Télémaque, Ṭahṭāwī and the (Counter-) Enlightenment in the Arab world

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Abstract

The Arab cultural awakening (*Nahḍa*) was one of the most pervasive and consequential intellectual movements in modern history. A key figure within this movement was the Egyptian civil servant, educator, translator and Islamic scholar Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī (1801–1873). Having visited Paris, he developed an interest in the moral, social and political ideas that were prevalent in nineteenth-century France. However, most current scholarship agrees that because of their secular nature, these ideas were of limited use for a devout Muslim such as Ṭahṭāwī in his own cultural and political context. In 1850 Ṭahṭāwī translated François Fénelon's *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699), and while it has been suggested that this novel may have influenced Ṭahṭāwī's later works, his translation of it has been mostly ignored by modern researchers. In this paper we demonstrate that Ṭahṭāwī found *Télémaque* to contain many potentially suitable moral and political lessons to translate into the modernizing Arabic-Islamic culture of the late nineteenth century. First, we present a history of the reception and cultural position of Fénelon's *Télémaque* in France. This will help scholars understand it as a popular text across ideologies and philosophical movements. Then we discuss Ṭahṭāwī's ideological makeup, specifically in relation to modernity. Lastly, we offer a discussion of passages from Ṭahṭāwī's translation of *Télémaque*. This allows us to expose some of Ṭahṭāwī's discursive strategies in Islamizing and Arabizing the concepts and ideas present in the novel, thus laying the conceptual groundwork for his later philosophical writings. On a broader level, this paper examines if and

how Ṭahṭāwī's own ideas and his appropriation of those of Fénelon as present in *Télémaque* can be plausibly included in the category of a 'global Counter-Enlightenment'.

Introduction

The Arab cultural awakening or renaissance (*Nahḍa*) was one of the most pervasive and consequential intellectual movements in modern history. Initiated by early-nineteenth-century intellectuals in Egypt and the Levant, it gradually spread throughout the Arabic-speaking world, lasting well into the twentieth century. The movement took place during a period of major top-down political reforms both within Egypt and in the Ottoman Empire as a whole. These reforms 'mark a discursive and political moment that made the time ripe for a new breed of intellectuals'.[1] Some of these intellectuals acted as members of the political establishment, while others operated independently.

A key early facilitator in this development was Muḥammad ʿAlī, the Ottoman governor who ruled Egypt as an independent viceroy from 1805 to 1848. ʿAlī's modernizing ambitions involved the import of European military expertise and educational methods, as well as the establishment of a modern bureaucracy and infrastructure along the lines of contemporary European states. The modernization effort required men knowledgeable of the modern ways, and to this end the procurement and translation of thousands of European books was ordered. While ʿAlī's interest was in technological, practical and military knowledge (the Egyptian military caste of the Mamlukes had been decimated by the French army in 1798), his scouts inevitably also gathered and translated works containing political, religious and cultural ideas that impacted contemporary Europe. Apart from the collection of books, ʿAlī also sent out student missions for study in European cities. Among the students sent off in these missions, one name stands out among all the others. Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī (1801–1873) was the only

Arab sent along in a mission of forty-four students of mostly Turkish background to study in Paris.

Ṭahṭāwī was a relatively young man who studied at al-Azhar, one of the Muslim world's most prestigious centres of Islamic learning. His role in the mission was not to engage in formal studies, but rather to tend to his companions' religious needs. However, Ṭahṭāwī soon mastered the French language well enough to engage in academic studies, and he quickly developed an interest in French culture. He read many works, especially by key figures of the Enlightenment, whose ideas he admired.[2] Ṭahṭāwī kept a detailed journal on his experiences in France, which he published in 1834 and which is now considered his magnum opus: *Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz fī talkhīṣ bārīs* ('Extracting gold from a summary account of Paris').[3] Upon his return to Egypt, Ṭahṭāwī served the court in various administrative positions and gradually came to function as the chief ideologue of Muḥammad ʿAlī's administration, tasked with the moral and ideological justification of its policies. In 1850, Muḥammad ʿAlī's grandson and successor, ʿAbbās, reversed many of his predecessor's policies and sent Ṭahṭāwī into exile in Khartoum.

During his exile in the Sudan (1850–1854), Ṭahṭāwī claims he still felt the dutiful urge to serve his nation and decided to spend his time in a useful way by translating François Fénelon's *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699), one of the books he had read during his time in France.[4] Ṭahṭāwī's selection of this book for translation is interesting for multiple reasons. First, Fénelon's *Télémaque* has had a reputation of being a subversive political work, and because of his exile and troubled relationship with khedive ʿAbbās, many modern scholars have given Ṭahṭāwī's translation that same label.[5] Various unsubstantiated reasons have been given for Ṭahṭāwī's exile, leaving us in the dark concerning the conditions of this period. As this paper will show, the resulting uncertainty on that particular episode of his career has played a role in the skewed manner in which Ṭahṭāwī's translation of *Télémaque* has been interpreted thus far. Thus, what is interesting is not the idea that Ṭahṭāwī chose this book to act out against his patrons, but the fact that, until recently, most scholars have ignored more plausible reasons for him to make this choice.

The unlikeliness of Ṭahṭāwī's motives being subversive is further substantiated by the fact that since at least the early nineteenth century, Télémaque had been a widely-read work all over the Middle East. Ṭahṭāwī's endeavour was far from unique even in his own language: by

the time he began working on it, several translations had already been made into Greek, Persian, Turkish and Arabic. There are no indications that this text was in any way deemed politically sensitive, and it was not banned anywhere in the region.

The characterization of Fénelon's *Télémaque* as a critique of Louis XIV's rule has been amply discredited by now.[6] The book was a best-seller in mid-nineteenth-century France because it fit the taste of neo-classicism and because it was recognized by schools all over the country for its educational value. When we approach the translation from the perspective of its reputation during Ṭahṭāwī's visit to France and its currency in the Middle East, pay due attention to the similarities between the lives of Ṭahṭāwī and Fénelon and, perhaps most importantly, include *Télémaque'*s political and moral lessons in our analysis, it becomes apparent why it is likely that Ṭahṭāwī had other reasons to translate Fénelon's famous historical novel. Like Ṭahṭāwī, Fénelon had a conservative background. Not a revolutionary by any means, Fénelon's ideas regarding religion's place in the state and the role of the prince were quite suitable to Ṭahṭāwī. When he worked on this translation, Ṭahṭāwī had not yet fully developed his ideas on the state or the prince; these would crystalize much later in his career. The most important reflections of his social and political thought are found in *Manāhij al-albāb al-miṣriyya fī mabāhij al-ādāb al-ʿaṣriyya* (1869), a treatise on his vision for a modern Egypt, and in *al-Murshid al-amīn li l-banāt wa-l-banīn* (1872), in which he argues for the equal education of boys and girls.[7] Both Daniel Newman and Gilbert Delanoue suggest a link between these works and the translation of *Télémaque*, but this link has never actually been explored or made concrete. As this paper will argue, it is indeed plausible that Fénelon's *Télémaque* helped Ṭahṭāwī form the political ideas he would later expose in his other works.

When we relate Ṭahṭāwī's thought to Fénelon, we must ask what it means when a nineteenth-century intellectual (or indeed, intellectual movement) from outside Western Europe adopts or adapts an aspect of Western European thought that scholarship identifies as (Counter-)Enlightenment thought. The case of Ṭahṭāwī and Fénelon is particularly exciting, precisely because Ṭahṭāwī has become known as an icon of the early Arab liberal age, while Fénelon is classified by some as a father of the Enlightenment, but by others as a representative of the Counter-Enlightenment *avant la lettre*. How should we understand this possible

contradiction? Is it at all possible to expand our understanding of an intellectual movement such as the (Counter-) Enlightenment to include intellectuals that operated in regions far removed from the (Counter-) Enlightenment's original geographical, cultural and religious context?

The Enlightenment originated in a distinctly French political and social order, reacting against a distinctly Roman Catholic tradition. As thinkers outside of France adopted the ideas of the movement, each with their own regional constellation of politics, religion and philosophy, by definition the movement became the ancestor to different versions of the Enlightenment. Similarly, the Counter-Enlightenment was a response to the political, social, ideological and philosophical ramifications of the Enlightenment specific to a certain time and place, thus bound to differ from one place to the next. France's contributions to the Counter-Enlightenment were not driven by the exact same motives as those from Germany. For instance, part of the anti-Enlightenment sentiment in Germany may be attributed to a general anti-French sentiment, pitting German passion and poetry against French rigidity and rationalism.[8] Also, Germany in the nineteenth century was the product of its own intellectual and political history. On the other hand, Germany and France also had much in common in terms of culture, history and commercial relations, which allowed for the movement of ideas between intellectuals of either region. This means that while differences are already significant and should be noted, a case can still be made that some of these intellectual movements existed in a relatively homogeneous manner across borders.

However, when we start to look further into Europe, direct contact between intellectuals becomes less likely, shared culture and history becomes less of a factor, and the local power constellations begin to differ more from those in Germany and France. The further away we move from the epicentres of these intellectual movements, the greater the difference becomes between the contexts in which the ideas are introduced, and the more selectively the ideas of such movements reach these remoter regions. It can be deduced from this that the larger we draw the circle of inclusion for a certain intellectual movement, the more stripped-down and basic the defining principles and ideas become. Moreover, these separate ideas that no longer belong to a bigger body of thought become part of a new context, possibly within its own larger intellectual movement. Is it then a question of the (Counter-)

Enlightenment spreading across the globe, or different local movements borrowing from it as they see fit? This is one of the problems that occur when thinking about our question. What are the minimum requirements to plausibly categorize the body of ideas of intellectuals who come from remote philosophical traditions as part of a (counter) movement they are not geographically or culturally attached to?

Another issue that must be considered is that Ṭahṭāwī did not operate in isolation. He and his work are very much a part of the larger context of reform in the Ottoman Empire, both actively shaping it and being shaped by it. This translation therefore converses not only with the outside context of Enlightenment and possibly Counter-Enlightenment, but with Tahtawi's own political and intellectual context as well. As we will demonstrate throughout this paper, it is often the case that dualistic views of ideas are not only too simplistic, but also culturally bound and therefore pose a second problem. When we think in terms of a movement and an opposing counter-movement, we place certain ideas opposite to each other. While it may be the case that in Western European, Christian traditions these oppositions are 'valid', they may not be as valid elsewhere.

Summarizing the objectives of this paper, we will relate Ṭahṭāwī's central ideas on modernity as can be drawn from both his *Murshid* and his *Manāhij* to those present in his translation of Fénelon's *Télémaque*. This will make it clear how Ṭahṭāwī adopted many elements of this novel into his own philosophical writings and how they fit into the reform ideas of the age. We will pay special attention to the changing ideological and political meaning this text has been given on its path through time and space. We will do this while critically examining if and how Ṭahṭāwī's own ideas and his appropriation of those of Fénelon as present in *Télémaque* can be plausibly included in the category of a 'global Counter-Enlightenment'.

First, we present a history of the reception and cultural position of Fénelon's *Télémaque* in France. This will lead to an understanding of not only its appeal to Ṭahṭāwī, but also its unique position as a popular text across ideologies and philosophical movements. In the second part we discuss Ṭahṭāwī's ideological makeup, specifically in relation to modernity. We explore the extent to which his status as a high-ranking civil servant and religious scholar limited or enabled him to lay out his ideas on modernity. Here we will argue against viewing conservativism

and modernism as tensely opposite concepts in discussing Ṭaḥṭāwī's philosophical attitudes. Not only is this relevant to the question of the possible existence of a global Counter-Enlightenment; it also refers to the sometimes confusing characterizations of Ṭaḥṭāwī's thought in existing scholarship of the period. Lastly, a discussion of passages from Ṭaḥṭāwī's translation of *Télémaque* will show the many similarities between *Télémaque* and Ṭaḥṭāwī's later works. By focusing on the translation we can expose some of Ṭaḥṭāwī's discursive strategies in Islamizing and Arabizing the concepts and ideas present in the novel. We will argue that in this translation we see Ṭaḥṭāwī laying the conceptual groundwork for his later philosophical writings. Insight into these strategies hopefully provides cause for further research.

The Cultural Evolution of *Télémaque* in France

Fénelon is a peculiar figure, in the sense that representatives from different or even opposing political and philosophical movements have claimed him as one of their heroes. Depending on whom you ask, he could be considered a father of the Enlightenment, a hero of the Revolution or an anti-modernist deeply embedded in religious tradition. In order to understand the attraction of Fénelon's *Télémaque* to thinkers of the Enlightenment as well as those of the Counter-Enlightenment, but also to visiting intellectuals from outside Europe such as Ṭaḥṭāwī and more distant audiences in general, it is useful to be familiar with the book's reception history in France.

When Fénelon's manuscript was finished around 1697, only a handful of copies circulated among his students in the royal court. In that same year, Fénelon was ordered by the king to permanently return to his diocese because of a theological dispute in which he had sided with the losing party. The subject of this dispute, a treaty he had written titled *Explication des maximes des saints sur la vie intérieure* (1697), was ultimately condemned by Pope Innocent XII in 1699 as a result of a two-year long campaign by Fénelon's opponent Bossuet. Fénelon humbly accepted defeat. Around the same time, publishers were starting to show an interest in Télémaque, and eventually, after a domestic servant had come away with a copy, the book was printed in 1699.[9] Because of rumours of subversion and a perceived criticism of the king, the book

was consequently outlawed. All of this scandal immediately created a huge demand, and many clandestine re-editions were published. It proved impossible for the court to control the circulation of the novel.

In 1717, after both Fénelon and Louis XIV had died, an officially sanctioned edition was finally published, and *Télémaque* would remain in high demand while enjoying legal status. According to Le Brun, the book was in agreement with early eighteenth-century taste, which asked for literature to be useful and entertaining (*utile et agréable*). Le Brun observes that in this period a first change in the cultural perception and function of *Télémaque* can be seen, 'de l'éducation du prince (…) vers l'utilité et l'agrément du public'.[10]

The fact that Fénelon chose a Homeric setting for his book meant that he would make no direct, explicit reference to Christianity or the Bible. In addition, any risk of being accused of teaching the royal heir subversive ideas was circumvented by presenting his lessons in the form of a novel. The ambiguous nature that was thus attached to the book made it appealing to secular and religious audiences alike. In the same manner, the not explicitly Christian, yet also clearly not secular character likely made the acculturation process easier for Ṭahṭāwī.

Despite the fact that the commotion at the court had subsided and the book now resided safely in the mainstream, a large part of the public's attraction to it remained the element of scandal, as well as the perceived criticism of Louis XIV. Many editions appeared, accompanied by explanatory notes on Fénelon's supposed critical passages, including speculations on the real-world counterparts to Fénelon's characters.[11] These types of editions would continue to appear until the late eighteenth century, and according to Le Brun the legend that had formed around Fénelon would make him out to be something that he absolutely was not: a 'philosopher' of the type that the eighteenth century would spawn, and an opponent of absolute monarchy.[12]

Classical Antiquity was a popular topic throughout eighteenth-century France, and its popularity increased in the century's later decades. *Télémaque*'s cultural position profited from this trend, as references to scenes from *Télémaque* appeared everywhere, from paintings, to furniture, to porcelain dishes and linen. The book was seen as a classical work, and had now grown into an educational role: it was used in secondary and higher education to teach the Classics. From this new educational status, a new kind of demand emerged, and again

many new editions were published, this time accompanied by mythological dictionaries and maps of the Classical Mediterranean for students. Fénelon's popularity was now at an all-time high. In 1771, at the request of the French Academy, numerous works of praise appeared, placing Fénelon in the humanist tradition. This image of Fénelon the philosopher grew so strong that, during the Revolution, there was talk of moving his body to be enshrined among France's national heroes in the Pantheon.[13]

In the nineteenth century, the educational use of *Télémaque* evolved further, as it was recognized for the full scope of its pedagogical potential. It was now used all over Europe in all levels of education and in the context of many school subjects, including History, Geography, Literature, Mythology, Latin (using the Latin translation), French as a foreign language, Ethics, Social and Political Studies. Le Brun notes that the book now sold better than ever, but that its use had completely changed from the early eighteenth to the nineteenth century.[14] People were now reading it for entirely different reasons, and it could be said that by the time Ṭahṭāwī learned about this book, whose cultural omnipresence in that era would have made it difficult to miss, its role and interpretation had come full circle. Fénelon's pedagogical intentions were finally realized, but on a much bigger scale than he had envisioned.

In more recent secondary literature on *Télémaque*, that is, from the late twentieth century onwards, a general consensus has emerged that the primary goal for this book is in fact the education and moral instruction of a future king of France, as had been Fénelon's claim all along. Furthermore, this literature recognizes that the morality contained in it is deeply spiritual and heavily embedded in Christian theology.[15] Therefore, it is impossible to view Fénelon's spiritual and political views separately.[16] The one central doctrine in Fénelonian morality is that of selflessness, or self-denial.[17] Fénelon had already developed his understanding of this concept in *Explication des Maximes des Saints*, the theological treaty that resulted in his exile from the court in 1699.[18] The doctrine is about disavowing personal interests and striving for the happiness of others; it requires submission to the hierarchy in the natural order of things: God, the nation, family. Relating this to the context of instructing a future king, the doctrine is a reminder that no-one is exempt from having to answer to a higher power, as the son obeys the father, the father the nation (*patrie*) and the king, and finally the king

answers to God and is bound by Divine Law.[19] Out of this central idea flows an emphasis on the virtues of moderation, simplicity, frugality, charity and labour, and a return to a closer relationship between man and nature.

It is clear, from a chronological point of view, and in terms of the ideas the book contains, that it is incorrect to think of Fénelon's *Les Aventures de Télémaque* as a work of Enlightenment thought. However, when considered from a cultural and educational point of view, the matter is more complicated. During the Enlightenment, *Télémaque* enjoyed its biggest selling numbers and became a staple of the new education system. Thus, the work's popularity and eventual cultural function should be considered a product of the Enlightenment. The question of to which philosophical movement, if any, it nominally belonged would have been unclear and probably irrelevant to Rifāʿa al-Ṭahṭāwī at the time of his encounter with *Télémaque*.

Ṭahṭāwī and Modernity

When analyzing Ṭahṭāwī's work, it is important to recognize that as an author, he was not autonomous. His role as a high-ranking public servant has greatly impacted the course and subject matter of his writings. Öhrnberg goes so far as to argue that 'the final assessment of his contributions must also be an assessment of the endeavours of his patrons'.[20] This is relevant to the question of his participation in an extra-European or possibly global version of Counter-Enlightenment, as one of Ṭahṭāwī's most central tasks was to create an ideological and perhaps spiritual framework for the new era ushered in by the reformist Muḥammad ʿAlī. Modernity and progress were considered favourable concepts in this framework. It should be added to this that Ṭahṭāwī seems to have genuinely supported the modernizing policies that were put in place by his superiors.

When surveying scholarship on Ṭahṭāwī, an unclear image emerges of his willingness to adopt European ideas into the Egyptian context. He is simultaneously described as symbolizing 'the best of the syncretism between East and West, tradition and modernity',[21] and 'still deeply rooted in his inherited convictions'.[22] Even though they allude to scattered mentions by Ṭahṭāwī of Burlamaqui and Montesquieu, most

scholars seem to agree that although Ṭahṭāwī had an open mind towards European political and moral ideas, because of his strict adherence to traditional Islamic conventions he was rarely willing to go so far as to adopt them for use in the Egyptian context.[23] He judged every aspect of European life and thought presented to him through the lens of the Divine Law (*sharīʿa*). And while in his report on Paris he showed great admiration for the French, he also abhorred their godlessness.[24] While this is true, we are inclined to disagree with the notion that the lack of a religious dimension would have been a deal-breaker for Ṭahṭāwī, since, as our discussion of the translation will demonstrate, Ṭahṭāwī had a knack for Islamizing passages of text whose contents met his favour. Furthermore, as we will also see in the current case study, it is not necessary for a thinker like Ṭahṭāwī to agree with the complete body of ideas propagated in a European text to let it be a source of inspiration. Ṭahṭāwī was capable of picking those elements that either readily fit Islamic orthodoxy, or could be made to, in order to fit his own goals and visions, which in turn fit those of his patrons.

Ṭahṭāwī put a great deal of effort into maintaining a balance between the traditional disciplines and the new intellectual material he would come upon.[25] The result contains elements that can be claimed to belong to both Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment. However, it does not strike us as useful to think in these terms, as Ṭahṭāwī's thoughts and ideas originated outside the European tradition of movements in philosophy and art. We therefore argue that when considered from the point of view of Ṭahṭāwī, Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment ideas do not have to be viewed as opposite. We will demonstrate this in our discussion of the translation.

According to Delanoue, Ṭahṭāwī's ultimate goal was to build a nation that was simultaneously Islamic, Egyptian and modern.[26] Core concepts in Ṭahṭāwī's ideology were civilization and progress. In order to excel in these areas, Ṭahṭāwī created a doctrine focused on moral instruction and scientific learning, which would lead to material prosperity and general well-being. Ṭahṭāwī has been described as a reformer, but it is important to define what this actually means in his case. Ṭahṭāwī was an advocate for innovation from within the broad confines of Islamic tradition, and always in agreement with the ruler's policies.

In his *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, Stephen Sheehi identifies a 'nomenclature of reform',[27] a lexicon that informs the narratives

to which participants from all sides of the reform discourse during the Arab renaissance subscribe. Civilization and progress are core concepts in this lexicon, as well as secular knowledge as a means toward those goals. It is easy to (mis)take these concepts as being informed by a purely Islamic framework, but as Sheehi argues, 'competing discourses of social reform and national identity from "Islamic modernism" to "Arab secularism" to parochial nationalisms' are all informed by this same nomenclature and the narratives that go with it.[28] It is clear that Ṭahṭāwī is no exception here. This is an important indication that, even though Ṭahṭāwī is seen as a pioneer of the Arab renaissance, the movement already possessed a mature discourse when he had yet to publish his most important ideological works.

Still, Islam is the framework within which all of Ṭahṭāwī's thought was articulated and the standard against which he would judge the merit of all political and moral ideas. He was firmly embedded in Islamic scholarly tradition, and in his endeavour to bring Islam into modernity he never tried to introduce completely novel ideas or interpretations. Ṭahṭāwī did try to combat the rigid climate of Islamic thought of his time by making a case for the medieval theological concept of *tajdīd*, meaning 'renewal'. The idea is not to introduce new elements to Islam, but to revisit and consult older, perhaps neglected or forgotten traditions and try to see if they are applicable to current conditions, but always with adherence to established dogma. Ṭahṭāwī paid lip service to this principle, but in practice, we see orthodoxy to be very malleable, to the extent that one wonders how restrictively it in fact functioned. In this regard, Hourani describes Ṭahṭāwī as a pioneer who argued for the legitimacy of adapting Islamic Law to new circumstances, but was not able to go quite as far as later authors were.[29] The introduction to the translation of *Télémaque* contains examples of Ṭahṭāwī taking liberties with orthodoxy while interpreting the Quran to justify possibly offensive or blasphemous elements in the novel.[30] These examples, along with his talent to Islamize foreign writings, indicate that he may have been more open and creative than Hourani gave him credit for. Our assessment of Ṭahṭāwī is therefore that he was probably not quite as dogmatic or dismissive of Enlightenment ideas as some of the authors we quoted have argued. However, in order to make his ideas acceptable to his patrons and the public, and to avoid risking accusations of heresy, he quite understandably kept his writings within

the boundaries of Islamic orthodoxy. It is also through this Islamic framework that Ṭahṭāwī established and justified his Egyptian nationalism *avant la lettre*.

In his *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (1962), Hourani introduces Ṭahṭāwī as 'the writer who first made articulate the idea of the Egyptian nation'.[31] Both Hourani and Delanoue agree that while he justified his love of the homeland by citing Islamic sources, religion does not seem to have been the driving factor behind Ṭahṭāwī's patriotism. They speak of a genuine love for Egypt, a patriotism that was intrinsically present in him, 'a warm personal feeling, not just a deduction from the principles of political philosophy'.[32] Ṭahṭāwī, in both his *Manāhij* and his *Murshid*, would often use the terms *waṭan* (the homeland, home country) and *ḥubb al-waṭan* (love of the home country), around which he would develop a moral doctrine of duties and rights for the citizen, whom he told to no longer sit idly by and passively submit to power, but participate in building a truly civilized society. This participation should not be confused with political (em)power(ment), however. Ṭahṭāwī was committed to the absolute sovereignty of the ruler, as was dictated by Islamic tradition (and his own patron). Ṭahṭāwī's call for participation refers instead to the individual's loyalty and self-sacrifice to the progress and wellbeing of the nation through economic activity and education. The citizen's principal right is freedom, 'for freedom alone can create a real community and a strong patriotism'.[33] Ṭahṭāwī's patriotism fuelled an interest in the scholarly subject of History.[34] His doctrine with regard to the Egyptian *waṭan* also included the claim that Egypt's history goes back to that of the pharaonic eras, thus arguing for the intrinsic greatness of Egypt as a civilization, a greatness that can be re-obtained by fostering the two main ingredients of civilization: moral virtue and economic prosperity.

In service of progress and civilization, Ṭahṭāwī emphasised that Islamic law allowed for learning from non-Muslim civilizations and the need of involving foreign parties in the formation of a nation of progress. In fact, patriotism and friendly relations with foreign nations were the two pillars of his idea of progress.[35] The primary goal of these relations involved learning and adopting the modern sciences and technology. However, as civilization does not exist solely on the merit of material prosperity and knowledge, Ṭahṭāwī also identified and acknowledged some European virtues: labour, courage, loyalty in social relationships and a full commitment to one's country.[36]

Ṭahṭāwī had a vision on how to achieve the great ideal of a modern, Islamic, Egyptian nation. He formulated this vision with a healthy dose of realism, which is to say with total deference to the political system and policies that were in place. So when we speak of Ṭahṭāwī as a reformist ideologue, this does not in any sense imply revolutionary or even oppositional tendencies. Ṭahṭāwī's political ideas were very much in line with the government policies of Muḥammad ʿAlī and later with those of his like-minded grandson and eventual heir Ismāʿīl. They were also part of a maturing intellectual movement of reformist thinkers across the empire. This granted him a great amount of freedom in expressing his personal ideas, which, while never contradicting current policy, were not necessarily derived from it either.

The King and the Law

In this section, we discuss al-Ṭahṭāwī's translation (1867) of Fénelon's *Les aventures de Télémaque* (1699) and address the question whether or not it might be seen as an example of Counter-Enlightenment outside Europe. We have chosen the theme 'the king and the law' as this is a central theme not only to Fénelon's and Ṭahṭāwī's thought, but to the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment as well. We have highlighted a few passages that are related to the political ideas that Ṭahṭāwī would later publish in his own writings. This will illustrate how suitable Fénelon's text was for transferral into Egyptian-Islamic culture as a narrative of a national history dating back to ancient times featuring princes of excellent morality. It will also be noted how well the narrative fit the official Egyptian policies of the time.

This translation has been called everything from paraphrase to adaptation to Arabization, but the generally mentioned standard for fidelity that al-Ṭahṭāwī seemed to meet is that he did not censor the source text by changing or leaving out passages that may be seen as politically, religiously or morally unacceptable. However, without dramatically altering narrative elements, Ṭahṭāwī made noteworthy changes to formal and metatextual elements. Firstly, the title of the Arabic translation is written in the flowery, rhyming style that is the customary in classical Arabic literature. Also, the entire text is written in a classical rhyme prose. Aside from these formal Arabizations, Ṭahṭāwī wrote

a lengthy introduction justifying his choice of the text and carefully guiding the reader's interpretation of the text's genre and purpose. In order to emphasize moral instruction as the interpretative frame for his readers, Ṭaḥṭāwī likened Fénelon's novel to the genre of *al-maqāmāt al-ḥarīriyya*, 'in the form of essays', while opposing it to other famous narrative genres, claiming that unlike those genres, 'these essays became very famous … because of the excellent concepts that they contain'.[37] By evoking this generic connection, Ṭaḥṭāwī encouraged his readers to look for the obvious as well as the hidden moral meanings that could be found throughout the text.

As Albert Hourani remarked, an important factor for Ṭaḥṭāwī's attraction to *Télémaque* was probably the fact that Fénelon presented Egypt as a model society with a wise king.[38] Fénelon's Egypt contained many of the characteristics that Ṭaḥṭāwī wished for modern Egypt to possess. Also, this representation of Egypt fit beautifully into Ṭaḥṭāwī's proto-nationalistic narrative of a virtuous and prosperous Egyptian civilization throughout history. In agreement with Islamic tradition, the ruler according to Ṭaḥṭāwī had complete executive power. However, using different sources of inspiration, Ṭaḥṭāwī put great effort into describing the makings of a just ruler. For instance, in his biography of the prophet Muhammad, Ṭaḥṭāwī compiled a summary of theological texts on the duties and character traits of the Caliph. In his *Manāhij*, the model prince was embodied by his prime patron Muḥammad ʿAlī. Delanoue describes Ṭaḥṭāwī's veneration for his first royal benefactor in detail. We will not delve deeper into this aspect of Ṭaḥṭāwī's writing, except to remark that in his translation of *Télémaque*, he may have seen a connection between Muḥammad ʿAlī and the wise Egyptian king Sesostris. According to Delanoue, Ṭaḥṭāwī's views on the duties of the ruler are reminiscent of the oriental *miroirs des princes* on the one hand, and Mentor's advice to Telemachus on the other. The ruler is the shepherd of his people. He is ideally guided by a sense of justice. He should be a father to his people, invest in their education, encourage them in their works by letting them acquire wealth from their earnings and prevent poverty by advising against unnecessary purchases.[39]

The ideal ruler according to Ṭaḥṭāwī would be a 'renewer' of the faith (a *mujaddid*, i.e., applying the idea of *tajdīd* mentioned above). He would thus follow the advice of legal scholars on how to apply the *sharīʿa* to the circumstances of his time. In accordance with the sharīʿa,

the ruler's authority is that of the successor of the Prophet Muhammad. He is thus given the double task of protecting the religion as well as the temporal interests of the nation. Even though the authority of Ṭahṭāwī's ideal ruler is legitimized by his just application of the sharīʿa, he proposes no institutional boundaries to that authority. According to Delanoue, it was his intention to provide a moral framework for the unquestioned and absolute power of the ruler.[40]

On the other end of the societal hierarchy, the subjects were bound to obedience to the ruler, as decreed in the Quran.[41] Under no circumstance would a revolt be justified. Instead, in the case of bad leadership, the only permissible option for the subjects was to ask God to surround the ruler with wise, selfless and just advisors.[42] A just prince is one who regularly consults with legal scholars and follows their advice.

If Ṭahṭāwī is to be considered conservative in some areas and progressive in others, here we see him at his most conservative. When discussing the power relations between the ruler and his subjects, he adopts a literal reading of the Quran, positioning himself on the stricter side of Islamic orthodoxy. This viewpoint may well be an effect of his employment with the khedivial court, since it is obviously in the ruler's best interest. Regardless of the underlying reasons for adopting his stance, Ṭahṭāwī shares his explicit absolutism with Fénelon. Both men claimed that subjects were essentially at the mercy of their rulers, but they also clearly described the makings of a good ruler.

These ideas are present in the second chapter of Ṭahṭāwī's translation of *Télémaque*, which corresponds with Livre II in the original. Telemachus recounts to Calypso his experience in Egypt. The chapter contains descriptions of the countryside, the cities, the people's social and economic make-up, and praise for the wise rule of King Sesostris. It also describes Sesostris' son and successor Bocchoris, who would prove to be an unfit king and who would go on to cause civil strife. His demise serves as a lesson for Telemachus. Sesostris closely resembles the ideal ruler according to Ṭahṭāwī's later writings, as can be seen from his loving relationship with the Egyptian people and his priorities in presiding over a highly civilized and virtuous nation.

Mentor and Telemachus are intercepted on the Mediterranean by the Egyptian fleet and taken captive. On the way to Egypt they feel miserable, but as they sail up the Nile, they are captivated by the sight of 'the fertile land of Egypt that resembles a paradise (*janna*) from which

streams flow far into the distance on all sides'.[43] They sail past heavily populated cities, palaces and rich farmlands. Mentor then notes how happy a nation (*umma*) is when ruled by a wise, rational (*ʿāqil*) and just (*ʿādil*) king, and people live in peace and tranquillity. They would love for their king to rule forever, because they know he is the cause behind their state of happiness. Mentor advises Telemachus to remember this when it is his time to inherit the throne: treat your subjects like they were your children. The description of Egypt's splendour continues. Mentor and Telemachus note the social equity in the cities and villages, the aiding of the poor, the education of children to live as moderate, obedient and hard-working people. Every father raises his child with good morals, a fear of the divine (*khawf al-ulūhiyya*) and adherence to the teachings of religion (*tamassuk bi-umūr al-dīn*). How happy they must be to have such good guidance from their king, and how happy their king must be to be so loved.

The king's sense of justice and modesty is on display when Telemachus and Mentor are brought before the king, who grants them the opportunity to plead their wrongful capture. The king has a daily routine of making himself available to hear grievances and receive advice. He never turns anyone away, because he rules for the benefit of the subjects, whom he sees as his children. He is also kind to foreigners and invites them to his court so that he may learn useful things from them, to become familiar with their customs and morals and to be informed about their wisdom and knowledge. Every day he arbitrates matters that are brought before him with complete fairness, and so it is that he receives Mentor and Telemachus. They had been captured on a Tyrean ship and were to be enslaved, as Egypt was at war with the Levantine city of Tyre.[44] Of course, Mentor and Telemachus were Greek, not Tyrean, and the king was willing to investigate their claim. However, the official in charge of the investigation then lied in his testimony, leading to the separation and enslavement of Mentor and Telemachus. Circumstances later led to Telemachus coming back before the court, and the official's treason became apparent. The king exonerated Telemachus and promised him a ship and crew to sail to Ithaca. He gave the official a life sentence while also taking away all his possessions. Here we see a lesson on the king's inherent good faith and sense of justice on the one hand, and the insidious danger of having corrupt officials around him on the other.

Soon after this seemingly happy ending, before Telemachus sets sail, Sesostris dies of old age. The nation is in deep mourning. Ṭahṭāwī devotes a short poem to the passing of the good king:

> Sorrow befell everyone high and low
> And all were overcome by grief, as though
> Judgment Day had come for Egypt,
> Catastrophe had struck
> For all the tribes sensed they just lost
> Their most beloved, the champion of this folk,
> The merciful father and honourable chief.[45]

This is a rare addition to the source material by Ṭahṭāwī, which may indicate the gravity he wanted to give this death in the narrative. The people's grief was so intense that it was almost impossible to bury the king, for everyone wanted a last glimpse of his body. Many also expressed their wish to be buried with him, and here Ṭahṭāwī adds: 'but that would go against the law of life'.[46]

Sesostris is succeeded by his son Bocchoris, a young man who, in contrast to his father, is described as having no appreciation for foreigners or the sciences. This is one aspect of the narrative that is eerily similar to Ṭahṭāwī's experience with ʿAbbās' succession of Muḥammad ʿAlī, and could indeed be presented as an argument for subversion, quite like the early reception of Fénelon's original in France. The coincidence is striking: Fénelon unknowingly wrote a fictional account that, if we were to believe Ṭahṭāwī's hagiographic accounts of Muḥammad ʿAlī's career, would almost literally play out in Egypt more than one hundred years after Fénelon's death and more than two thousand years after his narrative would have taken place. The similarity to Ṭahṭāwī's Egypt ends there, however, as Telemachus then witnesses how Bocchoris dies a horrible death during the civil war caused by his own barbaric tendencies. The chapter closes with the lessons Telemachus has learned from watching Bocchoris bring ruin to Egypt: a king must accept the kingdom as his burden and make his reign endure by letting reason rule.[47] No king is more miserable than he whom God (*Allah*) had chosen to watch over mankind and whom He has given (the tools of) justice, beneficence and sensible conduct, but who let himself be seduced into being a ruler for the sake of tormenting his subjects and letting his own happiness come first.[48]

In this narrative the reader is presented by two polar opposites when it comes to the character and disposition of kings. The description of Sesostris contains almost everything that Ṭahṭāwī would later claim is important for a king: the sense of justice, acting as a father to his subjects, an emphasis on education, actively looking to expand his (and thus his nation's) knowledge by inviting foreigners to share their wisdom with him. Also, Egypt under Sesostris is a thriving civilization built on an agricultural economy. The one important feature of a king that is not discussed here is that of the king's authority and his relation to the law. This subject enters the narrative in the fifth chapter, Book V in Fénelon, when the traveling company arrives in Crete.

Crete: The Rule of Law

Upon arrival in Crete, Mentor reminisces about a previous visit when king Minos ruled the island.[49] Mentor calls him 'the greatest king', and goes on to describe how he established a rule of law. Minos' laws are the reason for all of the favourable aspects of society that are present on Crete, like the education of the youth in order to create healthy and strong citizens, having learned through the law how to eat and drink only what their body needs, the importance of exercise and work, and the dangers of overconsumption leading to obesity and sickliness, which weakens the mind.[50] Three vices are punished in Crete: ingratitude, fraud and avarice. There are no punishments known on Crete for the vices of pomp and laziness, as they are simply non-existent there. The law has thus moralized Cretan society.

After hearing this song of praise for a king who lets law rule, Telemachus asks Mentor about the extent of the king's authority and power. The short answer to this is 'the king is the possessor of authority over the subjects, and his commands and prohibitions hold good; as for the written rules and laws of the kingdom, they hold authority over him (the king) and govern him'.[51] Here Ṭahṭāwī uses three different terms to indicate the concept of law, all with slightly different connotations: *Qānūn* is generally understood as positive law to complement *sharī'a* on issues upon which the latter stays silent.[52] *Sharī'a* is of course the divine law, which Ṭahṭāwī uses here in the plural form *sharā'i'*. This term can be used to indicate religious or revealed law in general, but we would argue that here the interpretation is likely meant to include the

Islamic connotation, especially since the source text merely uses 'laws' (*lois*), thus making this a voluntary addition in Ṭahṭāwī's text. *Ḥukm*, pl. *aḥkām* can mean different things, such as judgement, jurisprudence or rules, and can be used in a secular context, but also carries connotations to Islamic law.[53] So here Ṭahṭāwī essentially proposes his political model for the absolute ruler guided by *sharīʿa*. Here we see how Ṭahṭāwī employs an Islamic vocabulary to describe the guidelines for the absolute ruler, which in fact contrasts with the efforts Fénelon took to avoid obvious associations with a Christian frame of reference.

In the next sentences, Ṭahṭāwī stops using *qānūn* and *ḥukm* to indicate the law, narrowing down the terminology exclusively to *sharīʿa* and *sharāʿiʿ*: 'The *sharāʿiʿ* entrusted the people to the king ... with the condition that he would act as a father to the subjects in accordance with the *sharāʿiʿ* ... sovereign power is one of the *sharīʿa's* precious gifts'.[54] Mentor's monologue continues with the king's duty to live moderately and in complete dedication to peace and happiness among his people. It is a right of the people that the king's sense of moderation transcends theirs, and that he should not keep any wealth to himself. He should command the armies in defence of the nation (*waṭan*) against outside threats and act as a judge over his people so that he may lead them to righteousness, peace and happiness through the law. Mentor concludes that the only worthy king is he who effaces himself completely in order to fully exert himself in the interest of his subjects. Many of these ideas would appear again in Ṭahṭāwī's *Manāhij*, and this passage shows then how similar they are to Fénelon's.

Conclusion

The many stages of metamorphosis that François Fénelon's *Les Aventures de Télémaque* went through, from forbidden text to one of the most popular and respected works of French literature during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, has made it impossible to give it a single cultural, intellectual or ideological label. This feature has arguably contributed to its universal appeal. When Ṭahṭāwī came upon *Télémaque* during his visit to post-revolutionary France, that metamorphosis was already complete. The work he encountered functioned in French society as a universally used schoolbook and as moral instruction for the younger generation.

Islamic dogma was the principal source of ideological inspiration in Ṭahṭāwī's writings. Divine Law formed the framework of his ideas on the ruler and society. At the same time, and justified by the same Islamic mode of thought, he was part of the reformist political establishment of Egypt, a modernist very much interested in bringing technological and scientific development to Eastern lands, as well as the material wealth and comfort that go along with it. Civilization was his ideal, not nature. It follows from this that Ṭahṭāwī's interpretation of Islam cannot be viewed as inherently opposed to all the ideas of the Enlightenment. Moreover, it should be viewed as flexible enough to incorporate different European ideas, both modern and conservative. In fact, not being a part of the original context in which these European movements began, gives thinkers the freedom to incorporate what they deem useful without the added baggage of having to accept a complete discourse. In his report on Paris, Ṭahṭāwī's main complaint about French society was that it had chosen reason over God. Otherwise, his judgment was very favourable, and he lauded many of the virtues of French society for their likeness to those of Islam. Having noted how Ṭahṭāwī was able to Islamize lessons from *Télémaque,* it is not hard to understand that he could similarly accommodate certain Enlightenment ideas.

The Arabic translation of *Télémaque* had much to offer the Egyptian reader: a narrative presented as a historical account of Ancient Egypt and sound moral instruction on every level of society, written in an Islamic idiom. It reflects not only Ṭahṭāwī's personal ideal of a society based in religion, his feelings of patriotism and his conviction that one can learn from other societies, but also his government's wisdom in going down a path that is similar to that of King Sesostris. The book is a physical manifestation of the message that Ṭahṭāwī and his government were trying to convey to the public: in order for our society to take the next step, we must embrace knowledge both foreign and familiar.

We have shown the different ways in which Fénelon's *Télémaque* was an appealing text for Ṭahṭāwī to adopt and adapt for Egyptian culture. The translation itself is interesting for some of its departures from the original text. While Ṭahṭāwī is honest about it being a translation, his text is distinctly Arabic, from the genre in which he places it (a genre peculiar to Arabic literature), to his use of rhyme prose (a distinctive feature of Arabic non-fiction). Also, where Fénelon deliberately avoided direct references to Christianity, Ṭahṭāwī took away any ambiguity by Islamizing many passages in the narrative. This reflects

Ṭahṭāwī's nature as a creative thinker on one hand, and one who avoids all risk of accusations of subversion or heresy on the other. He successfully built a reputation of being a loyal civil servant and a pious Muslim.

Translation can be a tool of subversion or activism, a subtle way to create a parable for use in a local debate. We have demonstrated that in the case of Ṭahṭāwī's translation of *Télémaque*, it is implausible to make such a claim, either for or against his own government, or for or against a foreign intellectual movement or its counter-movement. The intention behind this translation should be viewed in a very straightforward manner: as a useful aid in instructing all members of Egyptian society on morality, patriotism, duty and piety, in order to prepare them for functioning in a modern society.

In exploring the plausibility of placing a thinker like Ṭahṭāwī in the tradition of a movement like the Counter-Enlightenment, we return to the questions we posed initially: do ideas perceived as part of opposite thought movements in Europe necessarily carry the same perception elsewhere? Is it likely that a thinker whose geographical, religious, political and cultural context vastly differs from that of the epicentre of a philosophical movement, will be familiar with the complex nuances of that movement? If not, then can he be seriously considered a proponent of that movement? We would answer all of these in the negative.

Certainly, Ṭahṭāwī's absolutism, his being on the conservative side of rationalism, and his emphasis on religion as a cornerstone of the future can be included in an argument to place him in a camp opposite the Enlightenment. At the same time, Ṭahṭāwī was an explicit modernist and the opposite of a naturalist: his desire was to advance civilization as much as possible. The central tenets of Tahtawi's thought were part of the nomenclature of reform identified by Stephen Sheehi. Also, we have demonstrated that Ṭahṭāwī was creative enough to meld specific ideas inspired in him by foreign authors into Islamic orthodoxy. Thus, when assessing his ideological make-up, we can only conclude that Ṭahṭāwī does not fit into the tradition of any single European thought movement. His process in accepting and rejecting elements of European thought did not take into account European perceptions of the opposition of ideas. Instead, it was about addressing the needs created by his local context of political reform, religion, rapid and radical societal change, and of course his own personal upbringing, education and experiences.

Notes

1   Stephen Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (Gainesville, FL, 2004) 19.

2   These works included, among others: Montesquieu, *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence*; Rousseau, *Le contrat social*; Voltaire, *Le dictionnaire philosophique*; Burlamaqui, *Les éléments du droit naturel et devoirs de l'homme et du citoyen tels qu'ils lui sont prescrits par la loi naturelle*. According to Delanoue many elements of Burlamaqui are present in Ṭahṭāwī's work as well. Ṭahṭāwī claims to have translated this work, but it was never published. Gilbert Delanoue, *Moralistes et Politiques Musulmans dans l'Egypte du XIXème Siecle (1798–1882)* (Lille, 1980) 774–6.

3   Daniel Newman has translated this work into English: Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric (1826–1831)*, trans. Daniel Newman (London, 2004).

4   François Fénelon, *Mawāqi' Al-Aflāk Fī Waqa.i' Tilīmāk: Tarjamahu*, trans. Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ Al-Tahtāwī (Beirut, 1867) 4–6.

5   Mattityahu Peled, 'Creative Translation : Towards the Study of Arabic Translations of Western Literature since the nineteenth-Century', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 10 (1979) 139.; Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 54; Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798–1939* (London, 1962) 74.

6   Jacques Le Brun, 'Les Aventures de Télémaque: Destins D'un Best-Seller', *Littératures Classiques* 3:70 (2009) 143–4.

7   The title of *Manāhij al-albāb al-miṣriyya fī mabāhij al-ādāb al-ʿaṣriyya* was translated by Hourani as: *The Paths of the Egyptian Hearts in the Joys of the Contemporary Arts* (Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 72); *al-Murshid al-amīn li l-banāt wa-l-banīn* is a more straightforward title, which may be translated as *The Honest Guide for Boys and Girls.* From here on, we will refer to these works as *Manāhij* and *Murshid*, respectively.

8   Isaiah Berlin, 'The Counter-Enlightenment', in Philip P. Wiener (ed.), *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, 4 vols (New York, 1973), II, 103–4.

9   There is no absolute clarity on the circumstances surrounding the first publication of Télémaque. Fénelon himself would always maintain that he had never intended for the book to be published, and that his sole purpose for it was the private education of his students: the heir to the

throne and his brothers. Le Brun suggests that it is likely that Fénelon would at least have known about the plans to publish, and perhaps tacitly agreed to it. See: Le Brun, 'Les Aventures de Télémaque', 134–35; Francois-Xavier Cuche, *Télémaque de Fénelon Entre Père et Mer* (Paris, 1994) 45–49; Henk Hillenaar, *Le Secret de Télémaque* (Paris, 1994) 13–20.

10 Or: 'From a mirror of Princes to a book that entertains and educates the public'; Le Brun, 'Les Aventures de Télémaque', 138.

11 For example, in 1719 an edition appeared in Rotterdam, containing many added notes on Fénelon's alleged subversive intentions.

12 Le Brun, 'Les Aventures de Télémaque', 139.

13 Ibid., 141.

14 Ibid., 143–4.

15 Francois-Xavier Cuche, 'La Morale Dans Les Ouvrages Pédagogiques de Fénelon' in Henk Hillenaar (ed.), *Nouvel État Présent Des Études Sur Fénelon* (Amsterdam, 2000) 72; Hillenaar, *Le Secret de Télémaque*, 18–9; François Fénelon, *Les Aventures de Télémaque: Édition Présentée, Établie et Annotée Par Jacques Le Brun*, ed. Jacques Le Brun (Paris, 1995) 8–13.

16 Hillenaar, *Le Secret de Télémaque*, 18.

17 The term that Fénelon uses in *Télémaque* is 'désintéressement'. 'Selflessness' probably covers the general meaning, but lacks a Biblical connotation. 'Self-denial', a reference to Matthew 16:24, connects the term to the context that is so central in Fénelon's teachings, which is to completely give oneself to God, and from this unconditional love, this *pur amour*, to truly live free from interest in any personal concerns or desires and to dedicate one's actions to the wellbeing of others.

18 In this work, Fénelon spoke of *pur amour*, as a theological concept. This term is not present in *Télémaque*, but is replaced by the term *désintéressement*. This is best explained by the fact that Fénelon stays away from explicit references to Christian teachings and vocabulary, choosing to cloak his lessons in the stories of Greek Antiquity.

19 Hillenaar, *Le Secret de Télémaque*, 22–4.

20 Kaj Öhrnberg, 'Rifāʿa Bey Al-Ṭahṭāwī', in Peri Bearman et al. (eds), *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Second Edition, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_6294, accessed 9 October 2016.

21 Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris,* 68.

22 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 82.

23 Ibid., 82; Delanoue, *Moralistes et Politiques Musulmans*, 387; Ṭahṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 86–87; Youssef M. Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography: Historical Discourse and the Nation-State* (London, 2003) 30–1.

24 Delanoue, *Moralistes et Politiques Musulmans*, 251–2.

25 Ibid., 387.

26 Ibid., 448.

27 Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, 24–5.

28 Ibid., 15.

29 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 75.

30 Part of the 27-page introductory statements to Ṭahṭāwī's translation is a prologue of sorts, in which he introduces the main character and provides a background to the story by referring to the events of the *Odyssey*. It is in this part of his introduction that he tries to justify most of the strange elements in the source narrative, like the presence of Greek gods and other mythological creatures. Remarkably, Ṭahṭāwī does not dismiss these deities as fictions of Greek antiquity. Instead, he re-specifies them as supernatural beings from the Islamic tradition, such as *jinn* or angels. Demi-gods such as Hercules are explained as the product of sexual relations between these angels or *jinn* and humans. Ṭahṭāwī provides the necessary academic and religious support to these farfetched claims by quoting literature ranging in authority from famous classical Arabic authors to the Quran itself. See: François Fénelon, *Mawāqiʿ al-Aflāk Fī Waqāʿiʿ Tilīmāk,* 23–9.

31 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 68–9.

32 Ibid., 80.

33 Ibid., 78.

34 Ṭahṭāwī played an important role in shaping modern Arabic historiography. For more on this, see: Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography*, 17–28.; Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 78–80.

35 Delanoue, *Moralistes et Politiques Musulmans*, 429.

36 Ibid.

37 The *maqāmah* is a canonical Arabic literary genre, written in rhymed prose, in which a wanderer visits different cities in the Muslim world. Even though this genre is now known for its moralistic elements, the main character in those stories is usually an eloquent trickster, not the noble hero that Telemachus portrays.

38 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 74.

39 Delanoue, *Moralistes et Politiques Musulmans*, 435–36.

40 Ibid., 411–13.

41 Surat al-Nisa', verse 59.

42 Delanoue, *Moralistes et Politiques Musulmans*, 437.

43 Fénelon, *Mawāqiʿ al-Aflāk*, 50.

44 A parallel to Ṭahṭāwī's Egypt: this war is reminiscent of Muḥammad ʿAli's Syrian campaign.

45 Fénelon, *Mawāqiʿ al-Aflāk*, 69 (our translation).

46 Ibid., 70.

47 Here lies another layer that explains Fénelon's popularity with different movements over time, and a good example of why it is necessary to be cautious against placing universal meaning on a concept as semantically loaded and as dependent on culture and ideology as *reason*. Fénelon frequently mentions reason as a virtue, a concept that is of course an essential part of the Enlightenment. However, Fénelon uses the term in a different sense than the thinkers of the Enlightenment: for him, it is the antithesis of passion. Reason is what enables human beings to act according to the will and morals of God instead of their own desires. It is not meant as a source of truth, as is claimed by rationalists. As it enters Ṭahṭāwī's translation, its meaning changes again (however subtly) to follow Egyptian and Islamic connotations.

48 Fénelon, *Mawāqiʿ al-Aflāk*, 75.

49 The Homeric Minos was said to receive his laws directly from Zeus. For someone familiar with the Classics, this passage would have invoked connotations of the divine inspiration of Minos' laws. Fénelon's work was filled with this kind of playful intertextuality.

50 Fénelon, *Mawāqiʿ al-Aflāk*, 133.

51 Ibid., 135.

52 Yvon Linant de Bellefonds, Claude Cahen, and Halil Inalcik, 'Ḳānūn', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

53 J. Schacht, 'Aḥkām', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

54 Fénelon, *Mawāqiʿ al-Aflāk*, 135.

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