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al-Jābirī, Muḥammad ‘Ābid

Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī (1935–2010) was one of the most influential Arab philosophers of the second half of the twentieth century, his major work comprising the four volumes of *Naqd al-‘aql al-‘Arabī* (“The critique of Arab reason”). Al-Jābirī played a significant role in shaping the 1980s and 1990s debate on *aṣāla* (authenticity), *mu‘āṣara* (contemporaneity), and *ḥadātha* (modernity) by demanding an “epistemological break” (*qatī‘a ṭbistīmūlūjīyya*) with unscientific thought systems and pleading for rationality, realism, and the separation of religion and science.

His own preference for the spelling of his name was al-Jābirī or al-Jabri.

1. BIOGRAPHY

Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī was born in the Berber oasis town of Figuig, in the southeast of Morocco, on 27 December 1935, although the civil registry notes his year of birth as 1936 (al-Jābirī, *Ḥafriyyāt*, 37). There he came into early contact with supporters of the Moroccan independence movement, and in his

autobiography, *Ḥafriyyāt fi l-dhākira min ba‘d* (“Archaeologies of memory”), which extends into the late 1950s, he describes their ideals and methods of education as having been an especially formative influence on him. Family as well as political circumstances obliged him to interrupt his formal schooling several times. He was among the students who completed the first Arabised Moroccan A-levels in 1957, and at almost the same time he obtained a French translation diploma. With a scholarship from the Moroccan government—the country had achieved independence from France the year before, in 1956—he studied philosophy for a year in Damascus and then at the Muḥammad V University, in Rabat. During his studies, he became a member of the Moroccan socialist party, al-Itihād al-Waṭanī li-l-Quwā l-Sha‘biyya (National Union of Popular Forces) and was one of the principal editors of *al-Tahrīr* (“Liberation”), the party magazine that he co-founded. In 1963 along with other party members he was arrested and charged with “illegal possession of arms and conspiracy against the state,” but he was quickly released (Al Ghouz, *Vernunft*, 80). For several years al-Jābirī taught

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