



# The Search for Beauty in Islam: A Conference of the Books

*Khaled Abou El Fadl*

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## **The Search for Beauty in Islam: A Conference of the Books** Khaled Abou El Fadl

Khaled Abou El Fadl is a classically-trained Islamic jurist, an American lawyer and law professor, and one of the most important Islamic thinkers today. In this updated and expanded edition of *The Search for Beauty in Islam*, Abou El Fadl offers eye-opening and enlightening insights into the contemporary realities of the current state of Islam and the West. Through a "conference of the books," an imagined conference of Muslim intellectuals from centuries past, Abou El Fadl examines the ugliness that has come to plague Muslim realities and attempts to reclaim what he maintains is a core moral value in Islam—the value of beauty. Does Islamic law allow, or even call for, the gruesome acts of ugliness that have become so commonly associated with Islam today? Has Islam become a religion devoid of beauty, compassion and love? Based on actual cases, this book tackles different issues and problems in each chapter through a post-9/11 lens, discussing such topics as marriage, divorce, parental rights, the position of women, the veil, sexual abuse, wife-beating, terrorism, bigotry, morality, law, and the role of tradition. Abou El Fadl argues that the rekindling of the forgotten value of beauty is essential for Muslims today to take back what has been lost to the fundamentalist forces that have denigrated their religion.

## **The Search for Beauty in Islam: A Conference of the Books Details**

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## **From Reader Review The Search for Beauty in Islam: A Conference of the Books for online ebook**

### **Gabrielle Ghazali says**

amazing collection of essays from a great Muslim scholar.

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### **Mehwish Mughal says**

An important book in our times when everything about Islam is painted with the brush of hatred. It conveys the message repetitively that we are not seeking enough and if we are truly seeking then it will take us our whole lives but we will only get so close.

It was daunting. It was daunting to know the amount of literature produced on Islam. It was enlightening. It was enlightening to know that the Islamic history is full of great scholars who spent their entire lives in the search for knowledge. It was unsettling. It was unsettling to know that we have very strong, unwavering opinions about issues that we do not even begin to understand. Such revelations mixed with the author's command of the subject and the magnanimity of the content had the power to change a lot of things inside me. I spent a lot of time in the conference and I spent a lot of tears on the conference. I felt nostalgic for a time and place which was far far away in history. I felt vulnerable. I felt happy. I felt scared. I felt a lot of things.

The book is written in love. It is beautiful, the words are beautiful, the message is beautiful, everything about it is beautiful.

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### **Farah Hany says**

Must read in every sense of the word. So many treasures and moral values in this book that I feel so blessed to have learnt, I've never read anything on contemporary Islam that hit home as much as this one. Every dialogue begets a soulful reflection and every question carries the burdens of generations. It shows how we are plagued in this day and age by those who only want to learn what they think they already know, and how those who focus on the legalities and pedantics lose sight of the essence of Beauty in Islam. This book reclaimed my sense of balance and dignity and most if all, of the Beautiful.

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### **Sagheer Afzal says**

This book is quite simply a page turner. Lucid, profound and laden with insights so sharp that to read them is life experiencing a revelation. This book is a must read for every Muslim. When reading scholarly books I use a marker to highlight any passages or sentences that are pregnant with meaning. With this book, by the time I came to page 355, (the end), my marker had become dry. There can be no greater testament to this philosophical gem.

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## Hadi says

One of the greatest books I have ever read. Eloquently refreshing perspectives on various topics, with important commentary on the state of affairs in "Contemporary Islam" - sometimes through historical lenses.

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## Renad says

Good work!

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## Hena says

Can every Muslim please read this book?

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## Hafsa says

This book is amazing-- I like Khaled Abou El Fadl's literary style and the way he divided the book into shorter essays. I feel like it is one of those books that you have to keep on going back to and read a chapter at a time...b/c LIFE happens, and you can understand the issues that Abou el Fadl raises on different levels. I like that he was able to address some of the more controversial issues that do not necessarily get talked about within the Muslim establishment, although I do wish that he had focused a bit more on other issues as well b/c to a highly critical lens, this book could be seen as the work of an "apologist". Nevertheless, a really important piece, definitely a must-read for any interested in Islam and contemporary issues.

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## Ahmed says

A friend of mine summarised it best when he called it "uncanny". The author's ability to get into your head, to blur the lines so that emotion seeps from the book into you, is uncanny.

The premise of the book, which the title alludes to, is that in the author's apartment there is a conference of books where the Islamic civilisation convenes nightly. Voices of geniuses and giants long dead debate from their covers, and his role as keeper of the conference is to chronicle this until such a time that Muslims are ready to reclaim their intellectual heritage.

The book consists of 85 essays, varying in length between a page and around 15, mostly personal reflections of the author. Some of them address personal experiences, including his studies with sheikhs in Egypt, living under a totalitarian regime and the arrests and torture of numerous teachers and friends. Others deal with issues of importance to the Muslim community, particularly treatment of women, domestic violence, abuse of scripture and authority by religious leadership, islamophobia, ignorance and the dearth of serious Islamic scholarship today.

He pulls no punches in those essays which are bitter and mocking polemics against religious literalists. Others are highly technical; coming from his position as an accomplished expert in Islamic law himself he

either systematically demolishes their positions on a particular issue (as he does in his book *The Authoritative and the Authoritarian*) or shows the ludicrous inadequacy of legalism. Sometimes the essays read like a tragic farce. Sometimes they are elating. Offence, betrayal and outrage. Sorrow. Serenity. Soaring joy. All are emotions that Khaled Abou El Fadl communicates exquisitely in his uniquely beautiful prose, and the intensity is such that it is one of the few books to have ever made me cry.

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### **Setadipa says**

sejak dahulu kala banyak manusia pandai yg termarginalkan, sepi sendiri di akhir jalan... pun saat ini (?)

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### **Ebadur says**

Read this!

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### **Risman Mou says**

i don't know about that

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### **John Nordin says**

For those unfamiliar with Islam, Abou El Fadl cracks open the tradition. You can see Islamic reasoning at work as he compares sources, uses the ancient writers and parses out conclusions. Read especially his deconstruction of alleged authorizations for violence against women in Islam and his defense of the tradition of women scholars. You can also feel his anguish at how much of Islam has turned its back on reason and the core belief that God commands the just and beautiful in favor of a narrow-minded fundamentalism. Christians struggling to defend against Christian fundamentalism will find an ally here.

Even a single chapter on a "fatwa on dogs" shows how real intellectual inquiry operates and how fundamentalists distort it.

And, if you love books, you will rejoice in his loving invocation of the conference of books, the collected wisdom of centuries, that swirl around him each night as he studies. It is a beautiful image, of books talking to each other over the years, and of each of us now joining that conversation as we read and think. My only complaint is that I would wish to have had more of this book: more Islamic analysis of issues.

Abou El Fadl has been accused of being a 'sympathizer' of terrorists by Pipes; reading this book will show the total absurdity of that claim since his opposition of extremism is woven into his entire world view.

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### **Aly says**

Really makes you think about how the media has skewed Islam to suit it's own, as well as consumers, views.

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## Jennifer says

A profound and fascinating book. A book to savor.

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