

Call for Papers

Workshop on Typologies in the Islamic Ethical Discourse

Orient-Institut Beirut & American University of Beirut

The Orient-Institut Beirut and the American University of Beirut will jointly host an interdisciplinary workshop to examine various typologies often encountered in the books of ethics.

Pre-modern Islamic writings on ethics are populated by a host of exemplary and stereotypical characters who function as shorthand for certain models of behaviors. Playing well-defined roles in narratives and aphorisms, these types come with sets of traits that were commonly recognized and anticipated by the contemporary audience. As representatives of abstract and multifaceted ideals these types are not confined to specific contexts and plots. The ruler who is expected to govern his subjects with justice and austerity appears elsewhere in the form of the father who manages family and household as the microcosm of the realm. His success or failure depends on advisory types, ranging from the vizier to the companion, whose astute council, if determined trustworthy and reliable, must be followed. Female characters can represent both the worldly temptations that entice men's most basic desires and challenge their commitment to virtue, and the lower soul (*nafs*) that men and women must tame and control to lead a virtuous life. These are but few of the numerous recurrent types commonly found in the Islamic discourse on ethics as many more await to be discovered and described.

While the presence of typologies in Islamic texts is frequently acknowledged, they remain a largely untapped source for the understanding of the Islamic ethical discourse. Referring to the relationship between recurring elements that define each other by partaking in the same continuum of meaning, typologies shed light on a variety of issues, such as the discursive mechanisms that governed the writing and reading processes of texts on ethics, the pedagogical theories and practices that underlie them and the writings' literary nature. Through discussions on how exemplary and stereotypical characters are used, modified and redefined in pre-modern Islamic texts, this workshop aims to investigate a range of typologies in the ethical discourse in light of its historical and intellectual developments across all relevant genres.

We invite papers that investigate typologies in pre-modern Islamic texts on ethics by addressing, for instance, the following:

- Gendered typologies: Male and female as types in the ethical discourse.
- Typologies across time: Historical developments in the use of typologies in the ethical discourse.
- Typologies across genres: Difference in usage of typologies in various genres.
- Historical typologies: The relation between the use of typologies and the understanding of time and history.
- Multi-layered typologies: Polyvalence and ambiguity in the use of typologies.
- Literary typologies: The literary function of typologies.

- Border crossing typologies: Comparative perspectives on typologies.
- Religious and secular typologies: The religious valence of typologies.
- Cross-disciplinary typologies: The use of medical, legal and other typologies in the ethical discourse.

Proposals including an abstract (300-500 words) and a short biography can be sent to Dr. Fatih Ermiş (ermis@orient-institut.org) or Prof. Bilal Orfali (bo00@aub.edu.lb) no later than 18 October 2021. Full draft papers will be due 7 February 2022 for accepted proposals. The workshop will be conducted as a hybrid event, i.e. both in person and online, but depending on the circumstances we hope to welcome as many participants as possible in Beirut. Cost of travel and accommodation will be covered by the organizers.

Conveners are Dr. Fatih Ermiş (OIB), Prof. Bilal Orfali (AUB), Prof. Bashshar Haydar (AUB) and Dr. Enrico Boccaccini (OIB).