perspective are the major constituents of that inquiry.

My main arguments are:

a) The Islamic knowledge that is taught as an instructive material in contemporary Egyptian mass education is different from what used to be taught up until the late nineteenth. It is important to know what kind of Islamic knowledge is used in the religious education today.

b) How knowledge is taught is as important as the knowledge itself. Besides curriculum, school buildings, social atmosphere inside and outside around schools, teachers' academic skills, their treatment to students and their ideological orientations, which are called *hidden curriculum*, all give many clues for researchers to examine the issue of education. Therefore, it is worthy of note to argue that how hidden curriculum changes according to the different types of schools (state or private, secular or Islamic).

c) The Islamic knowledge taught in state schools is intended to be beneficial for the maintenance of the legitimacy of the Mubarak regime. Such notions as nationalism, patriotism, anti-terrorism and anti-Islamism are

embedded in the official curriculum in accordance with national interests and official state policies of the country. Concerning with the nature of religious ideology, religious legitimization becomes a very effective means for the state to attain the consent of its people. Furthermore, it helps regime to ensure a tight control over the production of Islamic knowledge, but it is not predictable or clear that the emergence of unwanted religious formations are prevented.

d) The control of religion and religious legitimization by the state makes the separation between the religious and secular blurry. Many state-driven political and socio-economic projects, including education, which are secular in appearance are attempted to be legitimized on the basis of certain Islamic concepts and values, so as to attain a substantial mass support among the people. Hence, I intend to redraw the boundaries between Western and indigenous, tradition and modernity, and between the religious and secular.

e) The interpretation and perception of the state religious discourse by people is significant to understand the duality between the state and individual, because the state policy may generate alternative life domains and social networks (in which educational institutions partake) which vehemently interfere with the state and its official ideology. Schools produce many contradictory and unintended consequences in that sense, so it seems necessary to rearticulate the role of the state in society, and thereby initiate a new relationship between the authority and citizens in the context of Islamic revival in Egypt.

f) Assuming the existence of different Islams, it is not plausible to argue about a sole Islamism or Islamist group. It is likely to discern the different and even contesting Islamist discourses about religious education. Mirror images and meanings may exhibit a variety according to different Islamist circles. It means that it is not possible to deal with a single perception of alternative Islamist discourse, which is nourished by a single state of mood and motivations.

g) The differentiation in the perception of the Islamists may be read as a result of different interpretations of the historical past and Islamic tradition of Egypt and the Muslim world among the Islamists. I think the changing motives,

moods and mirror images that are adopted by Islamists are conducive to the emergence of the different perceptions of not only the past or tradition, but also the current socio-cultural process and future.

h) Al-Azhar and private Islamic schools are seen as the breeding grounds providing recruitment for fundamental groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, fulfilling the duty of educating children of Islamic civil networks or communities. I consider these Islamic schools as a part of the alternative Islamist domain and an agent of the power struggle between the state and Islamist groups to capture the public religious discourse. Hence, it seems important to figure out what kind of different and alternative Islamic socializations these Islamic schools provide for their students and communities.

i) The dichotomy between the religious and secular collapse in Islamic schooling in the sense that both Islamic and natural/social science are taught simultaneously at schools. There are three different questions that come out of this picture. First, what is the significance of teaching Islamic sciences (the Qur'an, *hadith*, *tafsir*, *fiqh* and etc.) together with natural/social sciences? Secondly, is there any function to preserve this dual and apparently contradictory structure in educational institutions? Thirdly, what is the Islamization of modern scientific education?

### 2.2.4. Research Methods and Sampling

Affiliated with the department of politics at the American University in Cairo (AUC), I stayed in Egypt for three months (April-June) in 2005. Before going to Egypt, I originally considered applying certain questionnaire forms about Islam, modernity and education in different types of schools. However, I realized that conducting this kind of a field research was almost impossible, because even well-known Egyptian scholars who have been studying the subject matter for years was not being able to obtain the necessary official permissions. I

was told that even if I applied for the permission, the bureaucratic process would take at least one year to complete.

Therefore, to collect enough data, I turned to semi-structured in-depth-interviews. In the first couple of weeks of my stay in Cairo, I came across certain challenges. I came to realize that interviewing people in Egypt on the issue of Islam for a scientific project has certain limitations and dangers. First of all, studying Islam is not seen as officially proper despite Islamism becoming a considerably apparent aspect of the Egyptian society at present. It is not viewed as a convenient subject in the eyes of the ruling elites in the milieu of the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which has a strong Islamic militancy and fundamentalism past. Furthermore, the Muslim Brotherhood's demonstrations such as the street protests against the referendum for the constitutional amendment in May, 2005 increased the tension in the social life in Egypt. Among the ordinary Egyptians, a foreign researcher talking and asking questions about Islam and religious education is not likely to be warmly welcomed at a first meeting due to the colonial past of Egypt. When I talked and broached my research problems to a professor at the AUC at our first meeting (we had many conversations later), he reacted sarcastically by showing his deep anger, and asked "will you show Al-Azhar as a terrorist foundation?" Therefore, during my interviews, I began the conversation by asking general questions to learn the person's views on the concept of education as well as the structure and problems of the educational system in Egypt. Then, in the course of conversation, if I was able to build a warmer relationship between interviewees and me by breaking some barriers and prejudices, I would then broach the issue of Islam and religious education.

For this thesis, I carried out my interviews in the form of one-on-one conversations. While the conversations with educational experts and professors took 2 hours at least, other conversations with students took less, between 1 and 1.5 hour. In order not to impair the intimacy with interviewee and not to hinder their trust in me, I opted against using a tape recorder, and when interviewing

experts and professor, I did not use even paper and pen to take notes. Immediately after the conversation ended, I would write down the conversation on paper.

I interviewed twenty-eight people in total, and their socio-demographic data can be seen in the Table 1 below[6]:

TABLE 1: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF INTERVIEWEES

| Number of interviewee | Gender | Age | Employment |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Female | 45 | Social researcher in CEDEJ in Cairo |
| 2[7] | Male | 40s | French teacher in Jesuites school (Congregation school) and in French Cultural Centre |
| 3 | Female | 21 | Undergraduate student in Political Science at the AUC |
| 4 | Male | 30 | Doctor |
| 5 | Male | 35 | Graduate student in the Middle East Studies at the AUC (graduated from Al-Azhar) |
| 6 | Female | 30 | Graduate student in History at Benha Univ. and working in Arab TV |
| 7 | Female | 40s | Researcher in Population Council |
| 8 | Male | 50s | Assist. Prof. in Gynecology and researcher in Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research |
| 9 | Male | 47 | Civil Engineer (graduated from Al-Azhar) |
| 10 | Male | 20 | Undergraduate student in Commerce at Cairo University |
| 11 | Male | 17 | Graduate of technical-vocational school |
| 12 | Male | 19 | Undergraduate student in Law at Cairo University |
| 13 | Male | 35 | Assist. Prof. in Turkish Language and Literature at Helwan University |
| 14 | Female | 25 | Graduate Student in Arabic Studies at the AUC (graduated from the AUC) |
| 15 | Male | 21 | Undergraduate student in Political Science at the AUC |
| 16 | Female | 27 | Graduate student in History at Al-Azhar |
| 17 | Female | 50s | Professor in Political Science at Cairo University |
| 18 | Female | 23 | Undergraduate student in Political Science at the AUC |
| 19 | Male | 50s | Professor in Economics at Cairo University and civil education consultant |
| 20 | Male | 52 | Assist. Prof. and researcher in National Center For Educational Research & Development |

[6] The names of the interviewees are listed in the order that the interviews were carried out.
[7] He was a Coptic Christian.

TABLE 1 (CONTINUED)

| Number of interviewee | Gender | Age | Employment |
|---|---|---|---|
| 21 | Male | 50s | Professor in Philosophy at Cairo University |
| 22 | Female | 22 | Undergraduate student in Political Economy at the AUC |
| 23 | Female | 19 | Undergraduate student in Political Science at the AUC |
| 24 | Female | 20s | Undergraduate student in English at Benha University |
| 25 | Male | 35 | Instructor in Turkish Language and Literature at Al-Azhar |
| 26 | Male | 20s | Undergraduate student in Political Science at the AUC |
| 27 | Female | 23 | Graduate student in Arabic Studies at the AUC (graduated from the AUC) and working in a British International School as teacher |
| 28 | Male | 40s | Educational researcher who worked before in the curriculum development center in the Ministry of Education |

To find interviewees, I used snowball sampling, and hence, having had a good impression and substantial information about me, interviewees mostly did not avoid being helpful by sincerely answering questions. Almost all interviews were conducted in English, because my Arabic was not good enough to carry out interviews in Arabic. It did not constitute any problem while interviewing educational experts and professors whose English was proficient. However, it posed a minor problem in finding student interviewees, because AUC students, whom I chose for their proficiency in English, were a very small minority in Egyptian society. Moreover, despite our ability to communicate with each other very well in English, I found that language barrier always had an enormous constraining impact on a researcher's attempts to understand the symbolic life and world of meanings of a society. Consequently, my field research in Egypt has certain limitations in this sense, and while I was writing this dissertation, I always kept these limitations in my mind when suggesting certain arguments about Islam and education in Egypt. In summary, it would be scientifically better for readers to tackle the research findings in that way.

To sum up the overall methodology of this thesis, I used an eclectic methodology, a combination of the notion of a complexity theory for social change and hermeneutic interpretation of discourse. The first provides me a broad perspective to scrutinize the particular historical processes and the current transformation of religious educational system in Egypt relying on certain binary codes. At first glance, the dichotomy between the state and individuals takes a structuralist form in Althusserian account, but then the unintended consequences of Egyptian mass educational system directed my focus on human agency. Therefore, what I seek to do in this study is to revise and criticizes Althusserian structuralism by interpreting the perception of individual groups in terms of hermeneutics.

Focusing on the different and contesting educational perceptions, I aimed to collect discursive and institutional data about the mirror images forged by

particular meanings, motives and moods of the interviewees without articulating any anticipation or proposing any eschatological idea.

Studying the records of interviews, I employed certain analysis criteria: 1) Socio-cultural analysis of contemporary Egypt in terms of the production and preservation of religious symbols and meanings, 2) Discourse analysis of the interviews to understand the complex structure of mirror images, 3) Interpretation and reinterpretation of meanings, motives and moods and their impact on social reality. To understand the people's own cognitive map and body of meanings, motives and moods that forge their perception of social reality, I tried to develop an insight to the issue, and to reach their own *emic* conceptualizations.

# CHAPTER 3

# THE RISE OF NEW EDUCATIONAL CONCEPTS AND STRUCTURES DURING THE EGYPTIAN MODERNIZATION PERIOD

In this chapter, I discuss the historical transformation of the Egyptian educational system from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the Nasserist regime (1952-1970). Firstly, I touch upon the infiltration of European educational institutions and methods into the Egyptian society, which generated a dual structure in the educational system: modern/secular and traditional/Islamic education. Secondly, I single out the importance of the emergence of the elementary education for the first time under the colonial regime, which was intended to fulfill the duty of modern mass education in Egypt. Then, I briefly discuss the conceiving of mass education as the place of moral education in the Egyptian context under the colonial regime. Lastly, I tackle the profound unification and centralization process in the field of education in Nasserist era in which creation of a nationalist and secular mass educational system was pursued by the ruling elites.

## 3.1. Continuity and Discontinuity in the Nineteenth-Century Traditional Islamic Education of Egypt

In the medieval age, two types of school seem to have consisted of the traditional educational system of Egypt: *Kuttab* and *madrasas*. The first *kuttab* - a system of elementary schools- occurred in the Umayyad period (661-750). *Kuttab*'s main function was to socialize the children, make them proper Muslims and teach them basic reading, writing and arithmetic (Williams, 1939: 36-38). Then, in the eleventh and twelfth century, centers of higher learning (*madrasas*)

flourished throughout the Islamic world and students traveled from one center to another to learn from the most famous scholars and sheikhs. *Madrasas* were the institutions for the more advanced study of classical Islamic texts (Starrett, 1998: 38). The prevalent methods of education in that period are mostly characterized by the recitation of the Qur'an and the transmission of Islamic knowledge. It was a system which relied on rote learning and memorization (Williamson, 1987: 22-23).

During the nineteenth-century modernization period in Egypt, the educational structure started to change profoundly. The ruling elites launched large-scale modernization projects in fields of military, politics, law and education. Muhammad Ali in Cairo was trying to keep up with major European countries, especially in fields of military and state administration. European thoughts, notions and institutions deeply permeated the Egyptian society on a grand scale. As a result, Western educational institutions permeated Islamic countries in order to produce functionaries to meet the bureaucratic and administrative needs of the states. The education in Egypt took a dual form: Modern education (primary, secondary and higher educational institutions training officers, bureaucrats, lawyers, doctors, and engineers) and traditional Islamic schooling (*kuttab* and *madrasas*).

Until the nineteenth century, *madrasas* provided the religious instruction necessary for training the *ulama*, which were the judges and teachers. These were positions central to the administration of Egypt. With the advent of the modernization period, the Qur'an was no longer sufficient for the education of modern functionaries and professionals such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, economists, modern soldiers and bureaucrats who were required by Egypt under the regime of Muhammad Ali. Generally, traditional educational institutions were in decline in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, because modern education stole the prestigious position of professions (doctors, engineers, scientists etc.) formerly occupied by traditional learned men (Rahman, 1982: 89).

Traditional *madrasa* education up until the nineteenth century in Egypt required no walls to divide classrooms, no desks, no ordered ranks, no uniforms, no timetable, and no posted curriculum, i.e., no order in the modern sense of the nineteenth century as a framework, code or structure (Mitchell, 1991: 82). It was not uniformly organized or centrally managed, nor was it the charge of the central government, as are in modern school systems. "It was locally organized and privately endowed…The obligation of educating youth lay primarily with the *ulama*, and in the early centuries of Islam schools were invariably adjoined to mosques" (Cook, 2000a: 478).

As Mitchell describes traditional *madrasa* education in Egypt, after dawn prayers, the first lesson would generally be learning the Qur'an. This was followed by lessons in *hadith*s and then by the Qur'anic interpretations (*tafsir*). The period after evening prayer was devoted to the study of mysticism. Students, especially in *fiqh* lessons (a lesson on Islamic law), seated in a circle, and the method adopted by masters was one of the argumentation and dispute, not lecturing. Student learned from other students as much as from their masters (Mitchell, 1991: 82-84).

When intellectual technologies and political institutions from the West penetrated the Muslim world, they paved the way for the emergence of new ways of conceiving, practicing, and passing on the Islamic tradition. New order brought about new teaching methods and schooling. Islamic knowledge became a kind of instructive material, found necessary for various political purposes in elite and then mass schooling in Egypt. "This new schooling was intended to transform the organization of knowledge transmission by utilizing new disciplining and ordering techniques of power" (Herrera, 2004: 18).

A distinction is often emphasized between acquired knowledge and revealed (intrinsic) knowledge in the Islamic conceptualization of knowledge: *'ilm* and *ma'arifah*. The former type is an exoteric knowledge achieved though reason (*'akl*), but it was exclusive to *ulama* throughout the medieval Islamic history. Intrinsic knowledge is an experimental esoteric type consisting of

particular degrees of illumination that could only be attained through progressive ritual practices led by heart (*qalb*) (Gilsenan, 1973: 11). It is believed that only a few adherents have the ability to experience it. *Ma'arifah* reflects the Sufi understanding of Islamic knowledge, but Sufism in all its forms appeared to challenge the basis of *ulama*'s authoritative position, and to undermine their elaborate structure of consensus, custom and law.

Tapper argues that *'ilm*, the religious science of *ulama*, was institutionalized in the orthodox Islamic education delivered by the preachers and teachers in the mosques and religious schools belonged to the Sunni community under the *ulama*. The most well-known method was the memorization and correct recitation of the Qur'an and other religious texts and commentaries with the direct instruction of teachers. *Ma'arifah* was the esoteric knowledge gained from the experience as opposed to *'ilm* (Tapper, 1991:72).

One of the most important features of the nineteenth-century educational modernization in Egypt is the codification of *shari'a* for religious education in modern school textbooks. The penetration of modern educational methods and notions caused a need for the rationalization and codification of *shari'a*. It was *'ilm*, characterized by *High Islam*, which was codified in textbooks for the teaching of Islam in centralized and bureaucratic modern mass schooling. Instead of irrational, emotional and mystic *ma'arifah*, orthodox and scriptural *'ilm* proved to be more useful and applicable into the modern mass educational system under the colonial regime.

### 3.2. The Impact of Colonialism on the Educational Institutions: The Growth of Colonial Mass Education

The main point here is to understand the changes in the state's perception of religion during the colonial period, because it has affected the ways of reproduction and dissemination of Islamic knowledge in the Egyptian educational system.

The colonial practices and projects exercised by the British in Egypt significantly damaged the inchoate national educational system. Beside the exploitative economic and political policies, the British were not interested in improving the educational conditions of the Egyptians. Lord Cromer feared that educational reform and expansion would lead to the development of a nationalist, anti-British elite, and according to his belief education was not, in any case, a governmental responsibility (Szyliowicz , 1973: 122).

The British rule restricted the enrollment rates in new modern schools through examinations, fees and a lack of facilities (Cochran, 1996: 13). In 1907, free education was prohibited by Lord Cromer. The main goals of the British colonial policy were to maximize economic benefits and to minimize political instability. It desired to maintain and even strengthen the existing system. The British were concerned with the need to prepare Egyptians for the middle and lower strata of bureaucracy (the high-level posts were reserved for Europeans, especially Englishmen).

By not providing a substantial university education, the British hoped to prevent the creation of an educated group that might provide leadership for a nationalist movement (Szyliowicz , 1973: 129). There were Schools of Law, Medicine and Polytechnic which represented the higher education in Egypt, but an Egyptian university could not be established until the departure of Lord Cromer in 1908. The Egyptian rulers (khedives) who followed Muhammad Ali – Ismail (1848), Abbas (1849-54) and Said (1854-63)– were not strongly committed to developing a state-led mass education system. They feared that education would open the eyes of people, and it would be more difficult to rule them.

In 1898, however, the British attempted to bring autonomous traditional *kuttab* under the central government's control in order to create a quasi-mass educational system in accordance with the British's colonial interests. The number of *kuttab* rose from 301 with 7,536 students in 1898 to 4,432 with 156,542 students in 1906 (Szyliowicz , 1973: 127). However, it would be

deceptive to conceive of the *kuttab* system as a full-fledged and easy-to-access mass schooling. Although this was an impressive increase, only a small proportion of all the *kuttab* in Egypt were in fact brought under this program. In 1904, of the 124,486 pupils in inspected *kuttabs*, 81,000 had received no instruction in writing, 70,000 had not commenced to learn arithmetic, and 54,000 had not even begun learn to read; at the following year's inspection these figures stood at 94,000, 87,000 and 68,000 respectively, out of 145,694 students (Starrett, 1998: 48).

On the other hand, the educational system underwent a unification and centralization process to some extent in the colonial period (Galt, 1936). The first large-scale reforms to build a unified and centralized mass educational system were carried out under the British colonial regime. Although this system was intended to fulfill the duty of providing mass mobilization, there was little change in the content and atmosphere of this new schooling. "*Kuttab* continued to fulfill its original function, the transmission of religious culture, but in a different way, and with a different manner of articulation to the community and the state" (Starrett, 1998: 61).

Islamic character at the schools did not mean that Western secular models and ideas were totally absent, but that the schools were not a passive aping of modernization for the sake of Westernization. In addition, Islamic character was demanded for the goals and requirements of mass education in Egypt. The representatives of the British colonialism themselves were eager to put Islam into the curriculum of mass education, because the British interpreted Islam as an authoritarian and disciplining body of knowledge, and intended to create benign individuals that could not stand against the British's colonial interests (Szyliowicz , 1973: 124; Mitchell, 1991). In this system, teaching involved the inculcation of feelings of obedience and discipline which were the very characteristics the British desired in the Egyptians.

### 3.2.1. The Teaching of Islam as a Moral Instruction

When the creators of the modern mass schooling in Egypt devoted a large space and long time to the religious education in the curriculum, they intended to create a particular and encapsulated set of moral character and identity, thanks to the appropriation of modern schooling techniques. Not only in Muslim societies, but also in all over the world, religion appears to be one of the most viable and efficient options to socialize peoples with desirable moral behaviors and values. Linda Herrera argues that:

> New schooling was used as a means of technical, economic, administrative, and military modernization and simultaneously as a means of preserving and transmitting aspects indigenous Islamic culture with its accompanying emphasis on religion as a way of achieving correct moral behavior. (Herrera, 2004: 319)

As Stoddart argues, the operative side of the religion manifests itself in two main ways: morality and worship (Stoddart, 1994: 53). This operative side of religion has combined with the modern regulation and ordering techniques in the contemporary era. For the British, religious instruction meant the inculcation not of recited truth, but of behavioral guidelines. Abd al-Jawish, an educationalist and the future nationalist leader, wrote about the colonialist educational understanding in 1902, stating, "students are taught obedience and submission to the school's discipline and regulations, thereby becoming accustomed to respecting the regulation, discipline, and laws of the state" (Mitchell, 1991: 102).

All these indigenous and colonial attempts to order the Egyptian society were reminiscent of the Comtian notion of social science (Mitchell, 1991: 113). This notion viewed social science as a kind of social engineering, and viewed the society as a project, the main task of which was to build a *modern* and *scientific*

society through the findings and resolutions proposed by social sciences. During the Enlightenment period, scholars were concerned with moral issues, but they wished to free moral philosophy from its reliance upon religious dogma, to place it upon a scientific and rational base, and to derive objective knowledge from it. These ideas and prospects were considerably embodied in positivism, which makes a very rigid distinction between fact and value (Hall and Gieben, 1992: 43).

Cook typically distinguishes moral education from religious education. He claims that the former universally "involves teaching children tolerance, honesty, good citizenship, while the latter comprises the study of the Qur'an and Sunna" (Cook, 2001: 386). However, in the case of Egypt, secular and religious characters of morality combined in the Egyptian moral education. This combination seems to be controversial with the positivist meta-narrative of secularism which assumes secular and religious spheres as disparate social realities.

Obviously, the motivations attributed to the reforms in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were diverse; but the result was the emergence of creating new spaces for Islamic religion and morality. Asad argues that a new moral landscape emerged with the reordering social life in terms of secularization and Westernization. Of highest important is how the Islamic discursive tradition responded and intervened in this newly emerging moral landscape (Asad, 2003: 215-227). In contemporary Egypt, Islamic discursive tradition attempts to gain influence over this moral landscape by capturing public discourse in the mass educational institutions. For this reason, mass educational institutions have become the battleground between the state and the dissident Islamist groups for the control of the socialization of Egyptian youth.

### 3.3. Nasser's Period: Pan-Arabism and Secularization

Under Gamal Abdul Nasser[8], large-scale modernization and nationalization reforms were carried out in Egypt:

a) The primary school system was unified in 1953 when elementary schools –*kuttab*- were abolished and primary schools made free and compulsory for every Egyptian child between six and twelve years of age. In July 1962, all public education was made completely free.

b) The state determined the curriculum and the structure of the system. The curriculum was standardized and unified through the use of Arabic as the sole medium of instruction. For the first time, private schools were brought under the same laws and required to use the same textbooks as state schools, and were subjected to the full inspection of the Ministry of Education.

c) Islamic matters were included in the curriculum of the state-run education (Daun and et al., 2004: 10; Hargreaves, 2001: 249; Szyliowicz. 1973: 283).

In 1952, 1.5 million children were enrolled in primary schools; by 1969 this figure had increased to 3.6 million. Secondary school enrolments during the same period increased from 181,789 to 293,991 (Williamson, 1987: 119). However, the rate of growth in the schools age population continued to be greater than the rate of the growth of school places. Egyptian population increased from about 20 million in 1951 to over 30 million in 1970 (Williamson, 1987: 120). In 1960, the

[8] Gamal Abdul Nasser was the member of the Free Officers who led the independent movement resulted in the toppling down of the Kingship in 1952 and the foundation of Republican regime. After M. Naguib, he became president as a very powerful nationalist leader of Egypt. In his tenure, Egypt embarked on enormous modernization and industrialization projects which engendered a substantial secular middle class. The curriculum was standardized and unified through the sole use of Arabic, and through the national primary leaving certificate. He remained in power until his death in 1970.

rate of illiteracy was 75 percent (twelve and a half million people) (Szyliowicz, 1973: 128).

Conceptually, the major goal of education was no longer to train proper Muslims or Christians, but to *fabricate* loyal citizens to the nation-states, imbued with national values, and to rally citizens around national interests. Nasserist educational projects designed to train modern citizens (new humanity) against foreign domination and also against any indigenous traditions or institutions that were believed to hamper national unity and strength (Brown, 2000: 129). Nasserist regime tried to socialize and educate the Egyptians according to Nasserist ideology. As a result, the mass education under the regime of Nasser again became an apparatus of the government to control and monopolize the society.

Nasser's ambitious socialist and Pan-Arabist ideologies appeared to have superseded the Islamic ideologies. Pan-Arabism, which was first articulated by the Christian intellectuals in Syria-Lebanon in the late nineteenth-century, means the belonging to, across regional boundaries, a larger unity of the Arab nation and sharing in a common culture (Ajami, 1978/79). In the covenant of Arab Cultural Unity which was approved by the second conference of Arab ministries of education held in Baghdad, 1964, Article 1 says that "the aim of education shall be to bring up generations of the Arabs, enlightened, believing in God, devoted to the Arab fatherland… armed with science and morals" (Tibawi, 1972: 234).

Even today, it is clear that Pan-Arabist values and tradition are situated frequently in school textbooks. In the textbooks of social studies (*içtimayat*) courses, the name of the country is not written as Egypt, but as the *Arab Republic of Egypt*. The Arab character of Egypt and the country's political, economic and cultural leading role in the Arab world are emphasized many times. Arabic literature, Arab history, geography of the Arab world and the role of the Arabs in the development of civilization are presented as important subjects in the curriculum.

To what extent Pan-Arabism has been adopted by the Egyptians is vague; or whether the centre of the Nasserism is Egypt or the Arab world is not clear; but Nasser was successful in triggering the masses so as to prolong his power, and to draw the masses' attention to the international Pan-Arabist cause so as to conceal the political-social contradictions and Egypt's socio-economic deteriorating conditions. When the failure of Nasserist projects came to the surface after the end of his charismatic authority in 1970, his modernization policies and ideas, which had a secularizing impact, began to be subjected to severe criticism.

Furthermore, while circumscribing the authority and power of the *ulama*, Nasser did not have reservations about benefiting from the influence of the *ulama* over the masses. Besides that, he never made an assiduous effort to secularize the country as well as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Turkey. He invoked the Egyptian *ulama* and Al-Azhar in his public speeches, and benefited from the influence of the *ulama* over the masses to ensure the legitimacy of his regime and his national socialist policies (Jankowski, 2001; Jankowski, 1986).

Article 19 of the Egyptian Constitution of 1923 formalized Islam as the religion of the Egyptian state, reinforcing its presence in the curriculum. Although Nasser articulated nationalism and socialism as the national ideology of Egypt, Islam was declared as the official religion of the state by the Constitution of 1964 under his regime. It is interesting that he inaugurated a number of reforms, including the abolition of religious courts and the creation of a unified, secular legal system after his attempted assassination in 1954 by the members of the Muslim Brotherhood (Szyliowicz, 1973: 281). Through these legal reforms, Nasser intended to assert the unification and extension of state power, and to eliminate radical Islamists.

The internal motive behind secularization in Egypt has been the fluctuations in the power relations between Islamist side and the ruling elites: The action against the Islamists and the Muslim Brotherhood has been taken when they constitute a considerable threat to the regime. Rahman argues that it is certain

that Turkey has not been able to export its secularism to the Muslim world at large. “Secularism has undoubtedly made strong inroads in various ways, but there is no sign that state secularism will be [or has been] ever espoused” (Rahman, 1982: 98).

The modern and secular nation-state seeks to regulate all aspects of individual life, including religious aspect, within a unified, centralized and standardized system to ensure national integration, economic regeneration and modernization. The transformation of the Egyptian *kuttab* from a local circle for the inculcation of sacred text into a local institution in the colonial period can be seen as a part of this regulation (Starrett, 1998: 66). Judith Cochran argues that “the task of Egyptian education in the twentieth century has been to integrate two seemingly incompatible value systems; one secular and foreign, the other religious and Egyptian” (Cochran, 1986: 7).

After the foundation of modern Egypt as an independent nation-state, Egypt endorsed the values of Islam, socialism and Pan-Arabism until Sadat came to power. The educational system under Nasser passed through a centralization and standardization process. A national unified curriculum was prepared and decreed, and the *kuttab* system was legally abolished, but in reality, the *madrasa-kuttab* system has managed to exist to the present in Egypt.

Islamic education has managed to survive in the era of the nation-states in different ways, such as Islamic instructions having been integrated into the curriculum of the modern mass schooling in Egypt for the correct moral socialization proposed by the state. In this way, from the nineteenth century onwards, the regimes in Egypt have tried to control and channel the production and dissemination of Islamic ideology into the desirable forms and courses in order to balance the power of the *ulama* and dissident Islamist groups.

# CHAPTER 4

## CONTESTING DISCOURSES ON RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTIONS IN CONTEMPORARY EGYPTIAN MASS EDUCATION

When I came to Egypt for field research, I was shocked with the abundance of Islamic symbols in the public sphere. The people reading the Qur'an in their hands at work, on the subway or anywhere else became a usual moment of my daily life in Cairo. Sometimes on the subway, I used to hear someone who called for people to return to the *true Islamic path* by chanting "*Allahü Ekber*" (God is great) and giving a short but fervent speech about Islam. I also observed the enormous numbers of women, wearing *hijab*. I do not have any statistical ratio about the issue but as far as I noticed during my stay in Cairo, I think almost eight or nine out of every ten women in Cairo streets were wearing *hijab*. The remained one or two women were mostly bearing the cross, meaning they were Christian. This means that very few Muslim women in Egypt go outside without wearing *hijab*.

In family, at school or work and among friends and relatives, I was told that there is an unremitting pressure on women who do not wear *hijab*, and they are frequently warned of their *improper* behaviors. I had two female informants who were non-covered, assisting me with my research. They had similar thought and feelings about this, expressing they felt as if they were feeling drowned in this society (Egyptian). One of them said, "I wished to leave Egypt because of the pressures. I can not even walk on the street freely without being harassed and insulted sexually in Cairo." These two Egyptian girls wanted to go abroad to live free of religious pressures. This contrasts with Turkish girls from the upper strata of society who wear a headscarf, for they prefer to go to European or American universities where they can attend classes freely wearing a headscarf due to the

fact that headscarves are banned at universities in relatively a secular country like Turkey.

Islamism has been growing for last three decades in Egypt. There are many reasons for this such as: The global crisis of modernity, the oppression of authoritarian regimes towards the Islamist movements through mostly armed conflict, peace with Israel (at the end of the Camp David Peace Process in 1979) and the alignment with the West under Sadat, and the decline of Pan-Arabism since 1967 (the military defeat of Arab countries in the battle against Israel in the Six-Day War). Furthermore, another significant reason that is articulated frequently, concerning all the Middle Eastern countries, is the failure of secular-modernist and socialist projects that had promised solution for socio-economic problems (high unemployment and inflation, impoverishment of the middle and lower class, corruption in the state sector, housing and urbanization problems, worsening equity and external debt). In Egypt, the state has not been able to resolve such socio-economic problems, and has failed at carrying out welfare services such as health, education, and infrastructure. Those failures diminished the legitimacy of the regime, and stirred up Islamism in Egypt.

After the 1970s, in the Middle Eastern countries, especially in Egypt, Arab nationalist discourse has been transformed into religious discourse. While economic liberalization policies were inaugurated by Anwar Sadat (1970-1981) and Hosni Mubarak (1981-present), social life has been highly influenced by Islamic tradition which has proven to be the most viable source for the re-formation of Egyptian identity. In the course of the Islamic revival after Nasser, Anwar Sadat sought to capture the religious discourse, in which the nationalist discourse began to be reformulated, for the purpose of winning popular support and shoring up governmental legitimacy. He was interested in strengthening "Al-Azhar and other governmental religious agencies (the Ministry of Religious Endowments and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs) as a counterweight to his predecessor's socialist policies" (Starrett, 1998: 80). In order to undermine Nasserism, especially by condemning Nasser's so-called socialist policies, Sadat

opened the public sphere to the activities and ideas of Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, *Takfir wa Al-Hijra*, *Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiyya* and *Al-Jihad*.

The Nasserist regime was vital for understanding the efficacy of the ideological discourse over Egyptian mass population who supported the cause of Arab nationalism under the influence of the charismatic authority of Nasser (cf. Dekmejian, 1971). Moreover, the expansion of free mass education and the development of information technologies in publishing and communication increased the effect and range of this ideological discourse. The Mubarak regime seems to be well-aware of the power of ideological discourse in order to provide mass mobilization. While Islamic identity is enhanced by the Mubarak regime as a cultural notion that is also expected to shore up the legitimacy of the regime, Islamism is propagated with a radical slant by the Muslim Brotherhood[9], asserting the Qur'an as the only source of the Islamic way of life. While this process has allowed religious discourse to occupy a central position in social life (Al-Azmeh, 1993: 55), it has generated a power struggle in order to capture the public religious discourse between the state and dissident Islamist groups.

In this chapter, I first examine the state discourse about religious education and try to discover what kind of mirror images and a proposed society the state articulates, and to elaborate on how it uses the mass educational system as an ideological state apparatus driven by these images and propositions. Secondly, I analyze the interviewee's perception of about the current religious education, the state's religious discourse (educational and general) and their propositions of an ideal religious education. In this part, I categorize the interviewees into several groups according to their changing perceptions not only between secularists and Islamists, but also among Islamists themselves. I define secularists as a particular group of people who maintain secular values and views, and perceive Islamism in Egypt as a threat to the development of Egyptian society and to their personal freedom. On the other hand, I call the other groups as Islamists because beyond

[9] The Muslim Brotherhood and its educational thoughts and projects are deeply investigated in the third section in this chapter.

being pious or religious, this group is *proposing an ideal society* on Islamic precepts (cf. Afsaruddin, 1999).

Then, thirdly, I deal with the issue of the Muslim Brotherhood, providing a very concise account of its history, its ideologies, its policies and its civil welfare institutions. Elaborating on the case of the Muslim Brotherhood will provide me a very important political and cultural background and some clues for understanding the different perceptions of the interviewees. Moreover, the interpretation of perceptions goes hand in hand with the analysis of social change –*the over-Islamization* of Egyptian society. Lastly, I discuss the results of the interpretation and analysis, and begin to debate on the unintended consequences of the educational transformation within a particular cultural and political framework in Egypt.

### 4.1. State Discourse about Religious Course in Mass Education

The expansion and transfer of religious socialization and teaching to modern public school system over the last century has led to a comprehensive revision in Islam's role in Egyptian society. Islam was declared the official state religion by the 1964 Constitution, and under Sadat, *shari'ah* was included in the Constitution as the major source of legal systems, reinforcing its presence in the curriculum. Especially after the growth of Islamism, policy makers pay homage to religious education in the public sector, if only rhetorical, in order to alleviate extremist demands (Cook, 1999: 342). In 1995, the National Project was designed by Mubarak to 1) reinforce Egyptian national identity through the study of Egyptian historical heritage, 2) reaffirm the study of the Arabic language, and, 3) raise the profile of religious values (Cook, 2001: 394). In effect, it was a project oriented to improve the technical-vocational education in Egypt. However, not only was the task of National Project to produce a better workforce imbued with the principles, values and labor skills needed for a technological society, but also reinforcing the values of religion (while avoiding terrorism and

extremism). In this way, the Mubarak government makes conciliatory gestures to the demands of Islamists for the sake of the regime (Cook, 1999: 344-354).

Gregory Starrett,[10] who conducted anthropological research in the late 1980s in Egypt, argues that two processes have altered Islam to make it useful as a political instrument: the first is the process of *objectification*. In this process, Islam has become the object of knowing, besides praying and sacrificing. Starrett argues that "[k]nowing Islam means being able to articulate the religion as a defined set of beliefs such as those set down in textbook presentations" (Starrett, 1998: 8-9). Islam has been made a part of the curriculum to make it a subject which must be explained and understood (Eickelman, 1992: 650). In terms of *High Islam*, in modern education, Islam has begun to be considered a tangible, codified and measurable object to be learned easily by students with the codification of *shari'ah* in the educational body of knowledge. The second process explained by Starrett is functionalization: existing religious discourse has been reified, systematized, and set to fulfill the strategic and utilitarian duties for the state policy. He argues that "the sacred texts of Islamic tradition… [were transformed into] systematic, socially and politically useful products for mass mobilization" (Starrett, 1998).

On the state discourse, the *ulama* under the control of the regime states that Egyptian youth's mind is empty of *true Islamic culture*, and as a result any other ideas, especially extremist ones, can proliferate in this atmosphere. They think that extremism results from ignorance of religion and mistaken ideas. The Minister of Religious Endowments emphasizes the need to leave religious matters to specialists, "saying that Egypt's youth are basically good, but that they lack direction and guidance" (Starrett, 1998: 175). In the tenth grade religious studies textbook (1986-87), there is such a passage that explains "we should stay within our limits and leave independent judgment in religion to the knowledgeable scholars" (Starrett, 1998: 176). In the twelfth grade religious

[10] I found his book, *Putting Islam to Work*, as one of the most detailed and felicitous works on the issue of religious education in Egypt. Therefore, I frequently quote his arguments especially in this section.

studies textbook (1989-90), there is another passage that states "Islam in Egypt is Islam without fanaticism, Islam without extremism" (Starrett, 1998: 177). In a tenth grade *social studies* (not religious) textbook[11], it is emphasized that "Islam has never become a religion of war or violence."

As Starrett argues, no longer is religious writing expected to be purely exegesis, legal interpretation, or instruction in ritual performance, but now it is expected by the state to comment on the politics, gender roles, or crimes, giving useful moral messages on the basis of the Qur'an and *hadith*. By putting religious courses into the curriculum of mass education,

> The traditional study of the Qur'an, whose purpose had been to learn how to use the sacred word in appropriate contexts, now became the study of Islam as a moral system, a study removed from its living context and placed on the same level as other secular categories of knowledge… Religious education was conceived explicitly as just one more part of a comprehensive system of social planning operating through the school, rather than the mastery of a body of spiritual literature. (Starrett, 1998: 71-72)

The notion of obedience and loyalty to God in Islam is emphasized by the state discourse to create and maintain a particular social order. In effect, the ultimate obedience to God as the basic principle is immanent to the Qur'an. In Islamist account, the ultimate aim of religious education can only be achieved through obedience to God. Religious education has the "unequivocal goal of instilling the correct knowledge of God and righteous conduct" (Al-Attas, 1985: 180). Al-Attas claims that the educational purpose of Islam is the recognition and acknowledgement of the proper places of things in the order of creation, and it leads to the recognition and acknowledgement of the order created by God (Al-Attas, 1985: 180). This results from the fact that a Muslim "must know his place in human order, which must be understood as arranged hierarchically and legitimately into various degrees of excellence *based on the Qur'anic criteria of*

[11] Al-Liqani, et al., 2004/2005: 32.

*intelligence, knowledge and virtue* [emphasis original]" (Al-Attas, 1985: 187). The notion of ultimate obedience is justified and utilized on the state discourse through religious courses that are put in *secular* mass education, and the principle of obedience to God is oriented to obedience to the state or rulers.

In Egypt, religious courses in mass schooling are viewed by the regime as a weapon against Islamism. Two important aspects of Islamism, political Islam and Islamic terrorism, are two of the biggest problems of Egypt, which threatens the legitimacy of the regime. When Husnu Mubarak was elected as the new president after the assassination of Anvar Sadat in 1981 by a member of an Islamist *jihad* group (a radical branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt), Mubarak embarked upon the termination of Islamic terrorism in Egypt. When Islamic terrorism rose in Egypt during the late 1980s and the 1990s, the Mubarak regime waged a war against Islamism, Islamic terrorism and the Muslim Brotherhood. The regime has oppressed Islamist groups and their social organizations, including schools, severely on each occasion. The authoritarian Mubarak regime aims at oppressing any opponent Islamist movement –either violent or non-violent– on the pretext of undermining the political and social stability.

Besides of the issue of stability, the attempts to stop the Islamic terrorism in Egypt have another important aspect. Islamic terrorism mostly targets the places that are full of Westerners, tourists and *West-toxicated* native people. Many times, touristic places, night clubs, pubs and video clubs have been bombed in Cairo by radical Islamists. Securing touristic places is important, because tourism is one of the major three economic resources (the others are Suez Canal and the US aid) in Egypt, and any bombing at touristic places causes a decline in the incomes of tourism, and eventually it damages the legitimacy of the regime. Therefore, in the curriculum of the religious course, Islamic terrorism and Islamism are asserted as very un-Islamic, and as inimical to the *true Islam* which is promulgated by the state discourse under the auspices of the state-supported *ulama* (mostly from Al-Azhar).

The codification of *shari'ah* as a set of moral rules from a particular state perspective has changed the understanding of Islam in Egypt. In this sense, with attention given to the conceptualization of Ernest Gellner, the state discourse paves the way for the interpretation of Islam in the form of *High Islam*, which seeks to flatten all the differences and dissonances in Islam for the sake of state policy, and implicitly gives a hegemonic, orthodox character to Islam. I think, this inevitably Islamic character insinuates into the religious education in state mass education, and provides an inadvertent religious ground for the Islamist socialization projected by the Islamists.

Additionally, Starrett claims that "each new attempt to correct mistaken ideas by furthering the penetration of Islamic discourse in public sphere creates an intensification of conflict between parties seeking to control the discourse" (Starrett, 1998: 219). As I mentioned above, besides the subtle methods of the state to capture the public discourse at schools, these attempts are also carried out publicly in order to appease the Islamist dissident groups. However, the Islamic images in Egyptian public space are one of the historical and psychological sources of the hegemony of Islamist discourse in Egypt. Beginning with Sadat's tenure, Egypt's public environment began to be swamped with the signifiers of religion: on signs, billboards, murals, advertisements, radio and television programs, public events, and the covers of books and magazines for sale on every street corner.

Moreover, the abundance of Islamic images has created a public need for their existence (Starrett, 1998). In general, the new Islam in Egypt creates its own needs for the religious information and messages in public. Consequently, both the proliferation of Islamic symbols and values in public sphere and the public need for Islamic information increase the emphasis on Islamism, and pave the way for the formation of different and new opportunities that would be conducive to the proliferation of Islamist groups and their alternative discourses

## 4.2. Alternative Moderate and Radical Islamist Educational Discourses

In this section, I try to analyze the findings of my interviews in order to understand the various contemporary Islamist ideologies and discourses. It does not mean that I do not discuss about the secular, but I touch upon alternative secularist discourse tenuously because my major concern here is the different Islamist alternative discourses.

Corresponding to the obvious rise of Islamism, most of my interviewees and informants claimed that the society and individuals should be more Islamic. At the center of their ideas about Islam and religious education, there is a significant typical concept, *jahiliyya*, which is a particular state of ignorance. Sayyid Qutb, one of the most important figures of the Muslim Brotherhood in the formation of its ideology, asserted that Muslims were not living in an Islamic society. He "charged that Egyptian society was living in a *jahiliyya*, or a state of ignorance similar to that which predated the coming of Islam" (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999: 43). Hence, they must build a society according to *true Islamic law*. However, in that sense, *jahiliyya* is not a pre-Islamic condition, but a modern condition. Esposito argues that " the classical historical designation of pre-Islamic Arabia as a society of ignorance (*jahiliyya*) was appropriated to condemn modern [Muslim] societies as un-Islamic or anti-Islamic" (Esposito, 1995: 128).

I found interesting that people from both Islamist and secularist interviewees in fewer numbers defined the current Egyptian society as being in a state of *jahiliyya* similar with Qutb's conceptualization. However, the reasons for the ignorance of the society and the proposals to end it vary according to the different sides. Secularists charge Islamists with the responsibility for this ignorance in Egyptian society by arguing that Islamism prevents the development of scientific and technological improvement, as well as democratic governance. It is this backwardness that causes the political, economic and cultural deterioration of Egypt. On the other side, the Islamist group defines the state of *jahiliyya* in

rather Islamic terms. As they see it, Egyptian people need to develop a greater understanding of Islamic culture and tradition. Furthermore, the Islamist group believes the society's moral decadence and identity void are key issues for the solution of Egypt's problems, while the secular group places little importance on these.

Generally speaking, secular discourse overlooks religious education and Muslim identity of Egypt, and severely condemns Islamism. On the other hand, the Islamists implicitly or explicitly charge that Egyptian society lives in a state of *jahiliyya*, and come up with particular suggestions and ideas for building a *true Islamic society*. Therefore, they consider the matter of religious education as a significant aspect of the debates on the issue of establishing the prospective Egyptian society as a Muslim nation.

The more interesting point is the unexpected differentiation and novel shifting in the Islamist group. Upon deeper investigation, it becomes clear that there are significant discursive differences between moderate and radical discourse. While some interviewees express their thoughts in line with the mainstream ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, they are still able to embrace the Western culture and life-style, or at least can stress the importance of liberalism and tolerance. Therefore, it seems most plausible to me to classify Islamist discourse in two different groups: moderates and radicals. Overall, I categorize all the discourses into three groups: secularist, moderate Islamists and radical Islamists. While debating the religious education on discourse, I relate various discourses to the issues of Islamism, nationalism and especially identity politics, because during my interviews, I found out that there is a subtle and strong link between religious educational discourses and political thoughts (the ideas of a proposed identity and society) of Islamist groups.

### 4.2.1. The Medium of Education: Sacred Language of the Qur'an or the Dominant Language of Globalization

Interviewee number 27 maintained a secular lifestyle, and was not wearing *hijab*. Regarding the issue of education, she claimed that the educational system should be secular. As she also mentioned, and as I was told several times in my conversations, in both secular public schools and even foreign private schools[12], the Arabic language is taught in classes through the medium of the Qur'an and the *hadith*s by the teachers, mostly graduates of Al-Azhar. Students in foreign schools are even required to memorize the certain Qur'anic verses in Arabic courses.[13] This inevitably gives an Islamic character to the modern secular education in Egypt. However, some Islamist intellectuals and educators do not even find this Islamic character of Egyptian education sufficient. Abu Suleiman claims that education must prepare men with competence to interpret ideas, facts, and events in light of the ultimate values of Islam. According to him, Arabic should be taught as a compulsory subject in primary schools, secondary schools and university in all Muslim countries (Abu Suleiman, 1981: 174).

The Islamization of language brings about the Islamization of thought and reason; the Islamization of Arabic, by being charged with Divine inspiration in the form of Revelation, brings Arabic into a position of immunity to change and development, making it unique among all other languages (Al-Attas, 1985: 43).

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[12] There are two types of foreign private schools in Egypt: One group is congregational schools (French, Italian, Greek and Armenian), the administration committee of which consists of priests and nuns. These schools are among the best schools in quality, and the education is delivered in churches with intensive teaching of English and/or French. Congregational schools are defined as Egyptian educational institutions which follow the official national curriculum. The other group is American, British and German schools which has more secular, and Western atmosphere and staff than congregational schools. Different from congregational schools, the staff members of these schools are mostly from metropolitan countries. They follow a metropolitan educational system and offer American, British and German diplomas. In order to differentiate them, I define the first group as Catholic schools, as termed by Egyptians (most of the congregational schools' graduates at universities come from Catholic French schools), and the second group as foreign schools.

[13] At the AUC, one of the most prominent figures of Western secular education in Egypt, there are Arabic teachers having Al-Azhar background.

There are common arguments about the characteristics of Islamic education such as the long influence of memorization and rote-learning methods. Rote-learning and memorization in educational institutions are claimed to be the remnants of traditional Islamic education, and these methods, with the elevation of the Arabic language to a position of sanctity, are seen as the elements strengthening scriptural *High Islam*, which is claimed to trigger the rise of Islamism in Egypt. Russell Galt argues that this method of instruction, known as scholastic formalism, of which Al-Azhar is today also crowned, is giving children an arrogant fanaticism and very little elasticity of mind or imagination in Egypt (Galt, 1936: 34-35). This problem, as Starrett argues, is because the religious corpus, including official textbooks and Islamists' products, is an instrument of mobilization in which this sacred literature becomes a mere point of departure (Starrett, 1998: 232).

I realized that this perception of Islamic education is held by non-Muslim Egyptians and secular-oriented Egyptians. In our conversation, interviewee number 27 recounted that in foreign private schools, religious and Arabic courses are blocked. However, if families want, students can take these courses. This situation in Egypt is to some extent due to the strong Islamic character of Arabic class, which renders learning the Arabic language undesirable for the non-Muslim Egyptians and secular-oriented Egyptians who seems to be more familiar with the Western culture than the Egyptian Islamic tradition. On the other hand, the sacred language of the Qur'an, Arabic[14], is exalted as the major bearer of Islamic culture and tradition by Islamists. I think this picture shows us how the political situation of Egypt affects the perception of Arabic, because it seems that among secular or Christian Egyptians, classical Arabic may appear as an indicator of Islamism, even though Arab nationalism, which enhances the Arabic

[14] The Arabic language is categorized into two types: The first is classical or formal Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, which is used in written materials and formal verbal communications such as literature, media, news and education. The second is colloquial Arabic which varies according to different regions and countries. For instance, the Egyptian colloquial Arabic and Syrian colloquial Arabic are different from each other.

identity and language, was founded by Syrian Christian Arabic intellectuals in the late nineteenth century in the Middle East.

Blocking the religious and Arabic courses –the teaching of national language, the symbol of both Islamism and Arab nationalism– is very significant when considering that the majority of the students are Muslim Egyptians.[15] Most of the radical and moderate Islamist students at the AUC, whom I interviewed, graduated from Catholic and foreign high schools. I first assumed that they would have less knowledge of Islamic culture and commit to the Islamic principles less than their counterparts in the public schools which are more likely to be associated with Islamist communities and projects. Hence, inevitably, this situation directed me to re-consider the relation between Arabic and the idea of Islamic education.

Ali Abdel-Haleem Mahmud[16] claims that the Brotherhood has a strong stance about the cultural invasion to the Muslim world. He goes on to say that the campaigns of the Western countries are directed towards Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, "aiming to put it in competition with other languages, or even to replace it with distorted colloquial languages… because thinking is practiced through language" (Mahmud, no date: 57). However, the Muslim Brotherhood does not object to the teaching of foreign languages, provided that it is not at the disposal of missionary activities (Mahmud, no date: 68). During my interviews, radical and moderate Islamist students often criticized their Muslim Egyptian peers and teenagers who graduated from Catholic and foreign private schools for not being competent in classical Arabic, which they view as the bastion of Muslim identity.

[15] I found it very interesting when I first heard that the majority of students in not only secular foreign schools, but also in congregational schools, are Muslim.

[16] Ali Abdel-Haleem Mahmud is the author of the book, "Methodology of Education Adopted by the Muslim Brotherhood." This book seems to me as a kind of educational manifesto of the Muslim Brotherhood. See http://www.ummah.net/ikhwan/. Therefore, I frequently quote from this book to discuss the radical Islamists' ideas about the issue of an ideal educational system.

However, most of the Islamist parents and university students emphasized the importance of English proficiency to able to catch up with the pace of globalization and find a well-paid job under the deteriorating socio-economic conditions of Egypt. The AUC students, almost all of them come from private Catholic, foreign, language and Islamic schools[17], speak fluent English. They always have precedence over the other university students in the job market, and they usually get the best-paid and high-status jobs. When I asked the parents who have a strong Islamist stance and send their children to public schools, all of them agreed on the importance of being competent in English. Furthermore, some of them, even the most radicals, admitted that if they could afford it, they would rather send their children to Catholic schools to provide a much brighter future for their children.

Additionally, speaking English fluently is often seen as a sign of high societal status among Egyptian people. When I was in Cairo, one of my informants and her husband, who are radical Islamists and fanatic sympathizers of Al-Qaida, took me to their village, which is half an hour from Cairo by car. While we were sitting with her male and female relatives in a big village house, an old blind man came in the room. Actually, he was my informant's father, and surprisingly, he was both *teacher* and *imam* of the village. My informant told me that her father had memorized the whole Qur'an, but he could not read or write anything except the Qur'anic verses. Now, he was teaching the Qur'an by heart to the children at the primary stage in a *kuttab* in the village. This *kuttab* was a kind of Qur'anic school which does not depend on the state administration for their operation, but are often organized by the local members of the local *ulama*.

It was so surprising for me to see that there are still *kuttab* existing in Egypt. However, more surprisingly, his knowledge was not limited solely to the Qur'an. After joining us in the room, he sat in the center of the group, and called

[17] Apart from Catholic and foreign schools, there are private national language and Islamic language schools for the education of Egyptian elites. I shed light on private Islamic language schools later. In private national language schools, the medium of education is a foreign language –mostly English, and the official curriculum is mastered by the students

his granddaughter to come closer to him. He then said to her, pointing at us: "my dear granddaughter, let's speak in English and show our guest how well you know English." Then, the child at 3-4 years old started to speak certain basic words –numbers, some introduction idioms– in English. I must have looked so surprised that my informant felt obliged to explain the situation to me, proudly saying that "my father knows English at basic level, so he also teaches English in the *kuttab* to children and his granddaughter."

As can be seen from this narrative, it is apparent that there is a complicated relation between the teaching of Arabic and English on Islamist discourse. While the former is exalted as the basic pillar of Islamic identity, the latter is viewed as an indispensable part of modern –either secular or Islamic– education and as a requirement of the global market economy in order to have a good job, high status and elevated life style.

### 4.2.2. Ambiguity between Nationalism and Islamism

Nationalist paradigms still have a strong influence over the official curriculum of Egypt. However, the terms of *nationalism* or *nationalist* signify a conflicted body of symbols and meanings. In Egypt, overlap is emerging between Islamism and Arab nationalism. Arab nationalism, which reached its peak under Nasser (1954-1970), seems to be superseded by Islamism especially on Islamist discourse in Egypt today. For instance, Ali Abdel-Haleem Mahmud criticizes the Syrian Arab nationalists who described the Ottoman ruling system as an occupation of the Arab world, and views nationalistic enthusiasm as a grudge against Islam with the intention to break the unity of the Muslim world.

Actually, the key concept here is the notion of territorialism. In the *Track to Youth*, Hasan Al-Banna says that "in Islam it is not acceptable that national (or ethnic) ties are stronger than the bonds of religion and faith" (Mahmud, no date: 25). The Muslim Brotherhood is claimed to denounce all national borders, blood or racial distinctions in Islam. "The Muslim Brotherhood, have [sic] the top

priority to the resurgence of the Caliphate" (Mahmud, no date: 42). During my interviews with radical Islamists, all of them apparently agreed on the foundation of an Islamic nation –an *ummah*– without current national borders. Some of them, in fact, sensed their desire for the re-foundation of Caliphate; an AUC student in this group, who recently joined the Muslim Brotherhood, told me that she missed the heydays of the Ottoman Sultanate, and wanted to see a Sultan in Istanbul again. However, when I deepened the discussion with the people sharing this viewpoint, I noticed that they started to imply the superiority of Egypt in this Islamic cause, *Da'wah*, by emphasizing Egyptianness. In our conversation, interviewee number 13 (a radical Islamist) scorned the Gulf States in the Middle East by stating:

> The people of the Gulf States are mobs, Bedouins. By this I mean they have no culture and no glorious history like ours. They have a lot of money, but they did not help us financially in the Six-Day War. But we will see… When their oil reserves are finished, they will surely go back to their tents.

As can be seen, the identity as a mirror image and a source of reference has a triple form in Egypt: Arab nationalism, Islamism and Egyptian nationalism. Considering Islamist discourse in Egypt, Islamism and Arab nationalism seem to be on one side of a coin. Viewing these two ideologies as two aspects of a single ideology, I think Islamism asserts itself as the single ideology in an orthodox and homogeneous character, in which Arab nationalist and Islamist ideas are mutually reinforcing each other. While Islamism is the most apparent ideological source of identity, Arab nationalism that constructs itself upon the language element on the Islamist discourse is still embedded in the perception of a particular Muslim identity and culture. Referring to the Prophet Muhammad's sayings, Hasan Al-Banna relays that Arabism is the tongue, so he who speaks Arabic is an Arab. "That's why the Unity of the Arabs, is necessary to bring back the glory of Islam, reinforce its power, and re-establish its wide nation"

(Mahmud, no date: 41). On the other hand, Egyptian territorial nationalism, which asserts Egypt as the leader of all Arab countries, seems to have a strong influence on the formation of the Islamist identity. Although the ideas of establishing *ummah* and a united Arab nation overlap, there exists a tacit common belief, even on the radical Islamist discourse –seemingly the most critical discourse to nationalist ideology–, which privileges Egypt over the other Muslim countries in the process of establishing an Islamic community.

### 4.2.3. The Duality between Secular and Islamic Education: The Concept of *Cultural Schizophrenia*

While Sayyid Qutb declares the entire Egyptian society as *jahiliyya*, he condemns the West for privileging the human mind and scientific inquiry over divine truths, which has brought about another disaster. For him, Muslims have fallen into *jahiliyya* because men allow other men, i.e. the human mind, to rule over them. Human mind and reason should be considered inferior to God's holy truth according to Sayyid Qutb. Human reason cannot understand divine truths; it can only submit to those truths. He claims that human thought will fall short of being able to provide causal explanations about human existence, because only Islamic guidance will be able to understand the nature of the universe (Akhavi, 1994: 136, 141-144).

Davari also "incriminates humanism not for being just another philosophy, but rather for becoming the blueprint for another man; a man to whom all the philosophies, theories, logic and new sciences must be subordinated" (Boroujerdi, 1993: 240). The reason for this subordination is believed to be the modern secular knowledge and scientific activities which have been imported from the Western countries to the Muslim countries.

From this perspective, Islamic education is viewed as a twofold process – intellectual knowledge and spiritual knowledge. It strives to produce a complete person, including the rational, spiritual and social dimensions of the person. In

Islamic educational theory, the general objective of gaining knowledge is the actualization and perfection of all dimensions of the human being. The *Tawhid* notion provides a comprehensive and integrated approach to education in Islam. However, the secularization process and the following pluralization of society started to threaten the *tawhid* notion in the field of education, and the all-encompassing and unified characteristic of traditional Islamic education. Cook argues that "secularism, with its veneration of human reason over divine revelation and precepts of the separation of mosque and state, is anathema to the Islamic doctrine of *tawhid* (oneness)" (Cook, 1999: 340).

As a term proposed by Descartes, the Cartesian split between the spiritual and material side of the human being became a predominant framework on the Islamist discourse about the educational system in Egypt. In Cartesian dualities of spirit versus matter, mind versus body, faith versus reason and revelation versus observation, the former of these binary terms were relegated to religion/church while the latter had been left to science/universities. Regarding the Islamic education, Ashraf, a prominent Islamic educationalist, says that separating the spiritual development of the human being from the rational and temporal aspects of the same person is the main cause for the disintegration of the human personality. From the Islamist perspective, materialism and individualism are seen as the most threatening aspects of secularization towards the Muslim world. Islamic education, i.e. Islamic *tarbiyah*[18], "is concerned with the molding of mankind in a way that covers all aspects of life; spiritual, mental and physical" (Mahmud, no date: 11). For many Islamic scholars like Al-Attas, Al-Faruqi and Sayyid Qutb, materialism, which strips human beings of their spiritual character, constitutes the main reason for all social, political, economical and environmental problems in the world because it causes moral decadence.[19]

[18] There are ten basic pillars of the Islamic *tarbiyah* for the Muslim Brotherhood: 1) Understanding, 2) Sincerity, 3) Worship, 4) Jihad, 5) Sacrifice, 6) Obedience, 7) Perseverance, 8) Integrity, 9) Brotherhood, and 10) Trust (Mahmud, no date: 103).

[19] The subject of "moral decadence" of the Muslim societies is one of the most important constituents of the Islamist discourse. While my interviewees having an Islamist orientation relay

S. Ali claims that the relationship with the USA and the "reliance on foreign models of education, which deny Islam as a dominating educational philosophy" (Ali, 1984: 99). It causes a state of *cultural schizophrenia* in the Muslim societies. While secularization/pluralization diminishes the *tawhid* notion in Islamic thought, the "dichotomizing effects of modernity and Westernization… [have] produced a polarized culture" (Cook, 2001: 405).

One of the most conspicuous examples is the foreign private schools which are exposed to these dichotomizing effects of Westernization and secularization. Tuition fees for these schools are so high that only upper class families can afford to send their children to these schools. In comparison with public schools, they provide relatively secular and Western education (including Catholic schools) for their students. Therefore, because of their educational background, the students of private schools can reach and apparently adopt Western and secular symbols and cultural materials more easily and on a larger scale than an ordinary Egyptian. However, as can be seen in the interviews, it does not entail that the students and graduates of these schools have secularist mindsets. As I mentioned before, it is very hard to find anybody –even among the graduates of foreign schools– who refers to secularism or secular symbols and values, while discussing any social issue. Most of my interviewees came to the same point: "we should be more Islamic and better Muslims, and religious education is so important for Egyptian society." I was introduced to several female AUC students who were living a very Western lifestyle without wearing *hijab*, but still asserted Islamism as their mainstream ideological orientation.

Interviewee number 15 appeared to adopt the radical Islamic discourse, and during our conversation, he articulated orthodox Islamic ideas in a very rigid and certain manner, asserting the Qur'an as the sole source for an Islamic way of living. He sensed that the Qur'an suffices for man's guidance and salvation; there is no other knowledge that can guide and save the mankind. The conspicuous

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the problems of the educational system, they often emphasize the moral decadence of Egyptian society implicitly or explicitly.

point is that he graduated from a private Islamic school which implements the British educational system, and issues British diplomas.

All of my interviewees more or less touched upon the identity crisis among the Egyptian youth. The Islamist discourse defines this identity crisis in term of *cultural schizophrenia* which is claimed to paralyze the Egyptian youth's mind; the Egyptian youth is believed to be ignorant of *true* Islamic knowledge and values, and of how to apply Islamic knowledge in their daily life, but eager to adopt Western lifestyle and consume Western products unconsciously.[20] However, when I started to conduct my interviews at the AUC, I felt surprised, because there are many Islamists among the AUC students who would be presumed to experience this identity crisis at most.

Having a strong Islamist stance and Western life-style, many university and high school students seem to have identity problems. Interviewee number 26 explained to me the identity void experienced by the students of foreign schools, saying that:

> The American schools in Cairo have a subtle political aim: To leave all Egyptians without a coherent identity. The graduates of these schools feel neither completely American nor Egyptian. But, Islam and Arabic are the backbone of our culture, and we are devoid of learning them in private foreign schools.

During our conversation, he expressed his views in a radical manner, and blamed the US involvement in Egypt's political and cultural affairs for damaging the nation's Islamic character. Moreover, not only the upper class students, but also the middle and lower-middle class students seem to experience similar identity confusions. One of my informants, who is a graduate of public technical-vocational school, had a strong conviction in Islamism, but at the same time, he was listening to Western music such as Backstreet Boys and Linkin' Park. Even among Al-Azhar students, it was possible to see the fans of Lebanese female

[20] The state sees the Egyptian youth as ignorant as well and vulnerable to Islamist ideas.

singers whose video clips are publicly condemned by the *ulama* of Al-Azhar because of the intensive *eroticism* in the video clips. As can be seen especially from urban students' life styles, having different and contesting meanings, motives and moods, the Egyptian youth feels obliged to formulate their won rules and values for pious religious conduct while accommodating their desires to live as modern, and to some degree Western, metropolitan youth (Herrera, 2001: 238).

Many Egyptian educators draw a direct correlation between an insufficient emphasis on moral education and the painful and lingering question of identity for Egyptians. Cook argues that "if educational policy is not infused with sufficient religio-cultural instruction, they [Egyptian educational experts] argue, Egypt risks losing a collective self-definition" (Cook, 2000a: 487). None of my interviewees considered religious education to be unnecessary. Most of my Islamists interviewees, either radical or moderate Islamists, complained that the state schools and educators pay a great deal of lip service to religious education. They are not satisfied with the amount of time devoted to the religious courses.[21] It was explained to me that many students in Egypt do not care about the religious courses, some of them sleep during the classes, and they can easily pass the exams by making little effort. The grades of the religious courses in the Egyptian educational system are not taken into account in calculating the official CGPA of the students in secondary schools. In Egypt, where there is not a general university entrance examination at the end of secondary education, students' CGPA and yearly final exam scores are the criteria for which university they can enter.

Cook argues that a vast majority of academics in Egypt support religion in schools and perceives the Minister to be systematically removing Islamic influences from the educational system (Cook, 2000a: 485). Dr. Suleiman Abd Rabou Muhammad argues that, although the Egyptian public schools incorporate

[21] In Egypt, the time devoted to religious course is three hours a week in public primary schools, and two hours in public secondary schools.

religious education, it is non-productive, and cannot constitute a strong *defensive line* [emphasis mine] that would protect children from deviation and non-Islamic behaviors. He continues that there is little connection between the religious education now taught in schools and the problems of the society and environment, and claims that there is a systematic elimination of Islam from the curricula (Cook, 2000a: 487). According to the Islamist discourse, this situation creates the state of *jahiliyya* that the Islamist discourse defines as a state of being weak morally in Islamic terms, so consequentially of being perplexed by *cultural schizophrenia* and vulnerable to the threatening Western culture and politics. The religious education is articulated as a moral remedy for *cultural schizophrenia*. The anxieties about a moral and spiritual deficit in educational development plans have become more pressing than ever.

### 4.2.4. Islamization of Educational System

In terms of religious socialization and moral teaching, Islamist discourse on religious education matches the state discourse to the extent that both emphasize strengthening the Islamic character of Egyptians.[22] Interviewee number 8 said that:

> Islam is the nature of human being. It means not lying, being respectful of others, being moral, being a hard-worker and the like. This is the essence of Islam, this should be the focus of religious education, but now we are far away from this point.

He defends the compulsory religious course, and suggests that children should infer moral lessons from the Qur`anic verses and *sunnah*. On the other hand, supporting new, non-governmental Islamic movements, he implies a

[22] This perception dates back to the colonial period (see Chapter 3).

moderate alternative understanding to the state discourse on religious education by relaying that:

> The movements are slow, but growing. In mosques, young people are studying the Qur`an and learning good habits. There are also [Islamic] NGOs, though not full-fledged yet. Young people should participate in them, think about their future and their values, design their own programs, and fill this gap which schools can not fill.

However, the Islamist discourse goes beyond the matter of religious moral instructions. The radical Islamist discourse proposes the idea of a totally Islamized educational system by taking out all secular subjects and methods from the education in order to overcome the state of *cultural schizophrenia*, or *jahiliyya*. Ali Abdel-Haleem Mahmud claims that one of the most important objectives of Islamic *tarbiyah* is to prepare individuals to live in harmony and agreement with his brother after they are united (Mahmud, no date: 16).

Here, the issue shifts from the moral education in religious color to the issue of Islamization of the schools and modern scientific education; because, the main goal of people who articulate the radical Islamic discourse is to build a completely Islamic society, similar to the Muslim Brotherhood. This discourse takes its essence from the very orthodox scripturalist of Islam, the main goal of which is to take out everything which is found anti-Islamic, or even un-Islamic, and to flatten all differences and varieties based on the Qur'an. Hasan Al-Banna says that every methodology that does not support Islam, and is not based on its general foundations, will not lead to any success (Mahmud, no date: 91). Radical Islamists criticize the primary reliance on scientific faculties for the discovery of truth, and say that reality is restricted only to sensual experience, scientific procedure or processes of logic (Cook, 1999: 346-348); but they claim that this situation prevents the discovery of the whole truth, and creates a society in *jahiliyya*.

This perception holds the Qur'an as the sole resource of knowledge and all scientific practices. According to this idea, the epistemology and methodology of all scientific branches should be suitable to the Qur'anic verses, and unsuitable, meaning all Western and secular concepts, should be purged from the curriculum. Then, reconciliation should take place between Islamic and *civil* sciences (natural and social sciences).

The term *civil* education is used by the radical Islamists instead of the term *secular*. Interviewee number 17 (a radical Islamist) refused to say the word *secular*, even when I asked about secular education. Ali Abdel-Haleem Mahmud also touches upon *civil* education. It is almost impossible to find the phrase *secular education* in his book. Mahmud says that "some people wanted to cancel *civil* [emphasis mine] education, but the Muslim Brotherhood took a medium position and asked for mixing religious and *civil* [emphasis mine] education" (Mahmud, no date: 67). At this point, the term *civil* education refers to modern scientific education. Instead of *secular* which is claimed to be a Western concept and inimical to Islamic culture, *civil* is viewed neutral and acceptable for use by radical Islamists while talking about the issue of education in Egypt. The issue of *civil* education is actually a project aiming at embracing the sciences of the West, which would be stripped of its *secular* characteristics while keeping the religious education in order to educate the Muslims and *ummah* properly.

Interviewee number 17, one of the pioneers of Islamic intelligentsia in Egypt, prefers to use the term *civil* education instead of *secular* education, because she argued that the former term means *non-Islamic*, while the latter means *anti-Islamic* thought. She said that:

> We want an educational system which is peculiar to Islam, but the current Egyptian educational system is under the influence of anti-Islamic, Western methods and ideas. We should do away with this Western educational system, and establish a Muslim paradigm to create a genuine educational system which is convenient to Islamic principles.

When I asked her about the issue of Abu Zaid[23], she acted as if she approved the happenings to Abu Zaid, and said that "Abu Zaid attempted to interpret the Qur'an as if it was a historical book or novel. It is absolutely unacceptable and anti-Islamic." Her words appear to confirm the scripturalist orthodox character of the radical Islamist discourse which leaves no room for the simultaneous existence of different understandings and interpretations of Islam. The perception of social life as an ever-changing and relative reality is viewed by the Brotherhood as a trend which is anathema to Islamic *Da'wah* and *Shari'ah*. Mahmud claims that the main of aim of this trend *invading* the Muslim countries are as follows:

> 1) Drifting Muslims away from their methodology and system that set for them by Allah, 2) Distortion of Shari'ah by accusing it of being local and historical, and far from being suitable for application at the present time regarding its systems and manners, 3) Wasting the spare time of Muslims (they shouldn't have spare time any way) with disgraceful and immoral plays and novels. (Mahmud, no date: 38)

When I was conducting my field research, I attended a political science class at the AUC. In the class, one of the students was presenting a Master's thesis proposal, and it was about how to build an international relations perspective based on the Qur'an. After explaining the several terms about the issue such as *ijtihad*, *ijma* and *sunnah*, she then sought to make particular connections between these Islamic terms and the concepts of modern international relations. Overall, *tawhid* was the most important concept in her proposal for an effort to build an authentic and single Muslim perspective for international politics. This proposal is actually a reflection of the hot debate in

[23] Abu Zaid was a professor at Cairo University. In the mid-1990s, he was persecuted by Islamists because of writing "textual critiques of canonical sources. He was brought to court by the Islamist lawyers associated with the Brotherhood, who demanded that he be divorced from his wife, because an apostate cannot be married to a Muslim" (Zubaida, 2001: 246). Then, to abscond from persecutions and accusations, he was compelled to leave Egypt with his wife.

Egypt on the viability of Islamic sciences such as Islamic international relations, Islamic medicine and Islamic sociology. Islamic scholars argue that an indigenous Islamic science can emerge provided that Muslim scientists analyze their data with reference to the Qur'anic concepts (Al-Faruqi, 1981: 3).[24]

Interviewee number 17 argues that:

> Many scholars in this faculty lecture by relying on Western sources like positivism or Marxism. Why don't we lecture from the Islamic paradigm; why don't we take the Qur'an as the source of knowledge in social sciences?

This radical Islamist discourse is concerned not only about a proposed religious education *in se*, as is the case on the moderate discourse, but about the Islamization of the whole educational system and scientific activities. She ended her words by explaining that the *tawhid* notion is located at the heart of the Islamic paradigm. As for the issue of international relations, the goal is to build a single unified Muslim nation; *ummah* –one nation, one religion and one culture.

### 4.2.5. Tolerance/Integration or Expulsion/Disintegration: The Stance of Islamic Education

The radical Islamist discourse has a totalizing character, and aims at unifying Egyptian society under a single Muslim identity. The Muslim Brotherhood claims that the secret to keeping Muslims underdeveloped is to keep them away from Islam and to maintain the dissensions between them (Mahmud, no date: 86). Interviewee number 17 said that:

[24] This issue is discussed in Chapter 5 in a deeper and more comprehensive fashion.

> In the West, it is taken for granted that every culture and country normally has certain indispensable common values and norms, and so, ours is Islam. When we articulate the idea of Islamization of society, the West charges us with being fundamentalist and intolerant of the other culture [the Copts].

In the mirror image of radical Islamists, the Copts are seen as the agent of colonial powers which are assumed to desire the termination of Islamic culture and tradition in Egypt. Mahmud says that "we should not be deceived by those who say that other religions such as Christianity and Judaism have any use or benefit for Muslims… [The] ideologies prevailing in the East or West do not provide anything that is not already existing in Islam" (Mahmud, no date: 34).

Interviewee number 17 accused the AUC and other foreign schools as being the representatives of colonial Western culture, of undermining the Islamic culture and identity of Egypt. Mahmud says that the Westerners opened several schools, thereby they are able to control education in the Muslim word, and "try to put a barrier between the Muslims and their Islam, their morals and manners" (Mahmud, no date: 66). However, in this context, how should/could the existence of the Islamist groups at the AUC be explained?

On the other hand, this totalistic (potentially totalitarian) radical understanding of the West and Islam is not shared by all the Islamist discourses. Interviewee number 14 was not wearing *hijab*. During our conversation, she denounced radical Islamism, and accused the Muslim Brotherhood of being a terrorist organization. She defended the re-opening of *ijtihad*, and supported the teaching and articulation of not single but various readings of Islam. She said that "the Muslim Brotherhood is very popular in Egypt, why? Because, they proclaim that the Copts[25] are our enemy. Christian and Western culture is a part of the

[25] The Copts are the Christian minority group (approximately 10 per cent of the total population) in Egypt. Many of them are well-educated and from the upper-strata. In comparison with their minority position in the society, they are keeping high niches in both governmental and non-governmental organizations, and are very influential on the state policies.

Egyptian culture. You can not draw a clear-cut boundary between them." The surprising point is that she also said that "we should be more Islamic, and learn the religion of Islam much better. We should do this, because we are living in an Islamic country, not in a secular country like France." At that point, it is necessary to ask the question of who is Islamist. I felt compelled to re-think about the definition of *Islamist*. Up to now, it is obvious that there are significant differences between moderate and radical Islamist discourses in term of their mirror images and references about the Western culture and secular knowledge. However, in the beginning of this study, I never expected such a conflict between these two Islamist discourses within the mainstream ideology of Islamism.

One of the important representatives of the moderate Islamist group among my interviewees, interviewee number 8, said that:

> Democracy lessons should be added to curriculum. Using time efficiently, respect for others, good governance, human rights, fighting extremists and negotiation skills should be taught, because it is a prerequisite of being a society.

He suggested that in religious courses the moral and ethical issues such as tolerance and sympathy in the religion of Islam be stressed, and even religious classes sometimes should sometimes be done together with Christians to develop a mutual understanding between the two religious societies.[26] Interviewee number 2 argued that students should learn the common points in both religions, and how to show tolerance for each other. He said that:

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[26] This idea was also articulated by Kemal Bahaeddin, the Minister of Education, who fought against Islamist movements in education with the attempts of purging Islamist elements and teachers from the educational body. However, the opposition of public to this idea was so overwhelming that it had to be abandoned (Herrera, 2000: 94-95). In public and private schools, religious courses are taken by Christians and Muslims in separate classes. In addition, both Christians and Muslims are required to master different textbooks specific to Christianity and Islam, which prepared by the Ministry of Education.

> It is nonsense to separate Christian and Muslim students in religious courses. It strengthens the rupture and segregation between Muslims and Christians. Of course, Muslims go to another room for prayer, and Christians also do a mass prayer, but the class should be mixed, otherwise it will soon cause a social explosion.

Overall, this moderate Islamist discourse appears to adopt the particular notions of political modernity (pluralistic ones in particular), and to include the Coptic Christians as an integral part of the Egyptian culture, while excluding and rejecting radical Islamism. On the other hand, this pluralist understanding of Islamic culture does not have a secularist character because of ultimately having an Islamist stance. Rather, it is a result of modernization process which brought pluralistic notions –though not in secular terms– of political modernity to Egypt. Instead of doing away with the religious institutions, meanings and symbols, this process in Egypt seems to trigger the growth of a liberal perception emphasizing the pluralism and tolerance in the religious society and education of Egypt.

This kind of Islamist discourse fits the democratization expectations of some scholars in Egypt. Denis J. Sullivan argues that tolerance is the main issue for the democratization in Egypt (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999: 129). While Ibrahim (1996) and Sullivan believe that the tolerance for the Islamic movement and its absorption into political system will be a success of democracy, pluralism and civility in Egypt, they presume that Islamists will be a loyal opposition and behave politically in a restrained and responsible way in terms of democracy and tolerance. Therefore, while this process paves the way for the democratization of the Egyptian political system, tolerance and recognition of Islamism in the political sphere will bring about the decline of violent-intolerant Islamist extremist movements.

Wickham, however, criticizes this view that recent developments in Egypt do not denote the establishment of such a democratization paradigm (Wickham, 1994: 507). Sami Zubaida also claims that Islamists are not the genuine proponents of democracy, pluralism and human rights, and their democratization

discourse remains only in words. He says that "Islamists of all tendencies have not shown particularly liberal attitudes in dealing with challenging opinions and have always been ready to censor and denounce any cultural product they deem at variance with the true religion" (Zubaida, 1992; Zubaida, 2001). Going even further than this, the Muslim Brotherhood articulates that Islamists should not stop at censoring and denouncing un-Islamic elements in society, but should fight against them. For the Brotherhood, one of the main objectives of Islamic *tarbiyah* is to prepare the soul, mind and body to get ready for *Jihad* with scientific, material and moral power (Mahmud, no date: 30). In *Muslim Brotherhood Under the Banner of the Qur'an*, Hasan Al-Banna says that:

> We should face… [the devastating Western philosophies and] the civilization of matter, pleasures, and desires… We shall continue to fight those philosophies until they are driven out of our land, and our people are completely cured of their effect… We shall chase them in their homeland, until the whole world acknowledges the name of the Prophet (Peace be upon him), and believes in the teachings of the Qur'an, and the shade of Islam shelters all the earth. (Mahmud, no date: 45)

### 4.3. The Case of the Muslim Brotherhood

It is important to pause here in order to shed light on the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, the discourse of which I associated with the radical Islamist discourse in my study. So far I have only briefly touched upon some arguments of the Brotherhood in this thesis, for it seemed best not to interrupt the course of the discursive narrative in the previous sections.

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Hasan Al-Banna, a school teacher in Ismailiyya. Hasan Al-Banna was one of the most important pioneers of early fundamentalists who disseminated the idea of returning to *true Islamic path* and of building an all-encompassing Islamic society in the face of Western

economic, political and cultural *threats*. However, "they looked to the sources of Islam not simply to replicate the past but to respond to a new age" (Esposito, 1995: 120). They try to reinterpret or reformulate Islam in both an authentic and modern fashion to revitalize the Islamic community, *–ummah*.

Hasan Al-Banna claimed that imitation of the West and importation of Western political ideas and cultural traits were subversive to Islamic societies. Those ideas still constitute the ideological base of the Muslim Brotherhood today. However, especially before the 1952 Revolution, Egyptian anti-colonial nationalism can be seen as the ideological mainstream of the Brotherhood, and they conjoined with leftists, secularists, and the Free Officers to terminate the foreign domination.

Hasan Al-Banna, as a preacher, managed to develop a broad-based populist movement. The organization grew quickly in both rural and urban areas, and it was said that there were a half million active membership by the end of 1940s. On the one hand, the Muslim Brotherhood provided educational and welfare services while discussing the actual problems of Egypt. On the other hand, they got involved in acts of violence against the British in Canal Zone in 1951, fought for the Palestinian cause against the Zionists in 1948, and attacked Egyptian politicians. The brethren assassinated Egyptian prime minister Nuqrashi Pasha in 1948. Less than two months later, on 12 February 1949, Al-Banna was assassinated by the regime's secret police (Hopwood, 1992).

In the course of the 1952 Revolution, the Brotherhood helped the Free Officers overthrow King Farouk. However, after the consolidation of the power of the Free Officers, Nasser did not welcome the protests and political demands made by the Brotherhood and refused their demands for the application of *shari'ah*. After an attempt on Nasser's life in 1954, "more than one thousand of the Brotherhood's members were imprisoned and tortured, and their leaders were executed. Government repression forced what was left of the Brotherhood underground" (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999: 43).

During the Sadat period, the Brotherhood was encouraged in its Islamist policies. They gained many members from university students, and held a powerful position on campuses. The prominent Islamists today in Egypt largely belong to the secular professions. Before the 1980s, in Egypt, the modern educational system was strongly urban and, to some extent, elitist in character. Religious schools, mostly Al-Azhar schools, remained rural and the only source of education available to the mass of the populace from the lower-strata. As Ibrahim avers in his research in 1977, most radical Islamists in Egypt, who affiliated themselves with the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, were university students or graduates, most of whom had a rural background (Ibrahim, 1996). Egypt's stratification system reached its fluidity from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s. Along with industrialization, the equalizing opportunities of bold socialist policies under Nasser and ambitious programs in education, social mobility rapidly increased. During that period, all levels of education became accessible to all Egyptians (Hargreaves, 2001: 249). They majored in engineering, medicine, pharmacy, technical military science, agricultural science, and literature. The first four of these listed require very high qualifications for entering a university.

Since the 1980s, members of the Muslim Brotherhood sometimes have had the upper hand in the professional associations in Egypt, and there are many young professionals who had been recruited into one of the Islamic groups during their education. Islamist groups are able to offer students in the universities a coherent analysis of their position and considerable welfare support (Ibrahim, 1996: 181). In this way, university campuses function as recruiting grounds for illegal Islamist groups. In the 1970s, it was estimated that nearly one-third of the students at the universities of Cairo and Alexandria were active members or supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood (Szyliowicz , 1973: 190). Today, Cairo University is still heavily influenced by Islamist students, organizations and activities. These Islamist student organizations provide welfare support for students such as free tutoring, books, meal and clothes. The campus also appears

to be the heart of the student politics, and on each occasion when the tension between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood increases, the university students gather in huge numbers on campuses and hold well-planned demonstrations against the regime in favor of the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamist expectations. Therefore, several squads of the Egyptian military police force are always on call in case of a demonstration in front of the campus gates, faculty gates and even inside buildings. On each occasion, the government suppresses Islamist movements at the university by arresting Islamist student leaders, expelling them from the university and closing their organizations.

According to the survey conducted by Cook on the issue of Islamization at the universities in Cairo, "the majority of respondents consider the national system of education to be too Westernized, and desire more of an Islamic texture in both universities and daily life" (Cook, 2001: 407). Dr. Samia al-Khashab's 1988 survey of Cairo University students indicates that over 80 percent of the 450 students thought *hijab* should be required of all Muslim women (Starrett, 1998: 91). Cook claims that "students feel that the state fails to provide adequate religious preparation for children. Many draw a link between the current state of social decay and economic dependency of Egypt and the lack of spirituality in the educational system" (Cook, 2001: 391).

Today, when we look at the members of the Muslim Brotherhood, the majority of well-educated people from the new middle class are very noteworthy. Their members are entrenched in professional associations, such as Muhammad A. Al-Futuh, who is both a prominent leader of the Brotherhood and is the head of the Egypt's doctor syndicate. Michael Gilsenan argues that technocrats, the key actors of advancement, trained at modern scientific universities, see themselves as lacking an ideology after the 1970s. According to Gilsenan, they believed Egyptian society needed to be prevented from its irrational and unscientific nature, and it was religious law which could rationalize and order Egypt, and provide a morality to the people (Gilsenan, 1988: 183). From this view, the concept of *High Islam* (scriptural and orthodox Islam) seems to be

adopted and reproduced by Islamist technocrats in Egypt's professional associations in order to build a *truly Islamic society* based on the Qur'an.

A comprehensive debate could be furthered on Gilsenan's argument, but the key point here is the emergence of Islamism as the constructing ideology to transform Egyptian society into a perfect Islamic community. Therefore, *modern* Islamic education, i.e. Islamic *tarbiyah*, is expected to terminate the state of *jahiliyya*, and to build a *real Islamic society* by the Islamist groups. As I mentioned before, this idea appeared for the first time in the works of Sayyid Qutb who is the most prominent leader of the Brotherhood after Hasan Al-Banna. Sayyid Qutb, who was imprisoned in 1954 and hanged in 1966, represents a turning point in both the general fundamentalist movement and the transformation of the Muslim Brotherhood. The target of the fundamentalists turned from foreign dominations to their own countrymen whom they accused of being ignorant and only nominally Muslim.

Today, the Muslim Brotherhood is an important figure in the radical Islamist movement in Egypt and the Middle East as well. It is claimed to have massive support among Egyptians. In general, the Brotherhood renounces the Mubarak regime as an oppressing and un-Islamic rule fawning over the colonial and imperialist West, especially the USA, and defends the total Islamization of the whole society based on the Qur'anic precepts without leaving any room for foreign and non-Islamic formations to be entrenched in the society.

While Islamism is rising in Egypt, the Mubarak regime does not allow them to participate in the political system, and prevents the debates which are presumed to shape the state policies in the public sphere. Islamists are still denied the rights to establish a political party. The Egyptian government spokesmen often argue that Egypt is already an Islamic nation. "There is no need for Islam to play a political role in a country in which the people already practice their Islamic faith" (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999: 89). However, the Muslim Brotherhood has entered into the parliament in coalition with the political parties such as the New Wafd in 1984, the Socialist Labor Party and the Liberal Party in

1987. With the reform pressures from the USA, the Mubarak regime allowed the candidates who are the members of the Brotherhood to contest in the 2005 elections as independent candidates, and the independent candidates of the Brotherhood gained 88 seats in the current national parliament.

What is worthy of attention in the proliferation of Islamism is the rising popularity of the various Islamic welfare institutions (mostly overwhelmed or influenced by the Brotherhood) (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999: 125). The advent of quasi secular/modern mass schooling, modernization attempts, mass literacy and printing may appear to suppress Islamic tradition. However, modernity has given new and different possibilities to Islamic tradition to reproduce itself in social reality and human consciousness. Islamic NGOs – Islamic civil social networks[27]–, the majority of which are supported and funded by the Brotherhood, are one of these possibilities, and they present their followers another way of life, and another life-world as an alternative to the regime. The Islamist discourse of the building an all-encompassing *true Islamic society* has reflected on the social reality as Islamic institutions, rivaling those that are *un-Islamic* or *non-Islamic* ones (Wickham, 1994).

The growth of private Islamic schools after the 1970s should be understood within this process. While the Brotherhood articulates Islam as a *new* or *reinvented* way of life, Islamic welfare institutions have begun to fill the socio-economic gaps stemming from the failure of state policies. Islamic economic institutions, one of the important constituents of these civil networks, are the main financial source of Islamic NGOs and the Brotherhood. Their most important feature is that they provide thousands of jobs to young Egyptians. Islamic NGOs provide many welfare services that the state can not provide in full, such as health care, education, sports and social activities. They run better than their state-public and secular counterparts. They are run on a low-cost overhead basis, and are less expensive, and less impersonal than their counterparts (Ibrahim, 1996: 60-61).

[27] I prefer to use this term instead of *Islamic civil society*.

The past several decades have witnessed the partial retreat of the Egyptian state, especially from the country's socio-economic sphere. By providing welfare services, the Muslim Brotherhood is filling the public space vacated by the state (Wickham, 1994; Ibrahim, 1996; Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999). This situation has given a substantial ground for the Brotherhood to proliferate not only in the political arena but also in public mass schooling –private or public. Not to mention Al-Azhar, I think discussing the expansion of private Islamic schools as a part of this trend is a good way of to deal with the issue of alternative Islamic educational institutions.

### 4.4. The Breaking of the Regime's Monopoly over Education

By getting involved in various welfare institutions, Islamic organizations increase their popularity among Egyptians while simultaneously diminishing the legitimacy of the state. The shifting of the legitimacy and popularity from the state to non-governmental organizations plays an important role in breaking the monopoly of the state's religious discourse, and paves the way for the construction of different Islamic discourses. This situation reflects on the educational system because the regime can no longer control the production and dissemination of particular Islamic discourse in public.

Islamist groups attempt to ensure their own authority over education and texts in accordance with their particular Islamic discourses. By doing this, they lay claim to an authority that is independent from the state for interpreting Islamic scriptures and transmitting Islamic culture, which undermines "one of the basic foundations of the state's moral legitimacy: its protection of the Islamic heritage, including the responsibility to provide children and youths with trustworthy religious guidance" (Starrett, 1998: 5). In many pre-university educational institutions (public schools and private Islamic school), the Muslim Brotherhood seems to have the upper hand. During my interviews with secularist people, they recounted that public school teachers urge parents to force their

daughters to wear *hijab*, and these interviewees warned that religious education on the practical level serves as an instrument of indoctrination, and recruitment into the Islamist movement.

The clashes between the state and the Islamic civil networks increase the current dissonance between the public and governmental authorities. Carrie Rosefsky Wickham claims that "within the interstices of authoritarian system, Islamist activists thus have developed an alternative domain in which new values are being cultivated and new styles of participation are being forged" (Wickham, 1994: 508).

This clash reproduces the authoritarian aspects of the Egyptian regime and the rupture between the state and people in the educational system. In the official statement about the principles and targets of the Egyptian educational system, the Ministry of Education posits the issue of education as a matter of national security. Islamic terrorism and extremism in Egypt reached its height in the 1990s, and at that time, the Minister of Education, Kemal Bahaeddin, accused Islamic fundamentalists of planning to seize power by exploiting educational institutions to implant extremist thoughts in the young. He also claimed that the attacks on tourists and assassinations of police were often the work of Islamist teachers and students. Then, the Egyptian Ministry of Education embarked on destroying books, tapes and other items which allegedly promoted Islamic extremism. By October 1994, the Ministry destroyed more than 12 million books and tapes (Cook, 2000b: 36-37). During this process, the load and content of the official curriculum of the religious class at all levels was lightened, and some subjects were taken out completely on the same pretext. "Thousands of privately-run mosques are being taken over by the state… [and] Islamist-leaning school teachers were purged from the educational system" (Hammond, 1998: 14).

In 1994, the Minister imposed a second and more controversial attempt to limit the prevalence in school of the much more popular *hijab* on the ground that

it was a form of political symbolism of fundamentalism[28]; but this attempt triggered an immediate and fierce response from the general public. All these moves by the government against Islamists aggravated a sensitive public nerve. The issues of religious legitimacy and political authority are at the heart of a dilemma faced today in Egypt, for Egyptian people, most of whom support Islamism, see those attempts as an assault on Islam, which is viewed as central to the Egyptian cultural identity and integrity. In the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, this tension turns out to be a power struggle between the state and Islamist circles who aim to build a *true Islamic society* by overthrowing the Mubarak regime.

Islamic awakening has brought about a particular urgency on the government's behalf to rearrange their Islamic religious education program. In doing this, Islamic instruction as a part of moral education has again been reproduced by the state. However, as Starrett argues, the government's consistent utilization of Islam for gathering mass political support has been a crucial factor in sustaining and deepening the influence of Islam as the core of politics. However, it created a convenient climate for Muslim fundamentalist movements, because Islamic symbols and values, though presented from a different perspective, are used again to curb religious extremism. As Starrett argues, the abundance of religious messages and symbols pave the way for the rise of Islamism. One of the officially-stated aims of the secondary education in Egypt is to instill students with the belief in God and to teach them how to be proud of Islam while maintaining a respect for other belief systems and also avoiding bigotry and extremism. However, I think the argument suggesting the abundance of religious messages in the public sphere as the major cause of apparent Islamism at schools and universities does not suffice to explain the emergence of alternative Islamist discourses. The current political framework in which schools operate affects the formation of various alternative Islamist discourses to the

[28] When Islamist activities began to threaten Sadat, a presidential decree in 1979 –two years before his assassination- made Islamist groups illegal on university campuses and banned the wearing of clothing or beards symbolizing religious identity and support.

extent that certain issues reflect on Islamist discourses about education. These issues include the clash between the authoritarian Mubarak regime and Islamic NGOs, the identity politics influenced by anti-Western and anti-colonial sentiments, and the globalization of information and the market. Actually, it is this political framework which not only functions as the engine of the ideological clash between the state and Islamist discourses, but also creates unpredictable and controversial perceptions and discourses within Islamist groups. Al-Azhar and private Islamic schools appear to be the hotbeds of the power struggle, in which both ideological clash and controversial discourses/identities among Islamists are crystallized.

# CHAPTER 5

## UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF EGYPTIAN MASS EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

In this chapter, I intend to discuss the clash and struggle between the state and Islamists within the context of the mass educational institutions of Egypt. Mass education has been unpredictable, and has had unintended political and cultural results. Herrera argues that:

> Scholars have overwhelmingly been guided by macro or statist approaches in which omnipotent states orchestrate and efficiently control all educational action… [They] overlook the agency of non-governmental, unofficial, or local actors in promoting change… [Moreover], such studies, which regard educational activity as essentially state driven, overlook… [the] effects of civil society, namely, the local appropriations of schooling (Herrera, 2004: 324-325).

Mass education is intended to provide a mass mobilization, but in Egyptian case, it has not yet followed a desirable course for the state, and has caused unintended consequences.

Al-Azhar and private Islamic schools are the primary Islamic alternative to the state public schools. These Islamic schools are the places in which an unintended socialization process occurs by inculcating different values and norms, and providing different identities. As I mentioned above, the inherent political framework of Egypt, which has a great impact on the formation of alternative ideological discourses, is conducive to the proliferation of dissident Islamic schools within the body of the mass educational system in Egypt.

As Cook argues, the "development of education –and the means by which it is delivered– results from the persistent struggle among competing social groups seeking dominance or influence" (Cook, 2001: 408). He continues that Islam has become a language in which cultural and political battles are fought, and as a result, different and alternative educational areas emerge, competing with the governmental mass educational institutions. Private Islamic schools and Al-Azhar schools are two of the major alternative forms of the mass education taking precedence over curricular religious education.

### 5.1. Private Islamic Schools (PIS)

In Egypt, private Islamic schools, which numbered approximately two hundred by 1996, started to be established in the 1970s with the rise of Islamism in order to provide religious socialization for modern, urban Muslim youth (Herrera, 2001: 226). There are primary, preparatory and secondary stages in PIS. At each level, certain religious elements and courses are incorporated into the curriculum. PIS either add extra religious courses (mainly the Qur'anic studies) to the curriculum or integrate Islamic elements to the standard courses to render their education more Islamic. Various PIS exhibit a variety of ways of integrating Islamic courses and elements. However, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, PIS are required by law to follow the same curriculum and system of examinations as any other private and public schools. PIS, like the other private schools, are not allowed to use alternative textbooks and other educational materials without the official permission of the Ministry.[29]

However, attention to the hidden curriculum seems so important in the socialization of the students in these schools. Herrera gives an example in her article about Islamic schools to reveal how teachers find ways of giving an Islamic color to modern scientific education. In science class, students are taught that

[29] The only exception is foreign (American, British or German) schools.

plants need not only water, air, sun and soil, but also need Allah's care (Herrera, 2001: 231).

Interviewee number 19 (a secularist) said that:

> Rich Islamists send their children to these schools. The Muslim Brotherhood is predominant in these schools; and the personnel and students of these schools are active participants in the Brotherhood. These schools are affiliated to the Ministry of Education, and follow the official curricula; but in effect, the environment in these schools is quite different. Women wear *hijab*; extra religious courses are mastered by the students; the competitions of memorizing the Qur'an are held by the school staff; religious prohibitions, sins and the devil are continuously imposed and instilled into the minds of children.

PIS present a strong Islamic atmosphere and inculcate particular Islamic moral values and norms into their students, and thus constitute an Islamic moral landscape that is alternative to the public schools. Daun argues that "[f]or the majority of Muslims, learning Islamic moral training is important… and if they feel that Islam does not have a proper place in the state-run schools, they enroll their children in non-formal and civil sphere Islamic arrangements for moral training" (Daun and et al., 2004: 16). It is claimed that one of the main targets of the moral training in PIS is to protect Muslim children from the ills of secularism and materialism. As I mentioned before, the state and Islamist discourses on religious morality differ to a large degree, and this difference in perception of religious morality is institutionalized in the case of PIS. Herrera relays that:

> Alternative religious anthem to the national anthem, the overt subverting of national symbols, the distinctively Islamic way of greeting and exhalations, the incorporation of religious rituals into the school day, the religiously justified institutionalization of gender inequality, and the overt expression of political dissident are all characteristics that make it [PIS] distinct and set it [PIS] apart from other schools and point to an alternative education. (Herrera, 2000: 128)

This duality between the state public schools and PIS needed to be scrutinized in the political context of Egypt. The moral landscape has become a battleground between the Mubarak regime and alternative Islamist groups not only on a discursive level, but also on an institutional level. As a part of Islamic NGOs, PIS seem to have a considerable impact on the complex formation of *Egyptian Muslim* identity, the course of *Da'wah* and *Jihad* of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the maintenance of the legitimacy of the Mubarak regime. In the 1990s, when Islamic extremism and terrorist attacks reached their peak, PIS began to be considered as the cradle of Islamic extremism and terrorism. While the Minister of Education, Kemal Bahaeddin, brought PIS under strict surveillance of the government, he waged war against the entire phenomenon of the Islamization of education in Egypt. *National security* now is defined by the Mubarak regime as the main objective of the Egyptian mass education (see the Chapter IV), and PIS are seen as a serious threat to the country's national security. Now, the role of schools is asserted to protect the national youth from extremist and terrorist thoughts and elements (Herrera, 2000).

An example of the Ministry's policies towards PIS to suppress them is the decree banning *hijab* as school uniform. Herrera recounts that when the Ministry of Education banned *hijab* as a part of school dress, many students in PIS, who had not been wearing hijab, started to cover their heads. They perceived this attempt of government onslaught on Islam, and protested it by not letting governmental inspectors get into the schools and by filing lawsuits against the government (Herrera, 2000). Hence, this perception strengthened the radical Islamist identity and discourse among the female students in PIS. My secularist interviewees claimed that in PIS, the Egyptian government is charged with apostasy.

Another interesting issue in the case of PIS is the Saudi contribution to the foundation and operation of PIS. Interviewees number 19 and number 25 drew my attention to this issue in Cairo. Interviewee number 19 said that:

> Islamic schools are private schools, and built by the Saudi Arabian money. Saudi Arabian flag is hung on the walls of these schools instead of Egyptian flag, because they accuse the Egyptian state of being infidel.

Herrera also points to the Saudi flags hung on the walls of school buildings. Several times in her thesis, she denotes the Saudi connections in the foundation and funding of PIS. The majority of PIS are founded by Egyptians who earned large incomes by working in Saudi Arabia. While PIS have indeterminate links with Saudi Arabia, where a rigid, orthodox understanding of Islam (Wahabbism) is prevalent, they are also connected to the cultural and economic channels of the West to a large extent that there are Private Islamic English Language schools (PIELS) for the education of elite Muslim children.

PIELS charge very high fees, and provide not only an Islamic moral landscape, but also an elite socialization peculiar to the upper class strata of Egypt. Many rich Islamists prefer to send their children to neither PIS nor foreign or Catholic, but to PIELS. PIELS aim to provide modern scientific education and a strong sense of Islamic morality at the same time. Actually, these schools are established as an alternative to the foreign and Catholic schools –the best schools of Egypt in teaching foreign language and secular knowledge– and to Al-Azhar schools.[30]

The students of PIELS are exposed to Western culture more than the students in PIS and Al-Azhar schools. PIELS present a relatively Western, English-speaking environment to their students from the upper class strata that has extended cultural and economic relations with the Western countries. On the other hand, the Qur'anic studies and Islamic moral inculcation are central to PIELS as well. The issue of PIS and PIELS take place as appropriate cases on which the similar debates and arguments given in the previous Chapter under the subtitle of *Alternative Islamist Educational Discourses* can be furthered. Within

[30] Al-Azhar schools are seen as the best schools in teaching Islam, while the worst in modern scientific education. I discuss Al-Azhar schools in the next section.

the volatile political framework of Egypt, the issue of PIS and PIELS illustrate the complex ways of producing and articulating of Islamic values, identities and discourses.

## 5.2. Al-Azhar Schools: Combination of Islamic and Modern Sciences

In the tenth-century, when a Shi'i caliphate, the Fatimids, was established in Egypt, their rival caliphs claimed descent from the Prophet, and fortified their claim through a well-planned state-driven education. Al-Azhar was built as an intellectual center (quasi mosque-university) for the production and dissemination of Isma'ili understanding of Islam (Tibawi, 1972: 85).

In the nineteenth century, the study at Al-Azhar was not regulated by law until the time of Khedive Ismail (Williams, 1939: 60). Abduh regarded most of Al-Azhar teachers as too conservative and the range of studies pursued too narrow (Tibawi, 1972: 76), and boldly expressed that "Al-Azhar might be merged into the general educational system –as the center of Islamic education– instead of remaining a curious enclave or museum of Islamic medievalism" (Rahman, 1982: 66). In 1887, a government-inspired inquiry for integrating such sciences as mathematics, astronomy, physics and chemistry into the curriculum in Al-Azhar to be able to compete with the Western nations was put forward. The sheikh of Al-Azhar at that time, Sheikh Al-Anbabi, affirmed the necessity of learning these sciences, however, he warned that such sciences be seen as instrumental sciences which would not be studied for their own sake but for the benefits that accrue from them for the sake of Islamic community (Rahman, 1982: 67).

As quoted by Cochran in her book, an Al-Azhar sheikh in the early years of the twentieth century explained that the main aim of Al-Azhar trains authorities upon the theology and the sacred law of Islam, jurists and priests of Islam. Both female and male Azharites go out to various towns and rural communities of

Egypt, as well as to other countries, to be expounders of the sacred law covering all matters of daily living (Cochran, 1986: 14-15). On the other hand, in the 1970s Egypt, "people enrolled at Al-Azhar [also] tended to be the children of religious leaders or of farmers and peasants. For them this institution provided practically the only opportunity for occupational mobility and further schooling" (Szyliowicz, 1973: 192).

Today, in the countryside, Al-Azhar schools still appear to work as an agent of mass education, because of the scarcity of secular public schools. Al-Azhar schools are prevalent in rural areas; and with a substantial student population in cities as well, the number of the students enrolled at each level of Al-Azhar schools reaches the highest rates in the mass education of Egypt. Regarding the popularity of Al-Azhar, the financial supports, free accommodation opportunities and schools materials, and scholarships provided by these schools play an important role. For Al-Azhar students, this kind of support is vital when the proportions of poverty and impoverished rural areas in Egypt are taken into consideration.

With its greater educational body and historical omnipresent impact, the influence and power of Al-Azhar has also been sought for justification of state policies by the regimes. The rulers in Egypt regarded Al-Azhar in particular as an important source of legitimacy and power. Nasser attempted to reform Al-Azhar, and his main goal was to undermine the political power of religious leaders and particularly of the Muslim Brotherhood. In the course of the reformation period of Al-Azhar, power was transferred from conservative leaders to government appointees. Al-Azhar is dependent on government patronage today. Through the medium of Al-Azhar sheikhs, it is very useful for the government to ensure the elimination of active religious opposition against the regime. It is also easier for Al-Azhar to rely on government support for its programs and projects, and for monopolizing Islam by using of state channels effectively. A governmental decree of 1994 declared the state recognition of the absolute authority of Al-

Azhar in matters of faith in order to guarantee public order and social morality (Rahman, 1982: 104; Hatina, 2003).

The control of religious schooling supposedly enables the state to monitor, regulate, and prevent the radicalization of Islam. While Al-Azhar was reformed by incorporating modern scientific faculties into the university education under Nasser, it was assumed that studying Islam in modern education would curb the use of religion, so it would not threaten the secular establishment. However, Al-Azhar did not always exhibit loyal attitudes in its relation to the regimes. When the conservatives and Azharites prevented the reform attempts towards Al-Azhar, the Egyptian parliament reacted by discriminating against its graduates seeking official positions and by refusing to provide funds for the school. It was disastrous for Al-Azhar. Its influence diminished, and the position of students and teachers deteriorated (Szyliowicz , 1973: 192). Today, Al-Azhar graduates are not allowed to enter any faculty at public universities. Some of them now come to teach Arabic and religious courses at public schools. Al-Azhar has a broad educational system and network. The students graduated from Al-Azhar secondary schools pursue their higher education, at least, in modern scientific departments at Al-Azhar University. Furthermore, Al-Azhar has its own higher institutes for training its own teachers to be employed in Al-Azhar kindergarten, primary and secondary schools.

In spite of these restraining attempts by the Egyptian regimes, the student population of Al-Azhar schools has been growing disproportionately. Between 1981-1987, for example, while the enrollment in arts and humanities faculties at Egyptian universities increased by a total of 8.2 percent overall, the number of students in the Faculty of Islamic Law at Al-Azhar increased by 42 percent, and the enrollment at the Faculty of Theology increased by slightly more than 70 percent (Starrett, 1998: 90-91). More recent statistical data concerning the Al-Azhar schools are as follows: 1) As the number of general primary education classes increased by 5.5% in 01/2002 compared with 94/95, the percentage of Al-Azhar primary classes (first six-year period) increased by 19.2%; 2) As the

number of general preparatory classes increased (three-year period –*ortaokul* in Turkish terms) by 22.8% in 01/2002 compared with 94/95 (respectively the total number of enrolled students in the two different schooling years in general prep education: 4,393,211 and 3,409,127), it increased by 75.5% (313,265 and 187,326) in Al-Azhar; 3) As the number of general secondary classes increased by 32.1% in 01/2002 compared with 94/95 (1,162,879 and 844,358), the number of classes in Al-Azhar increased by 58.9% (279,969 and 168,830).[31]

Al-Azhar schools are not affiliated to the Ministry of Education, but are directly affiliated to the Prime Ministry in Egypt. Being integrated with the power and state apparatus in Egypt, Al-Azhar has apparently become the representative and producer of a particular single Islamic knowledge and identity in Egypt.[32] As a result, Al-Azhar schools are seen as a kind of state agent or representative of the state-formatted Islam, which particular Islamic groups renounce as anti-Islamic. These groups do no regard the Al-Azhar sheikhs as an Islamic authority, and they even assert that the prayer practiced behind an *imam* from Al-Azhar is not valid before God. Al-Attas claims that the main goal of education in Islam is to produce *good* man as an individual, not to produce good citizens. When the education of *tarbiyah* is transferred to state, there is a danger that education becomes a secular exercise; because state education is naturally governed by utilitarian principles such as producing *good* citizens (Al-Attas, 1985: 184-190).

Despite these reservations about Al-Azhar among radical Islamists, Al-Azhar maintains its traditional position as a center of Islamic learning in the eyes of many Egyptians, while still retaining traditional methods of teaching. The curricula of Al-Azhar schools include both Islamic and modern scientific courses. Law No. 49 of 1930 divided education at Al-Azhar into four stages: primary, secondary, higher and specialization (Williams, 1939: 60). There are now

[31] Source is the Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of Education, Statistical Yearbook of 2003.

[32] When thinking of Gellner's conceptualization, it is interesting because, until the nineteenth-century, most of the sheikhs at Al-Azhar had belonged to various Sufi orders in Egypt (Gilsenan, 1973; Johansen, 1996).

kindergarten, primary, preparatory, secondary, and university stages of Al-Azhar schools. The total period of primary and secondary education is 13 years. The secondary education in the Al-Azhar system is divided into two branches: Literature and natural science/mathematics. As I discussed above, it constitutes an alternative and different system than the general educational system in the public education. Furthermore, for the students of Al-Azhar schools who want to pursue a university career, Al-Azhar University is the only available option. Only Muslim students are admitted to Al-Azhar schools. Al-Azhar schools follow the Egyptian official curriculum; but in addition, their students are required to master detailed Islamic knowledge in extra religious courses.

Clearly, Al-Azhar schools constitute a convenient schooling for the education of Islamist students; because, the Islamic atmosphere, the abundance of Islamic values and symbols, and the effect of the Islamic community outside of school play an important role in the socialization of Muslims for Islamic communities. As in the case of PIS, while the organizational structure of Al-Azhar schools, their curriculum and their aims are patterned within the Ministry of Education guidelines, the internal dynamics of these schools is determined by the religious context through informal processes in the classrooms. Teachers are eager to inculcate certain Islamic values beyond the scope of the standard curriculum.

Speaking of the teaching of modern scientific education, my interviewees first defended the myth of Al-Azhar tradition, but as the conversation goes on, they began to elaborate on the problems of Al-Azhar and to regard it as inferior to other schools because of its bad educational quality and strict outdated scholasticism. Al-Azhar schools in general educational quality are the worst schools in Egypt. Educational researchers whom I interviewed said that the most outdated, memorization/examination-based, and authoritarian educational system in Egypt is currently exercised in Al-Azhar schools. For that, none of my interviewees (even radical Islamists) sent, or was thinking of sending their children to Al-Azhar schools.

Most of the people and students with whom I talked said that one of the best sides of Al-Azhar schools is that they teach classical Arabic and Islam very well. As far as I could learn from my interviews and conversations, this idea is quite common among the people. When I asked the interviewees about Al-Azhar, they sensed a substantial sympathy towards Al-Azhar, and, emphasizing its religious character, appeared to respect Al-Azhar because it is the school which best teaches Islam and Arabic. However, all educational researchers, professors, and a graduate of Al-Azhar said that Al-Azhar schools do not teach Islam and Arabic very well at present. In his article, Andrew Hammond claims that in the Al-Azhar system, "it is not until the last year of secondary school, at 16, that pupils are required to know the entire Qur'an" (Hammond, 1998: 13). Interviewee number 25 admitted that "the memorization of the Qur'an was required to pass the secondary schools of Al-Azhar before; but now, many Al-Azhar university graduates do not know the Qur'an completely." Interviewee number 28 said that "although the memorization without understanding is the basic pillar of the methodology of Islamic teaching in Al-Azhar, the students enter exams without even knowing or exactly memorizing the required religious texts." These statements prove to be illuminative to the idea that Al-Azhar has become a myth in the minds of the people who do not have current and detailed information about Al-Azhar schools.

Mahmud views Al-Azhar as a castle which preserves the knowledge of Islamic *shari'ah* and the Arabic language from the Western cultural invasion (Mahmud, no date: 62). However, all my secularist and Islamist –either moderate or radical– interviewees overtly said that Al-Azhar schools lag behind in teaching modern sciences and remain far away from understanding and appropriating new information and technologies of the contemporary era. Islamists criticize Al-Azhar schools for being narrow-minded, outmoded and incapable of using the new possibilities of modernity.

On the other hand, with its students of rural and poor backgrounds and outdated teaching methods and materials, Azharite schools do not seem sufficient

for the Muslim youth to meet the demands of a changing and globalizing society. Some Islamist intellectuals even think that its lacking knowledge of foreign languages and unfamiliarity with Western culture render Al-Azhar schools unable to improve the image of Islam in the West (Herrera, 2001: 229). As Mahmud A. Faksh argues, the Islamist leaders are not traditionalists who are ignorant of the knowledge and practices of modernity in the contemporary era. These leaders are men of today, products of modern education (Faksh, 1997: 26).

The more noteworthy point is the combined teaching of modern scientific education and Islamic scientific education at Al-Azhar schools, especially in the university faculties. At the university stage, there are modern scientific faculties within the body of Al-Azhar University. In 1961, Al-Azhar by law was brought into the national system and its curriculum was radically widened. In addition to the traditional colleges of Islamic and Arabic studies, four new colleges – agriculture, business administration, medicine and engineering– were established. Another innovation was a college of Islamic studies for girls (Tibawi, 1972: 120). Al-Azhar was metamorphosed into a modern institution with new administrators and faculties. Now, the major faculties of Al-Azhar are the following: Jurisprudence and Islamic Law, Theology, Arabic Studies, Business and Administration, Engineering, Agriculture, Medicine, Institute of Languages and Translation, and the Higher Institute of Islamic Studies.

The aim of adding modern-secular faculties to the body of Al-Azhar was to compete with the general-secular educational system, and to train a class of professionals (doctors, engineers, lawyers and teachers) with a solid knowledge of Islam. However, "the fact is that Al-Azhar [still] represents the late medieval body of Islamic thought with certain new and minor modifications" (Rahman, 1982: 99-102). Rahman argues that these reformist changes have brought a kind of *re-formation* (not reformation) that is a reconstruction of the inner nucleus based on rigid Islamic orthodoxy. Too much emphasis on *acquisition of knowledge* –learning static body of knowledge– gives a scholastic and orthodox character to Al-Azhar.

While Al-Azhar maintains the duality between religious and secular education in the educational system in Egypt, the same duality has emerged in its own body through the opening of scientific faculties. It is here worth examining what kind of a relation there is between Islamic science and modern science. Is there a complementary or an opposite relation between *spiritual-Islamic sciences* and *material-Western sciences*? Despite his criticism about the reformation of Al-Azhar, Rahman suggests that the introduction of secular law into the Faculty of Shari'ah in Al-Azhar is an encouraging development for the reformation of Al-Azhar; because in addition to producing lawyers who combine knowledge of both kinds of law, it will be conducive to an integration or synthesis of the two traditions (Rahman, 1982: 103-104). Interviewee number 8 said that "there is no integration between religion and science in Al-Azhar schools. You can not link biology and Islam to each other. They are taught separately. Biology is taught as biology in Al-Azhar schools." On the contrary, interviewee number 16 admitted that teachers bias the scientific education. While they skip some subjects which they find anti-Islamic, the superiority over scientific knowledge and encompassing character of Islamic tradition are stressed. She herself said that "science must have its limits. Philosophy for example may be dangerous." She continued that:

> There is no contradiction or competition at all between religion and secular studies in Al-Azhar. On the one hand, secular sciences are considered complimentary, and do not casually impose Western values especially if you are educated in Al-Azhar. On the other hand, the sheikh of Al-Azhar chooses the books and somewhat adjusts the curriculum taught in Al-Azhar schools. Actually, there is no complete secular education in Al-Azhar schools. In classes, some points which are not contradictory with Islam are chosen and emphasized by teachers so as to complement Islamic ideas.

While modern secular sciences are perceived as *complementary*, Islamic scientific education seems to focus on the issue of morality among Azharite students and staff. Interestingly, the issue of the moral education in the form of Islamic education comes to be the crucial point in the reconciliation of Islamic and modern scientific education. Interviewee number 5, who majored on comparative law in Al-Azhar, said that:

> There are Islamic courses in addition to the scientific courses in the faculties in Al-Azhar University. The main aim is to train doctors and engineers who also know Islam and especially Islamic morality very well. For example, a civil engineer, having graduated from Al-Azhar, does not build toilets and bathrooms directed to the Mecca (*kabe*) in a flat, because Muslims pray standing towards Mecca.

This formula materialized in Al-Azhar schools is proposed to be exercised in all public schools and universities among moderate and radical Islamists in Egypt. Interviewee number 15, who is a radical Islamist, said that "the idea of training professionals who also know Islam very well is very good. For example, during a liver transplantation, a doctor should know how to do it in an Islamic way." Furthermore, interviewee number 25 said that:

> Egyptian society is undergoing a moral decadence. Now, the educational system in Al-Azhar is not very good. However, if students would take good and sufficient Islamic education beside scientific courses in Al-Azhar University, they would not cheat people in hospitals, building constructions and the like; because, they would know Islam very well, and would have a fear of God.

Osman Bakar, an Islamist scholar, defines the physician as a man of virtuous character who must combine scientific acumen with moral qualities, and whose intellectual power is never divorced from deep religious faith and reliance upon God (Bakar, 1999: 109).

In this Islamist perception about education, modern science and technology become an obsession as the sole indicator of human progress and development; and this obsession brings about the decline of moral and spiritual values. Consequently, science and technology are misused, and pave the way for the economic exploitation by the rich against the poor, destruction of the environment, false ideologies such as atheism and materialism, and the like. That's why the intervention of spirituality and ethics are urgently needed (Bakar, 1999: 229-236).

It can be seen how so-called traditional Islamic education is reproduced in the framework of modern secular education though moral education in the contemporary era. Beyond the training of the *ulama* and *alims* of Islam, the major benefit of Al-Azhar schools is claimed to disseminate Islamic culture, morality and virtues in all fields of social life, and to strengthen the moral character of society. Without building a moral character first and foremost, there is little hope for an Islamic society. The highly significant mission of Al-Azhar schools is claimed to train Muslim engineers, Muslim doctors, Muslim managers, Muslim father, Muslim neighbors and Muslim friends.

When I considered Al-Azhar schools within the political framework of Egypt, I first posed the following question: are Al-Azhar schools the educational institutions that train scientifically-minded and learned men of religion, or a breeding-ground for a radical-militant Islam that might undermine the political regime and purge the Western elements in Egypt, or be alternative channels of upward mobility for the children of conservative and religious-minded rural and poor people? It is debatable whether or not Al-Azhar schools are the breeding-ground for the Islamic fundamentalist. Except for interviewee number 19, none of my interviewees accused Al-Azhar of being fundamentalist or terrorist. Actually, they said that the essential Islamist threat towards the regime comes from the non-governmental and PIS, not from Azharite schools.

However, I do not think it is scientifically correct to see PIS and Al-Azhar schools as the sheer cradle of production of Islamic radicals, but the more important point is that these schools provide the best alternative to public secular

education for the parents[33] who do not want their children to internalize secular and anti-Islamic Western values, and who want to bring up them according to Islamic principles. Over the years, PIS and Al-Azhar schools have developed into a parallel educational system for all those who do not want their children to pass through the secular education system. Through these Islamic schools, parents intend to create an educational safe environment, an Islamic moral landscape, insulated from the ills of so-called secular society, and expect to see their children fully prepared to defend their Islamist beliefs and way of lives when they graduate.[34]

This moral character is intended to be built conceptually against the Western and secular values and symbols, or political ideologies. Because of the moral deficiency, i.e. *jahiliyya*, people become captive of secular and materialist Western culture. In this sense, it seems impossible to speak of any *integration* between the secular and religious, but rather, a kind of *negation*, in which the sacred refutes and even condemns the profane. Interviewee number 5 said that:

> While I was majoring on comparative Islamic law in Al-Azhar University, we used to follow this method in classes: first, we read modern law; then, professors taught us the deficiencies of modern law according to Islam; and at the end, they expected us to learn Islamic law and its superiority over modern law very well.

The content and methodology of Islamic knowledge taught at Al-Azhar seem to view secular sciences as challenges towards Islam from the West. While secular sciences are perceived as inferior to Islamic sciences, Islamic elements are integrated into the curriculum of secular sciences to protect Islamic

[33] On the other hand, many parents are compelled to send their children to Al-Azhar schools because they can not afford any other.

[34] The influence of Al-Azhar in this sense is reaching far beyond Egyptian borders. It frequently sends out personnel for work abroad. Interviewee number 9 has been in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States to work for years. He said that "the Gulf States prefer to employ Al-Azhar graduates in their countries because of their substantial Islamic knowledge and strong Islamic morality."

knowledge, culture and Muslim professionals from the ills and attacks of secular Western culture.

This perception is also embedded in the political discourse at Al-Azhar schools. There is a common political comment that the Western powers, the USA in particular, carry on an onslaught against Al-Azhar and the Muslim identity of Egypt. This argument implies a strong link between Azharite educational system and the protection and preservation of Egyptian Muslim identity. "There recurs a subject in the Al-Azhar curriculum titled 'defense of the Qur'an against Western attacks'" (Rahman, 1982: 103). Rahman argues that it is interesting because there is not much doubt cast on the authenticity of the Qur'an by Western scholars. Indeed, certain early Shi'i views might be much more dangerous on this issue.

Anti-Western sentiments and a search for authentic Muslim identity appear to be an indispensable part of the education at Al-Azhar schools. The developments in global Islamism, the reproduction and dissemination of the issues of Al-Qaida, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the American occupation in Iraq all buttress the Islamist stance against the intervention of the Western, secular cultural thoughts.The Islamic discourse that refutes the secular influence in Egypt's educational system is a reflection of the general Islamist quest for an authentic religious identity in the whole Muslim world. Referring to Dilthey, Al-Faruqi argues that "the humanistic studies of Western man and the social analyses of Western society by a Western scientist are necessarily 'Western' and can not serve as models for the study of Muslims or of their society" (Al-Faruqi, 1981: 11-12). Therefore, the quest for authentic Islamic social and natural science becomes an inevitable and just attempt; because, to study Muslim societies, Islamic-oriented scientific studies are necessary in this sense.

However, what can be said about the main character of a proposed Islamic social and natural science? A common dominant idea is held among the Islamic scholars in the Muslim world, as Al-Faruqi argues, that the human phenomenon does not consist of only *natural* elements, but also moral and spiritual elements – although science treats these as inexistent and irrelevant. Scientific "methodology

remains to this day devoid of tools by which to recognize and deal with the spiritual" (Al-Faruqi, 1981: 11). A human being is a single and unique totality consisting of both material and spiritual sides; so, consistent with this idea, modern scientific teaching should include both material and spiritual, i.e. religious elements within its body in accordance with the *tawhid* notion. On the other hand, regarding the teaching of modern secular sciences and Islamic knowledge together, is it here possible to speak of a parallelism and co-existence in a compartmentalized way? Does the educational system that is heavily influenced by Islamic instructions at particular schools, such as Al-Azhar and PIS, merely function by adding Islamic moral instructions into the secular curriculum?

### 5.3. The Quest for Islamic Sciences: The Purposes for the Islamization of Modern Scientific Education

Al-Faruqi, a prominent Islamist scholar, argues that all learning must reorder itself under the principle of *tawhid*. The Muslim social scientists are the *Ulama* of the *ummah* today. They are the planners of its strategies and designers of its future, the educators of the *Ummah* at large as well of its political, social and economic leadership. Their studies are the *ummatic* sciences, i.e., those disciplines which study human behavior. Muslim learning calls for reclassification of the disciplines: "natural sciences dealing with nature, and *ummatic* sciences dealing with man and society. Both aim at discovering and understanding the divine pattern: one in physical objects, the other in human affairs" (Al-Faruqi, 1981: 16).

Paralleling the rise of Islamism in Egypt, there is a strong tendency to Islamize *secular* education among the public university students and professors. Islamized education and identity are defended as necessary for coping with the political and cultural invasion of the Western world. At that point, it is important to distinguish an issue: should religious education be devoted more time and

given more emphasis in the curriculum so as to teach students *true Islam* and detailed Islamic knowledge, or should the school environment, teachers and students be more Islamic to balance the secular impact of modern sciences, or should the whole corpus taught and methods applied at schools and universities be Islamized? Regarding the first issue, most of my interviewees emphasized the necessity of religious course in mass schooling. The second can be put into words namely as the structural re-formation of the modern educational system such as that after the coup led by General Zia-ul-Haq of 1977 in Pakistan, where the military government declared a number of important changes in order to Islamize society and educational system as well. These included the imposition of chador for female students, "the introduction of *nazra* Qur'an (reading of the Qur'an) as a matriculation requirement, an alteration of the definition of literacy to mean religious knowledge, elevation of *maktab* schools to the status of regular schools and the recognition of *madrasas* certificates as equivalent to master's degrees" (Hoodbhoy, 1991: 37).

Liberal, secular educational theorists' primary criticism of Islamic educational theory has been its rigid absolutist posture on truth that there is only one possible solution or answer to any problem. Such a dogmatic position can only breed intolerance toward other religious or nonreligious ideologies. If schools seek to initiate students into a particular Islamic conception of the world with the intention of committing them to those beliefs, this is not education, according to secularists, but indoctrination. Accordingly, Al-Attas defines education as a process of instilling something into human beings (Al-Attas, 1985: 173).

Not many people in Egypt share such secularist reservations, but is it possible not to speak of any mutual permeation between them? When I posed several questions about this issue, the most of the interviewees could not suggest a coherent explanation about what the Islamization of knowledge and of education is. Some argued that there is a parallel system in which there is no

room for interaction between secular and Islamic education, or between secular and Islamic knowledge in Al-Azhar schools.

This suggested dichotomy does not diminish the reality of the existence of a contrasting, sometimes bolstering, relation between them. On the other hand, this relationship may turn out to be a struggle of Islamist discourse in order to carve out room for Islamic science or indoctrination in the secular and temporal world. Al-Azmeh talks about Husayn al-Jisr who assumes that religion can not produce what can be refuted rationally and scientifically. For instance, he adopted a scientific interpretation of miracles such as "relying on the chemical transformation of air into water to explain the prophet's miracle of giving some of his followers water to drink from his finger" (Al-Azmeh, 1993: 120). Abdullah Omar Nasseef claims that according to the Qur'an, "there is no conflict between faith and man's knowledge of the universe and his use of this knowledge for good" (Al-Faruqi, 1981: 145). Whenever a Muslim scholar's findings and analyses come into conflict with fundamental assumptions stated in the Qur'an, it means that they have not yet found complete and sufficient data, and that is why they are unable to reach a conclusion coherent with the Qur'anic statements.

From this perspective, "scientific research, particularly from foreign countries or international agencies, is cited to show that secularists are finally discovering those truths that Muslim has known all along" (Al-Faruqi, 1981: 146-147). Therefore, there is no need to prove that all scientific theories can be found in the Qur'an, because they are tentative. However, Muslim scientists are sometimes warned to abstain from interpreting the Qur'an through secular theory and assumption (Al-Faruqi, 1981: 146-147). Said Halim warned that religion had been an obstacle to the progress of science in the West because of an inherent contradiction between Christianity and modern science. However, Said Halim thinks that "the situation was different in Islam because, being a 'rational' religion, Islam enjoined science; it did not regard science as inimical to faith" (Berkes, 1998: 352).

It is here crucial to avoid the pitfall of implying that secular knowledge is inseparable from secularism. Starrett gives an example in the textbooks that in the case of ablution (*wudu'*), the ritual purity of the *wudu'* is equated with the physical purity of a secular bath. So that the sacred requirement of ablution is functionalized, implying that the reason for the prescription is its presumed effect on health and well-being, rather than to mark a separation between sacred and profane. Furthermore, this notion of cleanliness is stressed "both as a contributor to individual health and a token of social progress" (Starrett, 1998: 152).

However, when we tackle the third type of Islamization of the educational system, the idea of denunciation of any secular method or knowledge comes to the agenda, which has generated an Islamic intellectual orientation that poses ontological and epistemological debates on the necessity of an *Islamic history*, *Islamic sociology*, *Islamic medicine*, or of *Islamic linguistic sciences*. Al-Attas asserts that each branch of rational, philosophical and intellectual sciences must be isolated from secular elements, and imbued with Islamic elements. This process is the Islamization of education "which means the deliverance of knowledge from its interpretations based on secular ideology and from the meanings and expressions of the secular" (Al-Attas, 1985: 203). Sayyid Qutb also denounces the efforts of Muslim scholars to reconcile revelation and reason (Akhavi, 1994: 134-135). S. H. Nasr says that "modern science is a cancer which is today steadily eating away the marrow of the Islamic faith" (Hoodbhoy, 1991: 69).

Islamist scholars propose that every scientific branch must be related to the Qur'anic precepts. Osman Bakar and some other Islamists suggest the works on biology, mathematic and physics of the medieval Muslim physicians over centuries as Islamic sciences, because they were based upon the principle of *tawhid*; the knowledge of *tawhid* was held to be highest form of knowledge by the Islamic thinkers such as Ibn-i Sina, Farabi and Gazali (Bakar, 1999: 61-62).[35]

[35] However, surprisingly, Ghazzali, one of the most popular idols of Islamists in Islamic intellectual history, denounced the Muslim scholars who followed Aristotle, and declared that Muslims must reckon as unbelievers the Muslim philosophers such as Ibn-i Sina, al-Farabi and

Osman Bakar and some Islamist scholars come up with certain suggestions linking the modern/secular life style and many of the modern diseases such as obesity, AIDS, a heart attack and a stroke. Therefore, the Islamic life style may be viewed as a form of preventive medicine with respect to the various rules of *shari'ah* concerning ritual cleanliness, food and drinks, sex and life. He says that Muslim physicians specifically discussed and wrote medical and scientific justification for the prohibition of pork and alcoholic drinks (Bakar, 1999: 115-117). Abdul Hamid al-Hashimi argues that Muslim psychologist is bound to assume moral judgments in their psychic analyses, because behavior is always either good or bad according to Islamic values (Al-Hashimi, 1981: 60). The Institute for Policy Studies in Islamabad, which serves as an intellectual center for the *Jamaat-el Islami*, proposed a series of changes to Islamize science and textbooks. These propositions include the idea that the first chapter of a chemistry book should have a title like *The Holy Qur'an and Chemistry*, and every chapter should begin with an appropriate Qur'anic verse or *Hadith*. It is un-Islamic to speak of *Newton's Laws* and *Boyle's Laws*, because it is tantamount to *shirk* (idolatry). Similarly, it is un-Islamic to teach that mixing hydrogen with oxygen automatically produces water. Instead, it should be said that when atoms of hydrogen approach atoms of oxygen, then by the will of God water is produced (Hoodbhoy, 1991: 55).

In his book, *Islam and Science*, Hoodbhoy touches upon some Muslim scientists' efforts in studying such untestable matters in the name of Islamic science as the speed of Heaven, the temperature of Hell, calculation of the quantity of *sawab* (Divine Reward) earned by prayer, the chemical composition of *jinns*, formulae for the calculation of *munafiqat* (hypocrisy), and explanation of the Prophet's Ascension based on the theory of Relativity (Hoodbhoy, 1991: 79, 140-151). For instance, Dr. Mohammed Muttalib, who taught earth sciences at Al-Azhar University in Egypt at that time, presented a paper in a conference in

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others, and their followers because of their transmitting the philosophy that is inimical to Islam. In these philosophers' accounts, Ghazzali claims that the precision and clarity of mathematical demonstrations lead students to forsake belief in Islam (Hoodbhoy, 1991: 104-105).

the late 1980s, claiming that mountains have roots in the earth and saying "Allah made them act like pegs which tether a tent to the ground and keep it from blowing away. Without mountains… the earth's rotation would cause everything simply to fly apart" (Hoodbhoy, 1991: 142).

Dr. Abd al-Fatah Galal, an educational advisor to President Mubarak, says that "I do not believe in an Islamic approach to education. How do you teach chemistry, for example, through an Islamic perspective? Chemistry is chemistry" (Cook, 2001: 398). Interviewee number 19 claimed that:

> Islamic science is absolutely nonsense. We have many problems such as unemployment, bad governance and economy, illiteracy, thousands of young people are now in prison; but instead of solving these problems in a scientific way of the twenty-first century, we take shelter in Islamism. We should separate science from our Islamic values and identity. Otherwise, Islamic conservatism becomes an obstacle in front of the society and educational system, as happens today.

These propositions about the Islamization of modern sciences appear to be groundless and unfitting. However, the important point is this broad network of Islamic intelligentsia, the members of which comes from various Muslim societies (including Egypt), and their radical thoughts and suggestions to render scientific education Islamic on such a grand scale in order to create a genuine and proper Muslim identity and society.

PIS and Al-Azhar schools are the token of Islamic moral education which Islamists articulate as the backbone of Muslim culture and identity. However, in the contemporary era, to pursue the *Da'wah* of building a *true Islamic nation*, Islamists argue the new ways of conceiving, producing and transmitting not only Islamic morality but also secular knowledge. This process distinctively transforms both the Islamic moral landscape and religious educational fields.

# CHAPTER 6

# CONCLUSION

The cultural reproduction of Islam as an ideology and identity by means of education has followed different and unpredictable courses, and the content, methods and goals of the Islamic knowledge and ideology has changed according to the perceptions of different groups and people. Since the rise of Islamism in Egypt, the religious educational transformation of Egypt has been resulting in many unintended consequences. In this study, I tried to analyze the various unintended consequences of this transformation by categorizing them for three interlocutors: for secularist historicism, for the Egyptian state and for me.

I think the major assumption of secularist historicism proves to be incorrect that neither religious meanings and motives nor the significance of the religious education has evaporated in Egypt. Under the influence of the global religious revivalism in the world, Egypt has been witnessing the over-Islamization of the every field of the society. When considering the results of the interviews, the majority of Islamists –either radical or moderate– is conspicuous that their multiple mirror images (not only about the religious education but also other different social issues) have more or less substantial religious –even Islamist– references. The interpretation of these mirror images indicates that the ideological discourses as a constructer of the social reality and a triggering of a social action bear significant Islamist meanings, motives and moods. This provides me tangible information that can be consulted to explain the Islamic revivalism and the proliferation of Islamic schools in Egypt.

I hold the proliferation of Al-Azhar and private Islamic schools as the concretization of the ideological propositions articulated on Islamist discourses. While PIS are growing in city centers, the public schools are staffed by Islamist

teachers. I remark Al-Azhar schools as the most important figure in this sense, which outnumbers the public and private schools by the number of schools, class and students. PIS and Al-Azhar schools are mass educational institutions which follow the same official curriculum and serve at all the stages of mass education (kindergarten, primary, secondary and even university). They provide Islamist values, ideas and identities to their students within an intensive Islamic atmosphere, and aim to prepare the students for the Islamic *Da'wah*. However, in this process, it should not be overlooked that Al-Azhar schools do not charge tuition fee, and Al-Azhar schools provide free accommodation, free meal, free tutoring and free school materials. I think this is the main reason for the growth of Al-Azhar schools.

At this point, I re-criticize secularist historicism that Islamic schools are not backward, primitive or anachronic institutions. In the 1970s, emphasizing the duality between the urban and rural, it was suggested that the remained traditional Islamic education was inherent to the rural. At that time, it was expected that secular/modern education would spread in urban space, and with the migration from villages to cities on a large scale, traditional Islamic education would inevitably have been evicted. However, after the foundation of PIS, beginning from the late 1970s, the situation started to change and, in the 1990s, the student populations of these schools has started to consist of urban and well-educated families on a large scale.

These schools are the virtual products of the Egyptian modernization as a reaction to the *blind* Westernization (in terms of Islamist discourse) of the educational system. The religious and secular, the traditional and modern are combined in the body of these schools in order to constitute alternative educational areas to their counterparts (either public or private) which Islamist discourse accuses of being *un-Islamic* or *non-Islamic*. Islamist discourse which defines Egyptian society as ignorant of *true Islamic knowledge and values* condemns other private and public schools as deficient in terms of teaching Islamic morality. It views the Egyptian mass education, except Al-Azhar schools

and PIS, is insufficient to foster an Islamic identity and community, or inimical to the Islamic character of Egyptian society because of Western and secular content and methods in the mass education.

Al-Azhar schools and PIS teach both modern secular sciences and Islamic sciences together. This combination seems to be controversial, because, at first, I thought that the epistemology of the latter is the product of a rebellion against the former, and the acceptance of one necessarily implies the rejection of the other. Actually, during my conversations and interviews in Egypt, it was rarely expressed that the coexistence of secular and Islamic education is contradictory. In the reality of this combination in Egyptian Islamic schools, modern alternative Islamic schooling also utilizes particular issues in secular curriculum by sacrilizing them, and Islamic education has become urban even metropolitan, modern and sophisticated in its teaching strategies and schooling atmosphere on the other hand. While this situation makes the boundaries between the religious and secular, and the traditional and modern ambiguous, it also paves the way for the emergence of new ways of conceiving, producing and disseminating religious education. In this way, as Islamist discourse articulates, Islamic schools deliver an ideal education on the basis of *tawhid*, and complete secular education by teaching moral instructions. While teaching modern scientific education, they improve the spiritual side of their students by inculcating Islamic morality, and compensate the *ill effects of secularism and materialism*. The major goal of the Islamic schools is to train Muslim doctors, teachers, lawyers, engineers and politicians.

The issue of Islamic moral instruction is the subject of the second unintended consequence. There are different groups such as the state, secularists, moderate and radical Islamists in Egypt, which define Islamic morality in different terms, and this situation reflects on the religious education in mass educational institutions. While secularists do not put any emphasis on religious education, the state tries to dominate the area of public religious discourse by promulgating a particular Islamic ideology and Muslim identity through religious

education. On this state discourse, Islamism is defined as an aberration from the *true Islam*, and as a body of backward, dangerous and fanatic ideas preventing the development of Egypt. However, the reaction of Islamists circles appears to be unintended by the state, because Islamists articulate different Islamic ideologies and Muslim identities on their discourse, and establish their own schools for the socialization of their Muslim students in a different manner from the state education. Islamists define Islamism as an all-encompassing, sacred *da'wah* to build the *true Islamic society*. It is interesting, because the Egyptian regimes beginning from Nasser have been seeking to utilize Islamic teaching for the sake of maintaining their own legitimacy. The result is the power struggle between these two groups to capture the public religious discourse in the arena of religious education to control the moral socialization of Egyptian people. The contesting plurality as an unintended consequence for the state causes a threat to the legitimacy of the Mubarak regime today.

The pluralization as a result of the modernization process in Egypt paved the way for unintended consequences for the state not only in the educational system but also in the whole public sphere, such as the proliferation of Islamic quasi-civil society organizations. Mass literacy and printing, specialized modern mass education, democratic, the republican and liberal institutions and values of political modernity, and capitalist open-market economy all have been following a secularizing course so as to create a pluralized society; and this secularization process broke the all-encompassing impact of traditional Islam on Egyptian society.

However, the result of this process is not the emergence of a secular public sphere, but of an institutional differentiation and specialization which breaks the power of a sole religious hegemony, and creates societal institutions functioning independently from a religious authority in the social reality. The Egyptian state has never had a secular character, and has never embarked upon secularist reforms as was the case in Turkey under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. On the other hand, the response of Islamists (the Muslim Brotherhood in particular) to this

pluralization is different. They have captured or established its own publishing houses, investment companies, educational institutions, political organizations, health clinics and syndicates in order to build an Islamic society immune from the regulations of the Mubarak regime and Western culture.

PIS in particular are a part of these wider and plural Islamic civil networks. However, I think not only the regime, but also Islamist circles are not comfortable with this contesting plurality of religious discourses and institutions. When looking at the radical Islamist discourse and the records of the Muslim Brotherhood, the idea of pluralization on institutional level seems not to reflect on the ideological mindset of radical Islamists. I think in the most of PIS and of Al-Azhar schools, a rigid, scriptural and orthodox understanding of Islamic tradition is promulgated as the single Islamic ideology. The consequent point which should be focused on is the Islamist response, which is institutionally pluralistic but mentally totalitarian, to the modernization process in Egypt. I think that the absence of a prevalent secularist ideology in public sphere, which is currently dominated by either moderate or radical Islamist discourses, hinder the emergence of a pluralistic public ground where each competing group would recognize a legitimate position for the other.

On the other hand, when I started to conduct interviews, I discerned that there are also different and even contesting pluralities within the Islamist discourse itself, and this finding was definitely an unintended consequence for my pre-understanding about the subject matter. In my pre-understanding about Islamists and Islamism, I had actually assumed a single Islamism and Islamist group which I was to call later radical Islamism in the binary categorization of Islamist groups –moderates and radicals. It was unintended for me to figure out that there is a moderate Islamist group which emphasizes the necessity of democratic pluralism. The moderates defend the Western and Christian culture as a part of Egyptian society and identity. The moderates suggest that Muslim Egyptians can share and learn many things from the Western and Christian culture, and proposes a mutual understanding between the Muslims and

Christians in religious education. On the other side, radical Islamist group rejects the Western culture as completely inimical to Egypt and Islamic society. Regarding the West, radicals implicitly or explicitly express a total mirror image, an *other*, or an enemy which is claimed to continuously penetrate into Egyptian society in order to undermine the Islamic culture and Muslim identity of Egypt. The radicals sense that the Coptic Christians are the *traitors* assisting the Western and colonial onslaught from within the society. This picture shows us that there is no single Islamist movement and identity, because among Islamists themselves, it is possible to speak of different perceptions about Islam, Islamism and the West.

This differentiation of the perception reflects on the Islamist discourse about religious education as well. While the moderates put emphasis on the teaching of Islamic morality and sciences to strengthen the Muslim character and identity of Egyptian society, the radicals advocate the purging of all secular and Western elements from the whole educational system, and propose Islamization of not only schools, teachers and students but also modern sciences like medicine, law, international relations and sociology.

There are definitely substantial similarities between two different Islamist discourses, such as the both discourses views the current, state-controlled religious education at public and private foreign schools insufficient in terms of content and methods. They criticize Egyptian society for being ignorant about Islamic knowledge and culture. However, the moderate discourse adopts a more liberal and tolerant stance in the face of Western culture and educational system. Assuming a parallelism or non-integration between modern secular and Islamic sciences, the moderate discourse appears to seek for the new ways of how to improve the religious education. On the other hand, the radical discourse goes beyond the moderates by proposing an all-encompassing society project in which Islamic knowledge is produced and presented as the anti-thesis of Western sciences.

At this point in the course of my field research, I was confounded by the question of who is Islamist in my analytical conceptualization, and what does

*being a better Muslim* means in the emic conceptualization of Islamists? The interviewees from Islamist groups complained about the masses' ignorance of Islamic history, philosophy, different Islamic denominations (*madhabs*) and schools. Professors and graduate students usually complain about that the most of Egyptian people can not understand the Qur'an, and do not know how to read and interpret the Qur'an and *hadiths*, and practice them under the circumstances of contemporary age; which is implied as the main problem of Egyptian society in the road to the Islamization of the country. They emphasized that, there are many uneducated people about religion, but they speak about religion; and people can easily believe them. Without understanding the Qur'an, praying five times, memorizing the Qur'an, or going to mosque are not enough to be a Muslim.

However, one of my informants was an educational expertise in Egypt, and said that "as presented in the official records, the ratio of the illiteracy in Egypt is %20-30, but we think that this ratio reaches 50 percent of the total population above 6-year-old." It means that there are a large number of ignorant people, in this sense, who may supposedly be considered to adopt, consume and articulate general Islamist public products and discourses upon the written materials, including the Qur'an. On the other hand, as I mentioned many times, there is a fact that Islamism is so apparent in Egypt. Many people try to participate in this Islamist wave, and Egyptian people coming from different strata and social class support the *Da'wah* of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Another example for this matter is the elite Muslim schooling. It was much unexpected to find radical Islamists at the AUC (an American University which I had supposed the most secular educational institutions in Egypt). They are the graduates of foreign and Catholic schools, the students of which are exposed to Western culture and values at most when compared to the students of other schools. It is clear that they have a Western life style as a part of secular culture, extended relations with Western countries, and consume the secular products of Western culture. In their Western life-world, I had assumed that elite Muslims

studying at foreign and Catholic schools must have a secularist or even pro-Western world-view, but the research process refuted my assumptions.

I think there is no direct causal relation between being Islamist and knowing Islam, or between being in a Western life-world and having secular or pro-Western thoughts; because, it seems a complex issue that what is meant by being more Islamic or by being educated in a more Islamic fashion. During my field research, I should admit that I could not find satisfying and meaningful causal connections between these dualities. However, then I figure out that what I should seek for may be not meanings, but motives and moods. Not meanings, but particular motives and moods provide Islamists with a particular Islamic world-view, identity and society project. In particular, I find the issue of identity as a catalyst to understand the connection between motives/moods and Islamism in Egypt.

There is an identity crisis that has been precipitated by the sense of the failure of West-oriented Muslim rulers, the sense of being threatened by an *other*, and by the impact of *cultural schizophrenia*. Moreover, the current political and cultural framework of Egypt confounds the identity crisis, because the perception of Egyptians about this framework is based on the perception of the historical process of Egypt –Muhammad Ali Period, the British colonialism, Nasserist modernization, Sadat's open-door policies and Mubarak's oppressive policies on radical Islamist groups. I think this historical process has caused a kind of Westernization in the Islamist way of living, whereas having created a sense of hatred towards the West. It is this mood which has produced an Islamist discourse against the West in different forms such as anti-colonialism, anti-capitalism, and now as being against cultural imperialism. This mood is conducive to the emergence of Islamist motives on Islamist discourse about building a proposed world, such as that this anti-Western reaction has turned into a quest for a more Muslim authentic identity rooted in an Islamic past in the face of the West, and this quest comes to sight as a renewed call in Egypt for building an authentic Islamic society.

Of the above-mentioned stages of the historical process, I think the colonial past of Egypt has a distinctive significance for the understanding these Islamist moods and motives. Colonial practices are often invoked from the depths of the collective memory of Egyptian people especially in order to assert a genuine Muslim identity today. While the British colonialists were exploiting and damaging the country's socio-economic and political conditions as an alien hegemonic rule, the first Islamists movement –*Salafiyya*– grew out of this environment, and asserted their arguments on an anti-colonialist discourse. The Muslim Brotherhood was established in 1928 to fight against the British colonialism in Egypt, and in a short period, the numbers of the members of the Brotherhood was estimated to reach almost a half of million people for this Islamic cause. It is still obvious that the colonial history of Egypt has planted the seeds of hatred among Egyptian people towards Western societies, and also even towards the Ottomans.

The colonial history in the Middle East has rendered the Muslim world politically and culturally more vulnerable to the impact of modernization. This situation stirs up Islamism in the region, which views modernity as a Western and/or colonial encroachment, while denying spatial, temporal and cultural differences. This situation has caused Islamic ideology in Egypt to reproduce itself and construct its identity in the face of a Western *other* by drawing certain dichotomic boundaries between the secular West and Muslim world. The most of the wrathful attitudes of Egyptians towards the Western powers have produced itself on radical Islamist discourse about religious education, and this public discourse has turned into a dominant ideology not only in the alternative mass educational system, but also in public schools to some extent in Egypt.

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