

and legislation to enforce morality. Finally, this work may be more suited to targeting secularists and “liberal” Muslims. Although political Islamists assert the same argument, their motivation may differ. As they are trying to impose shariah within the framework of the modern system, and the author suggests to implement it from the perspective of Islamic criminal law, most probably, they are two sides of the same coin.

Joseph .J. Kaminski, Islam, Liberalism and Ontology: A Critical Reevaluation

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Islam, Liberalism and Ontology: A Critical Reevaluation is an ambitious work that challenges the fundamental direction of the entire debate of reconciling Islam with liberal ideas. Joseph J. Kaminski, an assistant professor of political science at the International University of Sarajevo, presents his core argument in this book, stating that “liberalism - Enlightenment, and Political- and Islam operate on fundamentally different baseline assumptions about the nature and reality of itself. The stark differences regarding the overarching ontology of both discourses make reconciling them very problematic.”

He also criticises the reality that most academic endeavours that juxtapose Islam with the Liberal worldview are predicated on the presumptions that both are compatible from the beginning, which fails to produce a critical dialogue between the two doctrines. In the introductory part, the author includes some remarks on comparative political theory and contemporary debates that inspire his research. He interestingly states that one of his work engages in ‘the more orthodox sources first and then moving on to less orthodox ones’. Thereby, the comparative political effort can make a broad ontological claim on a particular discourse. In other words, Kaminski argues that ‘it makes no sense to base one’s argument about liberalism and or Islam on sources widely seen as overly reformist or outside the mainstream’. The author’s overarching arguments are outlined in nine chapters, including introduction and the conclusion.

Chapters two and three examine the enlightenment roots of liberalism and its so-called modest version of political liberalism. Initially, Kaminski

asserts unequivocally that “modern liberalism’s beginnings clearly lay within the European enlightenment and the western intellectual tradition. Liberal individualism is an inevitable outcome of modern secularism, and secularism, in turn, is a natural result of these enlightenment ideas. The book states that secularism entails contemporary man re-positioning himself in regard to the cosmos, a prioritisation of the individual psyche above the communal, and a new way of understanding science and causality.

The third chapter’s main point is that political liberalism is nothing more than a brainchild of perfectionist liberalism. Political liberalism, as opposed to its perfectionist counterpart, shows its value-neutrality through the idea of public reason. As one of its prominent proponents, Rawls argues that public reason has the capacity to attain an *overlapping consensus* in the public realm, even though engaging in the process may have different perspectives of what constitutes a good life. Nevertheless, Kaminski merely asks what if one’s own religion or belief contradicts public reasoning on a certain subject. Interestingly, in situations of conflict, Rawls stipulates that public rationality overrides individual reasoning. Kaminski says that in this context, political liberalism reflects its exclusivity and reveals its intrinsic link with the larger liberal philosophical paradigm.

In chapter four, the author devotes substantive attention to the subject of how to understand ‘Islam.’ Kaminski outlines his threefold framework for understanding Islam. In this section, he asserts that any understanding of Islam must incorporate the five pillars of Islam, six articles of faith, and canonical Islamic knowledge that has grown over times, as well as how Muslim lived within their integral aspects. Following this secondary level is commentaries and developments by subsequent scholars on the aforementioned canonical discourse. The author accepts that defining an orthodox interpretation of Islam in light of Islam’s broader intellectual tradition is nearly impossible. However, since there were central tenets of Islam that were agreed upon, prior scholars were able to distinguish between who was an innovator and who was an outright disbeliever.

This book makes an important point in comparing Islam’s moral epistemology with liberalism. On the other hand, unlike the independent liberal ethical mind, God is the creator of the cosmos and values, and hence, the scripture or God’s higher authority plays an important role in uncovering the dimensions of ethics in Islam. Kaminski exposes the gap between Islam and Liberalism in articulating individual rights. He claims that on one level, both are concerned about the individual. However, the manner in which these concerns are expressed differs dramatically; Islam is more concerned with the individual’s soul and their spiritual well-being while liberalism does not concern with the intrinsic qualities of man.

The book argues that there may be a common space in which Islam and the liberal framework can coexist without a conflict in regard to public issues.

Yet, there are substantial issues in the philosophical level that would prohibit Islam from accepting liberal demand in terms of how Islam should define its position in addressing the public realm. Here, Kaminski expresses his scepticism that mainstream Islam can be an acceptable option that fits well within the most prevalent Rawlsian argument on '*political and secular-based reasons for justifying what the doctrine supports*' in debating the public affairs. Kaminski is well aware that Islamic or legal ethical judgments would not hesitate to provide reasonable public justifications for its position on public concerns, as 'some of the Islam's legal prescriptions simply cannot be justified via appeals to secular public reason, such as the law of inheritance, prohibition of consumption of alcohol and laws of marriage, etc.'

In terms of legal philosophy, Kaminski emphasises that the liberal paradigm varies from the Islamic counterpart in a few notable aspects. Primarily, the liberal legal tradition concentrates on the issue's legality or 'what is legally right or wrong'. For liberal order, 'a just law is a legal law and questions related to 'the good' are not considered'. Islamic view on legality, on the other hand, transcends the restricted definition and incorporates the ethical and moral implications of the law into its own definition of legality. In that sense, Islamic law is 'expansive'. According to him, the broad character of Islamic legal philosophy is rooted in a cosmological truth that 'justice an openly prescribed need in an Islamic court. While context-specific versions of liberal positive law frequently have their own underlying sources, such as secular constitutions or human-made Bills of Rights, these foundational sources are inherently changeable and susceptible to interpretation.

As opposed to liberalism and its *deep disagreements* with Islamic onto-epistemological assumptions, the book contends that the communitarian framework might be an alternative paradigm in rethinking modern Muslim societies for several reasons. Because communitarian theorists believe that communities can be formed based on shared collective ideas and, they support the ontological claim of social nature of the self, the methodological claim of the importance of social context for moral and political reasoning, and normative claims about the value of community. Hence, the theory provides a flexible area to build a Muslim community based on the Qur'anic worldview.

Finally, an overall exploratory reading of this book generates three critical inputs that transcend the scope of this its study. First, comparative studies among dominant notions should always be founded in well-grounded philosophical architecture, allowing separate ontological underpinnings of ideologies to be extracted. Only then can those ontological assumptions be discussed with their counterparts. Second, this work contributes to healthy and honest discussions among communities and a mutual understanding on a wide array of topics by

promoting the moral values that respect diversity and plurality. Third, by bringing together Western theorists who advocate for an alternative communitarian paradigm to accept his communitarian plan for Muslim societies, Kaminski aims to demonstrate that his work is not just a divisive endeavour that promotes the '*us against them*' narrative. Instead, he intends to promote a new trend of discourses in which the Muslim scholars may critique and learn.