

THE ARAB INTELLECTUAL BETWEEN POWER AND CULTURE

In the contemporary Moslem-Arab societies, does the function of the intellectual recall that of the classic scholar, at once counsellor of the great people, honor of the city or of the village, and regulator, through the culture, through judicial consultation or through the education, of the social life? Any analogy too greatly stressed would be hazardous. After having sketched the constitutive movement of the Moslem civilization and its present state, we may then attempt to appraise the situation of the intellectual between the power and the cultural system.¹

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¹ This article proposes a general hypothesis on the movement of the Moslem civilization. It lies at the hinge of two series of studies. The first tries to encompass the great currents of the contemporary Moslem-Arab culture: cf. "Le marxisme et l'Islam," *Archives de Sociologie des Religions*, July, 1960, n. 10, p. 133; "Les courants réformateurs de la pensée musulmane contemporaine," in *Normes et valeurs dans l'Islam contemporain*, by J. Berque, J. P. Charnay and others, Paris, Payot, 1966, p. 225; "Dynamique de la pensée musulmane contemporaine," *L'Homme et la Société*, n. 17, July 1970, p. 243, and "Dynamics of Contemporary Islamic Thought," *France-Asie*, n. 197, 1969, p. 147; "Ouverture sur l'islamologie," *Actes du Congrès de Moham-média* "Culture arabe et culture française de part et d'autre de la Méditerranée," 3-5 décembre 1970, in a special issue of *Revue des études philosophiques et littéraires*, Rabat, n. 5, Sept. 1971, p. 33; see also the interview in the Arab revue *Al-Fikr* (Tunis), April 1971, p. 98; "Transferts de culture au Maghreb," *Politique étrangère*, n. 5, 1971, p. 603; "Une trajectoire arabe.

MOVEMENT OF THE MOSLEM CULTURAL HISTORY

On the whole, a constant process may be discerned in the history of the Moslems: the successive reduction of binary systems into a unity.

The Islamic civilization established itself in the course of the first centuries after the Hegira by the constant demographic alluvial deposits and cultural heterogeneousness which were successively phagocytized and transformed into a powerfully original entity. It appeared suddenly by a synthesis between the old Arab background (the nomadic life of the desert and the economy of the caravan city) and the revelation of the Koran: at once, ideological reform and socio-economic rebalancing. It was extended by the first great conquests which were then carried further by the populations which had been recently converted but conserved a part of their ancient systems of civilization. From their origins, the Mohammedans had integrated—and rendered unrecognizable since they made them their own—various elements of the Sassanide and Byzantine civilizations. Then in return they capitalized on the conflicts: the Mongolian or Turkish “great invasions” which involved the invaders’ conversion to an elaborated religious faith and to a refined civilization—creating a new fervour, a state organization and an artistic sensitivity which created specific “styles” in mysticism, in architecture, in poetry or in music. They then had to distinguish themselves by absorbing the elements native to the

Du rejaillissement culturel à l’affirmation économique,” *Actes du colloque sur la Renaissance du monde arabe*, Université catholique de Louvain, 1970, éd. Duculot, 1972, p. 38; “Jeux de miroirs et crises de civilisation. Réorientations du rapport islam/islamologie,” *Archives de Sociologie des Religions*, n. 33, Jan. 1972, p. 135.

The second pursues the presentation of the principal social figures of the modern Arab countries: cf. the peasant in “Flux démographique, force économique et appropriation du sol en Algérie,” in *De l’impérialisme à la décolonisation*, by J. Berque, J. P. Charnay and others, Paris, 1965, Editions de Minuit, p. 189; “Les cadres moyens dans les pays musulmans. Esquisse d’une problématique,” *Annales marocaines de Sociologie*, n. 1, 1968, p. 31; “Condition féminine et rapports sociaux dans l’Islam contemporain,” *Cahiers de l’Orient contemporain*, n. 77, Oct. 1969, p. 4, and n. 78, Dec. 1969 p. 4; “La musulmane dans la ville moderne,” *Politique étrangère*, n. 2, 1971, p. 141; “Pouvoir et bourgeoisie arabe. Le contrepoint libanais,” *Culture et développement. Revue internationale des sciences du développement*, Université catholique de Louvain, vol. IV, 1972, p. 57; “Le militaire arabe entre le pouvoir et la révolution,” *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, 1972, vol. LIII, p. 229.

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civilizations of the Indian sub-continent and of continental Africa, as well as those of the industrial civilization. The assimilation of this industrial civilization now constitutes one of the most difficultly analysed principal avatars of these continuing confrontations.

These confrontations entail inversely, in proper balance, the fundamental rejections. One is conceptual: such as the refusal for too great a confluence of the Moslem theology with the Hellenistic emanationism; the denial of political systems modeled too closely on the "developed countries"; the denial (which is extremely verbal among certain peoples) of a society which is purely materialistic and has an ethics based only on utilitarianism, etc. Another rejection is demo-political: the denial of every state-organized group on Moslem land which does not recognize their sovereignty: the French kingdoms, colonial domination, or Israel.

The history of the Moslem civilization could thus be "mounted" in a succession of dialectic antagonisms: to the original base opposes another civilization, from which results a new, and richer, formulation of the Moslem culture, to which opposes a new politico-cultural entity, etc. In short, it is a binary system which fuses its two ends and then recovers this binary aspect by introducing a new element for assimilation into the historical continuance.

The notion of "reduction into unity" is preferred to that of synthesis. This assimilatory movement is not at all comparable to a clash between equivalent thesis and antithesis; but it does entail accomodation, a remodeling of the existing Moslem civilization by its own conscious effort to insert within itself certain foreign elements. These elements are furnished through juxtaposing the civilizations after conquest (Egypt, Persia, Byzantium, the colonial period), or through erudite research (Hellenic thought, Christian theology, modern political philosophy: from humanism to socialism). The Islamic civilization remains the fundamental pier on which enrichment or erosion are superimposed.

For a relatively brief period, after the maturation of the vast territorial expansions and up to the economic crisis of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, then the Moslem culture had envisioned for itself a uniformity, horizontally distributed along

the whole of the *umma*, of which each city would constitute a pole connected to the others by the mobility of the scholars, the travelers and the merchants. It is the characteristic of a system of civilization to form itself into a coherent whole: to which, in their classicism, the cultures of great expansion succeed.

But the efforts provided in the course of the counter-Crusade, the fall of Andalusia, the Turkish sovereignty, the deflection of the great commercial currents from the Mediterranean towards the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, these determined the national and the cultural fragmentations. In the same measure where dynasties and intellectual and commercial currents would become localized horizontally (relatively), another geographic structure would appear: vertical, binding the village to its surrounding territory, and this by a double shift: by the *sūq* or the bazaar, the place of exchange between the alimental products of the peasant and the artisans' goods of the city, and by the literate more or less versed in the law, assuring a possibility of social coexistence and of articulation of the village/countryside symbiotic whole.

Thus in the course of centuries the high culture was diffused from the cities into the heart of the country, but in stressing certain of these elements: certain fragments of the ideo-religious *corpus* (and not the completeness of the *shari'a*) and the initiatory and fraternal aspects of mysticism more than its spiritual implications. And these elements now constitute a not negligible portion of the current beliefs: thus the opportunist conception of causality, of cosmogony, of the representation of the world issued concurrently from eschatology and from the magic which is in part derived from the symbolic height of letters and numbers, or from popular medicines, blendings of local traditions, but also from rudiments and explanations derived from the classic canon, notably Avicennism... The vernacular cultures which are ethnographically diversified and yet bathed in a vaster culture which encompasses and hovers over them, are often constituted by the detailed elements which are accumulated without critical understanding and without thought for conceptual coherence, but which nevertheless contribute to the nexus of the days, assuring the general rationality of the group observed. A popular culture, in effect, is often the graduated projection in the continuance of an earlier learned culture, grown less and less effectual

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out of the exhausting of its creative and assimilatory energy. So much the more that, according to a current psycho-sociological reaction, the perception of the misfortune of the times, the uneasiness of civilization, determine an emphasis on religiosity: the normative-theological aspect which is destined to guide behavior (thus to give security, the counterpart to a changing world) or the mystical aspect (offering consolation and compensation to the harshness of life) which tends to supplant empirical scientific research, or else along the praxiological plan (economic and monetary structures as the political struggles continue to rebalance the stratifications and human groupings), but to the standard of the ethics: thus a scale of values, therefore the functions and sciences henceforth most highly valued: the religious.

Thus the central religious nucleus: the Book, was rendered perceptible to the people by a social pattern embodying multiple fashions: the *'ālim*, the *faqīh*, the *tāleb*, the *mollah*, the *sūfī*... an agent of adaptation between the social and the patrimonial, between the normative and the spiritual. But the compromise of the men of the Mosques and of the families who held the *zāwīya*-s and the sanctuaries with the colonial power and were careful to maneuver their influence for its profit, the phenomena of deviance fed by the cult of the saints and of the Marabouts, the grasp of conscience of the non-effectual character of the traditional education, less in its contents than in its presentations and methods, all these determine the revival of the intellectual function in the Moslem-Arab societies.

Since before the end of the nineteenth century, the Arab intellectual has been defined by his opposition on the one hand to the illiterate masses, and on the other hand, to the hardened tradition. He enters into the social category of the reformist versed in the religious sciences (such as members of the *Salafī* movement or the *Ulémas*), as well as that of the civil servants or the military (such as certain of the Young-Turks), or of the literary figures, such as the promoters of the *Nahd'a*, or of the professors. And gradually the most respectable and prestigious methods of teaching are undermined: the secular aspect, grandiose in its simplicity, of the high Moslem-Arab pedagogy: the circle formed by disciples around the expounding *shaykh*, backed against a column of the mosque, is now reduced to a picturesque

and episodic incarnation at the two most illustrious Islamic universities: for the free auditors in the period of Ramadhân at Qarawiyîn, for the foreign students seeking the prestige of frequenting al-Azhar. For advance studies, at Fès as at Cairo, the courses, material and methods are by now modernized.

The change for the intellectual also results in an optic alteration: passing from the ethical determination of individual comportment to participation in a national destiny. The various independences were not obtained without the action of the masses who were gradually excited by the organizations of combat. In the economy, the *salafî* controversies over the possible legitimacy of the banking operations, previously considered in the function of personal morals, were replaced by controversies over the system of cooperatives, or of self-management, or of planning—in short, by a collectivist conception relative to the exploitation of the resources and to the employment of their potentialities in relations of exchange or of international power.

Thus, as is so frequent in the course of history, the Mohammedans are now striving to proceed, in order to perpetuate themselves as a system of civilization, to two new and fundamental “reductions into unity.” A reduction to unity which is no longer continued, since the Moslem world reassembled and in independent countries liberated its diverse national cultural entities, into an internal clash of juxtaposed civilizations (colonial society/ autochthonous societies, Hinduism/Islam)—the cases of African Islamization and of Israel’s existence being reserved. Reductions to unity which are no longer opposing as in the beginning of the century, the supporters of the *jadîd* (new) to those of the *qadîm* (ancient) by reciprocal negation. But reductions which were carried out throughout the XIX century and up to our day by two contradictory and complementary movements: the one of open means and assimilation; the other by filtering: analysis and rejection of the elements denying the Moslem civilization. And in two perspectives: establishing homogeneities in relation to the external world (egalitarian political sovereignty, modern science and economics) and in relation to itself: effacing socio-economic and socio-cultural internal disparities. In short, by participation in the processes of planetary development, and by the reduction of the dichotomy between the culture of letters and the culture of common wisdom.

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INTELLECTUAL FUNCTION AND POWER

Since the liberations, in the principal Arab countries, the power is assumed by the relieving soldiers, by the militants who emerged "on the heaps" of the liberation struggles, and by the traditional or parliamentary notables who are still familiar with the colonial methods of administration and government. Since then, on the schemes of political philosophy and of interpretation of history, as on that of the complementing of social roles, the intellectual function is projected into an ideal task: consideration of the multiplicity of the developments and of the desirable orientations.

This intellectual function is then connected with that of the other directing strata: directive or organizational, governmental or techno-bureaucratic, but also that which relates to the masses. Through relations with the directing strata: without the reality of power, the intellectual adopts diverse compensatory attitudes: the assertion that the intellectual is also a laborer, working for the development of his nation and his culture. The intellectual workers (*al-muthaqqifûn*) must refine and offer a contemporary formulation of the Arabs' reality and essence in the face of foreign civilizations, and also, if it is necessary, counter to their own rulers who are too bound by the compromises of the great international game, or too constrained by technocratic objectives. They mobilize themselves in order to define themselves affirmatively to the Arabs—those who undermine the importance of a political event and those who act upon it. In other respects, they gain internally from the discredit in which the classic notables fell—without having succeeded to replace them in the intermediary echelons of the social powers. And, externally, by their writings, by their presence in the congresses, by the dialogs and controversies which they conduct with the intellectuals and politicians of other countries, they enjoy an "over-representation" in international opinions. However, it is an unbalanced over-representation since they do not at all oppose their sociological under-representation in regards to the masses of their respective countries, of which they constitute only a thin fringe, having perhaps absorbed too much of the West or of Marxism: that which prevents them from profiting from a power of "over-determination" in effective politics.

They also attempt another compensatory attitude—to surmount

dialectically (or only ideologically?) this distortion between their social status and their political role by declaring themselves the "thinking substance" emanating from the common value and supreme motive of history, an enlightened minority with the mission to judge the relations of force, the internal and international conflicts and contradictions, to criticize their governments—at the limit, to replace them. This reflexive counterpart to the direct action is lived as an effort to join the theory of action to its practice, the past to the future by restoring a density and an historic direction to the Arab culture and nation.

Yet, in the meantime, forces are to prove the imprecisions of this thought. The determination of the objective contingents is not at all pursued as that by the intellectual. He often prefers to project a long-term vision not subjected to the event, and he supposes that these wide perspectives are more "concrete" than the daily politics. Against the immediacy of the established regime, he evokes the "prophesy of realism"—or the realism of prophesy. The assurances of the resurrection of the nation and of the Arab culture are often expressed in a peremptory manner, without having sufficiently outlined the paths and methods of this resurrection. Eager to live at a level of sufficient theorizing, the intellectual is less anxious to propose effective political "followings." His abstention leaves then to the politician alone—or to his bureaucrats—the trouble of defining them, in the contingency or in the short term forecast, purely on socio-economic grounds: thus, fragmentarily. From here comes the hiatus between the fundamental objectives, which are remote and posed in postulates, and the likely means to attain them. As well, the long perspective is less hazardous, and offers less chance for error than does the short or middle prevision.

But this hiatus toughens the oppositions between the governmental and bureaucratic personnel working according to a nationalist empiricism, and the intellectual stratum whose most advanced elements sometimes lead towards the dogmatics of revolutionary socialism and to the unqualified assertion to being the expression of the Arab conscience counter to the contingent imperfections. Indeed, the radicalization of thought of the intellectual stratum in relation to that of the rulers constitutes a classic and universal phenomenon. However, it curbs its coagulation with the strata which effectively reduce the pressure of

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the power in an "historic" block (to employ the famous expression of Gramsci) which would combine more profoundly the cultural system, the institutional organization and the masses. At present, the thinker does not yet fulfill totally, on the socio-political plan, this role of theorizing/moderation/counsel of the established order and of the mediation between the base and the leaders, this ideological function of social rebalancing which theoretically fulfills the *'alim* in classic societies, to which it aspires but which circumstances seem to deny it. And the conceptual dichotomy between thought and action multiplies the risks—and the accomplishments—of brutal rebalancings in Arab politics.

This willingness for a general reinterpretation of the history gives, however, substantial insights into the psychologies of their authors and into the manner in which Arab public opinions resented the colonial epoch and how they now judge the Western civilizations, neo-liberal or socialist. But in this double role of echo and of instigation in relation to the masses that the intellectual assumes, he is also compelled to submit himself to the contradictions looming into view between the manifestation and the diffusion of thought.

TRANSPPOSITION IN THE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

It is a capital fact in the contemporary Moslem-Arab societies that the classic language no longer coincides with the culture, nor with the representation and the communication of the daily vernacular languages.

The extension of education and of Arabization determines a development which is accelerated and massive but is sometimes superficial, of the literate—easily attained by political discourse diffused by the mass media, of the *za'im*—but which still escapes the writer. He must then reforge his working tools and his means of communication: the language and the literary genres, if he wants to reach a greater public and obtain this socio-cultural restructuring and this linguistic homogeneity.

We will not evoke here the efforts often described, sometimes divergent, which exert themselves along these objectives: either

pseudo-classical language which simplifies and modernizes the vocabulary of classic Arabic but conserves a refined syntax; or purified dialect; or "third tongue" (middle Arabic), the tongue of the urban conversation (sometimes theatrical: *Tewig el-Hakim*) accepting as classic its rhetorical methods (which are also of the mental categories): antithesis, paradox..., but which are accentuated according to certain values perceived as modern (liberty, absurdity, restlessness, anguish, spontaneity and social spirit...) and which are concretely humanized by the dialectic elements expressing chagrin and humor, satire and fraternity, or "technicized" by the language of business or of administration. The true problem would perhaps be to appreciate the nature and the intensity of the shifting realized in the Arab cultural system by the contemporary intellectual activity.

Very schematically, the whole language presents itself under a triple aspect: a lexical "population" (returning to certain habits, to a certain technical state), a syntactical order (the specific manner of presenting the course of information, the arguments: certain modes of reasoning and of thought); and a system of reference to certain values, to certain communal works of civilization (ethics, literature, art, law, history...), permitting each individual to "test," to verify and affirm his belonging to the group. In these three aspects, the language is subjected to strong tensions. It must at first coin some words in order to designate objects, the notions which designate modern daily life, but also the technical news of management, the political ideologies and scientific theories. In this matter, the linguistic authorities waver between the Arab adoption and accentuation of a foreign word, or its translation through one of the concepts or one of the verbal forms which offers the play of the trilateral origins. In practice, subject to attempts at refinement, the press and radio often ratify the borrowing of words which are popular or specialized to the foreign tongue—when they don't instigate it themselves.

The whole borrowing of foreign words is sound to the extent to which it introduces a factor of life in the society. And the alphabets, the migrations of population, determine the enriching transfers of words and ideas, of new "nuances," which a simple translation would not know how to reflect. As well, the transfers in general only carry some several hundred words and are quickly assimilated through pronunciation and usage. However, the

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lexical importation already makes for an attack on the original purity of the language.

Yet more serious is the blow felt by the second designated aspect: the syntactical order of the Arab language: this succession of juxtaposed phrases, throwing light on each other by antithesis or by analogy, delivering—such a spark—their message almost intuitively, by their very nearness. The native Arab syntax favors the verb, the action fusing pure energy—or more exactly, the different possible modulations of the action, modulations resulting from the presence of the subjects, of attributes, of surroundings. Similarly, Arab rhetoric favors verse, the core of aesthetic and semantic vigour, the continuation of proceeding thought by evocation/comparison/induction.

Now the Arab has gradually integrated the deductive syllogism: thus a rationality is disengaged from the order of the language. The semantic communication is then made less by intuitive confrontation, the choice among diverse possibilities, than by discursive thought, analytic, disclosing the will to understand the world successively and no longer to perceive it immediately. This change would appear from the passage of verbal Arab to scriptural Arab. The movement is stressed by the *mu'tazilites* and the *falsafa*. It is accelerating today: numerous modern Arab texts seem to have abandoned the classic "method" of exposition which proposes discontinuous emissions of energy and is embodied according to the manner in which it enlivens the environment: they follow the expression, the "movement," of Western diction.

The influence, now secular, of philosophy and of European literature had in fact to transpose in the Arab thought—in the Arab mental structures—the classic scheme of languages coined in the imperialist industrial civilizations: English and French especially: subject, verb, complement, with the overlapping incidentals assuring the organic development of the thought. In short, a linear logical order, oriented in the sense of the gradual development and referring to casual rational series, to an order postulating the unfolding of the action in time by utilization of the "natural" laws: physical, social, socio-psychological, economic... Sharp intuition yields place to deduction, the priority of pure action (the verb, focus of Arab grammar), yields to the subject: to the actor.

This grammatical transfer has its parallel in the evolution of literary genres and of their contents. The classic literature, like Moslem ethics, offers few works of pure imagination, utopian or romantic: because the invention mirrors the impulse of the creation, and would only betray indirectly the psychology of their authors—since it is contrary to the decency, to the *hishma*, to denude oneself morally. The high literature would tend to cultivate the history, the geography, the catalogues of standard behavior, the moral critique of manners. Thus it would tend to general information and to social examples. The environment would surround, would protect, the individual.

But this environment deteriorated under the successive impacts of economic liberalism and of the revolutionary battles. By relaxing the taboos of caution, of courtesy, of respect, they constrained the combatants—making them refined, westernized intellectuals—to the direct action: to fight physical nature and in the social jungle. The former structures, the conceptual categories, were put forth again. The return to the “I,” to personal initiative, is correlative to this “re-barbarization” (in the sense: weakening the social environment constituted by the traditional frameworks and colonial society) which would necessitate the struggle. Each individual wants to “glue” himself to the instant which passes and to the future which is taking shape.

From here comes the hope of making history (the accession to independence, the national construction, the eventual socialist rebalancing) and the singular experience lived by the author, the witness who, evoking to each his own memories, will bring an easier communion/persuasion, will contrive some renewed manners, more effective constellations of ideas and of collective sentiments. The reaction to the events, the enterprising actions, the defeats, the doubts, the interrogations, the joy of successes or the grief of the long days when exaltation falls, all this directly nourishes the temptations for political and strategic theorizing. To a more or less intense degree, more or less exteriorized, the autobiographic statement feeds the reflection. One can again raise up multiple examples, from the *Philosophy of Revolution* by Nasser, to the Maghrebin essayists or the Palestinian poets.

This constant would perhaps merit a psychoanalytic expla-

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nation. Literature as gratification of the ego, as an exploitation of the aesthetic virtualities of the language, yields room to social criticism—or more exactly, becomes its servant and its herald. Utopia in the noble sense of the term: construction of a city in a future rendered possible by voluntarism, today exceeds in sustaining power the traditionally major activity of the Arab intellectual; that by which he could prove his mastery of the language (the consubstantial element to the nation): poetry.

Political motivation encroaches upon the novel, poetry, criticism and the cinema, and even the young theatre: the harshness of the Algerian Kateb Yacine to his counterpart in the cruel farce of the Egyptian Ali Salem, *The Phantoms of Heliopolis*. It gives rise to a varied journalism—yet often controlled or tele-guided by the governments. But its favorite genre is the essay, a mixed genre, malleable *par excellence*, authorizing all the developments, every hypothesis: a free reflection which is not submitted to the constraints of erudition, proceeding by vast flights and by axiomatic assertions more than by incontrovertible ones, sometimes confounding the observation, the hypothesis and the objective, not always demarcating the real, the possible and the desirable. Nevertheless, endowed with an incomparable resonance.

THE INTELLECTUAL, ISLAM AND THE ARAB ESSENCE

The resonance results from the same movement of this reflection, from its contents, and perhaps from the ambiguous attraction aroused by certain accentuations, certain readjustments, in the values and in the respective references although indissolubly overlapped in the Islamic community and the Arab nation.

The Moslem civilization, through the immensity of its domain and the diversity of its anthropological incarnations, projected the theological notion of a unique God in the political notions of the unity and of the cohesion of the religious community, of the *umma*. A Durkheimian perspective would propose an inverse projection: the unity of the community, so necessary for the triumph of Islam from its outset, determines the notion of divine unity; the collective force is justified by the revelation. This double conceptual and sociological projection clashes with

the ethno-geographical, socio-economical and political disparities which history as it is lived ignites.

Through the centuries, the tensions, the combats between sunnism and shi'ism, between and within the rites, tribes and dynasties, have illustrated Moslem history. The sects of the classic epoch were associated on an ideological reasoning and on a socio-economic basis. The theologico-judicial methodology favored the notion of *ikhtilâf*: divergence. But now, except for encounters of some marginal sects (Baha'isme, Ahmadiya...) or some extremists (political reasons are not lacking), the Moslem world tempers its religious antagonisms. A feeling of Islamic ecumenism becomes evident, not by a desire for a reduction into unity of the diverse metaphysical or ritualistic formulations, nor of the manners and customs, but by an implicit recognition of the uniformity of these formulations which are mystic or legistic, philosophical or moral, and sometimes heterodox, of the equality afforded by right to the four orthodox schools. Everything which has been thought by a Moslem must be recognized as part of the "corpus" of Moslem thought. Everything exclusive would seem superfluous, contrary to the affirmation of the profound uniqueness of the divinity, of the faith, of the Moslem community, and of the originality of its civilization. Alone these deviations are isolated on some dogmas or fundamental canonical obligations. This perpetual tendency towards human regrouping and to ideological harmonizing (not towards uniformity) constitutes one of the great stimulating principles of Moslem action.

But the psychological religious fact: the personal faith in such a dogmatic "corpus," in such a mode of life avowed to obligatory ritual and on eschatological finality, does not deny that dogma, ritual and eschatology are also part of the system of civilization, and it determines a total vision of the existence, thus a certain idea of the collective organization and a certain type of culture. Through the centuries proposing a cosmological vision of the universe, centered on and encompassed by such a type of divinity, the Mohammedans defined some types of reaction, of manners and aesthetics, but they were incarnated differently across places and epochs and they gave them several historic and geographic formulations: Moslem-Arab in the narrow sense, Turkish, Mongolian, Hindu, Indonesian, Persian or African... or philosophic

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formulations: *mu'tazilite*, *falâsiifa*, *salafî*, modernistic, humanist, liberal socialist...

Thus, conceptually, the religious fact reacts on the cultural facts. But sociologically, this latter surpasses the former. In this sense, the social function of the culture varies according to some parallel "curves"—but not always according to the same movement—to those describing the variations between geo-religious ecumenism and national cultures. The core of "Moslem" communication, which is universalistic, reduces itself (proportionally, not well understood in the absolute) in the measure where the singularity and richness of these cultures are advanced. Now political independence consists also in the resurrection of a culture.

The present cultural nationalisms which are asserted as well by the holders of classic thought as by the spirits attracted by the revolutionary model, attempt to define themselves, to order themselves, to "collectivize" themselves—to transform themselves by self-affirmations which have in consequence a certain reversal on the level of the intellectuals if not of the masses: the Moslem element is affirmed as a fundamental part of the national personality, and no longer always the inverse. This conception then insiduously realizes a certain rebalancing in the respective instigations recognized in the values of the *umma* and of the *'urûba*.

Consequently, the tendency in other respects traditional: recognition of unity in diversity, is extolled by prudent politicians to defend Islam, or by the true believers, or by the spirits which are rather secular but sensitive to the charm, to the modes of the life, to the aesthetic and socio-cultural environment, to this undefinable but profound atmosphere of the whole Moslem land. The legalists on the contrary—especially those who are holders of official functions or support their political ambitions by the preservation of traditions—remain withdrawn in relation to this tendency, or rather, they consider ecumenism as a defense against the other ideological orientations spreading in the Arab countries.

In itself, this situation is, intellectually, normal. However, the divergences have often reached the thresholds of rupture, due to the progressive radicalization that the issue imposed on Arab thought as universally observed. Begun with reformism, it was

advanced by a liberal degree of parliamentary possibilism, then by the nationalistic struggle, by the national state structure, by the notion of specifically Arab socialism; it has disclosed, since the Six Days' War, a more marked tendency towards scientific socialism; then, in the bloody Palestinian swelling it adapts itself to an imperialistic and socializing state control. The evident refusals, by liberal parliamentarianism as well as by popular "classic" democracy, did not open onto a verbally coherent doctrinal elaboration which gives representation to the contemporary Arab general development, even if the notions of Arabness and of revolution remain at the core of the issue. Indeed, these diverse options simply assign the diffuse trajectory some of the opinions supporting all the holdings of position which are stopped in a moment given for such an individual, such a group or such a tendency of thought. But the important fact is that the intellectual controversies convey, no longer the religious ideologies, but the political doctrines and the economic routes: thus the models of a general social restructuring in which the culture receives a mission of coagulation on the scale of an organized group: the country—or of one to be organized: the Arab nation.

After having, during the wars of independence, supported violence, exercised "criticism by arms," the majority of the intellectuals (with the exception of Israel) strive to join the "arm of the critic" and the prospective to the ends of working towards this prodigious remodeling of itself, by itself, to which they now entrust the Arab societies. But they clash over two obstacles. The one is socio-political: the non-realization in relation to the leaders, neo-bourgeoisie as a military stratum, a conceptual and ideological system rather elaborated in order to get a clear idea of the Arab political reality, and not only of its development. And the other is psycho-cultural: the anguish, sometimes implicit, that the transformations which are sought in reality open onto a certain negation of the earlier Moslem-Arab substratum, in proportion to the acceleration of the *'urûba*, to see the local specifications, in relation to the *umma*, and for the utilization and the extension of rational series which profoundly modify the Moslem mental categories. So the anxiety, the *qalaq*, no longer bears on the servility or the scientific or economic delay, but on a possible self-surrender in the same measure

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where this delay is made up. From here come in return the affirmation on the Moslem-Arab character of every thought, whatever its contents might be, since it is thought by a Moslem-Arab.

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CURRENT HOMOGENISATION: A BINARY OR TERNARY SYSTEM.

It is this which constitutes the issue of the coherence of the Arab-Moslem civilization at the present time. Civilizations—like empires—progress, reach a zenith and then decline. But the process of decline is a slow one and it gives rise to moments of lag in the various aspects and works of culture. Now, the attribute of a system of civilization is its self-conception as an ordered whole: this is the point which widespread conceptual and demogeographic cultures reach (in their classical moment in any event), and it is this point which the Arab-Moslem civilization has periodically attained by the successive processes of reduction-to-unity, which have already been discussed.

But the synthesis has not always been a total one: resistance has been offered from time to time by elements which have been badly assimilated, to a greater or lesser extent. This reduction-to-unity should therefore be dissociated by fields and regions. It has been successful on certain planes, and less so on others. In Spain and Sicily, in the Frankish kingdoms of the Crusades, in the Balkans, and in the Maghreb until the rule of Ibn Khaldun (14th century), distortions of this sort were still in existence. In a comparative sense, the case of Indian Islam seems to be a typical one: in spite of the brilliant conquests carried off in the years 900-1100 by the Ghaznevids and the Ghourids and later in the 16th century by the Mughals, descending from the high ranges of the Himalayas, and in spite of the subtle infiltration of the coasts of Bengal and Gujarat by trading Arab seafarers, the Moslem penetration of this sub-continent did not fully submerge the demogeographic vastness of it, nor did it wear down the various philosophico-religious categories and the Hindu social structures. Because, since the 16th century, the Moslems were in direct contact—either through war or in

agreements of alliance—with both Europeans and the peoples of the Far East. Contrary to the classical binary system of Arab Islam, a ternary system came into being: a social environment and conceptual general attitude which were Hindu, commerce and power, and thence thought, which were Occidental; and Indian Islam which, at the very moment when the Grand Mogol empire was in the throes of flourishing, was “cornered” between these two antagonistic blocks. Forced either to fight or come to terms on both fronts (the intellectual and political recourses advocated by Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan are symptomatic in this respect), it was unable to bring about the “return to unity” which invokes the Moslem dynamic, and it is still suffering from the consequences of the divisions affecting Pakistan and Bangla Desh.

This statement of fact may be applied by extension to the ancient Indian Archipelago—nowadays known as Malaysia and Indonesia. Here likewise, because of complexities which were multiplied by the ethical, cultural, economic and geographic distribution of the archipelago, but also very probably because of western colonisation (which started with the Portuguese as from the 16th century, and was carried on by the Dutch), Islam, which was arranged in a ternary system, was unable to achieve a total cultural reduction-to-unity.

In any event, during the colonial period, the still latent dissociations between Arab civilization and vernacular cultures were revived. Europeanisation was a type of acculturation which created a direct thoroughfare from Kabyle or Auresian or Atlasian or Maronite or Coptic life to the current of modern thought. The methods and ingredients of the classical culture underwent a period of disaffection, and seemed momentarily to be relatively ineffective in the fare of modern rationality, being as it was urban, bourgeois, liberal and then socialistic. As from that time, a ternary system came into being. That is, in other words, a system in which the Arab-Moslem civilisation, by virtue of its own conceptual categories (concepts of the oneness of God, concepts of the oneness of Arab community, the Arab culture and, today, of the Arab nation) constantly felt itself to be ill-at-ease; a system which it has constantly been trying to reabsorb.

Of course, in another way, technical rationality gave rise to a new type of homogenisation in as far as a foreign culture

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developed into a dominant political system on the one hand, and gave access to the outward world and the world of science on the other. It was thus in a position from which it projected out over the mosaic structure of specific cultures distributed throughout Islam. But this process of homogenisation "from the outside" was a partial one: it was reserved for those who were "evolved," because of the weak state of scholastic training, and it was checked by fears of assimilation. And in other perspectives it was accentuated by de-colonisation. This latter stirred up whole peoples against the vast, centralised industrial metropolis with increasing frequency. In the course of this total and bloody struggle, the various peoples had gradually coagulated until they resembled, for all their varied cultural systems, one single group. This applied to dialectal wisdom and solid rural energy. It applied to the knowledge and thought-structure of the West which, to a greater or lesser degree, was either used or accepted by nationalist liberal bourgeoisies and revolutionary militants. In this struggle, political nationalism had mobilised cultural nationalism. Local particularism (race, family, heredity, climate, economic stratification and so on) in its various facets had become somewhat blurred in so far as historical revival proved itself to be effective on the scale of both the nation and of civilisation, and not on the scale of more narrowly defined groups and their particular "wisdom."

By reducing the internal opposition factions of the ternary system of the imperial age, the struggles for liberation reconstituted a brutal but simpler binary system: an Arab/Coloniser system. And these struggles also revived the centuries-old Arab-Moslem debate between the *bled* (countryside or village) and the city.

They represented a demographic overflow from the country provinces to the towns—first by the rural exodus which filled up the shanty town suburbs and then by the victorious return of the 'troops.' Inversely the city is now diffusing its powers, its culture and its technical capacities to the country folk. For example: does self-administration offer an opportunity of confluence between the two experiences?

In contemporary national structures, in fact, the processes of osmosis follow one another both in terms of the upsurge of coagulating ideologies (Algerianisation, Tunisification and so on)

and of the extension of new (national) customs (which are not always those of the industrial societies) resulting from generalised education, mass media, and contact with foreign ways of life (emigration). From that moment onwards the quickened cultural disparities of the end of the colonial era have been de-politicised and justified as far as possible by their enhancement of the national culture. But the popular cultures—and the groups supporting them—are in a state of transformation: the risk of “folklorisation” is not always absent. The research carried out by intellectuals and university bodies is at pains to gather together and preserve whatever still remains. But it is bound to change its course gradually in step with the various developments. The ground is giving way under the classical ethnographical observations which used to describe the customs, thoughts and institutions—before their disappearance—dealt with by the study of local crafts, or the study of surviving beliefs, but which are obliged to team together, in order to grasp the meaning of new structures, with the most modern concepts of the human sciences (humanities). For it is a fact that the mutations of the dimensions and relations of the human group and of civilisation involve the mutations of epistemology, and thence of the various renewed inquiries to do with the most pertinent analytical techniques and methods of interpretation.

For all its harshness, one of the great thrusts of contemporary Arab thought is the better explained henceforth. This is the at least partial denunciation of the inadequacy of the application of the concepts and methods issuing from the industrial societies to the Arab-Moslem societies; and the hope that it will be possible to achieve an application which will be more positive and favourable. In other words, there is a desire to reduce the instruments of thought, the object of this thought (for the Arabs), and the thought itself, to a state of unity.

Thus the pursuit of independence also goes through the phase of refusing the “intellectual hegemony” which is still exercised by the west. In this light, the whole of the Arab intelligentsia—in its very disputes—is engaged in the struggles for liberation. But the fact of shifting the at least partial responsibility for its own conceptual weaknesses on to the other, results in an adoption of concepts and a historical periodicisation which are both still those of the west. The controversies between Arab

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intellectuals therefore become exacerbated in respect of the "causal" accentuation of the various endogenous and exogenous factors relating to contemporary cultural development and the explanation of this development.

These controversies are transcended in the actual process of political awareness attaching to contemporary Arab thought. From which angle should the Arab intellectual pursue his current of thought? First and foremost, by carrying out a dissociative and critical study of the present situation? and thus coming out in favour of those "scientific" criteria and procedures which are likely to give results which are still fragmentary, but which, at a later stage, will be operational in the process of renovating his society? The environment, however, cannot really tolerate any research which is apparently not directed towards immediate political effectiveness. Or should he then, in an inverted sense, and before everything else, develop a worldwide, rational political plan, which, even if it may not directly orientate the course of history, will at least be capable of giving a general direction to Arab history? The second attitude is aimed more or less voluntarily at recovering—on the level of general strategy—what the establishment refuses to give the intellectual on the level of tactical action: a concrete, tangible, and officially recognised influence. What is more, it opens the way to yet another dilemma: the tendency to transform the research methods into ideology. And this in two opposite ways: either by showing them up to be partial, and accentuating that they give no more than a sawn-off image of reality—thus denying the worldwide aspect of the Arab future and sterilising its total voluntarism; or, on the contrary, by transcending them in a general vision of the world, and thence imbuing them (whether they are admitted or rejected) with a quality of finality which is clearly too much for them—thus, for example, instrumental Marxism, or structuralism which is sometimes considered to be anti-historical, and so on.

The Arab-Moslem intellectual is at the present time in pursuit of the rebirth—the second one—of his nation by the institution of the State, and the rebirth of his culture by its own deepening and by its position of correlation with the external conceptual systems. His work is thus dealing with this construction of a social fabric, and this coagulation of a collective activ-

ity which governs the whole gamut of individual behaviour. And this movement emerges as one of the major characteristics of the Moslem civilisation in its periods of expansion and flowering. In Arab societies, therefore, he embodies the greatest effort achieved by subjective consciousness to objectivise itself, to enter into communication with others in order to forge a consensus and a common orientation. But these outlooks still collide with the conditional existing reality and with the risk of deterioration with regard to the hoped-for cultural coherence.

Speaking in a geo-cultural sense, the Arab intellectual is at pains to situate his civilization in a length-wise sense as compared with the depth of the Sahara and the African continent, and breadth-wise in relation to the Moslem world, the third world—and the world taken as a whole, and he is at pains to avoid the face-to-face situation imposed by the past on both shores of the Mediterranean. But he is still very much aware of the weight of colonial, cultural inequality, and the attraction of ‘fashionable’ Western ideologies. Within his own society, he is involved with and refers to the language and history of the past, and to be built, but the actual effectual achievements are embodied in a “dense present,” in the short and not-so-short term, and the return to Arabisation, the mystique of the tractor, the establishment of industrial poles, petroleum recoveries... are just as much concrete elements which make governments valid in the eyes of their peoples. Under pain of compartmenting himself in ideology, he must therefore interiorise the transfer which occurs in the “contents” which he transmits: no longer just the traditional order and wisdom of the town towards the country, but the effective rationality of the industrialising organisation in relation to the urban and rural masses. He is at pains to be the focal point, the catalyst between refined culture and popular energies, but he is writing within a society, the greater part of which (even the section which has received the rudiments of literisation) cannot read. He sees himself as the expression of public opinions, as the voice that compensates for the institutions—still weak relays between the base and the *za'im*—but he would also like to play a part which, if not directive, would at least be animating in a political and ideological context. “Cornered” between his desire to be a representative of the people and his hope that he might be able to influence the course

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of events, he invokes that “sentimental connection between intellectual and people-nation” (Gramsci) which, in his eyes, would justify the privileges with which he is provided (if purely and simply no more than his learning) as compared with the masses, and would give him a certain weight in relation to the dominant social groups. But he is part and parcel of the middle classes and he is not always quite sure if he constitutes, with his peers, an autonomous body, or if he is just simply fulfilling a specialised function (at once both an apparent contestation and an underlying justification) of the class of the personnel holding the power in the circumstances. Namely, the militaristic-technocratic stratum which merges with the most capable elements of the reconverted bourgeoisie.

Of course, in respect of the proportionately slight number of intellectuals (*stricto sensu*) as compared with the demographic expansion, he often has occasion to pass directly “to power” either by (sometimes very tacit) consensus, or by governmental changes. But the concept of the intellectual is currently oscillating between two extremes: either acknowledgement of this quality by the only higher bodies—writers or teachers; or an extended regard given to all those holding diplomas—no matter how modest—and all those who are given a certain amount of responsibility in their profession. Now, the diversified recruitment of intellectuals, when carried out either through the intermediary agency of different bourgeois strata or directly by individual promotion outside the people (in what proportions?), already entails distortions in the political distributions and the effective choices. But the extension of education over the coming decades would probably result in enhancing the “threshold” of this category and creating a hierarchy in it. In that event the position and function of the intellectual will be called in question again. Consequently, at the present time, and in spite of these analyses, the intellectual is in no way constantly assured of not having a “false consciousness” (Engels) of the present situation; and he takes refuge—and grows stronger—in future affirmation.

The phenomenon is not troubling in itself: general political theorisation is often made *a posteriori*. And the various people can act effectively in accordance with their own personality by remaining within the tangible empirical realm. The fact nevertheless remains that, in both an intellectual and a sociological

context, the gap between the growth of thought and the immediate influence, between the rough outlooks and his relative social minimisation in relation to those wielding power, sometimes instils in the "thinking person" that malaise, that "unhappy awareness" which is so aptly described by Hegel. Perhaps it is also "unhappy" because the mutations of the day are at once invoked in order to re-become oneself, and feared because they do not represent a total rupture with the self.

Essentially, however, and beyond everyday thought, the unhappy awareness perhaps remains the actual driving-force and the honour of the intellectual function: a perpetual questioning of oneself and others, and of the self in relation to others. The questions and the efforts of Arab thought perhaps represent its true success; in any event they represent the vivid evidence of its vitality.

GLOSSARY

'ālim: traditional scholar (see *uléma*)

falāsifa (sing. *faylusūf*): Hellenistic philosophers of the Arab Middle Ages

faqīh: learned jurist

hī'bma: decency, proprieties

ikhtilāf: divergence of judicial opinions and of doctrines

jadīd: modern

mollah: religious wisemen

muthaqqifūn: intellectual labourers

mu'tazilite: rationalist philosopher

Nabda: Arab literary Renaissance of the end of the XIX century

qadīm: ancient

qalaq: disquiet, anguish

Salafi: Egyptian reformist movement of the end of the XIX century

shari'ca: the Moslem law

sūfi: mystic

tāleb: master of the school

Ulémas: Algerian reformist movement of the 1930's

umma: the Moslem community

'urūba: Arabness

za'im: political leader

zāwīya: mystic fraternity