AL-MASĪRĪ'S PERSPECTIVE ON SECULARISM: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

BY

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ABSTRACT

This research carries out a study on al-Masīrī's view on secularism. In fact, al-Masīrī has challenged the traditional proposition that 'secularism' is 'the separation of religion from state', and has deemed it 'simplistic or reductionist'; because, according to him, it overlooks the epistemological as well as the social underpinnings of the term. As such, he suggests a proposition, *in lieu* of the traditional one, that is all-encompassing able to represent all dimensions that are latent in 'secularism' and that have been overlooked consciously and unconsciously by western social scientists. As an antithesis to the traditional proposition, al-Masīrī maintains that secularism is a 'worldview'. Hence, the study examines the grounds on which al-Masīrī's claim rests and the methodology he followed in concluding such a finding. To understand how the term was traditionally perceived, the study presents a brief historical account of secularism and its development in the West and how it found its way to the Muslim world, with special reference to the Arab world. In addition, the study provides a conceptual framework with regard to the mainstream definitions of secularism. As far as al-Masīrī's perceptive on the subject matter is concerned, the study examines his life and thought to know how his thought developed and how this was to affect his view that secularism is a worldview and not only a political process. The study uses a qualitative and library based approach where data is exclusively sought from books and journals. Finally, the study concluded that there are many social phenomena in our Muslim societies that can be described as secularist, nonetheless, we are completely not only unaware of their presence but also involved deeply in it. Therefore, the study suggests that al-Masīrī's view needs to be taught in schools and universities in order to educate our children and the generation to come—the leaders of tomorrow, and make them aware of the epistemological underpinnings that secularism entails so that we can avoid, combat, and uproot them from our Muslim societies.

ملخص البحث

يدرس هذا البحث العلمانيةَ من منظور المسيري. في الواقع، يتحدّى المسيري المقولة السائدة بأنّ العلمانية عبارة عن "فصل الدين عن الدولة" ويعتبرها "اختزالية" إذ إنّ مقولةً كهذه، على حدّ قوله، تتجاهل البعدَ المعرفيِ والاجتماعي الكامن وراء العلمانية. وبناءً عليه، فإنّ المسيري يقترح، بدلَ المقولةِ السائدةِ، مقولةً تتّسِم بالشمول وتستوعب الأبعادَ الأخرى التي تجاهلها، بقصد أو بغير قصد، علماءُ العلوم الاجتماعية في الغرب. فالمسيري، على نقيض تلك المقولة، يذهب إلى أنّ العلمانية تمثّل "رؤية الإنسان للكون". وهكذا، فإنّ الدراسة، التي بين أيدينا، تبحث في الأسس التي اعتمد عليها المسيري في ادّعائه مقولةً جديدةً للعلمانية، كما أنّها تبحث في المنهجية التي اتبعها في الوصول إلى مقولة كهذه. ولفهم كيفَ كان يُنظَر إلى المصطلح في الماضي فإنّ الدراسة تقدّم خلفيةً تاريخية موجزة عن نشأة العلمانية ومراحل تطورها في الغرب من جهة، وكيفَ وجدتْ طريقَها إلى العالم الإسلامي وخصوصاً العالم العربي، من جهة أخرى. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، فالبحث يقدّم إطاراً نظريّاً يتعلّق بالتعريفات السائدة عن العلمانية. وبما أنّ البحث يدور حولَ رؤية المسيري للعلمانية، تتناول الدراسةُ حياتَه وأفكارَه وتطورَها ومدى تأثيرها على مقولته بأنّ العلمانية رؤيةٌ للكون وليستْ مجردَ إجراء سياسي. هذا ويعتمد البحثُ على منهج كيفي استقرائي ومكتبي لجمع وانتقاء المعلومات ذات الصلة بالموضوع الذي نحن في صدده، من بطون الكتب والمجلات. وأخيراً، خلصتِ الدراسةُ إلى أنّ هناك مظاهرَ اجتماعيةً في مجتمعاتنا الإسلامية يمكن وصفها بأنّها علمانية . ومع ذلك فإنّ كثيراً من المسلمين غيرُ مدركين لذلك بل ومنغمسون – بعمق – في غياهب العلمانية . ومن هنا فإنّ الدراسة تقترح أن تكون مقولة المسيري منهاجاً دراسياً يُقرّر على طلاب المدارس والجامعات من أجل تربية أطفالنا وتثقيف الجيل القادم——قادة الغد وإطلاعهم أنّ للعلمانية أسساً معرفية يجب التنبه لها؛ ومن ثم تفاديها ومحاربتها بل واجتثاثها من مجتمعاتنا الإسلامية.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy, Ethics and Contemporary Issue.

……………………………
Idris Salim El Hassan Salim
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy, Ethics and Contemporary Issue.

……………………………
Mohd Kamal Hassan
Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the International Institute for Islamic Thought and Civilization and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy, Ethics and Contemporary Issue.

……………………………
Mahmood Zuhdi Ab. Majid
Dean, International Institute of
Islamic Thought and Civilization

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole or in part for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Boukary Sila

Signature…………………………………   Date…………………

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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To my wife, Mariam, and our three children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The traditional as well as the current literature with regard to secularism revolves around the separation of religion from state or the separation of religious institution from that of state. This literature, therefore, deals with the political dimension of the term, overlooking any other dimensions that the term may imply. ʿAbd al-Wahhab Al-Masīrī (1938-2008), however, suggests that secularism has also epistemological as well as social dimensions that have been either consciously or unconsciously overlooked by social scientists. This study, hence, is an attempt to explore the epistemological and social underpinnings of secularism as perceived by al-Masīrī. In addition, it will investigate how al-Masīrī has construed this perception, and how secularism, epistemologically understood, manifests itself in many aspects of our day to day life.

In fact, as we shall see in chapter five, al-Maṣīrī claims that there are two types of secularism: *al-ʿalmāniyyah al-juzʾiyyah* (partial secularism) and *al-ʿalmāniyyah al-shāmilah* (comprehensive secularism). While the former represents 'political secularism', the latter epitomizes 'epistemological secularism'.[1] He also claims that, though the 'political secularism' is visible and its definition clear-cut and simple, however, he maintains that the 'epistemological secularism' is latent and its definition, therefore, should be complex and all-encompassing.

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[1] Al-Masīrī ʿAbd al-Wahhab, *al-ʿAlmāniyyah al-Juzʾiyyah wa al-ʿAlmāniyyah al-Shāmilah*, (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2008), 26.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

All conventional views and definitions with regard to secularism, in the West and in the Muslim world alike, revolve around "the separation of religion from state". [2] That is to say, they all view the subject at hand as an economic and political matter. In fact, some may regard it as a socio-cultural issue, but the eco-political paradigm is always the dominant one. Secularism so constructed, thereby, is clear and definite and does not express any comprehensiveness. Furthermore, the demarcation set by 'church and state paradigm', between what is worldly or profane and what is religious and sacred suggests that the process of secularization is explicit and identifiable. Al-Masīrī (1938-2008), however, holds a view, fundamentally revolutionary and different from the conventional views; for, he maintains that secularism as defined above and understood is simplistic and reductionist. In other words, he deems the above proposition (church and state paradigm) as a weak explanatory paradigm. He maintains that secularism is a worldview[3], a *weltanschauung*[4]. Thus, it can no longer be regarded as a set of ideas that one can agree or disagree with at whim; it is rather an over-arching phenomenon that is latent in the most innocent cultural products; which constitutes the embedded frame of reference for our conduct in public and in private.

In other words, secularism, according to al-Masīrī, has epistemological underpinnings that have been knowingly or unknowingly left out by social scientists.

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[2] In the Muslim context, there have always been two mainstreams: one that claims Islam is all encompassing system. According to this view Islam was revealed to guide human beings in all aspects of life, including, the social, cultural, and political, in order to achieve welfare in this life and the hereafter. The second trend rejects the previous view and maintains that Islam is solely concerned with the spiritual, inner and moral aspects of human beings, and therefore, cannot be codified as a state law.

[3] Sometimes referred to by the German term *weltanschauung* is first, the collection of beliefs (ideas, images, attitudes, values) that an individual or a group holds about things such as the universe, humankind, God, and the future; second, a comprehensive outlook about life and the universe from which one explains and/or structures relationships and activities. A worldview may be deliberately formulated or adopted, or it may be the result of an unconscious assimilation or conditioning process. It is the general perspective from which one sees and interprets the world.

[4] It is a German term (a worldview) a comprehension of reality as a whole; the overview of a cosmology; a person's all-inclusive conception or perspective of things and life; sometimes given as *Weltansicht*.

Hence, the problem around which this research revolves is the extent to which al-Masīrī's epistemological perception of secularism can explain our social activities. To achieve this, the thesis follows the ensuing questions.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1- What is secularism?

2- What is the historical background of secularism: in the west and in the Muslim world?

3- Who is al-Masīrī: his life and thought?

4- What is secularism as perceived by al-Masīrī?

5- What is the rationale behind al-Masīrī's suggestion for a new definition with regard to secularism, and his rejection of the conventional view on the subject at hand?

6- What are the implications of adoption of secularism?

1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Based on the aforementioned questions, the study aims at:

1- Exploring the theoretical framework of secularism—definitions

2- Reviewing the historical background and the factors that brought secularism into existence

3- Examining the life and thoughts of al-Masīrī

4- Shedding light on al-Masīrī's perspective on secularism

5- Explaining the basis of al-Masīrī's proposition for a new definition and over-arching understanding of secularism that transcends the conventional view based on 'religion-state' paradigm.

6- Understanding the implications of secularism as perceived by al-Masīrī in our social realities, or how it manifests itself in our daily lives, without us being aware of it.

7- Finally, the study hopes the outcomes and conclusions drawn from this research help us understand better the world we live in and be relevant to our political discourse today. It is also our hope that this thesis can be elaborated more into PhD dissertation that will discuss comprehensively areas that this research could not cover with regard to al-Masīrī's view on secularism.

1.4 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This research is a library-based one. That is to say, it depended chiefly on primary and secondary sources: books, articles, journals, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and research internet websites. Furthermore, data was accumulated from the aforementioned sources and analyzed critically to select the material that goes in line with the general guidelines and objectives set forth by this research. For the historical background of secularism, books of history were consulted to trace out when secularism began and the factors that caused it to exist first in the west and then how it found its way into the Muslim world, especially the Arabic-speaking countries. For the theoretical framework and terms, encyclopedias, dictionaries and books such as *The Secular City* will be helpful in defining not only secularism but also philosophical vocabularies that may occur in this research. As for al-Masīrī's life and thought, the research primarily depended on his book *Riḥlatī al-Fikriyyah* (My Intellectual Journey) to account for his intellectual development. For al-Masīrī's perspective on

secularism, this research chiefly relied on his writings and the writings of those who have written on him.

It is worthy of mention that the researcher has taken some practical steps as to generate some pieces of data missing in the aforementioned sources. For instance, it has been mentioned[5] in his *Riḥlatī al-Fikriyyah* and also on his personal website that al-Masīrī came to Malaysia as a visiting professor to International Islamic University Malaysia and delivered series of talks to a board of lecturers in the English Department on how English literature can be taught on the basis of Islamic as well as humanistic perspective. However, when he came, and how long he stayed, all these are missing. Therefore, the researcher wanted to know the answers to these questions, which would have contributed in filling that gap. To this, the researcher has paid a visit to Prof. Ibrahim Zain, now the dean of IRK in his office and was told that al-Masīrī arrived at IIUM sometime around 1996 when IIUM was still in the PJ campus. Prof. Ibrahim Zain also informed the researcher he has personally written a review on al-Masīrī's book entitled *Ishkāliyyah al-Taḥayyuz* (The Problematique of Bias) after his departure. Then he advised the researcher to visit the archives center at IIUM (Al-Ghazali Department at Human Sciences) for more details. The researcher went there just to find that the staff in the archives center at IIUM had no idea whatsoever about al-Masīrī, and the person in charge was just appointed and could not help much. In this situation, the researcher, we know it can be frustrating, visited Prof. Ibrahim Hassan, who confirmed that al-Masīrī came to IIUM around 1996 but he did not know further details about what he came for and how long he spent. However, he told the researcher to contact one of his colleagues, who also taught at IIUM, and who is now in Lebanon, for his colleague has more information about al-Masīrī. However, the

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[5] Al-Masīrī ʿAbd al-Wahhab, *Riḥlatī al-Fikriyyah: Fī al-Budhūr wa al-Judhūr wa al-Thamar: Sīrah Ghayr Dhātiyyah Ghayr Mawdūʿiyyah*, (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2009), 255.

researcher did not have the chance to do so because he was running out of time and needed to summit a first draft on time. Meanwhile, the researcher also emailed al-Masīrī's family to inquire about further information regarding his journey to IIUM and to confirm whether there is a thesis written on al-Masīrī's perspective on secularism, but they did not reply. Later on, the researcher found out through search engines that there is a PhD dissertation written on his thought in general, but in Arabic; from which the researcher has learnt the subject at hand is new and no one has previously written a MA thesis on al-Masīrī's perspective on secularism. One remaining step to be mentioned in this context is that the researcher had to ask some friends going to the Middle East for their holiday to bring back with them some very important books that can neither be found in IIUM Library nor National Library of Malaysia such *al-Masīrī fī ʿUyūn Asdiqāʾih wa Nuqqādih*, and other materials. The researcher has been able to receive some of these materials through his friends directly or through mailing. However, there is one important book entitled *Difāʿ ʿAn al-ʿAlmāniyyah Ḍidd al-Masīrī* (i.e. defending secularism against al-Masiri) by Ḥamad al-Rāshid the researcher could not find, and which could have helped much shed light on some areas related to the subject at hand.

1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of al-Masīrī's view on secularism is by no means a new one. In fact, there have been very few studies on the subject at hand, most of which is either polemic or descriptive and repetitive. Therefore, this thesis is an attempt to critically analyze the nature of his view that secularism is a worldview and the rationale behind him having this new perception, which flies in the face of the conventional view that claims otherwise and reduces it to its economic and political functions, overruling or ignoring

its epistemological as well as social underpinnings. Hence, the following literature will help the researcher, through this study, to answer the questions and materialize the objectives that have been set above. The literature ranges from general materials such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, etc… to specific materials directly related to the subject matter of this study. The following paragraphs will only enumerate materials that have direct connection with the subject at hand.

1- *The Secular City* is a very important book. It accounts for the origins of secularization. In his book, Cox emphasizes that secularization arose first in the so-called Christian West. Therefore, the rise of natural science, of democratic political institutions, and of cultural pluralism—all developments we associate with the west, can hardly be understood without the original impetus of the bible. He also comprehensively and meticulously studies the etymological derivations of the term secular, and then he points out how secularization differs from secularism. To differentiate between secularization and secularism, Cox holds that while the former is included within the inner teachings of the bible the latter is an ideology. Furthermore, he maintains that there are key integral components in biblical faith that form the backbone of secularization: the 'disenchantment of nature', the 'desacralization of politics' and the 'deconsecration of values'. Like al-Masīrī, Cox believes that a significant political change cannot be achieved in societies in which the ruling system is religious. [6] They differ in some aspects but agree in most of their views. Therefore, I think this book will help discover some of the aspects of the subject in question.

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[6] Harvey Cox, *The Secular City*, (New York: Collier Books: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990), 16.

2- *Islam and Secularism* by al-Attas is another book which will contribute immensely in this thesis to shed light on some aspects of secularism. Al-Attas also deals with the root causes that brought secularism to light, and he also discusses the etymological as well as historical aspects of the subject. The most important thing in this book is that the author states out clearly that religion in Islam is completely different from religion in Christianity (i.e. the distorted one). Al-Attas totally rejects secularism and considers it alien to Muslim culture. Interestingly, he emphasizes that the Western concept of religion does not fit into the same way Muslims look at Islam. In other words, he believes that 'religion' in the West is not a revealed one in the true sense of the word as it is the case in Islam. He says that Islam has its own absolute worldview or vision of God, of the universe, of the reality, of man; its own ontological, cosmological, psychological interpretation of reality; its own vision of hereafter. Although he does not clearly state Islam can be codified as a political system, however, this can be understood from his 'general statement' that Islam is worldview. Whereas, al-Masīrī, states that Islam is a worldview, but denies it as a political system. Therefore, it is obvious how this book is relevant to this inquiry because it refers to some aspects underlying the objectives set forth by this thesis. [7]

3- *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*[8] is another work that will be reviewed in this research. The book shows two main streams of thought vis-à-vis secularism in the Arabic-speaking part of the Muslim world with reference

[7] Al-Attas Muhammad Naquib, *Islam and Secularism*, (Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia 1978), 17-20.
[8] A. Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 69.

to Egypt and Lebanon. Furthermore, it focuses on ideas about politics and society during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. One of the two mainstreams is for the restatement of Islamic principles in social as well as political dynamics; and the other is for the separation of religion from political sphere. Therefore, this book is extremely crucial for the sake of this research, because it highlights the historical background and the rationale behind the rise of secularism in this part of the world.

4- Another excellent book is *Judhūr al-ʿIlmāniyyah* by Ahamd Faraj[9]. The book exhibits the historical roots of the conflict between Islam and secularism in Egypt— from the beginning until 1948. In this book, the author tries to set forth the factors that led to the rise of secularism, and how it permeated into Egyptian culture. Similarly, it also discusses how "*ʿAlmaniyyah*" the Arabic word for secularism penetrated into Arabic dictionaries. Therefore, this book will help us understand different factors that gave rise to secularism, including the coming of Napoleon alongside the Egyptologists, and the Christian Arabs etc... It equally points out the reactions of some Muslim figures like Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muhammad Rashīd Riḍā against secularism. In short, it is a very interesting book that can shape some aspects of the subject in question.

5- "Islam and Secularism in the Twenty-First Century" by John Esposito[10] is an article in a book entitled *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*. Esposito observes that the post-Enlightenment inclination to define religion as a system of belief confined to private business, rather than a

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[9] Ahmad Faraj, *Judhūr al-ʿIlmāniyyah*, (Al-Manṣūrah, Egypt: Dār al-Wafā), 1993.
[10] John L. Esposito, "Islam and Secularism in The Twenty-First Century" in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*, edited by Azzam Tamimi and John Esposito (London: Hurts and Company, 2000), 1-12.

worldview and a way of life, has impeded the ability of the west to understand Islam. Esposito here emphasizes that Islam unlike Christianity, cannot be 'compartmentalized'. It is rather a system that combines religion and politics. This is a powerful statement from a non-Muslim writer. Unlike al-Masīrī who categorically denies this duality, Esposito highlights in a number of his writings such as *"Islam and Democracy"*, *"Makers of Contemporary Islam"* etc… that Islam is a potential political power that will dethrone secular based system in the Muslim countries. The relevance of this book to this inquiry is that it focuses on political Islam and how the west has failed to understand that Islam as a religion allows and teaches freedom of expression, freedom of choice, tolerance, coexistence and dialogue with other religious traditions. He does so by giving instances where Muslim parties or movements were democratically and overwhelmingly elected in some Muslim countries but whose votes were confiscated and denied by the secular opponents; which led to bloodletting such as what happened in Algeria and other instances, which clearly demonstrates that Islam is alive as a political force in Muslim societies.

6- "The Origins of Arab Secularism" by Azzam Tamimi[11] is another article. The relevance of this article to the subject at hand is that it traces the roots of secularism in the Muslim world, which is one of the objectives of this research. It also highlights the trends that we have mentioned above – reactions of Muslim scholars vis-à-vis secularism. Most interestingly, this article points out the difference between French *laicisme* and English secularism.

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[11] Azzam Tamimi., "The Origins of Arab Secularism" in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*, edited by Azzam Tamimi and John Esposito (London: Hurts and Company, 2000), 13-28.

7-   Another book, we think it is worthy of mention here, is *al-Islām wa Uṣūl al-Ḥukm* by ʿAli ʿAbd al-Rāziq[12]. The author claims that Islam is a religion that only concerns with spiritual aspects of human being and has nothing to do with state and worldly affairs. In other words, Islam is a private business. Therefore should be separated from religion. This seems to be exactly what al-Masīrī says. This book has been controversial since it came out in 1920s until today. The author challenged the conventional view in the Muslim world that maintains politics is an integral element in Islam. Moreover, he challenged al-Azhar University and the proponents of this view. Hence, this book will help shed light on aspects of the concept of religion and state in Islam.

The previous literature, thought related to the subject at hand, however, deal more with the historical background as well as the theoretical framework of the thesis. However, the following materials are immediately related to al-Masīrī's view on secularism. They will help understand the reactions of other writings on the subject as well.

8-   *Al-Marjiʿ fī al-ʿIlmāniyyah: Haqīqat al-ʿIlmāniyyah wa al-Ṣirāʿ bayna al-'Islāmiyyīn wa al-ʿIlmāniyyīn* by Muhammad Ibrahīm Mabrūk[13] is perhaps the first work that critically analyzes Elmassiri's view on secularism. The author criticizes first the fragmentation of secularism by al-Masīrī into *al-ʿAlmāniyyah al-Juzʼiyyah wa al-ʿAlmāniyyah al-Shāmilah* or partial and

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[12] ʿAli ʿAbd al-Rāziq, *al-Islām wa Usūl al-Ḥukm*, (Egypt: al-Hayʼah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah Li al-Kitāb, 1993), 86.

[13] Muhammad Ibrahīm Mabrūk, *'Almarjiʿ fī al-ʿAlmāniyyah: Haqīqah al-ʿAlmāniyyah wa al-Ṣirāʿ bayna al-'Islāmiyyīn wa al-ʿAlmāniyyīn*, (Alexandria: Maktabah wa Maṭbaʿah al-Ashʿāʿ al-Fanniyyah, 2002), 61-72.

comprehensive secularism[14]. He says that if secularism is a worldview, as al-Masīrī holds it is, how then it can be divided into parts. He also refutes the definition introduced by al-Masīrī with regard to comprehensive secularism whereby he describes al-Masīrī's attempt contradictive to the mainstream one and ambiguous. Mabrūk refers to al-Masīrī's definition as 'not accurate' and not a definition in the strict sense of the word. Moreover, he criticizes al-Masīrī's view that secularism is an ongoing process and develops according to time. For instance, according to al-Masīrī's micro secularism, which is the separation of religion from the state, started with the Renaissance and therefore could not reflect secularism in the modern time. However, comprehensive secularism, which al-Masīrī deems as a comprehensive worldview that is based on rationalist and materialist aspects, is in continuous process. In other words, al-Masīrī sees that the current definition of secularism, the separation of religion from the state (partial secularism) should be replaced by more complex and comprehensive worldview that manifests itself in all aspects of the social reality. Hence, Mabrūk counter argues that what develops is not the concept or the paradigm itself, but the practices on the ground. To substantiate his point, Mabrūk claims that the notion of separation of religion from the state is not an offshoot of the Renaissance; it is rather a product of Greek philosophy. Therefore, secularism cannot be deemed a tempral process brought about by the Renaissance. Mabrūk also makes a very important point with regard to al-Masīrī's statement that "religion

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[14] Al-Masīrī coined these two terms. 'Partial secularism' denotes 'the separation of religion from state and some aspects of public life (the traditional definition of the term secularism). 'comprehensive secularism', however, is a worldview, which does not only denotes 'the separation religion from state and some aspects of public life but at the separation of all values (be they religious, moral, human).

must be separated from the state", he says that it seems that al-Masīrī is mixing up between Islam as a religion and that of other religions; he says that there is no such thing in Islam whereby secular authorities or institutions are separated from religious ones. Here, Mabrūk implies that al-Masīrī's view is not based on systematic study about the concept of religion in Islam. This is in short what Mabrūk has presented as arguments to criticize or deconstruct al-Masīrī's view on secularism.

9- Another work in the area of our discussion is an article entitled *'Ishkāl al-ʿAlmāniyyah fī Fikr al-Masīrī* (the problem of secularism in the view of al-Masīrī) by Ahmad Muhammad al-Daghshī[15], published in al-Bayan journal. The main point in this article revolves around al-Masīrī's statement that partial secularism is something that does not contradict with the principles of Islam. Al-Daghshī concludes that this suggestion by al-Masīrī is a reconciliation process aiming at bringing the secular parties and Islamic parties (or secularists and Islamists) together; and at raising awareness about the importance of coexistence in Egypt.

10- *Difāʿ ʿAn al-ʿAlmāniyyah Ḍidd al-Masiri* (i.e. defending secularism against al-Masiri) by Ḥamd al-Rāshid is a book in which the author strongly criticizes al-Masīrī's view on secularism. He says that al-Masīrī has distorted the very conventional definition of secularism, and that he has mixed up many different concepts and terminologies together. He also describes al-Masīrī's work lacking accuracy and deep analysis of concepts and worldviews. Finally, he questions the fact that al-Masīrī hardly makes

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[15] Ahmad Muhammad al-Daghshī, "Ishkāl al-ʿAlmāniyyah Fī Fikr al-Masīrī: Ru'yah Ukhrā," Majallah al-Bayān, <http://www.albayan.co.uk/MGZarticle.html> (accessed 30 July 2013)

reference to the statements and arguments he puts forward and considers al-Masīri's work non-academic.

To sum up, the literature on the subject at hand ranges between that which deals with the historical background, and that which deals with the theoretical framework and finally that which focuses chiefly on al-Masīrī's view on secularism. Most of these literatures is either polemical or descriptive. Therefore, this study differs from the both approaches because it adopts critical analysis vis-à-vis al-Masīrī's view on secularism. As a result, the major contribution of this thesis is that it is probably, in my knowledge, the first academic work at MA level written in English on the subject, thus, the research can claim to be a value-add to the field of research in general.

1.6 THE ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The study, thus, is designed as follows: introductory chapter whereby the general framework of the whole thesis is presented. This framework includes: introduction, the statement of the problem, scope of the study, methodology, and literature review. Chapter two will present a historical background of how secularism began and what are the factors that caused it to emerge first in the West and how it eventually penetrated into the Muslim world, with special focus on the Arab-speaking countries. Chapter three will deal with the theoretical aspect of the thesis whereby different definitions and interpretations as regards secularism will be presented. Chapter four will focus on al-Masīrī's life and thoughts. Chapter five will concentrate on al-Masīrī's view with regard to secularism and how he formulated the view. Finally, chapter six will disclose the findings of the thesis and recommendations for further considerations. Now, the next chapter will present the historical background of secularism.