peculiar to the West or to Western minds? What kind of things are on their agenda? Why do women and pluralism find a place among the basic subjects?

All of these demonstrate that the work has a Euro-centric view. The fact that Farid Esack, who has come to the fore with his "liberation theory" in the West, particularly in South Africa, is not among the names included in the work, or that in place of Hüseyin Atay, or alongside of him, the relatively more current name of Yaşar Nuri Öztürk could have been chosen from Turkey can all be explained by this Euro-centric view in the work.

This work, as stated at the beginning, runs parallel to the works of J.L. Esposito on Muslim religious, science and social leaders. In fact, Esposito's work that was published in 2008 asks the same question as Taji-Farouki in the title: *Who Speaks for Muslims?*

Bilal Gökkır

**Constructivism and Education**

Edited by Marie Larochelle, Nadine Bednarz & Jim Garrison

New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998. x+305 pp.

Constructivism is an umbrella concept that comprises theoretical schemes like cognitive subject, the learner/social actor, and the locus of knowledge. It is basically a description of the human cognitive process that is frequently associated with educational methods which support *learning by doing*, a phrase coined by John Dewey at the turn of the 20th century. This term has been interpreted in Turkish in a number of ways, but I prefer to use the term *yapılandırmacılık* in Turkish, which I found most fitting to the philosophy of learning that constructivism promotes. If I were to give some historical figures who contributed to constructivism in education, these would include Giambattista Vico, J.J. Rousseau, J. Dewey, J. Piaget, L. Vygotsky and V. Glasserfeld in the Western world. But there are also some important historical personalities in the Muslim world, such as Ebû Bekir Râzi, Ibn Haldun, Katip Çelebi, Selim Sâbit Efendi and Hasan Âlî Yücel, who can be considered to be constructivist educators in the general sense in their own *sui generis* contexts, as well as being prominent thinkers in Turkish or Muslim educational history.

Recently there has been some valuable literature published in English on constructivism and educational theory. Marie Larochelle, Nadine Bednarz and Jim Garrison have joined together and edited an important book which I intend

to introduce in this review, called *Constructivism and Education*; the book covers diverse discussions, from Piagetian constructivism to radical constructivism and from social constructivism to sociocultural approaches. The project of this book was apparently first designed during the special issue of the *Revue des sciences de l'éducation* (vol. 20, no. 1, 1994) which was devoted to this major school of thought in modern education. As stated in the preface, Marie Larochelle and Nadine Bednarz were guest editors. Most of the chapters (chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 13) of this book were originally written and published in French in the aforementioned journal.

Later on, American educators (Michael Bentley, Stephen Fleury and Jim Garrison) joined the conversation and created further momentum for the project, opening more pages on "problematic subjects", as represented by the integration of constructivism in education. Thus, these conversations eventually led to this book which focuses on the discussion of certain points and practices of education that have been affected by constructivism. The editors, drawing on perspectives that are based on a variety of reflections, questions and applications, try to grapple with various issues in constructivist education over a range of different fields, such as ethics, education in mathematics, philosophy, social psychology, education in science, social studies and so on. Moreover, the contributors to each section come from different countries, like Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, the United States and Canada, and thus the book is woven together with a diversity of socio-cultural perspectives from different geographies. But it must be stated that other perspectives and problematic points on the issue that arise in other geographies and cultures, such as Japan, Korea or South Africa, are not included in this book. Turkish public education has been implementing a constructivist teaching style in primary and secondary education over the last few years. Although this book was published in 1998, an article written from the Turkish context would present an interesting viewpoint on the topic in any future works.

In the first section of this book, Marie Larochelle and Nadine Bednarz introduce the basic frame of reference for the perspective of each contributor. The second part deals with a conceptual examination of the problematics of cognition which stem from radical constructivism, didactic constructivism and pragmatic social constructivism. Ernst von Glasersfeld, the advocate of radical constructivism today, contributed to this section with the article "*Why Constructivism Must be Radical*". Albert Morf wrote "*An Epistemology for Didactics: Speculations on Situating a Concept*". Jim Garrison also added the final article to this section, entitled: "*Toward a Pragmatic Social Constructivism*".

The third and fourth sections examine the presentation and discussion of teaching practices and promises, while examining the mediating role of teachers, teacher education and professional development within the constructivist mode in relation to various fields, ranging from math to ethics. The authors who have contributed to these sections include Paul Cobb, et al, "*Individual Construction, Mathematical Acculturation, and the Classroom Community*", M.L. Schubauer-Leoni, et al, "*The Construction of Answers to Insoluble Problems*", J. Confrey, "*Voice and Perspective: Hearing Epistemological Innovation in Sstudents' Words*", J. Désautels, *"Constructivism-in-Action: Students Examine their Idea of Science"*, G. Fourez, *"Constructivism and Ethical Justification"*, S. C. Fleury, *"Social Studies, Trivial Constructivism, and the Politics of Social Knowledge"*, Y. Pépin, *"Practical Knowledge and School Knowledge: A Constructivist Representation of Education"*, K. Tobin, *"Sociocultural Perspectives on the Teaching and Learning of Science"*, H. Bauersfeld, *"Remarks on the Education of Elementary Teachers"*, M. L. Bentley, *"Constructivism as a Referent for Reforming Science Education"*. The final section, entitled *"Critical Constructivism and the Sociopolitical Agenda"*, aims to initiate an ongoing conversation about the potential of constructivism in terms of how it can socially empower individuals and groups.

In chapter 8 Jacques Désautels attempts to clarify the reasons why epistemological reflection within science teaching can be justified through the integration of a constructivist approach. The first reason, according to the author, is an ideological one, and this is because all approaches to science teaching reveal a certain perception of science, one way or another. Certain assumptions on the nature of scientific knowledge and its historicity and the socio-cultural dimension of this knowledge are transmitted to students; this eventually influences the way the students shape their own perspectives. There is no doubt that the philosophical discussion of this issue in depth can be traced further in T. Kuhn's most celebrated work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution,* written in the second half of the 20$^{th}$ century. The second reason deals with epistemology and the appropriation of scientific knowledge; Désautels thinks that it is necessary to integrate epistemology within science teaching, which certainly makes the argument more pedagogical in nature. Recent research on science teaching programs has, as the author suggests, enabled experts in science education to rediscover one of the basic assertions of the Piagetian constructivist theory, that is, the notion that children already have their own construction of natural phenomena before their first science class. Children construct their own explanations of

phenomena in their own way; anything that takes place in their everyday lives, whether it is an object falling or the neighbor's broken windows.

A fairly good overview of all the chapters can be found in Chapter 1 by Marie Larochelle and Nadine Bednarz, but I would like to focus on some of the issues that have somehow been omitted from this book. Even though the book covers certain aspects of constructivism with its multiple implications in education, it still misses, I believe, some important dimensions, such as the critical role that school settings and culture play in constructivist education. There is no doubt that schools teach much more than they publicize. As Elliot Eisner convincingly argues in his book, *The Educational Imagination*, schools teach in a fashion that the culture itself teaches; this is simply because schools are the kinds of places they are. And, it is hard not to remember at this juncture the point that Dewey made long ago: "Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time."

All in all, the authors endeavor to substantiate the idea that students are not a *tabula rasa* nor clay waiting to be molded to whatever the adults desire. Rather, they are both actors and makers of their cognition and mentality: They associate, decipher, interpret, and transform in their own particular way.

Finally, the book concludes that once students have acquired awareness of the constructed knowledge with its relative character in nature, and are able to recognize the collective, consensual aspects involved in the construction process, they also gain the basic mental mechanism that empowers them to develop a more emancipative, critical relationship not only toward knowledge, but also towards the knowledge that is produced in our small world.

Seyfi Kenan

**Jewish and Islamic Law: A Comparative Study of Custom during the Geonic Period**

Gideon Libson

Cambridge: Harvard Law School, Islamic Legal Studies Program, 2003. xi+367 pp.

Jewish and Islamic legal systems separately have attracted wide interest from scholars, but the relationship between them is not a well-researched area of