Towards New Perspectives on

Ethics in Islam

Casuistry, Contingency, and Ambiguity

Guest editor

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Contents

Introduction

I. Islamic Philosophy and Theology

II. Islamic Jurisprudence

III. Hadith, Quran, and Adab

Contents

Muḥammad ʿAbduh's Notion of Political *Adab*: Ethics as a Virtue of Modern Citizenship in Late 19th Century Khedival Egypt

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Abstract

This paper extends the emphasis on contingency and context in Islamic ethical traditions into the distinctly modern context of late 19th century Khedival Egypt. I draw attention to the way Muḥammad ʿAbduh's engagement with Islamic ethical traditions was shaped by his practice in addressing the broad social and political questions of his context to do with nation-building and political journalism. As a bureaucrat and state publicist, he took pre-modern Islamic ethical concepts into the emerging discursive field of the modern state and the public sphere in Egypt. Looking at a series of newspaper articles for the state newspaper, *al-Waqāʾiʿ al-miṣriyya*, I show how he articulated an ethics of citizenship by defining a modern civic notion of *adab* that he called "political *adab*." He conceived of this *adab* as the answer to the problem of how a unified nation emerges from the condition of "freedom" by which journalists and the reading public at the time were conceptualizing the politics of the ʿUrābī revolution in late 1881. This was a "freedom" of the public sphere that allowed for free speech and the power of public opinion to shape governance. 'Political *adab*' would be the virtue or situational skill, internalized in each participant in the public sphere, that would regulate this freedom, ensuring that it produces unity rather than anarchy. I argue that *adab* here enshrined ʿAbduh's holistic approach to nation-building; Egypt with political rights would be a nation in which the very idea of the nation is comprehensively embedded—through *adab*—in people's lives, animating their "souls". This was a politics conceived not as a self-standing domain, but as growing out of society, becoming thereby an authentic unity and self-regulating "life". In developing this vision, ʿAbduh was amplifying pre-modern meanings of *adab* implying wide breadth of knowledge, good taste, and the virtues, labelled in the paper as 'comprehensivness,' 'consensus' and 'habitus.'

Keywords: Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Adab*, Freedom, Nation, Politics, Egypt

Introduction: ʿAbduh and the public sphere

Muḥammad ʿAbduh, the late 19th century Egyptian Muslim reformer, is widely considered the foundational thinker for Islamic reformism and modernism. As recent studies have highlighted, his project of reform is often misrepresented as solving the Orientalist problem, famously stated by Albert HOURANI (1983: 136-140, 344), of how to harmonize Islam with modernity. This framing of Islam and modernity as opposites misses the way Islamic tradition was part of ʿAbduh's modern thinking (HAJ 2009). And the positing of this problem of

opposites distracts from the actual synchronic contextual problems that ʿAbduh was addresssing, which were not limited to questions about Islam or to one discursive tradition (KATEMAN 2019; SCHIELKE 2007). In this paper, I will contribute to this revisionist relocation of ʿAbduh's reformist ideas in the specific concerns of his own discourse and practical context and, in doing so, show how his engagement with Islamic ethical traditions was informed and shaped by these concerns—providing a modern case study for exploring Islamic ethics as contextually-embedded as opposed to its stereotype of being scripturalist and deontological.[1] Building on recent studies of the modern state and intellectuals in the Arab world that decentre Europe, I particularly highlight the way his thought is generated out of his practice, working for the Khedival state in Egypt's expanding domain of *siyāsa* (state legal authority) before the British occupation in 1882—that his Islamic thought was not responding to modernity, practically realized by Europe, from a non-modern and solely theoretical space, but was part of and produced by distinct local modernizing practices (FAHMY 2018: 130-131; OMAR 2017). To capture this mutually formative link between Muslim thought and modernizing practice, I will zoom in on the connection between a specific role and a specific Islamic ethical notion: ʿAbduh's role as Director of Publications for the Khedival state and editor of the official newspaper between 1880-1882; and his notion of *adab*, a complex word that is translatable both in an active sense as 'etiquette' and a passive sense as 'literature' (BONEBAKKER 1990: 22-24). Looking at a series of newspaper articles that ʿAbduh wrote for the state newspaper, *al-Waqāʾiʿ al-miṣriyya*, I will show how he articulated an ethics of citizenship by defining a modern civic notion of *adab* that he called "political *adab*." He conceived of this *adab* as the answer to the problem of how a unified nation emerges from the condition of "freedom" by which journalists and the reading public at the time were conceptualizing the politics of the ʿUrābī revolution in late 1881. This was a "freedom" of the public sphere that allowed for free speech and the power of public opinion to shape governance. "Political *adab*" would be the situational skill, internalized in each participant in the public sphere, that would regulate this freedom, ensuring that it produces unity rather than anarchy. I argue that *adab* here enshrined ʿAbduh's holistic approach to nation-building: Egypt with political rights would be a nation in which the very idea of the nation is comprehensively embedded—through *adab*—in people's lives, animating their "souls"; this was a politics conceived not as a self-standing domain, but as growing out of society, becoming thereby an authentic unity and self-regulating "life". ʿAbduh, I propose, was amplifying pre-modern meanings of *adab* implying wide breadth of knowledge, good taste, and the virtues, in order to innovate an idea of a moral regulatory mechanism for the public sphere.

So modernity was not conceptualized in contradistinction to Arab-Islamic ethical traditions or with them merely as its background, but was a transcultural category available in the 19th century public sphere. There is a burgeoning literature on the *literary* use of the notion of *adab* in the context of the florescence of Arabic language, culture, and institutions of publishing and learning in the late Ottoman period and beyond, known as the *Nahḍa* (BOUQUET 2020; DUPONT 2020; GUTH 2020; MAYEUR-JAOUEN 2020; PAGANI 2020; al-

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[1] Building on the explorations of Islamic 'ambiguity' and 'contingency' in BAUER 2011 and JOHANSEN 1999.

BAGHDADI 2008; ROOKE 1998). This literature highlights the way the adaptability of *adab* facilitated the literary articulation of new bourgeois values of hard work and sentimentalism in the form of novellic caricatures playing out a moderating balance between novel European cultural mores and local social conservatism (BOUQUET 2020; DUPONT 2020; GUTH 2020; MAYEUR-JAOUEN 2020). Building on Ellen McLarney's work, I will show how *adab* also had an evolving and sometimes radical *political* use, providing the flexible framework in which ʿAbduh both imagined modern citizenship and challenged as well as preserved aspects of Egypt's balance of power amidst social change. This is not a conceptual history that traces the genealogy of *adab* or 'Islamic tradition' (SCHIELKE 2007; ASAD 2014, 2003), but one that focuses analysis on the synchronic context of *adab* in order to locate its signifcant and dynamic place within a complex ethical discourse spanning the shifting domains of state and journalism.

Adab neither has a set of explicit norms nor does it have a clear univocal meaning (MALTI-DOUGLAS 1985: 9-12). Rather, it offers a literature, methodology and way of doing things and its meaning lies in a polysemic spectrum between language and human conduct. In its active sense of etiquette it does not offer a deontological ethics, but a situational acumen, like using a language, that Arab journalists and reformers found useful for articulating what they saw as the social demands of modernizing change in the 19th century. The term was a reference point for the project of social reform, envisaged by ʿAbduh and other reforming bureuacrats like ʿAlī Mubārak and Ḥusayn al-Marṣafī, who formed a reformist network with ʿAbduh in government *majālis* like the new educational reform council, the *majlis al-maʿārif* (HEYWORTH-DUNNE 1939: 458), and cultural associations like the *Jamʿiyyat al-maqāṣid al-khayriyya* (DEYOUNG 2015: 220-240). *Adab* referred to refined civility and propriety on the micro-scale of individuals that could realize an ordered and productive society on the macro-scale of the imagined nation. It was closely linked to the reformist notion of *tarbiya* (upbringing) with its shift of the focus of Ottoman *tanẓīmāt* reforms from legal to moral reform by way of the rearing of national populations—also propagated by more popular pedagogical publicists in Egypt like ʿAbdallāh al-Nadīm (MCLARNEY 2016; SALVATORE 2016; FARAG 2001; GASPER 2001; SCHIELKE 2007). This educational discourse elided with an amplification of the meaning of *siyāsa* from the ruler's legal authority towards 'politics' in the modern sense of the collective interests and allegiances of the citizenry. This new *siyāsa* was centred around the ordinary individual subject (the citizen) as opposed to the monarch and accountable to public opinion (ŞIVILOĞLU 2018; MCLARNEY 2016: 39). McLarney has shown how the influential mid 19th century Egyptian bureaucrat and reformer, Rifāʿa al-Ṭahṭāwī, drew on the logics of *adab* to articulate this new kind of politics, con-figuring the legitimacy of the monarchy as a kind of constitutional paternalism, limited by consideration of public opinion that was understood to be representing collective interests (MCLARNEY 2016). ʿAbduh, I will argue, developed these logics further to address the challenge that the emerging political journalism of the early 1880s posed to *siyāsa* in expanding the authorship of public opinion and political agency to a wider and divided public who formed a public sphere of discourse about the interests of the Egyptian nation (FAHMY 2011: chapter 1; AYALON 1995: 44-49, 147-52; PHELPS 1978). His notion of political *adab* conceived this broader participation in political discourse through journalism as an extension

of *tarbiya* that turns subjects into citizens, that is, individuals who are responsible for their wider political order and have new political rights and duties.[2]

This article understands the public sphere in the sociological and historical sense of Charles Taylor's idea of the modern 'social imaginary' (1993). Taylor used this idea of 'social imaginary' to describe the new collective experience in history of social relations on a national scale and mode of governance predicated upon the idea of a national population. Both of these were made possible by social technological transformations in the 18th-19th century, in particular, the emergence of the printing press and mass print media like newspapers and pamphlets along with new sites of sociability like bourgeois salons and literary societies in which the new print media were consumed and discussed. The new media and meeting-spaces helped generate new civic and political subjectivities by connecting people on a nation-wide scale and within the discursive frame of a 'nation' that transcended immediate locales. Taylor defines the public sphere as a common space of the nation in which people who never meet understand themselves to be engaged in a discussion capable of reaching a common mind (TAYLOR 1993: 222-27). The novelty of the public sphere, he argues, lay in how it made the simultaneous collective agency of the nation thinkable—what he characterizes as "radical secularity". He does not mean by this term the absence of religion, but rather that the constituting actor of this space and collective agency is nothing other than the common action of coming to a common mind: "action is not made possible by a framework which needs to be established in some action-transcendent dimension" (TAYLOR 1993: 235-38). There is no higher time or founding moment that organizes humans politically prior to their co-action. Rather humans in this space are pre-political and together establish the political order, giving the politics of the public sphere a self-constituting character.

For 'Abduh, as I will argue, the significance of the public sphere is not just its cultivation of citizens who are politically responsible. The agency of public opinion ensures a political order that is suitable to the people and their particular condition of nationhood; in other words, while the modern state becomes more powerful in their lives, the public sphere gives them a new ownership over the state as a locus not just of legal rights, but of their positive moral agency. 'Abduh envisaged a political sphere that more effectively mobilizes the people of the nation through journalism, enabling the holistic spread of citizenship on the deep level of morality or virtue—a kind of moral standardizaton that leaves less space for a variety of localized loyalties and moral orientations. This is the self-constituting logic of the public sphere that in rooting political legitimacy in a consensus or common mind shared between the nation's different groups (religious, class, ethnic etc.), brings these different groups into a standardizing political fold under the banner of 'public interest'. Dyala Hamzah captures this standardizing effect in her work on the public sphere in the Middle East when she describes the epistemological shift of the transition from scholastic knowledge (*'ilm*) to journalism (*ṣiḥāfa*) as the writer's "loss of transcendent legitimacy in effective recognition

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2   'Abduh in this light appears to develop the influential *tanẓīmāt* linking of reform to constitutional justice in Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī's *Aqwam al-masālik* and al-Ṭahṭāwī's manifesto for a productive civic ethic and constitutional monarchy, *Kitāb manāhij al-albāb al-miṣriyya*, by more decisively locating the nation in the people and the public sphere. This involved defining justice here as a matter of limiting not just monarchical power, but the people as participants in the public sphere; see al-TŪNISĪ 1875: 13-30.

of his own immanent authority: that of writing in the name of all, in the name of public interest" (HAMZAH 2013: 100).

The "political life" and *adab*

I propose that ʿAbduh was acutely conscious of the public sphere in this sense of an experience of simultaneous collective interconnectedness as a new technologically-facilitated social and political condition in Egypt.[3] Being a journalist, government newspaper editor and a reforming bureaucrat seeking to build a nation and modern state, he was at the heart of the institutional developments that made the public sphere possible in Egypt: the popular journalism of the private presses, new social clubs and salons that were the social infrastructure of the Arabic *Nahḍa* (MESTYÁN 2017: chapters 4 and 5; FAHMY 2011: chapter 1; SALVATORE 2011; AYALON 1995: chapter 2; COLE 1993: chapter 5) and the *tanẓīmāt* and its rationalization of royal power into a government (*al-ḥukūma*) with an impersonal public structure (HUNTER 1999) beholden to the scrutiny of a public gaze that popular journalism was amplifying (FAHMY 2018: 51-60).[4] The polysemic character of *adab*, I argue, catered conceptually and imaginally for ʿAbduh's articulation and conception of the public sphere and the novel ways these developments were linking state and society. I will look at a series of articles that he published in November 1881 for the state newspaper, *al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya*, at the start of the ʿUrābī revolution—the military protest, backed by Egyptian agricultural elites, and eventual takeover of the Egyptian government, accused of accepting the injustices of a European regime of financial control (September 1881 – July 1882).[5] The title of the series of articles is the "political life" (*al-ḥayāt al-siyāsiyya*) which I will suggest is ʿAbduh's term for conveying the potential efficacy of the public sphere in generating a unified citizenry out of disparate social groups.

A central aspect of this efficacy in ʿAbduh's conception is what Taylor characterizes as the public sphere's self-constituting character (that the people choose their political order), which is implicit in the way ʿAbduh sets up his notion of the "political life" within a developmental history of "humanity". The political life emerges after the "stages" of the "natural" and "social" as a third stage in which humans "inspect the affairs of their soul (*nafsihi*) and are interested in the condition of their people (*jinsihi*)" and thus become "political humans with full rights and duties" (*al-insān al-madanī al-kāmil al-ḥuqūq wa-l-wājibāt*, ʿABDUH 2009: I, 362). He thereby sets up humans as pre-political: the ordinary individual, on the

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3 This supports Dyala Hamzah's argument for the reformist interest in the power of journalism and their self-conscious use of it. She argues that the public sphere has been underappreciated in the literature on Islamic reformism and modern Egypt. The close relation between reformist medium and message requires more attention. See HAMZAH 2013: 6-9.

4 This was playing out practically and materially in the regime of financial control's separation of government and khedival finances in 1878. This rationalization of governance was in contrast to an idea of a close association of governance with the person of the Khedive, as reflected, for example, in the understanding in the 1820s and 30s of state law as a violation of the Sultan's rights. See FAHMY 1997: 128-131.

5 For the history of the ʿUrābī Revolution see SCHÖLCH 1981; COLE 1993; for a closer look at ʿAbduh's circle of reformist bureaucrats during this time, see DEYOUNG 2015.

universal level of what he defines as their natural "humanity" (transcending any particular or exclusive modes of identity), precedes any shared principle of order ; and, as pre-political human beings, themselves then choose and constitute their political arrangement of "rights and duties"—the self-constituting character of the public sphere (as opposed to being naturally or divinely-given). The political order follows from an active state of being a citizen—of being "interested" (*yahtamm*) in the wider social whole. Significantly, ʿAbduh places regard for the "soul" (*nafs*) before regard for their "people" (*jins*); this seems to be a deliberate ordering because ʿAbduh repeats this phrasing and sequence later in the article (ʿABDUH 2009: I, 362-63). It suggests a kind of holistic governance, working from the individual soul and self-policing upwards, that was not present in the 'natural' and 'social' stages—an aspect of ʿAbduh's civic ethics which I refer to later.

ʿAbduh articulates the self-constituting character of the political life by linking it to the concept of liberty or freedom—the global principle of the 19th century developmental discourses (CASE 2019: 75-77). Commenting on the immediate political context, he claims that Egypt is entering this stage of "political rights" (*al-ḥuqūq al-siyāsiyya*). But, he warns, it is a "dangerous stage" in which "we are set loose to be free" (ʿABDUH 2009: I, 362-63). He says that "the lover of freedom has the illusion that the need for the *murabbī* (guide) and guidance negates freedom or is the sign of the persistence of tyranny." But, in reality, he argues, they need this guidance (ʿABDUH 2009: I, 362). ʿAbduh is defining a universalistic notion of the fully-developed human being as capable of partaking in collective self-governance and then both including and excluding the Egyptians in this category. His cautious ambivalence was challenging popular discourses about freedom at the time.[6] He subscribes to the global liberal axiom that political and social forms are most effective and legitimate when they are based on the consent of individuals, in particular, on collective consent—on political freedom that chooses its constraining order. He sees the political life as the fulfilment of this ideal, but his main point, as we will explore, is that this freedom is not just the absence of tyranny, but requires a more profound change on the level of *adab*: a re-ordering of the very fabric of society and language.

ʿAbduh locates this condition of freedom historically in terms of the social infrastructure and politics of the modern public sphere that I outlined above. He presents the role of the *murabbī* as built upon a politics of consensus: "he must be one who has unified the word of the people and obtained their trust, otherwise he is one of those with power (*al-sulṭa*) based either on violence or fear and delusion among his subjects" (ʿABDUH 2009: I, 362). He thus again locates political power as a humanly-constituted relationship—either by consent, violence or fear and delusion. ʿAbduh claims that the ruler of Egypt, Khedive Tawfīq, fulfils the role of the ruler who wins consent. "The great Khedive," he says, "has obtained the people's trust" and "is known for his longing to reform the nation… and desiring their freedom." So, he says, "there has spread in his age what some used to fear in times before him;" "newspapers have proliferated in his days, when in the past there were few… and charitable and literary societies have been organised and the people have been given freedom of speech, when in the past they spoke in the houses whispering and were not safe." And the

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6 For the question of the colonizing history of liberalism and the inclusive and exclusive nature of its definition of a universal humanity, see MEHTA 2009 and ESMEIR 2014.

newly-appointed ministers are trusted to "revive Egypt for the people of Egypt" (ʿABDUH 2009: I, 363). ʿAbduh is defining the distinctness of his age in terms of the material and political possibility of national conversation and consensus, unafraid and freely expressed, to which politics and the government are accountable. The word 'life' itself captures the self-constituting nature of the public sphere in ʿAbduh's social imaginary. As a 'life', it is animated and self-moving—it coincides with *ḥurriyya* (freedom) and the end of *istibdād* (tyranny). This expresses what Taylor calls 'radical secularity;' it is free to move according to its internal momentum and directionality—its order does not come from its unifying infrastructure, the newspapers and the clubs, which are purely a communicative structure. It is significant that ʿAbduh, in contrast to previous reformist writers like al-Ṭahṭāwī, does not use the organistic metaphor of a body with its pre-defined functional differentiations such as the king being the head of the body.[7] The order is alive in that it is subsequent upon the communicative agency of the people in the public sphere.

In the language above of "freedom" and "Egypt for the Egyptians," ʿAbduh was appropriating the popular slogans of the ʿUrābī Revolution. The tone of the press had changed significantly after the army's protest at the Khedive's Palace in ʿĀbdīn square on 9th September 1881 and toppling of the cabinet of Riyāḍ Pasha (SCHÖLCH 1981: 162-65, 191; PHELPS 1978). The event was popularly perceived as the end of a conspiracy between ministers and European financial controllers to secure Egypt's colonization by foreign powers. Journals like ʿAbdallāh al-Nadīm's *al-Tankīt wa-l-tabkīt* announced the start of a new "reign of freedom"[8] for the people of Egypt.[9] This freedom was seen as being politically institutionalized in the new cabinet and its plans for a constitution and Chamber of Representatives (*majlis al-nuwwāb*) composed largely of locally-elected Egyptian notables (al-NADĪM 1881). The discourse was patriotic and paternalistic, proclaiming the Egyptian army officer and leader of the protest, Aḥmad ʿUrābī, as the people's hero and "knight" (*fāris*), and the Khedive as Egypt's rightful leader defending the Egyptians from the abuses of the Europeans and Turko-Circassian elites in government—the "foreign administration" (*al-idāra al-ajnabiyya*). ʿAbduh includes in his articles on the "political life" this register of patriotic loyalty to the Khedive, but separates it from adulation of ʿUrābī and patriotic suspicion of the government's non-Egyptian personnel. He urges his readers to dismiss the accusations and "rumours" of the newspapers, claiming that the "government only intends us good" and seeks "reform" (*al-iṣlāḥ*) (ʿABDUH 2009: I, 364). ʿAbduh was trying to reconfigure the prevailing discourse, which was being consumed by thousands of Egyptians, mobilizing them in support of the army. The wide reach of the papers to non-literate as well as the literate was made possible by a popular culture of coffeehouses and salons in which the newspapers would be publicly available and read aloud (MESTYAN 2017: 132; FAHMY 2011: 31-36; AYALON 1995: 154; COLE 1993: 114). ʿAbduh's message reflected his complex position of criticism and support of a new order backed by a powerful coalition that included military

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7   For al-Ṭahṭāwī and al-Marṣafī, see MCLARNEY 2016; for a discussion of how the "body metaphor" was changing in light of modern practices of governance, see MITCHELL 1988: 154-59.

8   See al-NADĪM 1881. This issue includes a short biography of ʿUrābī and one of his speeches, delivered in his home province, *al-sharqiyya*.

9   For the description of the different newspapers and their positions at this revolutionary phase, see SCHÖLCH 1981: 177-85.

men, French-aligned government officials and the Egyptian notables.[10] He subscribed to the discourse of reform centred around the people and the nation, but appears to be relocating the imagined locus of freedom away from ʿUrābī and the formal institution of the Chamber of Representatives and within the fact of the public sphere itself—that the people of Egypt are politically vocal and can hold government and the "people of *istibdād*" to account by expressing their opinion. In this sense, his writing was radical as well as cautionary: he concludes the series by challenging "some who try to remove the national slogan" from the Egyptians and say the Egyptians are not ready for political rights, being accustomed to the "weight of tyranny and injustice"; "the events have proved irrefutably that we have a national existence (*wujūd waṭanī*) and public opinion, despite the contempt of the nay-sayers" (ʿABDUH 2009: I, 371). ʿAbduh was challenging social elites with a vision of the constitutional changes as much more than freedom from outside interference, but rather as a new positive freedom that mobilizes the wider population to form a collective power—"a national existence"—that can shape politics.

This appropriation of the popular language of freedom also encoded a state regulating agenda. The ʿUrābī-supporting press expanded quickly through the creation of several new periodicals like Sirāj al-Dīn al-Madanī's *al-Ḥijāz* and Shaykh Ḥamza Fatḥ Allāh's *al-Burhān* and was popularizing criticism of the state, in particular the European financial control, on an unprecedented scale—compounding the challenge mounted to the state's censorship regime by the wide dissemination of James Sanua's satrical paper, *Abū l-naẓẓāra al-zarqāʾ*, printed in Paris and sponsored by ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Pasha, the influential rival claimant to the Khedive's throne, and also hailing ʿUrābī as saving Egypt from its government (SCHÖLCH 1981: 172-188). Political journalism was proving an unregulatable mass-mobilizing force. This was not only in the Arab Press, but in the foreign press, largely French and English language newspapers, in Egypt that, as in colonial India, spread news about sectarianisn and 'fanaticism' in support of European colonial policies (STEPHENS 2013; PHELPS 1978: 167, 205; SCAWEN-BLUNT 1922: 132-33, 267). ʿAbduh's "Department of Publications" introduced a new press law on 26th November that decreed new strict limitations on both Arab and (controversially at the time) foreign journalists, to meet the challenge and protect "public order, religion, and manners (*ādāb*)": such regulations as each printing press requiring a licence to print from the Interiour Ministry (article one) and the proscription of disseminating any unauthorized text with "political" content (article 18) (TAQLÀ 1881). Importantly these laws and ʿAbduh's own journalistic discourse accomodate the logic of the public sphere rather than reject it—seeking to regulate political disourse, which is where *adab* comes in.

ʿAbduh's challenge to those he calls the "the lovers of freedom" problematizes as much as celebrates the public sphere so that it becomes a legitimate object of regulation—regulation in the name of freedom. He asks where the limits come from that would prevent the new political freedom—the "national existence"—from destroying itself by substituting a coercive social order of fear for a demagogic anarchy that is just as oppressive. He introduces the notion of *adab*, which he calls political *adab*, I will argue, to define political freedom in a way that ties it to limiting principles that foster national unity and the order of

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10 For this coalition and its opposition to ʿAbduh's patron in government, the prime minister Riyāḍ Pasha, see SCHÖLCH 1981: 144-45, 153-60.

"society". *Adab* was a means both of regulation and mobilization; it would turn the public sphere into an instrument of the state's nation-building agenda: a disciplinary arena of mediation and socialization in which the state's *siyāsa* realm of law-backed order would become a kind of active "life" (*al-ḥayāt al-siyāsiyya*) with a more comprehensive reach than law. Structuring this discourse is the classic liberal question, discussed around the globe at the time of how individual freedom can be a collective social condition (BARKER 2019; TAYLOR 2004: 13-14). *Adab* was already discussed in the press in this regard: Ḥusayn al-Marṣafī, ʿAbduh's colleague and fellow teacher in Egypt's educational establishment, published his *Essay on Eight Words* in October which tacitly criticized the army for violating *adab* by impinging on the decision-making prerogatives of the government (al-MARṢAFĪ 1881: 65-66); ʿAbdallāh Nadīm, on the other hand, credited the army for its *adab*, which he argued prevented the bloodshed with which freedom had been introduced during the French Revolution (al-NADĪM 1881).

I will point to three ways in which ʿAbduh exploits the *adab* tradition's multiple registers to articulate how political freedom can sustain itself internally, making for the "political life"—within his social imaginary of "a national existence" requiring no external ordering principles imposed through violence or ignorance. These three ways I label as comprehensiveness, consensus and habitus. They combine to constitute an idea of virtue of citizenship that regulates Egypt's public sphere by internalizing the 'political' or state-supervised *siyāsa* realm of public interest[11] as an object of knowledge and volition in the souls of its participants. Citizenship is meant here in connection with the public sphere: it does not just mean having state-decreed rights and duties, but has the active sense of being politically conscious and having a role in the political process through freedom of speech and voting (REIFIELD and BHARGAVA 2005: 21-22).

Comprehensiveness

Adab in its classical sense can be characterized as a general education through reading edifying literature and making use of many different forms of knowledge (ALSHAAR 2017: 6-9; BONEBAKKER 1990: 17-24; MALTI-DOUGLAS 1985: 11-13). It includes the idea of the beneficial effect of this wide reading and knowledge for cultivating the soul and practical skill. To elucidate these nuances, scholars like Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (d. 786), author of the first Arab dictionary, linked the meaning of *adab* to the term *ma'duba* meaning "invitation to a banquet" (ALSHAAR 2017: 11-16). The analogy suggests that *adab* is like a great banquet in which guests are nourished by an abundance of different kinds of food and drink. The banquet signifies both the multiplicity of knowledge and moral nourishment which have both been connected to divine generosity. Sufis, namely Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240), linked this sense of multiplicity or totality implied in the idea of a banquet more explicitly to ethical conduct and etiquette. If *adab* as etiquette was the embodiment of justice as it allowed one to put every word and action in its proper place, the source of this capacity was the Qurʾanic

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11 For the legal institutional arm of this realm in the *siyāsa* legal councils, see FAHMY 2018: chapter 2 and PETERS 1999: 378-97.

comprehensive embodiment of all the names of God and qualities of the cosmos—an idea of an all-encompassing knowledge that meant that one could act justly in all possible contexts (RYLE-HODGES 2017; CHITTICK 2009: 174-75; GRIL 1993). Indeed, the definition of *adab* with which ʿAbduh and other bureaucratic reformers of his time worked was primarily this idea of putting a word or action in its proper place.[12] In its sense of comprehensive knowledge *adab* has been more conventionally associated by Orientalist scholars with a cosmopolitan administrative and scribal class taking off in the ʿAbbasid era, exemplified by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 760) and ʿAlī al-Masʿūdī (d. 956) and influenced by Persian court culture. In this secretarial tradition of the *kātib*, the comprehensiveness and universalism of *adab* conveyed the worldly acumen to run an imperial bureaucracy and advise the ruler—drawing particularly on history and the sciences of language.[13] The anthological works written and used by this class were referred to as *adab*, according to its passive sense. These works would themselves embody comprehensive knowledge in a generalist rather than specialist fashion, containing different types of subjects and genres like anecdotes, poetry and *ḥadīth* and reflecting and informing the discussions of literary salons connected to the royal court and urban high culture.[14]

Returning to ʿAbduh, unlike classical *adab* culture with its orientation around the court and monarchy, his focus was on the individual citizen of the mass audience who participates in the public sphere and so is part of the nation's "political life." ʿAbduh appropriates the classic liberty principle[15] and interprets it with reference to *adab* to explain what freedom means for such a citizen:

> This life requires that the citizen (*al-waṭanī*) be free in opinion, acting as he wills up to a limit (*ḥadd*), whereby he neither damages society (*al-hayʾa al-mujtamaʿa*) nor

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12 Al-MARṢAFĪ 1875: 37-38; al-Marṣafī's *al-Wasīla al-adabiyya* was a widely-known text among ʿAbduh's bureaucrat colleagues and ʿAbduh taught from it in Beirut, see DEYOUNG 2015: 231. ʿAbduh uses the similar classical Arabic terminology as in this text of "putting things in their place" in an article entitled "Waḍʿ al-shayʾ fī ghayr mawḍiʿihi," ʿABDUH 2009: II, 133-136; 'misplacing a thing' was the traditional language used for describing royal injustice or *ẓulm*, see ERGENE 2001 and MOTTAHADEH 2001: 179-180. See also al-MARṢAFĪ's (1881: 65-67) contemporaneous usage.

13 A well-known aphorism compared the *ʿālim* or a religious scholar as a specialist to the *adīb* as a generalist (GOODMAN 2005; DABASHI 2013; HODGSON 1977: I, 453-69). For a critical account of these approaches interested in *adab*'s cosmopolitanism as wrongly imputing an Islamic-secular binary, see AHMED 2016: 229-38.

14 A classic example of this encyclopaedic style of *adab* is *Kitāb ʿUyūn al-akhbār* by the ʿAbbasid polymath and judge, Ibn Qutayba (d. 889).

15 The principle classically set out by the 19th century liberal theorist and reformer, John Stewart Mill, to define a safeguard against what he called the "tyranny of the majority" in a democratic republic: "the only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs or impede their efforts to obtain it… Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest" (MILL 2008: 8-17). Reflecting his place in a global public sphere of printed texts, newspapers and associations, ʿAbduh is addressing a global liberal question about how freedom can be a collective condition; this article understands him as amplifying the Islamic discursive tradition of *adab* in engagement with different global discursive traditions—for more on this global dimension of ʿAbduh's thought, see KATEMAN 2019. For Mill's concern for the question of protecting individuals from mass politics, see BARKER 2019: chapter 4.

interferes with the affairs of others. This freedom requires knowledge (*ʿilm*) of public good (*al-maṣlaḥa al-ʿumūmiyya*) and personal limits, and this is what is called political *adab*. And the practical knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of this *adab* necessitates that when the person knows the interest of his people, he strives in what furthers its continuance and growth. (ʿABDUH 2009: I, 364)

ʿAbduh identifies the agent as a "*waṭanī*," a member of the *waṭan*, the nation—defining them primarily as citizens who have duties towards the wider civic order within the territorial bounds of their nation rather than as subjects (*raʿiyya*) defined by their duty towards a monarch. If the citizens are going to be free agents within the collective sphere of the 'political' that spans the whole nation, then they need comprehensive knowledge that spans the nation's interests as well as their own personal limits, especially if they are going to be active in the national press discourse. ʿAbduh is capitalizing upon the sense of comprehensive and general knowledge in *adab* to articulate the far-reaching responsibility that comes with the freedom of being a citizen and the knowledge of their "people" that qualifies them for this responsibility, both theoretical (*ʿilm*) and practical (*maʿrifa*). The citizens have the authority to self-govern and be unsupervised by a monarchical enforcer because they embody the total perspective on the whole polity (*siyāsa*) which used to be the sole prerogative of the monarchy and bureaucracy, the *adab* elite—now *ẓulm* or royal injustice, classically understood as 'misplacing a thing' (ERGENE 2001; MOTTAHADEH 2001: 179-180)[16] is understood on the level of the ordinary individual (MCLARNEY 2016: 36). The citizen has a responsibility towards people outside of his and her class and locality, to whom they have been previously unconnected, because they belong to the same "society" by way of shared interests and mutual respect of one another's "affairs". In an article, published a month earlier in October, ʿAbduh articulates this widened outlook on the shared interests of "society" by using the phrase "the total virtue" (*al-faḍīla al-kulliyya*)—a virtue, he argues, that was absent among the landed elites whom he accuses of neglecting the "rights" of the poorer classes (ʿABDUH 2009: I, 349-52). In a speech that he gave after his exile from Egypt in Beirut in June 1886, he called it "the virtue unifying all the virtues,"[17] defining this notion in explicit relation to *adab*—introduced as "moral education," or "*adab al-nafs*". He presents *adab* as the religious tradition (*dīn*) of "knowledge which animates souls," training them to see "truth" (*ḥaqq*): "when the soul is perfected by *ādāb*,[18] it knows its place in existence and perceives the plane of truth in the well-being (*ṣalāḥ*) of the world and so rises up to offer its support and is certain of its need for co-participants in the nation and religious community" (ʿABDUH 1886). This encompassing virtue is an ability to go from self-knowledge to recognizing a wider and mutually-dependent order of benefit (*ṣalāḥ* or *maṣlaḥa*), which ʿAbduh translates into the patriotic terminology of the time: "it is what we mean by love of nation (*waṭan*), state (*dawla*) and religious community (*milla*)." The different objects of political loyalty in this phrase reflect ʿAbduh's adaptation of *adab* to the ambiguous political framework of the

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16 *Adab* is not conceived as advice for princes ('mirror for princes'), but as advice for people in general so that everyday life becomes politicized through journalism.

17 There is a parallel with the Sufi notion of *adab,* mentioned above, as a condition of balance and wholeness that consolidates all the names of God.

18 The plural of *adab*, referring to its different genres and practices.

Ottoman Empire, the *dawla* unifying multiple nations. The meaning of this knowledge being an "animating knowledge" is the way it embeds the total perspective on the civic whole on the intimate level of the soul or *nafs*. It does not just offer comprehensiveness in the sense of wide knowledge, but in the sense of "love" that responds to every occasion of civic need with "action" that persists in a total way—entering "every door and not returning"—until that need is met.

'Abduh utilizes the connection within the meanings of *adab* between this comprehensive knowledge and the edifying literature and studies that make it possible—the latter being conceived as a 'banquet' (*ma'duba*) that nourishes souls with many and various types of food and drink. There is a strong emphasis on vision and visual motifs; the one who has the internal ability to know their "limits" as dictated by the needs of the wider social whole, acquires "incisive insight (*diqqat al-naẓar*) and perception (*tabaṣṣur*) on the conditions of people now and in the past" ('ABDUH 2009: I, 364). He gives a sense of the banquet of different kinds of knowledge that nourish the soul and the mind with this vision:

> and they drink with their ears the speeches of ministers and representatives and eat with their eyes the pure writings of the newspapers. So they take back from these speeches, as from *salsabīl* [the well in paradise], wisdom and balance and they obtain from these writings the food of national fervour. And all that is clarified by those among them who are the scientists of governance, the men of wisdom, the political leaders, not to mention the travellers who unveil for them the veil of fantasies over the nature of matters and polish for their understanding the images of truths. So these are not hidden from them except what cannot be known without God. ('ABDUH 2009: I, 365)

Adab as comprehensive knowledge (in its active sense) and its connection to a wide range of literatures (in its passive sense) maps onto 'Abduh's 'modern social imaginary' (TAYLOR 2004) of the politically-engaged mass citizenry and their immersion in a world of mass readership and current affairs. Political speeches and journalism[19] in the public sphere are pure food and heavenly water that cultivate political *adab*. The teachers are engaged in the shared project of nation-building—they are government ministers, political scientists and observers of countries abroad. The purifying content of the different discourses is a living contemporary knowledge that updates its receivers in real time on the affairs and possibilities of the nation, an imagined body of people with whom they imagine themselves to be reading and acting. These discourses also perpetually animate souls with "national fervour" that partners comprehensive knowledge with the comprehensive type of civic virtue described above. This is an ethics of citizenship that draws on the rich semantics of *adab* to conceptualize the inseparability of individual civic responsibility and the wider mass-mediated structure of different kinds of literature and edifying words that make this responsibility possible as a distinct knowledge-informed practice.

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19 The importance of *adab* as a category through which Arab journalism was understood and pioneered is reflected in how 'Abduh called this style of article with its different literary registers and edifying content, "*al-Fuṣūl al-adabiyya*" or "edifying (*adabī*) sections"—introduced to the state newspaper under 'Abduh's reforms to state publishing (RIḌĀ 1931: I, 177).

ʿAbduh, in his role as the state's chief cennor, was addressing the problem of an un-regulated political freedom that might "damage society" by defining this freedom positively as a condition of *adab*: what one does or the opinion they express is up to their situational judgment, but they can only have this power of judgment when they have a comprehensive type of knowledge defined by ʿAbduh as encompassing a history of human actions and nations as well as the everchanging contemporary shape of "society" (*al-hayʾa al-mujtamaʿa*)—daily information made possible by new information technologies, that configure *adab* for what Taylor calls modern "direct-access society where each member is 'immediate to the whole'" (TAYLOR 2004: 157). "Society", whether that be the "people," the "nation" or the "religious community" or all of them, is being grasped as a necessary object of moral knowledge that is "the whole consisting of the simultaneous happening of all the myriad events that mark the lives of the members at that moment" (TAYLOR 2004: 147). The burden of citizenship is captured in ʿAbduh's use of metaphors of vision and unveiling—of seeing every slight detail of past and present. With political *adab* the order of "society" is not externally imposed, but through the comprehensive vision and "love" of citizens, becomes self-conscious and self-constituting. In other words, the 'political', the sphere that regulates "society", is alive in their souls as a 'common mind' rather than ordering them from above.

Consensus

A significant dimension of the *adab* tradition that ties into its comprehensiveness concerns the universal value of its knowledge as well as *how* it mediates knowledge and its association with good taste and high culture. There is implicit in *adab*'s universalism and cosmo-politanism the idea of *adab*'s universal and intuitive pleasantness and consumability (BONEBAKKER 1990: 22-23; MALTI-DOUGLAS 1985: 13); whatever its source in region or social status,[20] it concerns what any educated person would recognise as valuable and useful, being judged by its fruits rather than its roots. It thus implies a sense of a consensus on goods. The analogy of the banquet has been interpreted by classical lexographers as carrying this sense: it gathers many people by their "collective agreement for its praise" (ALSHAAR 2017: 12). According to James MONTGOMERY (2013: chapter 4.5), the great eighth century Arab prose writer and theologian, al-Jāḥiz (d. 868/9), explicitly saw his writing of lyrical Arabic prose about the wonders of creation as securing "social cohesion" for a highly partisan Abbasid society by providing a discourse that could unify monotheists from many different sects and faiths. Likewise Nuha ALSHAAR (2015: 126-129) argues that the distinguished philosopher and litterateur, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d.1023), along with Ibn Miskawayh (d. 1030) whose ethical treatise, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, was influential in 19th century Egypt,[21] enlisted the *adab* traditions of practical philosophy, particularly concepts of "friendship"

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20   For example, among the printed *adab* texts that ʿAbduh recommends to his readers are *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, a Pahlavi collection of animal fables, originally written in Sanskrit and translated by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, and al-Ṭahṭāwī's translation of the modern French classic, Fénelon's *Télémaque*, see "*al-Kutūb al-ʿilmiyya wa-ghayruhā*," in ʿABDUH 2009: III, 53-56; for the significance of *Télémaque* for al-Ṭahṭāwī's's political project, see MCLARNEY 2016: 31-35.

21   ʿAbduh taught *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* to a circle of students at his house (RIḌĀ 1931: I, 135).

(ṣadāqa) and "love" (maḥabba), to carve out a social imaginary that would unify Būyid society's different religions and rival factions. This dimension of consensus is present in 'Abduh's idea of "political adab" in a way that reflects his concern to regulate the meaning of political words in the public sphere.

'Abduh's discourse bears out Hamzah's argument that legitimacy for the journalists and state publicists in the public sphere was a matter of speaking "in the name of all, in the name of public interest" (HAMZAH 2013: 100). 'Abduh defines the "political" in "the political life" in terms of the common interests shared between the different social groups that make up the public sphere. He exhorts the newspapers to "follow the government" in supporting the new political rights by making "the interest of the nation their focus[22] in every situation, knowing that they (the newspapers) are like the cultivator of souls and intellects" ('ABDUH 2009: I, 365). This is where the dependence of the 'political' on the soul—the 'intellectual' and the 'moral'—and the nourishment of many souls through adab becomes crucial; the newspapers cultivate "fervour" and "love" for the nation, but the nation itself is a unity of plural interests such that this patriotism is necessarily a perceptive and empathetic sentiment that employs "balance and wisdom" (al-ḥikma wa-l-iʿtidāl). The newspapers, 'Abduh advises, should "feed hearts with a pure and pleasant politics (siyāsa ṣāfiya sāʾigha) like fresh water;" implying a purification of souls that clarifies their vision so that they can see and sympathize with different interests beyond their own "partial motives" (al-aghrāḍ). The idea of the "the interest of the nation" plays into the universalism or ecumenism implied in adab and the 'pleasantness' of its purifying water as it suggests that there are common goods that everyone can agree on just as there is adab literature that everyone can appreciate and find useful. 'Abduh calls this consensus the "public opinion" (al-raʾy al-ʿumūmī) that, he says, has "chosen (the government) to guide the nation" ('ABDUH 2009: I, 365). He calls on the elites and all "those with practical wisdom" to "throw away their egoistic desires and walk on the way of peace (al-salāma) towards well-being (al-hanāʾ) and nobility (al-karāma)" ('ABDUH 2009: I, 365-366). In the lyrical fashion of an adīb he is conjuring a vision of a way of peace and prosperity that unites everyone in agreement and in which they can be "safe" (salāma) from concealed interests. The word "karāma" plays into this sense of inclusion as its meaning is connected to generosity and magnanimity that is hospitable and welcomes others. A call for unity was a common feature of the press's response to the ʿUrābī Revolution. National unity was an important and contentious issue as it was an essential presupposition of the popular idea, promoted by 'Abduh, of the Revolution as a political event, moving Egypt towards self-governance, rather than purely a military intervention; 'Abduh was also calling the supporters of ʿUrābī, among whom were many ʿulamāʾ (COLE 1993: 241; SCHÖLCH 1981: 180-90, 302-03) in addition to the landed elites objecting to new taxes and centralizing measures (SCHÖLCH 1981: 114-130), to back the state's reform policies as the true embodiment of shared interests.

'Abduh argues that this consensus on shared interests is integral to the meaning of the polity as a "life." In response to a concern he cites that the political life has compounded divisions between "sects and parties" in "European nations", he writes that these people of the "political life" "do not disagree on the intended goal itself, but there are various paths to

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22   Literally, a statue (nuṣb) for its eyes.

their goal:" "France remains France in every condition and before every matter whether it is an empire, a monarchy or republic; if Germany were conservative or progressive or socialist, it would still be Germany behind that." This is the same with England, Italy and Austria and all other purveyors of the political life. What ʿAbduh appears to be arguing is that in the political life the people come before politics so that politics always grows out of their collective condition, the welfare of which defines a unified "goal". If politics is contested by public opinion in the public sphere, the worry is that it will divide the nation, but ʿAbduh is saying, on the contrary, 'public opinion' ensures that politics is suitable to the character of the nation and so enables the efficacy of the political as a kind of "life" not needing external compulsion. The ideas of political *adab* and 'public opinion' thus refuted the counter-revoutionary arguments that Egyptian politics, unlike European politics, required an external overseer, either Khedival, Sultanic or European, for its unity.[23]

Seeming to diagnose his view of the current condition of Egypt, ʿAbduh, in a set of important and conceptually dense sentences, calls his readers to likewise ground their politics in what they share in common, their nation or *waṭan*:

> The necessary unity of this life does not limit us by not admitting of division and disagreement except when there is a position of agreement and unity only in appearance and not in reality; and which cannot unify the word of the nation in its totality because of difference of opinions and variety in creeds. So for these groups, it might be appropriate to consider them free insofar as they continue to exist and are preserved, except that they are far from politics so that they relate to it in a theoretical way stripped of anything concrete (*maḥsūs*). So it is (actually) appropriate that the people of the political life, whoever they are, make the nation (*waṭan*) their unity to prevent disagreement among its inhabitants. And it is known that the state of something rises and falls… according to its standing (*al-sha'n*) and the benefits (*al-manāfiʿ*) that hang on it. And so when the nation is what unifies the word of the people, this is what greatens its real standing (*sha'nuhu al-maʿnawī*) such that universal benefits (*al-manāfiʿ al-kulliyya*) rest on it and it becomes a pivot upon which people's intentions and actions rest. When the nation rises in status, that honours and exalts the inhabitants because it has no reality (*ḥaqīqa*) other than by them and in them and there is no success except in them and from them and so they are it (the nation) and it (the nation) is their existence (*wujūduhum*) in word (*lafẓ*) and meaning (*ma'nāhu*). (ʿABDUH 2009: I, 367-68)

For political freedom to be possible within a context of social and religious diversity, these different groups need to carve out a shared domain of loyalty by making the nation or *waṭan* their unifying focus. *Adab* is not explicit here, but I am suggesting that it is in the background of reference to words and meanings, which were being mass-publicized at the time and which ʿAbduh, as chief censor for the state, appears to be contesting and regulating to serve the state's nation-building project. The dependence of political unity on words that can be shared is captured in ʿAbduh's use of the traditional phrase "to unify the word of the people." In

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23 For example, see the pro-Khedival message of the newspaper *al-Zamān* that Egypt, as an Islamic nation, required absolute monarchy (PHELPS 1978: 210).

classical Arab notions of kingship, this was a way of talking about the king's role of unifying different parts of his dominion (MOTTAHADEH 2001: 183). Here it is the *waṭan*, the nation or homeland, that unites Egypt's different communities—Muslim and Christian, Arab and Turk and so on. ʿAbduh locates the real meaning of this central word , the *waṭan*, in the people, in particular, in what motivates their "their actions and intentions." It is the answer to the problem of a "*siyāsa*" that is "far" from the people such that it has no "concrete" meaning for them. The "pivot" of the *waṭan* grounds "*siyāsa*" in what matters to the people in terms of their "standing" and "benefits"and so unifies them and works as a life through their daily individual volition. The *waṭan* as a "word" has no "reality" (*ḥaqīqa*) other than the people and no "meaning" other than their "existence."[24] There is no *a priori* essence defining the political life: it is a life precisely because the people's "existence" generates its essence, which thereby lives in the people in a holistic way—"word and meaning"; political words have their referents in what brings "universal benefits" that spread to everyone in the polity and are therefore meaningful and mobilizing for the whole polity, increasing the nation's "real standing." As discussed earlier, ʿAbduh's claim is that this substantive level of nationhood, the "existence", or what he called the "national existence" is an "irrefutable" reality in Egypt. Political *adab* is a condition in which this "existence" is able to speak for itself and choose the nation's government.

And the question of *adab* in ʿAbduh's political discourse here is not in the conservative sense used by al-Marṣafī that advises the army to know their place within the given social order (al-MARṢAFĪ 1881: 65-66), but is a challenge to that order that asks whether the new words in politics are the authentic words of the new "national existence?" As Timothy MITCHELL (1991: 136) has shown with reference to al-Marṣafī's *Essay on Eight Words*, *adab* encapsulated an idea of a close relationship between language and reality. Within classical *adab* literature on the Circle of Justice, kingship could be a legitimate authority for everyone in that the king, being independent of partisan interests, could be depended on to secure justice for the people—he "unified their word". *Adab* is those words that are real because everyone enjoys them and finds them useful. Part of this inclusivity was a matter of mediation—the way different and entertaining literary registers, including the emerging novellic genre, made the content of journalism accessible and consumable (GUTH 2020: 337), mentioned earlier as another implication in the banquet analogy. *Adab* has an important role in making possible the political, the plural realm of everyone, in which the force of the word's intepretation is made politically real—the textual act is a political act, which therefore invites regulation (MITCHELL 1991: 136). Unity and consensus allow for freedom in a context of social diversity because the shared political domain is not imposed, but always reflects the interest, will and intellect—the souls—of the different groups. Otherwise, ʿAbduh argues, there is unity only in "appearance," which implies the loss of benefits that are "universal" and the tyranny of some over others, even if the groups are "preserved" in their difference. So the ecumenical and linguistic dimensions of *adab* support a notion of the 'political' as a

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24 ʿAbduh's terminology of *lafẓ*, *maʿnà*, *ḥaqīqa* and *wujūd* is suggestive of his use of the Arab philosophical and Avicennian tradition in configuring his epistemology of public sphere—the issue of what gives political words referents that are real and trustworthy (making them a form of knowledge). For the influence of Avicenna on ʿAbduh via Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, see WISNOVSKY 2004 and SCHAR-BRODT 2007.

"national existence" that is emancipatory because, recognizing a shared humanity,[25] it pursues common interests and so mobilizes consent from all parties rather than ordering them from afar. And 'Abduh calls this object of consensus sacred—*al-maṣlaḥa al-karīma al-muqaddasa* ('ABDUH 2009: I, 366). These sacralizing epithets not only place consensus at the centre of moral and political legitimacy, but enhance this subjective dimension of authentic commitment and "fervour" that 'Abduh is making central to *adab*. 'Abduh is constructing the unifying politics of the *waṭan* as a sphere of free or volitional agency in which the "benefit" and recognition of "standing" that the people pursue for themselves is none other than the nation's "benefit" and "standing" (what Foucault calls governmentality). This, in turn, encourages the centrality of the 'political' in their lives, not replacing other more local communal identities or interests, but absorbing them into it. *Siyāsa* in 19th century Egypt was a term used by bureaucrats and magistrates to refer to the state legal-adminstrative sphere that would intervene in localities to secure law and order (FAHMY 2018, PETERS 1999). 'Abduh is reconfiguring its meaning in connection to journalistic notions of *siyāsa* in terms of the *waṭan* as the public sphere to imply the people's ownership of the 'political,' making it the intimate sphere of their souls—their continuous way of being or "existence" rather than an external intervening sphere.

The local context of this negotiation of the global liberal problem of how individual freedom can be a collective condition appears to be competing claims to represent the nation; at a time when newspapers were declaring 'Urābī to be a force for national unity (PHELPS 1999: 164-72), 'Abduh was warning of a danger of a false consensus in Egypt that was hiding partial interests. This was not just a cautionary message, but a challenge to social elites, European as well as Ottoman-Egyptian, who sought to co-opt the constitutional reforms within a paternalistic politics that denied the new journalistic meaning of the political as a kind of "life". The articles are polemical, but also pedagogical: similarly to al-Marṣafī's *Essay on Eight Words*, he is defining the rules of the game for gauging the reality of political words—namely, the question as to whether they carry a meaning that includes everyone's interests. 'Abduh's use of the tradition of *adab* is a creative negotiation embedded in his role and political context. But he also configures *adab* itself as a principle of social embedding, making politics suitable to its different users, like a language, so that it is a unifying and mobilizing force for the society in question. Part of this relation of words to social reality is to do with *adab*'s relation to action, which we will explore in the next section.

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25 Samuela Pagani argues that making this 'humanity' palpable was envisaged by *naḥda* litterateurs as a central function of *adab* as entertaining literature in the way the nascent novellic genre encouraged sentimental feelings for others across social divides—a sentimental correction, she argues, to the percieved inhumanity of the coercive modernizing programs of the *tanẓīmāt*; see PAGANI 2020: 351-57. 'Abduh himself authored entertaining *adabī* content that was also sentimental and humanizing—with the social realist style of novellic narrative—for the state newspaper, which I analyse in my PhD thesis (RYLE-HODGES 2020). For example, see his depiction of the regretful concience of the hedonist in "Waḍ' al-shay' fī ghayr mawḍi'ihi" ('ABDUH 2009: II, 133-36).

Habitus

A third dimension of *adab* that I propose ʿAbduh was exploiting to articulate his ethics of the modern public sphere is the dimension of habitus[26] or practice. *Adab*, as discussed in the classical *akhlāq* tradition of Ibn Miskawayh and Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111)[27], is understood as a reliable relationship between knowledge and action that is achieved by the disciplining of the soul or *nafs*—what could be characterized as the formation of a habitus that consistently manifests itself in action in an unthinking way (al-GHAZĀLĪ 1995: 17; IBN MISKAWAYH 1961: 27). ʿAbduh presents this aspect of *adab* as a keystone for the possibility of the political life. If the political life means that the people come first and then politics, in the other direction, politics makes demands on the people; the 'political' becomes a more holistic phenomenon, not acting upon the people, but being constituted actively and repeatedly by the people. ʿAbduh's point is that this is not easy and much more than a matter of introducing the necessary institutions like a representative assembly—political *adab* is a skill that takes time and discipline to cultivate. He maintains that "this *adab* is not achieved by sudden revelation (*al-mukāshafa*) or by nature or intuition, but it must be attained through searching and effort (*ijtihād*)" (ʿABDUH 2009: I, 364). Later, making a point about the difficulty of teaching *adab*, he affirms that it is "a habit (*al-malaka*) that cannot be attained except by repetition of action" (ʿABDUH 2009: I, 366). ʿAbduh is appropriating this practice-centred dimension of the *adab* tradition to connect political freedom and citizenship to the total transformation of the subject—of their soul—such that their comprehensive knowledge of public interest is embodied as the virtue that practises this knowledge in a comprehensive way; this practice does not just require love (*ḥubb*) that invests time, but also the cultivatable skill that emerges from this investment. As I highlighted earlier, ʿAbduh consistently defines the political stage of being a citizen firstly as interest in the soul or self (*nafs*) and then the nation (*jins*): the political life more widely presupposes a moral revolution in self-policing that changes the individual's habits and choices. The resulting skill of citizenship, unlike the agency of following an explicit rule, becomes unmediated by thought so that it is intrinsic to embodied agency, entering into every act and decision. The political life means that *siyāsa* operates through a kind of public culture. Political *adab* was not just a political ethics, but a political sociology – a new science that answered the question of how freedom itself could be a mode of governance.

This idea of political acumen at the level of culture or habitus addressed the political escalations of ʿAbduh's context. The new regime after the ʿUrābī-led protest on 9th September, operated under the popular mandate of "Egypt for the Egyptians" that promised a politics which reflected indigenous Egyptian interests as opposed to the foreign interests of European financial controllers. Journalism had a new political weight as the voice of the

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26 Implying the idea of "collective action" in Pierre Bourdieu's use of the term: habitus being a set of embodied dispositions that function as "matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions" that make possible collective action without there being an explicit rational code. The habitus, as internalization and integration of past experience provides an "immanent law" (BOURDIEU 1995: 81-83).

27 For a synthetic summary of this tradition see LAPIDUS 1984; for the prominence of the *akhlāq* tradition in the culture and schooling of reformist bureaucrats in 19th century Egypt, see COLE 1980: 29-46 and DEYOUNG 2015: 43-44.

people or public opinon in the theatrics of power. The political reform that was seen to commit the government to the inclusion of the Egyptians—in reality, local notables and landowners—in politics was the creation of an elected national assembly, for which local elections for delegates were taking place (SCHÖLCH 1981: 193-194). So the state was institionalizing the logic of the public sphere whereby the people as a political community could, by choosing whether the nation is a monarchy or republic for instance, determine their politics—what was refered to earlier as the "self-constituting" nature of the public sphere. This new kind of politics made for a destabilizing factor in governance that was shown in Urābī's toppling of the Khedival cabinet and that ʿAbduh's notion of political *adab* appears to be addressing. If the political order must follow upon the people's choice, mass-mediated in print, ʿAbduh's concern was that there must be something that regulates this choice in the first place, but is not itself external to choice in a way that would negate the self-constituting nature of the politics of consensus. Political *adab* by ingraining knowledge of public interest in the people who act in the public sphere, strikes the balance of containing the anarchic potential of political freedom without negating it through state tyranny. This middle point allows him to conceptualize through *adab* a free and independent press with its own internal regulation.

Within this social imaginary of the public sphere, political *adab* as a form of embodied skill and culture could provide this internal regulation as it is not 'action-transcendent'; it is a more basic cultural level of order—of knowledge, skill and habits—that is simultaneous with common action and public conversation. ʿAbduh writes that when the citizen has *adab*, they have a "pure soul and honest intention and leaning towards the public good"—"and then and only then," he says emphatically, "can one have the sacred rights of the people of the political life—freedom of opinion, speech and voting." For each freedom, he says, there is an internalized limit (a *ḥadd*) without which freedom would be "more shameful than enslavement." For instance, freedom of speech should not "jeopardize benefit and propriety and should not violate honour or damage one who is innocent or be spoken without certain knowledge" (ʿABDUH 2009: I, 365). The limits that protect the interests of the whole are not external unchanging laws, but are mobile and internal to the participants, speaking, voting and expressing their opinions—a constitution for the nation, protecting individuals and factual truth on the deep level of people's souls. This internalized protective virtue ensures that freely speaking the truth does not entail social hurt that could divide the nation—a national unity and civility that has room for free opinion and criticism. In theory, in the words of ʿAbduh, the "state has been appointed to strengthen these rights and support these limits" (ʿABDUH 2009: I, 365). It ensures that the public sphere functions as the political life so that, according to his reformist vision, the people themselves and their power to be in unified discourse via *adab* would constitute the momentum of state power. While being a demand for regulation, the radical challenge to more conservative social elites and colonial views of Egypt as incapable of a political will is also apparent. For it defined a legitimate and non-anarchic place for public opinion in Egyptian politics in the long term—indeed making it a non-infringeable locus of the "sacred"; having facilitated the rise of the new constitutional regime, public opinion was not just to be consulted, but would be an active and corrective force in governance. This was a vision of politics in which journalism would actively shape the modern state, giving not just readers, but journalists like ʿAbduh from lower social strata unprecedented power.

'Abduh is tying the public sphere as the political life to a whole new tradition of virtues which Egypt is growing into—political *adab*. The practice-centred nature of *adab* also offered his answer to how the regulating power of this tradition can empower a genuine "national existence," spreading from elites to the non-elites. He raises the issue that because political *adab* is an acquired and embodied skill, it cannot be attained to the same degree by everyone. He suggests that it can be spread iteratively and communicated via embodied practice. It is learned by the masses by imitating and copying guides

> They climb the rungs of the political life until this is successively repeated and so there develops in them *al-malakāt al-dhawqiyya* (habits of taste) which are known, but not defined just as it used to be for the Arabs in the *jāhiliyya* with regards to their language, speaking the right speech for the situation, whilst they did not know the linguistic rule without taste. ('ABDUH 2009: I, 367)

Through *adab* and its intuitive aesthetic quality, referred to earlier as "*ma'rifa*," 'Abduh conceptualizes the possibility of an implicit knowledge that could encompass sectors of the population beyond the elite. Despite stretching beyond the knowledgeable "elite" (*al-khāṣṣa*), the public sphere or 'public opinion' can be a responsible arbiter of legitimacy because it works like a language with its own immanent and authoritative rules that are practically active in all people, even if they are not educated enough to know them explicitly (i.e., as a habitus). 'Abduh argues that the more are "cultivated in *adab* (*muta'addib*)", the more the political life will endure and grow owing to the unity of orientation (*wijha*) it makes possible—as opposed to phases of politics in the past when the masses (*al-'āmma*) were under the "shadow" of an *adab* elite, and had different political goals and orientations ('ABDUH 2009: I, 367).

Being a citizen is about being literate in a political culture and way of life, extending beyond the public sphere—it is not just specific public displays on the national stage, but is systematic in the way each individual citizen acts and makes choices. Hence the possibility of the political life as an uncoerced and self-perpetuating civic order. The holism of *adab* here—grounding national politics on the level of souls—addresses an epistemic problem of the connection between word and action in the political sphere, of how mass-mediated words like the "nation" can be trusted to mean something practically. This in turn addresses the issue of consensus: the people cannot unify around words that do not have a relation to the "reality" (*ḥaqīqa*) that is their "existence" via "benefits" ("in word and meaning"). So, another aspect of this relation of words to "reality" seems to be the way *adab* substantiates words with action. 'Abduh calls his readers to action that will offer visible proof of their words:

> So, join this community! Let us spread its banners and raise its light and make visible its effects by actions which prove (*tuthbit*) the rejection of corrupt intentions and restraint from selfish motives and words which are transparent to sound insights and understandings (*ṣiḥḥat al-abṣār wa-l-baṣā'ir*) and good hearts and consciences (*ḥusn al-asrār wa-l-sarā'ir*). And perhaps we will stop those tongues that accuse us of ignorance and stupidity and of being far from the political life and perhaps we will realize the hopes (*āmāl*) of those who wish us happiness and success (*ḥusn al-ḥāl*) ('ABDUH 2009: I, 368).

ʿAbduh's Arabic words are here lyrical, rhythmic and rhyming—see above the alliteration and assonance of the repeated *-ār*, *-āʾir* and *-āl* sounds. One can also note the grammatical parallelism of human faculties (getting deeper from the perceptive to the heart-felt). In a certain sense, they embody *adab* in its meaning of disciplining (*taʾdīb*) in how, as words, they are connected to action by addressing the heart and conscience that are the sources of action and reverberate rhythmically to heighten their impact. This is an illustration of the way the comprehensivness of *adab* as literature (its multiple registers, literary, philosophical, instructional, entertaining etc.[28]) engineers a holistic politics not only by attracting popular consumption, but by addressing the whole person—their soul as well as their mind to garner patriotic sentiment and "fervour" as well as knowledge. As for *adab* as words with real trustworthy meanings, if the word, "nation", has no other reality than the people who therefore receive the "honour" for its success, then it is as real as their actions—its proof is in its visible "effects." These "effects" are testament to the deep and sentimental reality of political words in people's souls and conscience— a purified vision that sees beyond self-interest to the wider arrangement of mutual benefit in "society" (vision and understanding being semantically-entwined in the terms *al-abṣār wa-l-baṣāʾir*). So *adab* as a practical skill facilitates the political life by matching spoken political words with visible actions and so allowing the unifying locus of the nation to be trustworthy as a practical and empirical reality, fulfilling hopes and disproving those who discredit it. The "political life" is a panoptical society in which the citizenry are not just the subject of collective vision, but also its disciplinary object, serving as the gauge for the reality of the "political" in the everyday.

As Bonebakker points out, *adab* rather paradoxically has both referred to general knowledge and the specific knowledge required for a particular profession or practice like *adab al-qāḍī* (the conduct of a judge) or *adab al-akl* (table-manners) (BONEBAKKER 1990: 24-25). Indeed, the latter sense is also present in ʿAbduh's usage of the different senses of holism or comprehensiveness in *adab*: the political is not a self-standing realm, but requires a whole way of life and moral tradition that cultivates citizenship as a specialized and dependable habitus. In this way, ʿAbduh paints political freedom as a source of stability that synchronizes society with the political goals of the state and vice-versa. The *siyāsa* of the political life is not destabilized by the public sphere and wider participation in political decisions. Rather it has even firmer foundations because through the mass-mediating power of the public sphere it becomes grounded in the habits and virtues of the people; citizenship as political *adab* is a new type of limiting and stabilizing tradition of words and practices for state power. Talal ASAD (2014) and Wael HALLAQ (2014) present the expansion of state power and the liberal logic of the public sphere in the 19th century as a break from Islamic tradition that divorces law from morality, power from authority. For them, Islamic ethics reached its contextual limit with the modern state and liberalism. ʿAbduh, by contrast, drew on the *adab* tradition to argue that modern political freedom can be coupled with a new kind of morality and journalistic tradition of virtues and texts that regulates the public sphere internally, holding law and power to account in a new way.

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28 ʿAbduh also uses patriotic poetry in this series, 370-371. The new novellic use of different narrative episodes to offer multifaceted knowledge of a subject was another appropriation by *nahḍa* writers of this traditional *adab* style of comprehensiveness, see GUTH 2020: 337.

Conclusion

'Abduh's engagement with the *adab* tradition in the context of the public sphere and political journalism during the 'Urābī revolution offers a strong case study for the contextually and practically embedded nature of Islamic ethical traditions. For *adab* does not prescribe an explicit and literal program but offers a set of interconnected meanings that 'Abduh evidently amplifies in a creative way to address problems of political anarchy, unaccountability and colonialism that he perceived in his role as Director of Publications and chief censor for the state. Whether he can be characterized as purveying the Islamic discursive tradition in Talal Asad's sense of the word as textual tradition upholding orthodoxy (ASAD 2009) is debatable. It could perhaps be said, more in line with Fahmy's argument for multiple interconnected Islamic discursive traditions spanning state and society (FAHMY 2018: 25-26), that he is building elements of the *adab* tradition into a new journalistic and statist Islamic discursive tradition for the public sphere that comprises modern civic virtues and sensibilities of national belonging. His discourse on political *adab* not only challenges the binary of Islam and modernization but shows how his thought was engaged with the general liberal questions of his time about freedom, tyranny and political rights. I have particularly highlighted the way his ethical thought is produced out of his practice of being an editor and censor working for a nation-building reformist program: his creative use of the *adab* tradition is geared towards regulating and censoring the public sphere and produces a distinctive political ethics and sociology on this working level. His notion of political *adab* sets epistemic and moral rules that define the meaning of political words like "nation" and "freedom" circulating in the public sphere.

I suggested that 'Abduh's appropriation of the *adab* tradition reflects an attempt not only to regulate the public sphere, but to turn it into a channel of national mobilization that, challenging governing elites, invited the Egyptian people to take ownership of the modern state and its reforms. In the political life, as in Taylor's model of the public sphere, the people are pre-political and choose their political order so that that the political order becomes a living and self-moving order. *Adab* as a kind of culture of implicit meanings, habits and sentiments provides a moral order for this pre-political stage that is not external to or imposed on the people because it is internal to their agency and practice of visualizing "society" and, by extension, the shared interests of the nation or *waṭan*. In turn, this idea of the "political" or *siyāsa* as a realm of free agency—chosen by public opinion—is 'Abduh's blueprint for a new kind of *siyāsa* more generally; the political life, being a holistic politics, is not merely an administrative legal apparatus, but works bottom-up from the people as a continuous cultural and moral unity of acts and intentions, transcending their social and religious distinctions—imagined in the future as extending to the non-elite in the manner of an internalized habitus and language. The political freedoms of modern citizenship thus inhabit the level of the people's souls—a level which is mobile and agile as well as deep and substantive, and so on which they can truly be said to 'exist'. 'Abduh's logic plays on the link within the meanings of *adab* between language and reality, his appropriation of which for journalistic and state purposes I suggested is captured in the following important lines:

> When the nation rises in status, that honours and exalts the inhabitants because it has no reality (*ḥaqīqa*) other than by them and in them and there is no success except in

them and from them and so they are it [the nation] and it [the nation] is their existence in word (*lafẓ*) and meaning (*maʿnāhu*). (ʿABDUH 2009: I, 366-367)

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