The Intellectual

Middle East – Topics & Arguments

CONTENT

EDITORIAL

#01—2013

Dawn of the Declared Dead? On the Intellectual and Other Reasons for Launching a New Journal on the Middle East

Yvonne Albers, Maike Neufend

The question always arises when a fresh periodical appears—in this case, a new academic online journal on the Middle East: Is this needed?

It's not only out of modesty that the journal's future readers, and not its editors, should be the ones to answer this question. Nevertheless, this first issue gives us, as editors, the opportunity to introduce the original idea that led us to launch *Middle East – Topics and Arguments*, present its main aim and scope—and, of course, elucidate why specific attention is being devoted to *the intellectual* in its first key issue.

There were two main concerns that sparked our early discussions, looking back two years to the editorial team's formative meetings.

The first question was: How can these as-yet largely, especially in Germany, independent disciplines, all under the umbrella of Middle Eastern studies but with their diverging histories and research approaches, be brought together in academic cooperation? Obviously, the crucial task here is the quest for *interdisciplinarity*, not just in theory but in application. As a step in the process of overall academic reorientation—not only in the humanities—interdisciplinarity has become a leading idea, which has surely found as many advocates as it has critics. In our personal case, interdisciplinarity is part of our immediate academic environment, as all of us are affiliated with the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies at Marburg University, with its seven different subject areas ranging from ancient Near Eastern studies, Semitic studies, Islamic studies, and Arabic and Iranian studies, to Middle Eastern politics and economics. Due to this combination of expertise, not only the research objects themselves are often highly heterogeneous, but also the methodologies applied to the very same object may diverge strikingly—not to mention the various historical timeframes addressed. As a matter of fact, communication and exchange processes between the different disciplines—especially when entering into a joint project—are naturally characterized by contention and by conflict-provoking controversies. But at least in our case, friction has often led us to highly inspiring and productive debates that occasionally birthed an exciting idea—like this journal.

However, *Middle East – Topics and Arguments* is not only itself a product of these interdisciplinary exchanges, but also a manifestation of its leading thoughts: Our experiences led us to create a platform that actually welcomes the previously mentioned dialectics of friction and inspiration caused by interdisciplinary thinking. This allows for the clash of differing *Fachkulturen* (disciplinary cultures), as the

German language puts it. As mirrored by its title, this journal intends to initiate productive controversies and arguments on chosen topics with which our disciplines are all in their own ways involved, but maybe not yet connected to one another. For the purpose of discovering new, underappreciated, or even as-yet undetected intersections of debates actually taking place in different disciplines in the field of Middle Eastern studies, we decided to dedicate each single issue of this fledgling journal to one key topic, which we call "focus." Gathering around this topic in focus, we support and invite authors to provide concise and focused contributions that critically reevaluate established scholarly traditions and think beyond entrenched disciplinary boundaries. And who do, as we do, not understand interdisciplinarity merely as a method that necessarily leads to consensus or even compromise, but rather to an animated, sometimes heated, or even playful debate that allows more than one answer to survive in the end. In that spirit, we introduced the column "anti/thesis," in which two rivaling positions are juxtaposed, highlighting different lines of argument or competing narratives. This is also reflected in the column "close up," in which a person who has not only constitutively contributed to the issue's main topic, but

particularly stimulated and challenged academic debate, is portrayed.[1]

The second concern that arose during the course of our early conceptual brainstorming was the question of how to encourage our academic field to dare transgressing its regional boundaries and step beyond familiar Middle Eastern territory. Or, to turn this the other way around: How can we also be of interest for an academic public that is not primarily concerned with the Middle East, and participate in similar discussions taking place beyond our own research fields? We may then call this a quest for a *transregional* effort, which still remains underrepresented in the Middle East academic journal landscape. More precisely, the transregional approach we pursue does not primarily address comparative studies in the sense of juxtaposing two or three different regions regarding one problem or phenomenon, but—by taking the term even more literally—it rather aims to lift an issue's question to a broader, comprehensive meta-level. Our column "meta" is therefore not only a playful acronym of the journal's title, but also an innovative format that allows for discussing the main topic on a theoretical and philosophical basis. It bridges the various academic disciplines, contributing to each issue by transcending theoretical approaches used exclusively in one disci-

pline, while providing links between them. This we understand as a contribution to the greater project of leaving behind the concept of exceptionalism, which for a long time was attributed to the Middle East and academic studies concerned with this "entity."[2] The relevance of such an attempt becomes exemplarily obvious regarding the current phenomenon of resistance movements and revolutionary upheavals taking place worldwide. This fact might inspire to trans-think the so-called Arab spring beyond its Arab borders, and to "go worldly" in speculating about common motivations, triggers, and contemporary perceptions of a *raison d'être* that is moving people today. And this concern directly leads us to this first issue's key topic.

In the upheavals of the Arab Spring that have or are still taking place in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria—in differing magnitudes of violence and brutality—one puzzled and often frustrated concern was repeatedly articulated: "Where are the Intellectuals?" As just one of many examples, Syrian author Rosa Yaseen Hassan addressed this "question that remains since the beginning of the Syrian revolution" in her eponymous article, discussing the absence of Syrian intellectuals in the course of their country's turmoil. What *the intellectual* is often accused of, or respectively what he accuses himself for, is his

failure to perform a specific social task attributed to the role of the intellectual: namely to function as the people's guiding voice in times of historical transformation. The Arab intellectual of today seems to withhold all duties assigned to him, as he is not, following Bamyeh's characteristics, popularizing complex intellectual systems for the benefit of his public, founding original systems of thought, or expressing existing public sentiments and attitudes in a systematic but accessible format (Bamyeh 2-3); and therefore neither having foreseen what is to come, nor providing the already revolting people with a pioneering ideology.

It is important to remind us here that the absence of the intellectual is not only being mourned for the very first time in the Arab world, but also correlates to a recurring debate in the 1970s in Europe. The decline of the "universal intellectual," who claims access to an overarching knowledge, truth, or moral, was both testified to and postulated by the intellectual vanguard of the time. When Jean-François Lyotard was digging a hole for the "tomb of the intellectual" and "his belief in a universal subject" in 1983, Michel Foucault had already proposed to replace this figure with a "specific intellectual" who contributes to a strategic shift of power in a defined field of activity (Ernst and von Gehlen 233).[3] Contemporary "Western" discourse on the topic becomes interestingly apparent in the course of current social movements in Europe and the United States; journalists commented on the muted voices of so-called public intellectuals in the *Occupy Wall Street* protests. Maybe Slavoj Žižek is right to demand in his recently published article, "The Violent Silence of a New Beginning," the full support of protesters and simultaneously "non-patronizing cold analytic distance" of intellectuals toward these movements.

But aren't protests worldwide (whether taking place in the Middle East, Greece, Spain, the UK, or the United States) calling for a paradigm shift in our thinking about intellectual guidance in social contexts? Initially, aspects that influence our understanding of the intellectual's meaning, role, and function should be discerned and signified. Therefore, for this journal, the editors' approach to this topic shall be guided by three interrelated questions: Who is an intellectual? How is her action shaped? And where does it take place? The first question denotes the *persona* or social figure itself, which appears, often simultaneously, as an indistinct analytical category connected to its specific time and place, and as a self-defining term in the course of an ongoing intellectual discourse. For defining such a historical concept of the intellectual, and accordingly the role assigned to her in society, requires deeper analysis of how and where this social figure is or has been active; a concern that is first and foremost related to the *regime* and the authorities in power. The regime's power over the ways cultural and social issues are addressed is one main concern of intellectuals' self-reflective discourse. How can one position oneself on national or religious ideologies; and how can public opinion be influenced, sometimes even under threat of death? However, often the respective authority—representing a limitative set of rules and laws—is seen as opposing a *public sphere*, which is often described as an environment for unrestricted discussion and opinion formation, where the intellectual's action effectively takes place.[4] Sociologist **Gil Eyal** demonstrates how rethinking the meaning and interconnectedness of these three areas of scholarly research—the *figure*, the *regime* and the *public sphere*—are important for future research. In contribution to the "meta" column, his article reveals how the notion "intellectual" is always stuck between an attempt to adapt it to current historical circumstances, and the never-ending preservation of its original historical meaning as "universal intellectual." Relating to Foucault's concept of the "specific intellectual," the author makes a plea for not

narrowing down the analysis to a specific social type but, rather, a *relational* analysis that aims to grasp the factors that structure an intellectual field. Along this relational analysis, Eyal deliberates how and where intellectuals intervene. To inform a more comprehensive approach that broadens the analytical frame by multiplying relevant agencies, modes, and targets of intervention, the author proposes the concept of "public interventions," contrasting to the somehow redundant term "public intellectual" (13-24).

Clearly, the bemoaning of "public intellectuals" is, among other trends, linked to a yearning for "universal intellectuals" who speak truth to power through a set of universal values. But, at least regarding the Arab region, the historical emergence of the modern intellectual was not—compared to the European narrative of Zola's protest letter "J'accuse"—sparked by a single founding document published by a man of letters. The "birth" of the *muthaqqaf* (intellectual) was triggered by a technological and economic modernization process starting in the late eighteenth century, and was above all propelled by the establishment of printing techniques that signaled a new dimension of publicity and the public sphere. Similar to seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Europe, a new public emerged in the Middle East that consisted primarily of an ascending mercantile class or bourgeoisie demanding a new kind of cultural good.[5] A large body of scholarship in Middle Eastern Studies turns on research about these new kinds of intellectuals during the so-called *naḥḍa* (renaissance), from the second half of the nineteenth century towards the early twentieth century (Abu-Rabi'; Boullata; Hamzah; Kassab, *Contemporary Critique*; etc.). This is the era of new cultural production of knowledge mainly through papers and magazines—and, with this, to the spread of novel concepts of state, culture, and communal life. The *mufakkir* (intellectual) and later *muthaqqaf* belong to these new intellectual figures; the scholar (*ʿālim*) and the man of letters (*adīb*) became the journalist (*ṣaḥafī*) and the public writer (*kātib ʿāmm*). Experts of different fields later maintained this new public role of a *muthaqqaf* as part of their own self-image (Hamzah 1).

The appearance of a new public sphere and how this affected the advent of the modern intellectual is one possible point of departure for evaluating the relation of intellectuals and their respective public. Recent scholarship entails a critical revisiting of the Habermasian "bourgeois public sphere," concerning constructions of privacy and publicness as well as questions of identity and the neglect of religion as possible factors having an impact on public discourse. For instance, el-Nawawi and Khamis argue that the public sphere in the Middle East today is not exclusively controlled by state censorship (which also induces practices of self-censorship), but that the public sphere is also a form of "public Islam." According to the authors, "public Islam" is marked by a "diversity of intellectual contributions, thoughts, practices and civic debates," where each sphere is represented by ʿulamāʾ (religious scholars) at its core (el-Nawawi and Khamis 29 ff.). In general, the ʿulamāʾ, as managers of the sacred, are often understood as counterparts to the *mufakkir,* who is perceived as being secular. Yet, popular labelings of thinkers like Swiss-Egyptian Tariq Ramadan as "Muslim intellectual" start to blur this boundary profoundly. In his contribution, **Jan-Peter Hartung** takes this label seriously, and shows how the genuine concept of "Muslim intellectuals" as ʿulamāʾ, who historically produced and administered hegemonic knowledge, lost any usefulness as analytical category. ʿUlamāʾ adapted to the changing landscape of knowledge production and the public sphere by entering into the same arenas and addressing the same issues as the *mufakkirūn*, a dynamic that consequently led to a melting of both categories. Discussing relevant sociological and philo-

sophical perspectives, Hartung concludes that both notions encompassed by the label "Muslim intellectual" differ to such an extent that their applicability to academic pursuit must be doubted (35-45).

The portrayal of Mohammed Arkoun as an "intellectual in revolt" by **Ursula Günther** gives one impressive example of this doubtful categorization. Mohammed Arkoun understood himself as "reflective researcher," which implies being devoted to critical theology but never leaving secular philosophy behind. Although he is a paradigmatic intellectual in the first place, popular Western media frequently had imposed on him, and still continue to, the label "Muslim intellectual," while—at the same time—he has been accused of Westernization and betraying his own cultural heritage by orthodox Muslims (63-67). Hence, Mohammed Arkoun was very much aware of the pressures intellectuals like himself must answer to. In his talk given on the conference "Intellectual Debates in Islam in the New Global Era," Arkoun declared two pressures as crucial for the prospective of intellectual activity: the pressure from above, i.e. the state, and the pressure from below, i.e. public opinion, especially on the part of fundamentalist Islam.

This "pressure from above" is certainly one crucial point of contention that in the past preoccupied Arab intelligentsia (and still does). How to behave and position oneself towards those in power, namely the nation-state and its propagated ideology? In her contribution, **Leslie Tramontini** illustrates one example of inner-intellectual controversy by examining the self-perception of the intellectual's role in the Iraqi cultural scene during and after Baathist rule (1963-2003). By tracing the discussion back to the 1980s, she unfolds a mental atmosphere characterized by control, censorship, and committed conformity. Faced with these conditions, a division occurred between those intellectuals putting their creative activities into the service of the nation, and those still trying to oppose official ideology in their work. As strongly shown by the author, inner-intellectual dispute didn't cease, but continued after 2003, when the line of who's inside and who's outside—committed to or against the system—was blurred again (53-61).

For an outside observer, it might appear as obvious that the state, as censor and oppressor, is responsible for the absence of intellectuals in public debate. The downside of this is that the state as active producer of elites is often dismissed. Iran provides an example of a state in need of defining and nurturing its own intellectuals through state institutions. After the Is-lamic Revolution, the Iranian government alienated Western educated professionals, while political measures were not initially introduced to stop progressive brain drain, which the country is still witnessing today. But as Iran experienced the largest loss of human resources in all of Asia, a political change of heart took place: In her contribution, **Julie S. Leube** explores how the Islamic Republic aims to counteract this development through the establishment of the National Elites Foundation. Through examining the foundation's structure, programs, and target audience, she shows how the definition of the officially nurtured elite is characterized by a merely technical understanding that disregards the role of opinion-making intellectuals as part of a country's elite (46-52).

Besides the power of the nation-state and its propagated ideology, popular and academic discourse present another explanation for the absence of intellectuals in a crucial time of turmoil and chaos, such as the Arab Spring. Middle Eastern societies are quite commonly attributed with some kind of societal malady—this "Arab malaise" is regarded as common narrative of a society finding itself in a state of weakness in the face of Western invasion. The intellectual preoccupation with this malaise shifted from demand of political reform and progress in the nineteenth cen-

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tury toward a revival of cultural heritage in the post-independence era.[6] As Abdallah Laroui stated in his famous critique *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual,* intellectuals after World War II and especially in the 1960s turned to a "quasi-magical identification with the great period of classical Arabian culture" (156). The quest for identity, authenticity, and orientation inspired a whole intellectual tradition, in the course of which "Arab intellectuals" are often denoted as "organic intellectuals" articulating their culture's concerns, emotions, and experiences in a language the masses could not express (Kurzman and Owens 13; Solty 111).[7] Even though the upheavals of the Arab Spring came as a surprise for many intellectuals, some of them had described a new trend toward democratic and humanitarian issues in intellectual debates in the Middle East. **Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab** therefore states in her contribution to this issue that "intellectuals were very much in tune with the deep transformations of their societies, and that their critical writings expressed on an intellectual level what the protestors are voicing today on the political level" (26-34). She describes a "critical turn" in post-independence Arab thought with shifting priorities, from "essentialism to agency, from identity to democracy, and from ideology to critique." Notably, Kassab convincingly argues that this turn

is not characteristic solely for Middle Eastern societies, rather indicates the moment when approaches of cultural and political decolonization turn from fixating on "the other"—the colonizer—to reassessing internal liberation policies common in various post-colonial societies. Evaluated in the new context of intellectual Arab self-criticism, Kassab notes that some of today's Arab intellectual voices provide evidence that inwardly turned self-accusation after the big defeat of 1967 is again turning outward, into greater concern with political matters. Her argument is similar to an idea articulated by Elias Khoury—who invented the term "third nahḍa" to signify the third intellectual awakening after the first historical *nahḍa* at the turn of the century, and a second *nahḍa* in the period after 1967. The intellectual output of this "third nahḍa" is not concerned with a distinct political program addressing a particular group of citizens (e.g. nationalism, socialism, fundamentalism), but rather with the question of universal human rights such as equality, justice, and freedom (Khoury, *Min ajl nahḍa thālitha*). Nevertheless, the renowned Lebanese author—himself being a leading representative of the Arab intelligentsia, and very much affiliated with the idea of relentless intellectual self-criticism—found himself in deep awe of people's braveness in Tunisia, Egypt, or

Syria. For him as an intellectual, the testimony of their actions allow for no other attitude than humble appreciation and a deep hope in the next generation (Khoury, *Inverted Worlds*; "Naḥwa mudawwana").

As editors, we feel that these six articles—particularly in their synthesis, through which several linkages and intersections are revealed—might initiate a process of rethinking our topic in "focus" and contribute to a broader understanding of the people we call "intellectuals"—in the context of the Middle East, but also beyond its borders. Nevertheless, we are well aware that contemplating this controversial figure implies a complex of aspects that could hardly be taken into full account in one single issue. (For instance, the role of gender relations remains underexposed.) Ultimately, this present edition sheds light on the Arab-speaking part of the Middle East, with an excursion to Iran, and concentrates on the region's modern history as cradle of the "intellectual."

So, was all the earlier talk about both an interdisciplinary and transregional attempt too ambitious? On the one hand, academics typically only grudgingly publicly confess intellectual failure, particularly when starting a new project, instead tending to turn all doubts into forthcoming successes. On the other hand, self-criticism is an integral part of our daily academic du-

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ties as well. On that note, the editors strike a blow here for daring something that might turn out to be difficult, complicated, or perhaps even impossible. However, this journal is and should remain a work-in-progress, and with its first issue and indeed its "meta" topic, we do hope to pave the way for future issues, coming closer in our search for discovering new, underappreciated, or even so far undetected intersections in a self-reflective quest for a both interdisciplinary and transregional attempt at further thought about the Middle East.

Notes

[1] Special columns like "anti/thesis" or "close up"—as well as book reviews and interviews—are optional and therefore not necessarily included in each issue. For example, in this first issue the "anti/thesis" column is abscent.

[2] The editorial board of *Middle East – Topics and Arguments* retains a broad understanding of the Middle East, which includes North Africa, the Levant, the Arabic Peninsula, the Gulf region, along with Turkey and Iran, and neighboring countries, as well as Middle Eastern and Muslim communities outside the region.

[3] For a more detailed history of the rise and fall of the classical intellectual figure in Europe, refer to Gil Eyal's contribution to this issue.

[4] The normative concept of "public sphere" was developed by Jürgen Habermas in his groundbreaking work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit)* in 1962, had since frequently been debated as place and target of intellectual action by academics and intellectuals alike.

[5] For a more detailed account of the development of a public sphere in the Middle East, refer to Jan-Peter Hartung's article in this issue.

[6] For the development of intellectual discourse in modern Arab thought, refer to Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab's contribution in this issue.

[7] For a critical reading of the "Arab intellectual" as "organic intellectual", see Bamyeh 9-20.

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META

#01 – 2013

Plugging into the Body of the Leviathan: Proposal for a New Sociology of Public Interventions

Gil Eyal

The main argument of this short essay is that the concept of *intellectual*, especially the somewhat redundant neologism of *public intellectual*, is too narrow to guide research on how interventions in public affairs are currently authored, crafted, and operated. Instead, I propose the concept of *public interventions* to inform a more comprehensive approach that broadens the analytical frame by multiplying relevant agencies, modes and targets of intervention. This approach is inspired by Foucault's (*Truth and Power*) distinction between the "universal" and "specific" intellectual; Bourdieu's (*Corporatism*) replacement of the latter by a "collective intellectual"; and the approach to the public sphere urged by the contributors to *Making Things Public* (Latour and Weibel).

I will begin by sketching a brief and schematic genealogy of the concepts of "intellectuals" and "public intellectual," to explain why they are at once too freighted with historical meaning (and a narrative of decline), as well as analytically too narrow, for dealing with the realities of contemporary interventions in the public sphere. I will then proceed to outline an alternative approach focused on interventions, along the three dimensions of agencies, modes and targets.

Why Are Intellectuals Always Disappearing and Reappearing, Declining and Resurging, Defending Their Mission or Betraying It?

The idea of the "intellectual" has a long and ambiguous pedigree. As Charle puts it, it is "essentially historical," a category

of historical memory. It is not a concept that can be picked up ready-made and be used for analytical purposes. It could, of course, be used for practical and strategic purposes, but then one should be aware of the long history of uses and abuses it trails behind it, and the set of mechanisms and assumptions that gets activated every time it is deployed.

These are mechanisms of defamation and celebration, of self-definition and counter-definition—in short, of boundary work (Gieryn) and classificatory struggle (Bourdieu, *Intellectual Field*). It is instructive to know that the term *intellectuel* was first coined during the Dreyfus affair—not for analytical or diagnostic purposes, but as a political insult. "To be 'intellectuel' meant to be 'dreyfusard,' that is a person who pretends to uphold things that the majority of the French refuse" (Charle). The insult, however, was embraced by its addressees and turned into a mobilizing device, a rallying call designed to bring into being and demarcate the boundaries of the category thus named (Bauman 2-8). Those who issued the call—Zola, Clemenceau, Anatol France, Henri Poincare, Durkheim—considered themselves to be the best representatives of the category and addressed their call to the like-minded. The laudatory meaning they gave it is still worn as a badge of honor today, just as the original

mocking meaning could still be activated as well.

The later career of the concept involved a continuous tangle between those who wanted to adapt it to changing historical circumstances, give it objective analytical meaning and extend it to wider circles of the educated, and those, on the other hand, who sought to redraw the boundary between who is and who is not a "true" intellectual based on the tradition, the preserved historical memory of the *intellectuels*. This boundary work often took the form of accusations that the intellectuals had betrayed their "true" mission (Benda, *Treason*), and ultimately informed a problematic of allegiance that pervaded all the later attempts to give the concept an objective analytical meaning (Eyal and Buchholz; see also Charle).

Only when taking into account this history of the concept can one understand the current popularity enjoyed by the concept of *public* intellectual. The conjunction "public intellectual" is, first of all, very recent. As can be seen in Figure 1, it hardly existed before 1987. The little uptick in 1987 marks the publication of Russell Jacoby's *The Last Intellectuals*, a book that bemoaned the disappearance of intellectuals while at the same time creating something completely new, namely the conjunction "public intellectual." As can be seen in Figure 1,
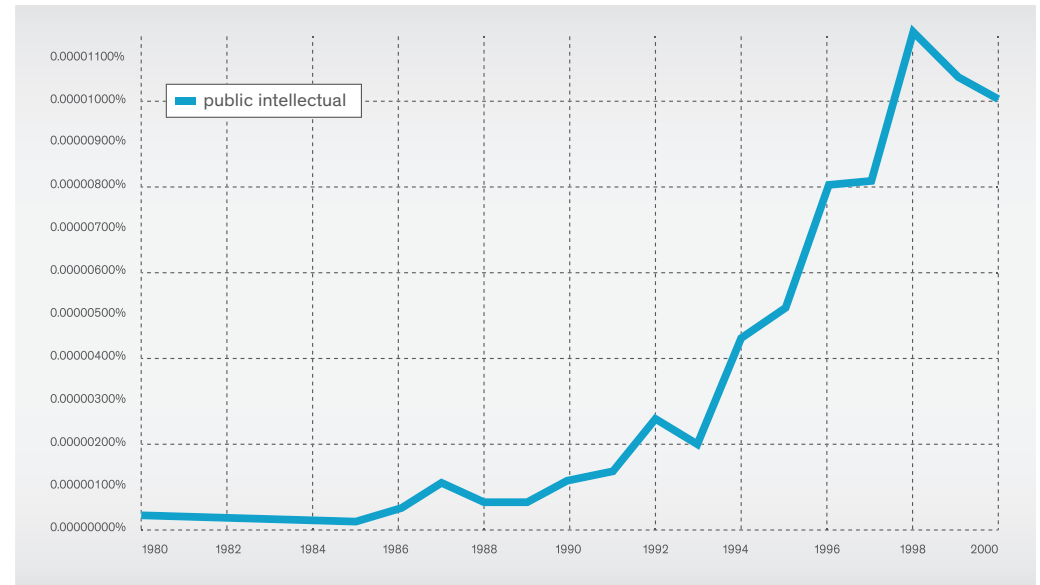

Figure 1: Frequency of appearance of "public intellectual" in Google Books from 1980 to 2000
Source: Graph. *Google Books*. Google, 18 June 2012. Web. 18 June 2012.

from the moment Jacoby announced their disappearance, the chatter about public intellectuals took off and never shut up.[1]

Second, the conjunction "public intellectual" is also very peculiar. It is strikingly redundant. Intellectuals were always understood—and understand themselves—as those who in their writing and speaking appeal to a broad public. So we have a small mystery here: How is it that the addition of a redundant qualifier works to resuscitate and energize a moribund concept pronounced to be on the vein? $X+0=X^2$? What exactly is *done* by add-

ing the qualifier "public"? The answer is *boundary work*. The addition of "public" redraws the boundary between who is, and who is not, a "true" intellectual in a very specific way, excluding from the category of academics and especially experts who are understood to be confined to narrow technical pursuits.

By the late 1970s, there were many attempts to give "intellectuals" objective analytical meaning as a "new class" composed of experts, technocrats, professionals, and academics (Bruce-Briggs 1979; Gouldner 1979; Konrad and Szelenyi 1979;

Walker 1979). Adding the qualifier "public," therefore, was boundary work meant to exclude experts and academics from the category and to signal that true intellectuals are *not* experts and academics: They are not entangled in mundane technical affairs or limited to their ivory tower. They address a broad public, owing allegiance only to truth and universal values. Since this conjunction first appeared in a book titled *The Last Intellectuals,* a book that belonged to the venerable genre of jeremiad (mixture of lament and accusation) about the decline of true intellectuals and betrayal of their original mission (Posner), it activated not only boundary work from experts, but also an entire narrative—deriving from the historical memory of the *intellectuels*—about decline, "endangered species," the threat of betrayal (by turning expert) or extinction (by a society of expertise), and consequently provoked a debate about whether public intellectuals are disappearing or on the contrary, reappearing on the web and the blogosphere (Donatich; Fuller; Kellner).

From Intellectuals to Interventions
The concept of *public intellectual*, therefore, leads us into a blind alley where nothing but echoes of the historical memory of the *intellectuels* reverberate between the walls. We need to retrace our steps back to an intersection where this boundary work between intellectuals and experts was questioned, and pick an alternative path from there. Fortunately, this intersection is not too far behind. It is represented by Foucault's (*Truth and Power* 128) distinction between the universal and specific intellectual.[2] While the "universal" intellectual fits the mold of what is meant by "public intellectual"—the prototype is represented by the engaged man of letters (e.g. Zola, Sartre) who speaks in the name of truth and universal values—the "specific" intellectual is an *expert*.

Foucault's example of a "specific intellectual" is Robert Oppenheimer. Oppenheimer, says Foucault, was an individual whose narrow technical work as an expert acquired universal dimensions when it threatened the whole human species with extinction, and who consequently felt compelled to intervene in public affairs. Oppenheimer did not begin as the independent, engaged critic that he came to embody later. He started as an expert working in the service of the American government, first at the Manhattan project, and then as Chairman of the General Advisory Committee to the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). It was from this position that he began lobbying for international arms control, i.e. that he began intervening in public affairs. Eventually, his activism led to the revocation of his security clearance in 1954 during the heyday of McCarthyism, and he became a *bona fide* dissident intellectual. Foucault concludes, therefore, that there is no reason to draw a strong distinction between intellectuals and experts: "the intellectual is simply the person who uses his knowledge, his competence and his relation to truth in the field of political struggles" (*Truth and Power* 128). Put differently, what is common to all who may be termed "specific intellectuals" is not that they correspond to a specific social type (since experts come in many different forms and shapes), but rather the *movement* by which their local and technical knowledge acquires a more general and public value and becomes the basis for intervention in public affairs. What is interesting about Oppenheimer surely is not merely his end point as a dissident intellectual, but the movement which took him from technical concerns and government service to increasingly independent intervention in public affairs. A movement, it is important to note, that did not owe its momentum solely to Oppenheimer himself, thus leading us away from the myth of the public intellectual as author and first mover. What Foucault did, therefore, was not to add another type, but to draw analytical attention to the enduring element in the concept of "intellectual," the part that

is indifferent to boundary work and classificatory struggles, and that could serve as a basis for reconstructing the concept.

Agencies of Intervention

The analytical framework I propose here is designed to analyze a movement, not a social type or a group. The first question, however, is "who is moving?" When analysis is focused on "public intellectuals," it tends to privilege the actions and pronouncements of a few prominent figures, thereby inevitably leading to boundary work, hagiography or a narrative of decline and betrayal. When, on the other hand, we analyze the movement by which knowledge acquires value as intervention in public affairs, the frame is broadened considerably.

First, it is clear that often this movement is initiated or carried through by experts, Foucault's "specific intellectuals," rather than generalist intellectuals. Moreover, these experts need not be only glamorous and well-known individuals, such as Oppenheimer, but can come from the ranks of the more "gray" practitioners, who often work away from the spotlight enjoyed by prominent figures. Yet, arguably, the public impact of their work is often no less profound. Few would recognize the names of the economists who designed the indicator of aggregate productivity trends.

The number-cruncher bent over reams of data seems far away from the image of the engaged or celebrity intellectual—though Nate Silver, the recently crowned "public statistician" (Scheiber), may still upend this stereotype. Yet, as Block and Burns show, these obscure economists profoundly shaped public discussion and political struggle over labor issues in the US over several crucial decades.

Or put differently, to avoid taking sides in boundary wars, we should take into account all actors making credible claims to represent publicly relevant knowledge and to engage with public affairs. And we need to take them into account not in isolation, or serially, but rather relationally as interdependent and competing in a common "intellectual field" where who is an intellectual and how to legitimately intervene in public affairs are objects of classificatory struggles (Bourdieu, *Intellectual Field*). Rather than limiting the analysis to a specific social type, this type of relational analysis directs attention to the factors structuring the intellectual field—the distribution of symbolic capital, the degree of independence from external political demand, and the degree of specialization (Sapiro). Field analysis replaces social types with intersections of these factors. For example, a region with a high degree of symbolic capital, relative immunity to

political demand, but weak specialization (a region roughly corresponding to where internationally acclaimed literary figures may be found), is likely to correlate with a mode of intervention in public affairs that approximates the ideal typical "public intellectual" (ibid.). Yet, field analysis also attends to the independent effect of trajectory and the construction of specific agencies of intervention. Intersections of factors specify positions, so to speak, but these positions could be occupied by a certain (albeit limited in characteristic ways) range of different actors, embarked on different trajectories, each thus subtly modifying the meaning of the position, constructing a somewhat different *agency of intervention* (e.g., Richard Dawkins moving into the "public intellectual" region entails the construction of a different agency of intervention than Naomi Klein). By this concept of "agency of intervention" I mean to emphasize that the answer to "who is moving?" should not be conflated with this or that concrete individual (or social type) because, as noted above regarding Oppenheimer, the momentum of their movement is often not of their own doing, and because the traveler, so to speak, is modified by the travel, by the distance traversed and the obstacles encountered, while their movement also modifies the region in which they travel in

characteristic ways. If repeated and stabilized, this interplay between how the actor is catapulted towards intervention, adapts herself to the road, yet also causes adaptations all around her path, is what I call an "agency of intervention."

The need to distinguish between concrete individuals and agencies of intervention is the clearest when it comes to *collective* agencies of intervention. The concept of intellectual field permits us to analyze also groups, collectives, networks, even organizations, as participating in the struggle over how to legitimately intervene in public affairs. This was Bourdieu's (*Corporatism*) criticism of Foucault. In contemporary conditions, he said, the agency of public intervention is most often a "collective intellectual": a group of experts working together. The same message comes from literature on "epistemic communities" (Haas). The propensity to craft a collective agency of intervention may also be correlated with the region of the intellectual field one occupies. Sapiro argues that "collective intellectuals" abound where the degree of specialization is high while symbolic capital is low. I am not persuaded that these are necessary conditions, but this is certainly suggestive as a starting point for analysis.[3]

To summarize this first point: once inquiry focuses on the construction of agencies of intervention, rather than on a social type, the scope of relevant actors is broadened from a few prominent individuals to include the ranks of more "gray" practitioners, especially as they increasingly are to be found working together in collectives—whether located in one strategic site, a public advocacy non-profit, or a (God forbid!) think tank (more about think tanks a little bit later)—or they are distributed in far-flung networks and epistemic communities.

Modes of Intervention

The analytical framework proposed here begun by asking "who is moving?" and developed the concept of "agencies of intervention." The second step is to ask, *how* do they intervene in public affairs, what are the *modes* of intervention characteristic of different agencies? Here, once again, the term "intellectuals" or "public intellectual" narrows our vision and forestalls a broader investigation. When the term "intellectuals" was first invented, it was in response to a protest letter published in the daily newspaper. The letter was collectively drafted and signed by several prominent academics, men of letters, artists and journalists, who demanded a new trial for Captain Dreyfus (Charle). From then on, when the term "intellectuals" was used, it conjured not only a specific social type

who intervened in public affairs, but also the specific mode, media, and manner of such intervention. Put differently, one of the reasons why the term "public intellectual" functions as boundary work from experts is because it references a restricted set of means (as well as a "style") by which intervention in public affairs could take place: the manifesto, the signed petition or protest letter, the polemical op-ed piece (and now the blog), the *samizdat* text, the gesture of "revelation," prophesying, "speaking truth to power," as well as propounding "transformative ideas" (Bell; Gouldner, *Telos*; Bauman; Sapiro).

As is evident in this short list of means of intervention, there is an intimate link between intellectuals and the concept of *opinion*. Intellectuals, in the classical sense of the term—and as discourse about "public intellectuals" seeks to re-inscribe—intervene by making their opinion known and by seeking to influence the opinions of others, or "public opinion." This is part of the boundary work that aims to distinguish intellectuals from experts. Opinion, as its etymology indicates, is distinct from knowledge and expertise in three ways: firstly, it is a belief or a conjecture without much support—the only support it has is in "the force of the better argument," namely rhetoric. Secondly, opinion indicates a preference, the choice to believe one thing and not

another—or, said more flatteringly, "taking a position." Finally, opinion is couched in terms that are immediately accessible to laypeople. Opinion clarifies, while expertise obfuscates. Opinion clarifies not only by being accessible, but also *because* it is rhetorical and one-sided. Out of the clash of opinions, clarity emerges. As John Milton said in *Areopagitica*, his 1644 polemical tract against censorship and in defense of free speech: "Opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making."

Yet this boundary work between intellectuals who make their opinions public and experts who provide technical assessments, between polemics and controversies (Chateauraynaud and Torny), is untenable (see also Heredia, unpublished). In contemporary conditions, when technical matters of concern are at the core of political struggles (global warming, economic restructuring, genetically modified foods—the list could be multiplied indefinitely), there is an irreducibly technical dimension to public polemics, just as there is an irreducibly rhetorical dimension to technical controversies (Latour, *Science in Action*; Latour and Weibel). Consequently, opinion strikes me as much too restricted a way to conceptualize what it means to intervene in public affairs, especially if we take into account the interventions made by experts and collectives of practitioners.

The focus on opinion seems calculated to exclude precisely technical expertise and a capacity to produce significant political effects, because it mobilizes robust and lasting "truth effects" in the form of reports, technical documents, expert testimony, even an experimental demonstration (properly publicized); or in the format of numbers, figures, graphs, and formulas, i.e. a "politics of measurement" conducted by modifying how matters of public concern are quantified, measured and represented (Porter; Breslau 39-40; Alonso and Star; Block and Burns).

Instead of the restricted means of intervention indexed by opinion, analysis should utilize a broad repertoire of formats or modes of intervention, all of which involve some hybridization of opinion and the technical armature of expertise. This hybridization is quite obvious in a series of technical products that are submitted to some kind of an adversarial procedure or forum: expert testimony at court; "position papers," that quintessential product of think tanks; and the "expert opinion" elicited by regulatory agencies. In all these cases, the adversarial procedure or forum does the work of analysis for us, so to speak, since it operates to expose the irreducible rhetorical dimension of technical knowledge, and thus its nature as a form of public intervention. These ex-

amples, however, should merely serve to remind us that often the most efficacious interventions either come black-boxed as charts, figures, numbers, and other technical devices, or they are counter-strategies that aim to open up these black boxes and make the technical public and political, and therefore must be armed with similar technical tools.

A good example is the design of economic indicators. When think tanks like *Redefining Progress* or *New Economics Foundation* design and calculate alternatives to the gross domestic product (GDP) such as, respectively, the "Genuine Progress Indicator" (GPI) and the "Happy Planet Index" (HPI), this involves opening up the black box of the GDP, a technically detailed critique of how the GDP is compiled and measured, and a no less spirited and "opinionated" critique of the assumptions and presuppositions (read: "opinions") upon which it is based (Eyal and Levy). Moreover, to the extent that these alternative indicators are employed by international, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations to assess policy, or even to completely revise the System of National Accounts (SNA) (see Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi), they constitute a formidable intervention in public affairs. This is but one example of what I mean by suggesting that the analysis of public

interventions should incorporate a much broader repertoire of formats or modes of intervention.

Targets of Intervention

The final question to be asked is *where* intervention takes place. The concept of "intellectuals" carries with it a certain normative (Habermasian) vision of its target as the "public sphere," by which is typically understood a sphere of public *opinion*, an agora populated by reasonable citizens who are presented with conflicting opinions and are capable of adjudicating between them according to the force of the better argument. I argued above that the concept of opinion is too narrow to capture the broad repertoire of contemporary modes of intervention in public affairs. Similar considerations apply when it comes to characterizing the target of public intervention. Modern-day politics, the public affairs wherein intervention should take place, are increasingly about technical affairs regarding which "the public"—understood as laypeople, who read newspapers and possess similar capacities for critical reasoning—is ignorant. This is an inescapable fact, but different conclusions could be drawn from it.

One could react defensively and, with Habermas, suspect that when the conversation gets technical somebody is ob-fuscating, evading the debate, and using scientific jargon and technical details as ideology. One would, therefore, seek to create mechanisms that filter technical discourse and return the public sphere to an ideal state of pure conversation of opinions.

Or, concurring in diagnosis but diverging in valuation, one could affirm that indeed, because of the increasing technical complexity of public administration, the public is a "phantom"—it is ignorant about these matters, which are known only to experts. Yet the public's ignorance could also be a strength because this means that it is impartial (Lippmann, *Public Opinion*; *The Phantom Public*; Binkley; Marres; Callon). One could reconstitute the public sphere through mediation of knowledgeable observers who act as honest brokers to guide the public through expert controversies. No doubt Walter Lippman had himself in mind. From 1931 to 1967 he wrote a syndicated column to this effect entitled *Today and Tomorrow*, carried by more than 200 newspapers and reaching an audience of more than ten million (Goodwin).

Lippman would probably have disapproved of the way this vision of mediated (and mediatized) public sphere has become a reality, yet the affinities between his analysis and contemporary realities are undeniable. The main reason why the concept of "public intellectual" often comes coupled with a narrative of decline and betrayal, especially in the US, is because the task of guiding, mediating, influencing, orchestrating, and even creating public opinion has become the business of think tanks, and they are much better at it than intellectuals, even syndicated ones. It is not a coincidence that the concept of "public intellectual" was coined in the mid-1980s, a time marked by the ascendency of second-generation think tanks in the American polity, which have professionalized the work of producing opinions and of producing individuals who present an opinionated posture as a way of living—pundits, columnists, commentators, "talking heads"[4]—as well as the work of orchestrating and generating "public opinion" using modern public relations techniques. Collectively, these organizations crowd out, speak over, or buffer the interventions of independent intellectuals (Medvetz).

So if you want to influence public opinion, form a think tank! It is possible, however, to draw a different conclusion from the increasingly technical nature of matters of public concern. My contention, inspired by the contributors to *Making Things Public* (Latour and Weibel), is that the concept of "the public sphere" is misleading in several respects when it comes to characterizing the targets of public intervention, and that

we need to conceptualize these differently. First, the concept of "public sphere" suggests a semi-permanent *arena* where robust conversation goes on uninterrupted among an already constituted social community. This is why contributions in this vein often bemoan the public's indifference and passivity. The arena—if it exists—is already occupied by think tanks and mediatized discussion, where "the public" does not exist prior to being affected and mobilized by a specific matter of concern. As Marres suggests, following Dewey, we should think of "publics" in the plural as provisional communities formed in response to issues of concern that existing institutions and procedures are unable to handle. It follows that we should not think of the public sphere as a pre-existing arena, a wide *agora* one need only step into to be elevated into public existence. We should think about it as something that flickers in and out of existence, depending on whether "issues spark publics into being" (Marres 213), and perhaps—if we need to stick with spatial metaphors—as a set of tunnels that are often exceedingly narrow and that are always in the process of gumming up if they are not used. In short, in true Kantian fashion, we should never think of the public sphere as a given, but always a *task* (with the implication that as historical conditions change, so does the task; you cannot hope

to excavate today's public sphere with the tools of yesteryear).

The second point has already been made, but it bears repeating. Concerning technical matters of public concern, intervention cannot be efficacious without being equipped with the armor of expertise, namely: techniques, instruments, demonstrations, figures, charts, numbers. Hence it cannot be a public sphere of merely opinion.[5] I would argue, moreover, that we have much less to fear about the perceived imbalance between experts and laypeople, which so worried Habermas and which led Lippman to declare the public a "phantom." To begin with, regarding newly emerging technical matters of public concern, it is often the case that *nobody* is an expert and everybody is ignorant. Intervention in public affairs then becomes partly a matter of creating or assembling expertise where none existed before. This is done by collectives composed of laypeople, activists, and experts, who educate themselves about a technical matter of public concern, and equip themselves with the knowledge and the technical means to craft an intervention (Callon). These collectives not only proliferate today in the sphere of patient activism (Epstein; Rabeharisoa and Callon; Eyal et al.), but they are also predominant in environmental politics or the field of "green economics."

Finally, the concept of "public sphere" is typically contrasted with "the state." The public sphere of free discussion and opinion formation begins where the state—with its chains of command and obedience, its use of technical discourse as ideology—ends. We have to get rid of this boundary work as well. I suggest we think of the public sphere, or spheres, not as outside the state, but within its boundary, within fuzzy and thick interfaces where expertise and the state interpenetrate and blend into each other (Mitchell; Rose). This is no doubt why Dewey says that the formation of a public involves "the discovery of the state" (Marres 213), namely, what is it? What should it do? What should/could it be? Perhaps the most important question regarding the crafting of public intervention today is precisely about this "discovery of the state" in an era of globalization. Technical matters of public concern involve not just one state, but many, and often all, so that the assembly of a public is tantamount to the discovery of possibilities for truly global governance and coordination.

These interfaces between expertise and the state constitute multiple public spheres of sorts, i.e. targets of public intervention that are directly continuous with the work of experts, because there are already established ports into the leviathan, so to speak; there are already institutionalized

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conduits by means of which particular types of expertise are permanently connected to the state. A good example is the aforementioned SNA. It is definitely part of the state since it is compiled on the basis of data collected by administrative agencies of the state (the Department of Commerce in the US), yet it is also an integral part of economic expertise, which not only supplies the tools with which to analyze these data, but also uses the "accounts" as measures of the variables composing general equilibrium models. Indeed, the SNA could also be seen as an "articulated macro level statistical response to the operational demands of a Keynesian economics" (Ward 10). Through the SNA, the state has been "governmentalized" (Foucault, *Governmentality*) and economic expertise has come to occupy a permanent role in the government of the economy. Only on the basis of this permanent port or interface—within its volume, as it were—could the construction of alternative economic indicators become a form of public intervention, indeed precisely a form of "discovery of the state." Another such permanent port is the General Advisory Committee to the AEC that Oppenheimer led before he was removed. It is an institutionalized interface where the expertise of nuclear physicists blends with and interpenetrates strategic, political, and economic considerations of state agencies and decision-makers. If we focus on Oppenheimer's dissident years, we would perhaps miss the more important and enduring fact that nuclear physicists (like economists) routinely intervene in public affairs not from "outside" the state, but from within its boundary, as an extension of their work as advisers for the AEC.

Thus, to intervene in public affairs means to travel along "the frail conduits through which truths and proofs are allowed to enter the sphere of politics" (Latour, *Realpolitik* 19), to re-open these tunnels where they have gotten gummed up, and to plug into the body of the leviathan by means of these pre-existing ports. To do so, it is impossible—as an institutionalized matter of course—to rely on opinion alone, rather one must come equipped with charts, statistics, experiments, and calculations. Ultimately, the new face of public intervention in the twenty-first century will belong to collectives of experts, laypeople, and activists, equipped with technical tools, who forge new types of expertise and plug into pre-existing ports in the body of the leviathan.

Notes

1 For the sake of comparison, the term "intellectuals" without qualifiers entered English language discussions during the first decade of the twentieth century (following the Dreyfus affair), enjoyed a steady climb, and peaked around 1970. Discussions of "intellectuals" then declined up till 1985, when they picked up again and returned to 1970 levels around 1995, no doubt due to the coining of the term "public intellectual."
A similar search on *JSTOR* found that the conjunction "public intellectual" appeared in the title of 67 articles, the first of which is from 1988 and is a review of Jacoby's book. It had never been used in the title of an article before.

2 Of course, "new class" theories also questioned the boundary work between experts and intellectuals, but they did so by totalizing and effacing the distinction between the two (relying implicitly or explicitly on another essentially historical concept, namely the Russian "intelligentsia" [Malia]), and without engaging in the work of reconstruction necessary to identify the enduring element in the concept of "intellectuals" and convert it into present-day research problems and strategies. For this work, Foucault offers a much better starting point (Eyal and Buchholz 119).

→ [3] In another paper, my co-author and I have suggested to consider the activity of designing and compiling economic indicators as a form of public intervention (Eyal and Levy). I will have more to say about this shortly, but for the moment let me just note that the individuals who joined together to develop the Human Development Index (HDI) as an alternative to the GDP were by no means low on symbolic capital. The group was led by a former Pakistani government minister of high stature, and included Nobel laureate Amartya Sen. It seems that in this case the mode of intervention—compiling an aggregate index—as well as the public sphere it targeted, the international system of national accounts (SNA), were more important determinants of the type of agency constructed than the factors identified by Sapiro.

[4] In a play on the old Weberian distinction, we could say that intellectuals live *for opinion*, while pundits (and think tanks) live *of opinion*.

[5] This observation is closely related to Posner's argument that the production and circulation of public intellectual commentary suffers from a "market failure" due to low barriers to entry and poor quality control that is unable to encourage market exit (Posner 72).

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FOCUS

The Arab Quest for Freedom and Dignity: Have Arab Thinkers Been Part of It ?

Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab

The recent Arab uprisings have been an unprecedented time of dramatic social and political movement. It has also been an intense time of debate between participants and witnesses of these historic events. Among the many questions raised in the debates is that of the role of the intellectuals, or the lack thereof, in predicting, contributing to, and participating in these momentous changes. Have Arab thinkers, and particularly the critical thinkers among them, been in tune with these movements? Or have they been totally disconnected from what has been brewing in their own societies for many years, if not decades? What connections, if any, could be noted between contemporary Arab intellectual critique and contemporary Arab protestation?[1]

Where Are the Arab Intellectuals?

Since the end of 2010, Arab thinkers, artists, and journalists have been commenting and analyzing the recent Arab sociopolitical movements, addressing a whole range of issues—among them the question of the place, or the lack thereof, of intellectuals in these movements.

This question stems from two phenomena: Firstly, the fact that Arab intellectuals failed to predict these upheavals; and secondly, the absence of intellectual leaders in the unfolding events. Indeed, the element of surprise has been one of the dominant aspects of the recent events, while the absence of central leadership has been another. The first aspect, in my opinion, is due to the very nature of the events themselves, namely as an outburst of anger and revolt against accumulated injustice and suffering; and the second can be explained through the withering-away of the avant-garde role of the intellectuals over the past decades. But if such momentous events were not and could not be predicted nor led by intellectuals, what are intellectuals for? What have they been doing? And what is their role supposed to be, in any case?

The question of the role and position of intellectuals has in the last few decades been a major topic of discussion in contemporary Arab writings, mostly in connection with the relation of intellectuals to power—be it political or financial—relating to their institutional work conditions, their access to knowledge, the means available to them for disseminating their work, their margins of freedom; as well as in teaching, researching, publishing and expressing their views in general. Questions of cooptation, censorship, pauperization, and marginalization—but also of pontification, cultural and intellectual colonization and decolonization, "authentic" local knowledge production and alienation—have been central to these discussions.[2] To these questions are now added that of their place in the upheavals: both cognitive and politico-moral. What knowledge—or more disturbingly, lack thereof—did they have of the deep movements in their

societies? And what political and moral stand are they taking vis-à-vis these movements today?

The genuine phenomenon of surprise and the factual absence of intellectual leadership in the traditional sense might confirm a seeming disconnect between Arab intellectuals and the socio-political movements of their countries.

However, some knowledge of contemporary Arab thought sheds a different light on the intellectual and political histories of the modern Arab world. In fact, contemporary Arab critical thought shows a number of similarities with what we have been witnessing on the streets of Arab cities, towns, and rural provinces. These parallels, between developments in contemporary Arab critical thought and the characteristics of the current Arab uprisings show that intellectuals were very much in tune with the deep transformations of their societies, and that their critical writings expressed on an intellectual level what the protestors are voicing today at the political level. That there was an element of surprise, an element of unpredictability, is itself no surprise, rather part of the very nature of such overwhelming outbursts of anger and protest after long periods of repression and accumulated suffering. I contend that intellectual critical thinking will never be enough to start

revolutions. These will have to come from some other quarters of human agency, namely from the basic human revolt against injustice and humiliation. There might not be a simple linear causal connection between the two levels of expression and action, but there certainly is a connection and a comparable reaction to commonly lived realities. On both levels, what we find is the quest for an empowered sense of self that involves searching for self-reflective thought of one's own, and the search for a fair and democratic government of one's own. But if the latter quest has become visible on the streets of the Arab world, the former has not been adequately acknowledged, not even by Arabs themselves.

In what follows, I elaborate on at least four ways in which the two levels echo one another, including some reflections on the significance of intellectual work in the post-independence era before, during, and after the current uprisings.

a) The Comeback of the Political After a Long Wave of Culturalism

Over the past decades, one could see the comeback of the political reading of a century-and-a-half-old Arab malaise. As is well known, Arabs have long been preoccupied with the question of civilizational malaise, at least ever since the Napole-

onic invasion of Egypt, as the common narrative goes. Questions of civilizational decline, renewal, and identity have been major preoccupations in their writings and debates. Analyses of and remedies to the position of weakness in which Arabs found themselves in the face of the modern Western invaders proliferated throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Until the 1940s and '50s, these analyses and remedies were to a great extent political, in the sense that the cause of the backwardness as well as the secret of progress were seen in terms of political justice, i.e. in a system in which rulers are held accountable on the basis of constitutional laws. By the mid-twentieth century and with a wave of independence in the Arab world, this preeminence of the political gave way to a more culturalist approach to the malaise—a malaise that lingered on despite the euphoria of independence and state- and nation-building—or perhaps because of this. The old-new malaise arose primarily from what the post-independence states turned out to be. Endless debates and writings tried to understand the post-independence discontent by revisiting cultural heritage and by dwelling on issues of authenticity and modernization. Early critical voices, however, instead emphasized the political ailments of the post-independence

era and denounced the disenfranchisement of the people by these states. But still, the dominating and growing current was preoccupied with "what was wrong in Arab culture," and numerous works were written on tradition, to find in it the causes of the present predicament, or on the contrary, the promises of the yearned-for recovery. It is only in the last two decades of the twentieth century that the political understanding of the contemporary Arab predicament returned to the fore, and refocused attention on the workings and failures of the post-independent state. It is precisely this focus that we find on the streets of Arab cities today.

In fact, the 1967 trauma had triggered two opposite reactions: on the one hand it pushed forward the search for a salvational native ideology that could embody a culturally and morally more genuine and faithful promise for a better future, namely Islamism; and on the other hand, it made the need for a radicalization of critique ever more pressing, occurring in the midst of desperate salvational yearnings, culturalist circular reasoning, and ideological fervor. From these critical quarters came a renewed emphasis on politics. Soon after the 1967 defeat, Syrian writer and playwright Saadallah Wannous (1941-1997) unambiguously defined the malaise as being primarily political: Arab societies were defeated because people were disenfranchised and prevented from political participation, because people had lost the freedom to use their critical faculties, because people were abused by corrupt and repressive regimes. This political reading of the malaise was to grow louder toward the end of the century, in conferences, interviews, publications, and including in a growing body of prison literature, which offered sharp diagnoses of the workings of the police state. Political participation and democracy became pressing demands. If good political governance during the time of the *nahḍa* primarily required constitutional rule, focused on the curbing of the power of a ruler by fundamental law, after 1967 it chiefly meant the affirmation of people's power and people's rights. Moreover, compared to those earlier *nahḍa* days, the need for good political governance became more pressing, more vital, often literally to preserve life, given the widespread violations of human rights. It was no longer a question of an optional proposal to borrow good governance ideas from foreign cultures and societies, but rather, a real need to secure some level of physical and moral integrity in the face of pervasive abuse. People took to the streets because they no longer wanted to be arrested and jailed arbitrarily; to be tortured, raped, and killed; to be robbed, to be deprived of a future; to be humiliated, to be lied to, to be impoverished; to be denied education, free expression, political participation; in a word, to be incapacitated and reduced to insignificance. The repressive regimes had incapacitated their people, and what the people demanded—even at the price of risking their lives—was empowerment, freedom, and dignity. The very concrete incapability of people to change anything about their reality because of the forbidden avenues of action in politics and society had been articulated in writings of the years preceding the uprisings. Indeed, the Arabic word for impotence, ʿajz, was one of the most ubiquitous terms one finds in these writings, whether in fiction, newspaper articles, scholarly essays, books, or interviews. It expressed the bitter frustration of being unable to change a state of affairs that ruined the present and blocked the future, along with conveying the deep despair that went with it. It is this ʿajz that people wanted to overcome by breaking the barriers of fear and storming the public scene, pushed by exacerbated despair, humiliation, and outrage. Only such a concrete political act on the part of the people, demonstrating publicly the will to force a change, could bring about the change that critical intellectuals could ad-

vocate for and recognize as an indispensable step out of the predicament, but could not undertake through their intellectual work alone.

Clearly, critical thinkers such as Saadallah Wannous, Abdallah Laroui, Sadiq Jalal al-ʿAzm, Constantin Zureiq, Fouad Zakariyya, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Hisham Sharabi, Abdelkebir Khatibi, and many others were not the only ones to sense and express this profound discontent—but they were the ones who articulated it in the most sober, lucid, and humanist way, drawing attention to the fundamental human values of freedom and dignity, seeing in individual and civil liberties the only source of hope and change. They warned against totalizing ideologies—whether religious or secular—resisted intellectual terrorism practiced in the name of "Truths," and criticized the un-reflected cult of authenticity. They did engage in cultural critique, yet without giving in to the culturalism centered around issues of authenticity and identity that prevailed in the post-1967 era. Indeed, the 1980s and '90s were dominated by a concern with tradition and authenticity. Numerous works were produced in revisiting the classical heritage (turāth in Arabic), either to show that the malaise was due to some elements in it and/or to find in it remedies for said malaise. In all cases, this malaise was understood to be inherently cultural, due to, and/or dealing with, some aspect of the cultural givens of the Arabs. But there was an increasing challenge to this approach by thinkers who realized that what was wrong with their societies was not the cultural per se, but that culture, like so much else, suffered from mismanagement of, if not the forbidding of, the political. Eventually, when people took to the streets, it was not cultural authenticity or a specific style of life that they demanded, but rather, political rights—and they demanded them from their own governments. Their protestation, their criticism, their indignation were directed not at external powers, but at their own rulers, their own states, their own political realities—not because they no longer perceived harm from external powers, but because their grievance priorities had become very clear. By clamoring on the streets and squares of their cities, the protestors expanded the clarity of these priorities and complemented the clarity achieved by the intellectuals.

b) The Gaze Turned Inward

Both in contemporary intellectual work and in current political contestation, the gaze is turned inwards, i.e., toward one's own modes of thinking, acting, ruling, and managing of intellectual and political affairs. Not so much because external harm—whether military, political, economic or cultural—has disappeared, but rather because of the need for radical self-reflection and radical internal protest against domestic problems, such as ideological mystification and indoctrination; the lure of salvational doctrines; the deadlocks of a mystified "authenticity"; of a mystified Volksgeist found in language, religion and/or tradition; essentialist views of identity; censorship, oppression, misappropriation of public wealth; the destruction of educational and cultural institutions; pauperization and socio-economic polarization; as well as police brutality and absence of the rule of law.

As mentioned earlier, the shifting of critique from external targets to internal ones occurred on the intellectual level after independence, once sovereign states became established and were later appropriated by long-lasting regimes run by individuals or families. It was deepened by the defeat of 1967 and the growing malaise of the subsequent decades. This is what I call the "critical turn" in post-independence Arab thought. Interestingly, it is a turn that we witness in other debates about cultural and political malaise in other parts of the ex-colonized world, for instance in Africa and Latin America. In the modern intellectual history of these

regions, we find a moment when past approaches to cultural and political decolonization are reassessed and reconsidered, when past struggles of intellectual and political liberation are revisited and revalued. In this turn, the focus of attention has shifted from the external other, the colonizer—on whom one had been fixated, in the effort to compare oneself to it, emulate it, fight it, and free oneself from it—to what one has been doing with oneself in the process. Then, internal liberation policies are reexamined and emancipation concepts are rethought.

It is interesting to note that in the critical turn one finds in all three regions a shift of emphasis from essence to agency, from identity to democracy, and from ideology to critique. The first shift happens with the discovery of the deadlocks of a deterministic view of identity, in which characteristics of the self (primarily the cultural collective self) are set and fixed outside history, constituting a solid image of the self that is firm and invulnerable, but which leaves no room for people's actions, choices, and responsibilities. Contrary to this view, critical thinkers defend a non-deterministic view of identity in which human agency is central, and in which identity remains in the making. The second shift occurs with the rising concern for personal and civil liberties, with

the growing demand for accountability in the exercise of power, and the pressing need for rule of law. Identity as a sense of empowered self remains relevant, but this sense is sought in the practice of critical faculties and in political participation rather than in a set of fixed features. Finally, the third shift comes with the demise of pre-set views about reality and change, and the discrediting of concepts such as socialism, Arabism, and even Islamism, which had been claimed by post-independent states and had wreaked havoc in Arab countries. The echo of this shift is seen on the Arab streets, where the people who took to the streets did not express ideological demands: they did not voice claims for socialism, Arabism, Islamism, liberalism, or communism; but rather for justice, dignity, rule of law, and political participation. Furthermore, the shift from ideology to critique is also due to a growing need in the post-independence era to relate ideas to concrete realities, to critically appropriate ideas by contextualizing and historicizing them. This shift can also be seen as a move from a "thought of authenticity," seeking a firm affirmation of a solid self, to "authentic thinking," understood to be indispensable for a true sense of self—thus making critique the major pillar of authenticity.

c) The Shift Away from Ideology

The intellectual scene witnessed, particularly in the more critically inclined part of it, a shift away from nationalism, Islamism, Marxism, and Baathism, toward critique, democracy, and fundamental human and citizen rights—in other words, to what is demanded by Arabs on Arab streets today.

From today's vantage point, it is difficult to imagine that once upon a time, in the 1950s and '60s, Marxist ideas and organizations were the most popular ones in the Arab world, and that Marxist parties in Sudan, Iraq, Syria and Egypt attracted large numbers of Arabs who invested their sincere beliefs and commitments into the causes of justice, equality, liberation, and progress. These ideas and organizations did not wither away naturally, but were systematically annihilated by post-independence regimes which recognized in them one of the most—if not the most—powerful oppositional forces. Marxist party members and sympathizers were persecuted, intimidated, arrested, jailed for years, tortured, forced to disavow their beliefs, executed, and exiled. These regimes also repressed the other major oppositional force, namely the Islamist one, however in a more Machiavellian way: not only by using force to silence it, but also by instrumentalizing it

to further crush the left. Indeed, they allowed Islamists to overpower leftists in various social organizations, and in the process led to the Islamicization of society in the name of faith and authenticity. Inevitably, this gave the Islamists increasing popular legitimacy and made them into an even more formidable challenge to the regimes. By the early '80s, the Arab left had become a shadow of itself, totally marginalized and disempowered. Not only did the regimes succeed in crushing this once vigorous movement, but they also discredited many of its principles by claiming to rule in its name. Indeed, the Iraqi and Syrian Baath parties were supposed to be socialist, secularist, and progressive parties dedicated to justice, equality, and unity. Moreover, such aspirations to justice and liberation kept motivating those who now housed them in another movement and another ideology—that of Islamism, as in the case of Hezbollah in Lebanon. Some have found this migration between such different and even opposite political currents to be a totally bewildering aberration. But it can make sense when one keeps in mind the basic vested aspirations in each commitment. Furthermore, the final blow to the Arab left, like to other leftist movements around the world, came with the demise of the Soviet Union in the late twentieth century. Whether and how the current uprisings will reinvigorate the Arab Left remains to be seen. What is certain is that these uprisings were not led by leftist ideologies and organizations as such.

Another ideology that was popular mid-twentieth-century was that of pan-Arabism. This expressed the yearning for might and progress through the unification of an Arab world that was, according to this view, fragmented and divided by Western powers. It represented an affirmation of cultural identity and the quest for a political expression of that identity. Unfortunately, all attempts at unification failed, and Arab unity remains an unfulfilled aspiration. This failure had been regularly lamented by politicians, thinkers, and people in general, but with time the project lost much of its attraction. On the one hand, it felt too remote to be credible, and on the other hand the realities of existing states absorbed too much of the people's thoughts and efforts for them to be concerned with some fictive state to come. Again, it is certainly not a call for pan-Arabism that moved Arab demonstrators in the various Arab countries to take to the streets since late 2010. But for numerous Arabs, the uprisings made the bond between different Arab countries real for the first time. People identified spontaneously with each other, empathizing with causes and struggles that apparently had so much in common due to the common ills of so many of these Arab states. Arab satellite television broadcasters had since the mid-'90s created a common space of news, entertainment, and debate, and this played a major role in connecting people during the uprisings. Before that period of media globalization, Arabs were confined to their official state media, in an Arab world where the circulation of ideas, people, and goods was strictly controlled and limited. But if the satellite broadcasters succeeded, it is because these people shared so much: linguistically, culturally, and politically. Whereas pan-Arabism had presented this commonness in an authoritarian, undemocratic manner, this more recent connectedness and empathy was natural, spontaneous, and free. Following news of the uprisings introduced people to the geography of their environment, as well as to its various ethnic, religious, and regional components. The pan-Arab idea of the Arab world was moreover a homogenizing one that recognized only the Arab language, Arab ethnicity, and Islam as "the" constituents of this world, excluding the Amazigh, Kurdish, Christian, and other minorities that populate it. The '90s had started to witness a revision of this exclusive understanding of Arabism. The

recent uprisings certainly brought about unprecedented, vivid pan-Arab awareness. It will be interesting to see whether and how this will affect pan-Arabism, and what place it will give non-Arab elements and minorities.

Obviously the dominant ideology of the last few decades has been Islamism—yet curiously it, too, was absent from the uprising banners. Interestingly, it did win free elections in Egypt and Tunisia, proving to be a serious popular movement, but not the unquestionable ideology of the absolute majority. This movement will now be practicing politics, after it was banned from it for decades. Its discourses and its social organizations will have to be confronted with the political realities of its countries and regions, and engage with youth that is no longer receptive to authoritarianism and autocracy. What this new phase will do to the movement itself—to the discourses, promises, and societies in which people have become open political actors—remains to be seen. Some analysts have been talking of post-Islamism in the region—be it in Iran, Turkey or other parts of the Arab world—a post-Islamism that is neither anti-Islamism nor non-Islamism, but a transformed Islamism that is seriously concerned with democracy.[3]

So on the one hand these ideologies— namely communism and socialism, Arab nationalism, and Islamism to some extent—lost their energy, credibility, and popularity over the course of the last five decades. On the other hand they also lost their relevance to critical thinking, which was keener on claiming liberties and reappropriating critical faculties than on seeking ready-made holistic worldviews. It is those liberties and faculties that people ended up claiming in their demonstrations, rather than any of the holistic doctrines of salvation.

d) Vanguard Leadership

By the end of the twentieth century, critical Arab thinkers had abandoned the claim of an avant-garde role for themselves, rather seeing the importance of engaging the people as the main actors for much-needed change—people who manifested themselves indeed as the main actor and guarantor of change in the current uprisings.

Already before the current uprisings, many critical Arab thinkers had relinquished a leadership role vis-à-vis their societies. In a series of interviews conducted by the pan-Arab daily *al-Hayat* in 2006 and 2007, Arab thinkers were asked about their understanding of their role and responsibility in dealing with the many challenges of their countries. Many of the interviewees,

including Samir Amin, Tahar Labib, Wajih Kawtharani, Burhan Ghalioun, Turki Hamad, ʿAbdallah Ghadhdhami, Nawal el-Saadawi, and ʿAli Harb called upon thinkers to focus on their scholarly work and produce serious knowledge in a region that suffered severely from weak production of rigorous scholarly knowledge, both on itself and about the rest of the world. They deplored the poor conditions of knowledge production in the Arab world, and also the phenomenon of mediocre scholars turned into media "experts," lured by fame and money offered to them. Most of them saw the absence of freedom and multiple obstacles to the free circulation of ideas, publications, and people as among the most serious impediments to their work. Kuwaiti sociologist Muhammad al-Rumaihi ironically stated that the biggest "cultural" institution that grew after 1967 was that of censorship. Another major predicament they saw in knowledge production and dissemination was illiteracy and the disastrous deterioration of education. Also despair and nihilism due to economic crises, developmental failures, and unresolved conflicts in the region were difficult challenges for their attempts at creating meaning and validating norms. The violence that engulfed the region made the defense of life-affirming ideas and

values a difficult task. It also made people more attracted to salvational doctrines than sobering critique. Many left-leaning thinkers, such as Georges Tarabichi, said they found themselves alienated from their societies, having failed to communicate with them, unlike Islamists who succeeded in holding a discourse that culturally and psychologically speaks to the people. The lesson to be drawn for them was to abandon the avant-garde leadership conception of their role, and to engage people in their concerns and activities, without however giving in to populism. The mood clearly was no longer of pontification, paternalization, and illumination, rather of modest listening and engaging in a common struggle for liberty and democracy. This new positioning of intellectuals was already present in some of the movements preceding the current uprisings, such as the Egyptian *Kifaya* movement against the passing of power from Mubarak father to Mubarak son, in which a number of intellectuals were involved but no "star intellectual" postured as the main inspirer or leader of the movement. Similarly, in the Tunisian, Egyptian, and Syrian uprisings, numerous intellectuals were involved in the demonstrations and multi-faceted advocacy activities, without standing as "leading" figures of the movements.

Intellectuals and the Arab Uprisings

My claim here is that in the dark decades following independence, Arab critical thinkers were very much in tune with their societies. Their work reflected on the deep discontent that they shared with their people, and articulated conceptually the ills they all suffered from: state repression, arbitrary rule, corruption, injustice, pauperization, social polarization, poor health, mediocre education, political disenfranchisement, and the absence of liberties and rights. They named and denounced these ills with sobriety, honesty, and consistency, in times of great despair and ideological disarray. They manifested intellectual lucidity and moral courage despite the prevailing helplessness and resignation. Their merit was to engender clarity where fear, state propaganda, and big money presses had filled the space with misleading discourses. They continued their quiet and meticulous work of self-reflection from the margins to which the powers-to-be had confined them, in environments of growing illiteracy and poverty. They continued to write, publish, and speak in the pockets of freedom that were left open to them; they managed to smuggle some of their forbidden films to eager audiences, to have their plays put on stages when censorship got occasionally distracted, to have some newspaper

supplements publish their articles (in the Lebanese dailies *al-Nahar* and *al-Safir*, and the London-based pan-Arab papers *al-Hayat* and *al-Quds al-ʿArabi* to name a few), and to have some presses publish their books. Clearly, the dissemination of their ideas was severely hampered by all these restrictions. Moreover, the nature of their work made it not destined for a mass readership, and they themselves were not mass-media figures—although they were not obscure figures either. Many of them were prominent men and women of academia, the arts, and the press—but none of them could mobilize masses. One has to add here the work of popular poets such as Nizar Qabbani (1923-1998) and Mahmud Darwish (1941-2008), who through their political poetry resonated with millions of Arabs, and that of popular cartoonists who expressed (and still do) most sharply the bitterly lived realities of the people, namely the work of Palestinian cartoonist Naji al-ʿAli (born 1938, assassinated in London 1987) and the work of Syrian caricaturist ʿAli Farzat (born in Syria 1951, recently beaten by Syrian regime forces).

Given the overwhelming ʿajz of this dark fin de siècle, nothing could foretell the outburst of such a popular capacity to rise and force change. No one could suspect the explosion of the accumulated ʿajz in

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an irrepressible determination to break free from the status quo. This was certainly not caused by those critical writings mentioned above. Ideas alone could not bring about this kind of defiance. The *élan* had to come from other quarters of human reaction, namely from the intolerable pains of suffering injustice and brutality over a long period of time. So one cannot speak of a causal connection between the work of the critical thinkers and the recent popular revolts. My thesis is that the demands expressed in the uprisings were conceptualized over the years by those thinkers.

Notes

[1] This essay is based on my study of contemporary Arab thought: Kassab, Elizabeth Suzanne. *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010 (Print). For bibliographical references I will refer the reader to the extensive notes and bibliography of the book.

[2] See for instance the two collective author volumes on the topic: Ṣāyigh, Anīs. *Al-Muthaqqaf al-ʿarabī: humūmuhu wa-ʿaṭāʿuh*. Beirut: Markaz Dirāsat al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 2001 (Print), and Labīb, Ṭāhir. *Al-Thaqāfa wa-al-muthaqqaf fī al-waṭan al-ʿArabī*. Beirut: Markaz Dirāsat al- Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 2002 (Print).

[3] See for instance: Bayat, Asef. "Islam and Democracy: What is the Real Question?" *ISIM paper* 8. Leiden: Amsterdam University Press, 2007 (Web. 6 Feb. 2013). For some seminal thoughts on ideology in the aftermath of the Arab spring, see: Haugbolle, Sune. "Reflections on Ideology after the Arab Uprisings." *Jadaliyya*, 21 Mar. 2012. Web. 6 Feb. 2013.

What Makes a "Muslim Intellectual"? On the Pros and Cons of a Category

Jan-Peter Hartung

At its core, this essay contains a substantiated plea for bringing about conceptual clarity to the notion of "Muslim intellectual," which the frequent and highly ideologically charged public usage of this term seems to distort. In search for a sound analytical concept of "intellectual" first, relevant sociological and philosophical deliberations are highlighted, indicating that both of their notions differ to such an extent that their applicability to academic pursuit must be doubted. Yet, by discussing some considerations by a study of Islam open to the approaches of the social sciences a possible framework for an analytically meaningful concept of "Muslim intellectual" is presented. At the same time, however, arguments are presented for why those contemporary Muslim thinkers who are usually credited with being "Muslim intellectuals" would hardly fit the analytical criteria for such label.[1]

These days, numerous terms, concepts, and labels bustle about in the popular media, impacting not just the common mind, but also academic discourse. This development is quite alarming, as it causes widely accepted rules of academic speech (e.g. Popper 1, 16-9, 22-5) to become infested with heavily value-laden and pithily used terms. This seems to be even more the case in the current highly emotionally charged media coverage of Islam- and Middle East-related developments in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which were justified on the basis of religion. To illustrate this rather troubling situation:

Recently, the terms *salafī*, *salafiyya*, *Salafist*, and *Salafism* have been flying around the media, labeling a quite heterogeneous group of Muslims who stand out visibly in their attempts to strictly adhere to the beliefs and, beyond that, the practices of earlier generations of believers. In the public perception, the term *salafī* has become representative of someone who, on religious grounds, rejects all values upon which the overwhelming majority of contemporary societies are based (liberal, democratic, secular, etc.). This rather woolly notion of *salafī* has now entered the academic context without, in most cases, being subjected to thorough scholarly scrutiny.[2] This is regrettable for several reasons. Firstly, such a lack of conceptual clarity lumps those reform-inclined Muslims in Egypt and the Levant at the turn of the twentieth century, who have explicitly labeled themselves as "salafiyya", alongside various contemporary groups and personalities that range from the state-supportive religious establishment in Saudi Arabia to militant manifestations such as *al-Qāʿida*. Secondly, the absence of a clearly defined analytical term will render every deduction on this basis at least problematic, if not void.

A similar label originating perhaps more in popular speech is that of the "Muslim intellectual," the subject of the present paper. Hardly ever properly defined, this tag appears to be ascribed to those Muslims who, by emphasizing rationality over slavishly adhering to a textual tradition, support the general compatibility of Western and Islamic social and political values. In

short, the badges "salafis" and "intellectuals" represent the "bad guys" and "good guys," respectively, from a perspective clearly shaped in a Western normative framework.

In this paper I will attempt to abstain from this popular notion of *intellectual*, instead considering it as an analytical term that has some explanatory force in academic pursuit. In doing so, I will generally challenge the idea of religiously connoted intellectualism, but conclude that the concept—provided it has been usefully defined—might be analytically effective for understanding social and intellectual change in the Muslim world during the decades around the turn of the twentieth century.

Three Approaches to the Target

In my attempt to ascribe meaning to the category *intellectual* in general, and *Muslim intellectual* in particular, I will elaborate three rather distinct approaches that have so far contributed significantly to the discussion, while at the same time not being necessarily in line with each other. The reasons for this disagreement are most probably of a systematic nature, rooted in the very self-conception of the respective academic disciplines. While sociology since Weber aims at interpretatively understanding actual social realities, practical philosophy—though related to social

realities—seeks to attain a rational justification of normative frameworks. Although it appears that both perspectives are mutually exclusive and would, therefore, require us to decide which of the two we are going to follow, both indeed have something to offer to our quest—especially with regard to the question of whether it makes sense to place intellectualism within an authoritatively grounded setting. In other words, it may help us to consider the usefulness of a category *Muslim intellectual*, as distinct from *Christian intellectual*, *Buddhist intellectual*, *Marxist intellectual*, *liberalist intellectual*, and the like, or whether the adherence to such a framework somehow contradicts the very idea of intellectualism. Finally, I will demonstrate that a study of Islam which is open to the insights of the social sciences and other humanities has something constructive to contribute to our academic discussion on the topic.

a) The Sociological Approach

While a distinct branch has developed within sociology investigating the phenomenon of the "intellectual,"[3] the individual to whom we owe the first systematic discussion on this matter was, as is so often the case, Max Weber. He had considered intellectuals within his sociology of domination (*Herrschaftssoziologie*) by defining them as:

those who wield power in the polity … the intellectuals, as we shall tentatively call those who usurp leadership in a *Kulturgemeinschaft* (that is, within a group of people who by virtue of their peculiarity, have access to certain products that are considered "culture goods") … (Weber 530 [transl. Talcott Parsons; italics in the original])

What can be extracted from this most general definition of "intellectuals" is innerworldliness, or the assumption of public responsibilities, as a decisive criterion (see Shils, "Intellectuals and Powers"; *Tradition and Modernity*). As such, Weber expert Wolfgang Schluchter has argued, intellectuals do not only have access to "cultural assets," but are decisively involved in the production of "cultural values"—values that, in turn, either relate to culture and society, or neutralize it (Schluchter 1:122, 2:533 f). "Culture-related values" are ethical values, ideally explicitly shaped by pragmatic or situation-depended considerations, while "culture-neutralizing values" are those produced by theoretical considerations and proclaimed as spatially and temporally invariant "truths." In a disenchanted world, Weber and his epigones would argue, the latter values originate in the natural sciences and are declared paradigmatic by modern "intellectuals" carried away by progress; it is this very declaration of val-

ues as self-evident, i.e. free from any social and cultural context, that the French cultural philosopher Julien Benda (d. 1956) would eventually unveil as the "betrayal of the intellectuals." This will be discussed below.

However, both sets of values that, according to Schluchter, intellectuals produce in the disenchanted world have a clear equivalent within a pre-modern religious framework as religious ethics and metaphysics. This, in turn, suggests the existence of "religious intellectuals" as the producers of these values, a fact that Weber and those in his wake are ready to concede (see Weber 304-14; Eisenstadt 29-39 et passim; Schluchter 1:223, 2:178, 206-10, 450f). Authors like Schluchter even go so far as to equate "clerics" with religious intellectuals, as those who "usually produce religious dogmas" (ibid. 1:223 and who are distinct from religiously motivated "lay intellectuals" (ibid.). This notion has a number of shortcomings. Firstly, it only works for communities in possession of a formal clerical estate, which renders it inapplicable in the Muslim context. Secondly, it is very much the production of dogmas—even those derived by the exertion of rational efforts—that leads ultimately to conflict with a philosophical concept of "intellectual," even though sociologists like Edward Shils (d. 1995) seem to have somehow tried in their works (e.g.,

"Intellectuals and Powers"; *Tradition and Modernity*) on the matter to overcome this antagonism.

b) The Philosophical Approach

Hardly any thinkers other than afore-mentioned Frenchman Julien Benda represented the philosophical position toward intellectuals at the *fin de siècle*. As was the case for many other educated French, and even more so for him as an assimilated Jew, the "Dreyfus Affair" of 1894 along with the inglorious role that numerous self-proclaimed intellectuals played therein became a catalyst for Benda's influential view on intellectuals, presented for the first time in his *La Trahison des clercs* in 1927. Benda initially set out the role of intellectuals as devoted, in an interest-free spirit, to guarding static universals such as "truth," "justice," "freedom," and "reason," only to unmask them as having quietly abandoned their lofty claim and allowing themselves to become corrupted by special interests (*Trahison* 83-92). However, instead of publicly acknowledging what Benda has labeled as this "betrayal," intellectuals disguise it by claiming their positions to be guided by insight into an "objective necessity"—or, as Benda has called it, "in the name of a [mystical] union with the evolution of the world" (ibid. 37). This insight into an objective—though defined—

necessity is, for Benda, a declaration of the bankruptcy of reason as the defining principle of intellectualism: since reason was subordinated to external circumstances that are declared inevitable, it became degraded to a mere tool for the affirmation and aggrandizement of an existing order and preconceived developments, and hence, solely as a means of legitimizing dogma. According to Benda, adherence to dogma is diametrically opposed to intellectual pursuit; in this point he implicitly re-invokes the idealist critique of empiricism at the turn of the nineteenth century, which has hardly been brought more to the point than in the remarks of the otherwise rather reviled Johann Gottlieb Fichte (d. 1814). Already in his *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Science of Knowledge* from 1797/8, Fichte had defined a "dogmatist" in very much the way Benda had portrayed the fraudulent intellectual, when he wrote:

> Every consistent dogmatist must necessarily be a fatalist. He does not deny, as a fact of consciousness, that we consider ourselves to be free; indeed it would be quite unreasonable to deny this. Instead, he uses his own principle to prove the falsity of this claim. He rejects the self-sufficiency of the I, which the idealist takes as his fundamental explanatory ground, and he treats the I

merely as a product of things; i.e., as an accidental feature of the world. A consistent dogmatist is also necessarily a materialist (1:430-31).

What we may conclude from this is that, for Fichte, an acceptance of any kind of dogma—as an indisputable truth existing outside ourselves—renders the ultimate task of an intellectual, specifically the production of culture-related values, completely void. Thus, we may conclude from both Fichte and Benda, to be an intellectual requires an uncompromising commitment to values that transcend the narrow confines of any dogma, rendering it a particular personal disposition:

> The kind of philosophy one chooses thus depends upon the kind of person one is. For a philosophical system is not a lifeless household item one can put aside or pick up as one wishes; instead, it is animated by the very soul of the person who adopts it. Someone whose character is naturally slack and who has been enervated and twisted by spiritual servitude, scholarly self-indulgence, and vanity will never be able to raise himself to the level of idealism (Fichte 1:434).

Fichte himself, as Benda argued in a later work, was such an intellectual: it was more the idea of national unity advocated by him and like-minded thinkers than the German Customs Union (*Deutscher Zollverein*) which eventually brought about the German nation (*Discours* 17). In other words, it was first and foremost intellectuals who brought about the novel idea of a nation as a culture-related value, and not any external condition portrayed as inevitable that necessitated the establishment of that nation.

What can be concluded from this brief excursion into a philosophical approach to the concept of intellectual for our own critical investigation is that, at least from this perspective, religion and intellectualism are mutually exclusive. This, in turn, poses the question of whether it is meaningful to speak of "Muslim intellectuals" or indeed, of a "Christian intellectual," a "Buddhist intellectual," and so on. Here, we would have to ask whether the attribute that refers to the belonging to a certain religious community is indeed the defining criterion for a particular brand of intellectuals. From the viewpoint of philosophers like the staunch Lutheran Fichte and the acculturated Jew Benda, a person can only be an "intellectual" if her or his religious belonging does not impact the rational argument for or against cultural values in a dogmatic manner. If this is the case, then the attribute that signifies religious belonging becomes more or less redundant; it would then be as significant a *definiens* as "bespectacled intellectual" or "bearded intellectual." If, in any case, the religious proclivities of a person become so dominant that religious dogma becomes the crucial reference point for the justification of cultural values, then according to our philosophers, such a person can by definition not be an intellectual.

Be that as it may, a sensible compromise between this prescriptive philosophical notion of *intellectual* and the more sociological one with regards to the Muslim context can be elaborated from the intriguing considerations of controversial Islamicist Reinhard Schulze (b. 1953), who has proposed a differentiation between "scholars" (ʿulamāʾ, sg. ʿālim) and "intellectuals" (*mufakkirūn*) in order to better understand profound structural changes in the Muslim world since the late nineteenth century.

c) The Approach by a Social Science-Inclined Study of Islam

Schulze proposes to employ the category intellectual in order to better understand what he calls "the historical function of an 'Enlightenment process'—that is, the liberation of an intellectual and academic culture within a society from immediate commitment to the directly experienced domination (*Herrschaftsbindung*) of an *ancien régime*" (Schulze, *Internationalismus* 3).

Therefore, for him, *intellectuals* comprise a new social group that a) does not affirm prevalent political rule, rather considering itself as the most suitable for community leadership; b) formulates a general social interest that is solely rooted in the profound knowledge of its own society; and c) would eventually claim a monopoly of definition in evaluating the state of the society and devising political remedies (ibid.). What should be quite obvious is that here, Schulze is certainly not concerned with any premodern period, but rather with the rapid and profound structural changes that have commonly been used to define modernity (Habermas, *Diskurs* 9-33; Hübinger 304-7). These very changes are what caused the emergence of a new societal elite; this elite, in turn, would then seriously question existing social and political conditions and, moreover, the knowledge that was used to justify its existence. While the ultimate target of this new social elite was therefore the political establishment, it first needed to challenge those who were engaged in the production and administration of hegemonic knowledge (*Herrschaftswissen*)—that is, the ʿulamāʾ.

Over the centuries, the ʿulamāʾ had established firm criteria for what was considered knowledge, or "acquaintance with tradition"[4] (ʿilm), as well as the methods for its acquisition. The ultimate premise herein is that knowledge cannot actually be produced, only reproduced: the focal point remains the authoritative texts and, first and foremost, those believed to be God's final verbal revelation to humanity in the Qurʾan. Such a strict dependence on text served to prevent free speculation (raʾy), since the foundation for any intellectual pursuit remained ultimately indisputable. It is upon this basis that, over time, exegetical traditions emerged which developed a number of genuine tools for controlling the perpetuation of knowledge. One of them is the institution of the formal teaching permission (*ijāza*) that contains the authoritative chain of transmission (*sanad*) and, thus, links its recipient all the way back to the Prophet Muhammad as the most authoritative interpreter of the divine revelation. As another of these tools, one may consider the formally rather restricted process of commenting upon earlier works that, at some point, have assumed an almost canonical status. It can certainly be argued that these formal restrictions—represented, among others, by the three forms *sharḥ* (i.e., commentary proper), *ḥāshiya* (glosses) and *hāmish* (marginal annotation)—indicate the confines within which individual reasoning can be tolerated, and where there must be no provision for irreversible breaks with the exegetical tradition.

Schulze identifies two developments that, in his eyes, contributed significantly to the undermining of the monopoly of definition held by the ʿulamāʾ since the eighteenth century. However, more recent scholarship has convincingly shown that the impact of one of these developments, namely the emergence of a new type of Sufism labeled Neo-Sufism, has been rather exaggerated (Schulze, *Internationalismus* 18-26).[5] The importance of the other development, essentially a technological and economic one, need hardly be explained: its trigger was the final implementation of the printed word across the Muslim world, and the resulting mass production of literary materials (ibid. 27-32; idem, "Printing" 41-9). That this development constituted a serious threat to the ʿulamāʾ 's monopoly of definition is already evident from their arguments against the establishment of an Ottoman printing press under the supervision of the Hungarian convert to Islam Ibrahim Müteferrika (d. 1158/1745) in the early 1720s, even though the latter had developed a clear religious legal framework for his arguments in support of the printed word (Reichmuth 157-60).[6] However, the ultimate precondition for a successful implementation of the printed word was the existence of a newly emerged readership outside the space controlled by the ʿulamāʾ. Quite similar to developments in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century

Europe (Habermas, *Strukturwandel* 69-85), a self-confident and educated public emerged, primarily amongst the ascending mercantile class, which demanded a new kind of cultural good. These goods did not necessarily relate in an affirmative manner to the existing political establishment, but instead to the economic interest of this new social strata.

The establishment of printing presses from Istanbul to Calcutta in the early nineteenth century, sanctioned by the political ruler but set up mostly by daring entrepreneurs, brought into play a new criterion for the selection of texts-to-be-printed, one not overseen by the ʿulamāʾ: namely, marketability. Now, the court was not the only customer for literary products beyond the scholarly estate; increasingly, the interests and literary tastes of the new and ever-growing educated public—considered by numerous scholars to be the nucleus for the emergence of a *bourgeoisie* (e.g. Schulze, "Gräber" 773-77; Pernau passim)—needed to be catered to. Because these interests and tastes hardly overlapped with those of the ʿulamāʾ, both social groups occupied distinct social and also physical spaces for their respective production of cultural goods, leading to the eventual embodiment of distinct cultural values. The ʿulamāʾ remained in the highly regulated space of the religious seminary—the

madrasa or the *dār al-ʿulūm*—and in the mosque, where works were meticulously copied by students under the vigilant eye of a senior scholar, and where the discussion circles (*majālis*) were always rather teacher-centered. Religious dogma, the epitome of ʿilm, continued to be the cultural good produced in these spaces.

In contrast, the newly emerging social strata resorted to using spaces that initially had a much different general function: at first, its members frequented informal places outside the cities, but from the eighteenth century on they congregated in what might be considered the "profane space" of coffee houses, and the salons that developed in private residencies (Schulze, "Gräber" 764-76).[7] It was in these alternative spaces (*maqāʿid*) that a less-restrictive ethos of discussion surrounding cultural values—embedded in science, literature and even theology—developed between people from various, although almost exclusively innerworldly, backgrounds. Beyond the knowledge the ʿulamāʾ brought forth, ideas (*afkār*) were developed and discussed; their carriers consequently known as *mufakkirūn*—intellectuals, who in the Ottoman lands became known as "afandiyya." What is interesting is that the topics that the intellectuals debated appear, at least at first glance, strikingly similar to those around which the discourse of the ʿulamāʾ

revolved. However, a closer look reveals that the reference points for the groups were significantly different. While it is indeed the case that both groups were concerned with notions of "justice," "freedom," or "politics" (idem, *Internationalismus* 33-6), the ʿulamāʾ remained clearly within the confines of the Qurʾanic revelation and the Islamic exegetical tradition. Hence, "justice" (ʿadl) is discussed in the context of the juxtaposition of divine and human capacities, "freedom" rather critically as epistemological and the resulting action-theoretical concept of "freedom of choice" (*ikhtiyār*), and "politics" in correlation with the revealed framework as "good governance" (*siyāsat al-sharʿiyya*). Even with regard to "society," the reference point is not so much the actual society in which these ʿulamāʾ lived and functioned, but rather the highly-idealized concept of a "community of believers" (*umma islāmiyya*). The *mufakkirūn*, in contrast, although equally referring to an idealized universalistic framework, their ideas of "freedom" (*ḥurriyya*), "justice" (*inṣāf*), or "politics" (*siyāsa*) related to their own experiences within the society in which they lived, and hence, were rooted in an appreciation of their own relatedness as human beings to the empirical world and not—at least not necessarily—to a dogmatic framework. While both groups had perhaps equally

good arguments in support of the validity of their respective views, it was the printed word and the resulting rapid dissemination of the works of intellectuals—aimed at reaching an as-large-as-possible readership (idem, "Printing" 46)[8]—that made the ultimate difference. However, the triumph of the intellectual over the ʿālim caused the latter to eventually assess and subsequently rectify its position. It is this adjustment to the prevalent circumstances that caused the genuine *Muslim intellectual* to disappear, at least as a useful analytical category.

Like a Shooting Star: The Fading of a Category

Admittedly, it took the ʿulamāʾ some time to finally recognize the threat that the intellectuals posed to their thus-far hardly contested monopoly of definition. However, once they had realized the gravity of their situation, the ʿulamāʾ tackled the problem head-on by appropriating issues as well as strategies that thus far had been exclusive to the intellectuals: their frame of reference would become more inner-worldly, in both content and strategy of dissemination. That European colonialism abolished Muslim rule across the Muslim world helped this transition considerably. While the impact and consequences of colonialism cannot but be considered catastrophic for the indigenous population,

it actually helped the ʿulamāʾ to liberate themselves from their traditional confines: they were no longer required to provide a normatively grounded justification for actual political rule, and therefore found themselves in a situation almost similar to that of the emerging intellectuals around the eighteenth century. Now ʿulamāʾ left the spatial confines of the seminary and the mosque and entered with the intellectuals into discussions of culture-related values; at the same time, intellectuals became increasingly accepted within the traditional spaces of ʿulamāʾ hegemony, which, in turn, facilitated reforms of curricula and means of instruction.[9] Thus, for example, the *ijāza*—originally only issued as a permission to teach one particular text in one particular tradition—became a certificate for the completion of a course in one particular subject, or even of the whole course of study (e.g. Hartung 237-38). It was these processes of mutual "infiltration" of formerly distinct and, indeed, rather exclusive social spaces that eventually blurred the boundaries between ʿulamāʾ and *mufakkirūn* and made an analytically meaningful distinction increasingly difficult. Besides, connected to this opening of space was an approximation in the initially conflicting values that each of the two groups had so far monopolized.

Moreover, ʿulamāʾ increasingly subscribed

to various technical means to publicize and circulate their views widely. At the center of this was, naturally, the printed word. But increasingly, audiovisual media and, more recently, the Internet with its many available formats, have taken hold. While the endorsement of the use of these media has contributed greatly to the reaching out from the confines of seminary and mosque, new literary genres were also appropriated by the ʿulamāʾ in addition to the dissemination of classical religious works. These new genres had previously been peculiar to the intellectuals: now, scholars were also producing popular textbooks with religious themes, spiritual memoirs, and general (religious) treatises on a vast variety of topics, written in a style easily digestible by the religious lay audience—the very same one whose taste the *mufakkirūn* had previously exclusively catered to. After the ʿulamāʾ entered into the same arena and addressed the same issues in a similar fashion, the divide between them and the *mufakkirūn* began to blur. Soon, the label *mufakkir* was also applied to ʿulamāʾ without any analytical distinction, as examples of the South Asian ʿālim Abu l-Hasan ʿAli Nadwi (d. 1999) and Egyptian Yusuf al-Qaradawi (b. 1926) provide ample evidence for; indeed, this epithet has since even been bestowed upon pre-modern thinkers, such as Ibn Taymiyya

(d. 1328) or Shah Waliyallah Dihlawi (d. 1762). At the same time, self-made men like Indian activist Muhammad ʿAli "Jawhar" (d. 1931) and Islamist theoretician Abul Aʿla Mawdudi (d. 1979) were bestowed the honorific of "Mawlānā," until then reserved solely for formally trained ʿulamāʾ. Does this mean that the concept of the *Muslim intellectual* has been rendered inapplicable, at least as an analytical category with any explanatory force? After all, the label is commonly assigned to a wide array of contemporary Muslim thinkers, like Egyptian Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (d. 2010), Iranian Abdulkarim Soroush (b. 1945), or Swiss-Egyptian Tariq Ramadan (b. 1962), and even academics seem hardly to question whether this is an appropriate label. Therefore, in conclusion, I will briefly outline my doubts regarding whether we gain any insight by ascribing the label *Muslim intellectual* to these or similar persons, and argue that the denominational attribute actually contradicts the very notion of intellectual.

All three personalities mentioned are not products of distinct religious educational institutions; but rather, of Western or Westernized ones. In addition, they all pursued an academic career in the selfsame institutions: Abu Zayd at the Department of Arabic Language and Literature at Cairo University, Soroush at the Institute for Cultural Research and Studies at Tehran University,

and Ramadan initially at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. Thus, their intellectual development seems to predisposition them all as "intellectuals" proper. However, the works with which our three examples have achieved international recognition present us with a different picture. Different as indeed they are, the core of the works of all three is indeed constituted by the unifying project of rationalizing religion in order to make it relevant for contemporary societies: Thus, while Abu Zayd attempted to rationalize the Qurʾanic revelation by stressing the historicity of the Qurʾanic text, Soroush's endeavors revolve around rationalizing prophecy, and Ramadan's around the development of rational arguments for the necessity of a new *fiqh*, taking into consideration especially the fact of a growing Muslim presence in Western countries (e.g. Abū Zayd 5-7; Sorūsh 1-28; Ramadan 93-102). None of them, however, question the veracity of the divine revelation as the ultimate foundation in renegotiation of societal values, and hence rely upon the reality of divinity as the supreme authority. By resting all the insights they produce on the premise of faith, they do not—like Kant did in the late eighteenth century—develop the skepticism towards the existence of God that is required for the recognition of "God" as a regulative idea (Kant 2:512-605 [B 595-732]). Thus,

while Abu Zayd acknowledges the impact of a temporally and spatially concrete Arab culture (ḥaḍāra) in the linguistic codification of the Qurʾan, he does not call into question the time- and placelessness of God as sender (mursil) and His message (risāla) to a temporally and spatially confined humanity as its recipient (mustaqbil) (Abū Zayd 31-57 et passim).

Tariq Ramadan, in turn, attempts to align Islamic legal precepts with the secular socio-political framework of those European states with a significant Muslim population, stressing the crucial importance of independent reasoning (ijtihād) in this context. In the process, he proposes a new legal-cum-ethical concept of territoriality that supplements the classical typology of *dār al-islām*, *dār al-ḥarb*, *dār al-ṣulḥ* and *dār al-ʿahd* and aims at providing a framework for Muslims in the West to maintain their normatively grounded moral superiority while integrating into the social and political structures prevalent in the West and contributing to their respective polities (Ramadan 119-52). Ramadan's views are, even more than those of Abu Zayd, based on faith, behind which one must not—and, in fact, cannot—go. Moreover, Ramadan, who for many is considered the "Muslim intellectual" *par excellence*, does not even attempt to view the normative foundations of his thought in a critical light.

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The one of our three authors who, in my opinion, comes closest to a notion of *intellectual* is Soroush. He, namely, plays down the canonized revelation in the Qurʾan to such an extent that it almost fades away completely. In contrast, he emphasizes the primacy of the historically determined "prophetic experience" (*tajrebah-ye nabavī*) by stressing that humanity is to constantly re-experience it and, because of the changing circumstances in time, expand it (*bast kardan*) (Sorūsh 12-15 et passim). While in this way Soroush clearly takes up the cudgel for the autonomy of the subject against the primacy of a de-historicized text, he still seems to assume an essence of religion enshrined in the manifold perpetuations of Muhammad's experience of a procedural revelation—which, given the historically changing circumstances, will necessarily take on different shapes.

What we may well conclude from this brief survey of the arguments presented by three authors who in popular as well as academic discourse are widely considered "Muslim intellectuals," is that, in the light of the lengthy exposition of the sociological and, beyond, the philosophical argument, this categorization does not hold water. In fact, the most they could be labeled as is "Islamic intellectuals," referring to the normative basis on which their respective views are based. This, however, would be a logical fallacy, since the analytical concept of the *intellectual* necessitates a critical distance from every faith-based supposition. Hence, one may perhaps consider someone like Anglo-Indian dissident thinker Ibn Warraq (b. 1946), who dissociates himself from accepting any social and ethical value that cannot be justified outside the confines of religion (Ibn Warraq 172-97 et passim), a "Muslim intellectual"—but, again, despite him certainly not agreeing to this label (ibid.),[10] it would be just as analytically meaningful and useful for the social sciences as the previously mentioned categories of *bespectacled intellectual* or *bearded intellectual*.

Notes

[1] This essay is based on the initial thoughts I presented at the conference "The Public Role of Muslim Intellectuals: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Challenges" at St. Antony's College, University of Oxford, 30 Apr. 2012.

[2] This situation was in fact highlighted in some contributions to the international workshop "Modern Salafism: Doctrine, Politics, Jihad" that took place as recently as 25 Apr. 2012 at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter.

[3] See, for example, the "Forschungsstelle Intellektuellensoziologie" (FIS) at Oldenburg University, which emerged out of the Adorno Research Center (founded 1996).

[4] This admittedly rather awkward translation of "ʿilm" is felt needed in order to distinguish this methodologically genuine approach from that of other Muslim groups concerned with the production of knowledge, even more so as other modes of cognition, such as the "intuition" (*ḥads*) and "non-discursive unveiling" *(takshīf)* of the Gnostics, or the "rational comprehension" (*taʿaqqul*) of the philosophers, aimed at yielding different results, for example "absolute certainty" (*yaqīn*).

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→ [5] Against Schulze, see, for example, O'Fahey and Radtke 1993, esp. 59-61, 64-71.

[6] For a discussion of the arguments against the print of Islamic literature before the nineteenth century, see Robinson 64-70.

[7] These spaces correlate somewhat with the spaces in which the emerging *bourgeoisie* in eighteenth-century Europe created a counter-public to the "representative publicness" of the courtly societies, see Habermas, *Strukturwandel* 86-121.

[8] Here, Schulze stresses the symbiotic relationship between printing (*ṭabʿ*) and dissemination (*nashr*) in the process of book distribution.

[9] In 1831, for example, with Hasan al-ʿAttar (d. 1250/1835), the first member of the *afandiyya* had been appointed principal of al-Azhar in Cairo. See Schulze, *Gräber* 777.

[10] Here, Ibn Warraq deliberately adopts a modification of Bertrand Russell's renowned autobiographical essay *Why I am not a Christian: An Examination of the God-Idea and Christianity* from 1927.

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Nurturing Intellectuals in the Islamic Republic. The National Elites Foundation

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In the past decades, constant brain drain has become a serious challenge for the Islamic Republic of Iran. Since the beginning of the 1990s, awareness of the problem and hence measures to counter this trend have increased. After some efforts to attract Iranian expatriates' interest in investment in—or even remigration to—Iran, in 2005 the *National Elites Foundation* was established. The foundation focuses on identification of highly gifted individuals, and support and preservation of the domestic elites to which they belong. Both material and non-material support are granted to select groups of beneficiaries, thus reflecting the Islamic Republic's attempts to support and care for its citizens' public and private lives.[1]

Iran is currently the country experiencing the largest loss of human resources in Asia: at the end of the 1990s, economists estimated Iranian brain drain to be at fifteen percent (Carrington and Detragiache 48). This emigration of highly skilled professionals and academics has become a vitally important issue for the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Over the past several years, active efforts have been made to deal with this challenge, which greatly affects the Iranian economy, as well as the country's scientific and technological role in the region. One of the measures implemented is the establishment of the National Elites Foundation (*Bonyad-e Melli-ye Nokhbegan*, hereafter referred to as NEF) in 2005. Since most research on Iranian brain drain is based on data acquired from outside of the country, existing research must be considered incomplete and reflective of a highly external view on the subject. Due to this deficit, the present study aims to make a contribution through examining and evaluating for the first time the statutes, documents, and reports of the NEF, and the country's efforts to stop or even reverse further migration of elites from Iran. The main question raised in this article is: What is the Iranian government's perception of elite, and how is this definition influenced by brain drain? Furthermore, this article seeks to introduce

the goals and aims of the NEF, along with its characteristics and its beneficiaries, addressing the question of whether the Islamic republic successfully nurtures its own intellectuals.

Defining Elite

Modern elites can be divided in functional sector elites and partial elites. Following Gächter (7-8), one can also distinguish between different categories of elites, such as birth elites, value elites, functional elites, power elites, position elites, political elites, and counter-elites. In most classical cases, different forms are combined in a system, i.e. birth and power elites accompany a monarchy, power and position elites go with a totalitarian regime, while functional elites may also demonstrate characteristics of performance elites. The constitution of and affiliation between elites in a particular socio-political system is related to historical and social change (Gächter 8).

Adapting and modifying Perthes' model on changing elites in the Middle East ("Einleitung" 18) and Buchta's model of Iranian informal power structures (9), Reiss-ner puts Iranian elites in three concentric circles: (1) an inner-circle elite, which consists of high-ranking clerics and religious laymen, with the latter having entered this circle only since the election of President Ahmadinejad. The inner-circle

elite determines the course of the Islamic republic—but contrary to during the first ten years after the revolution, no longer dominates discourse, rather only reacts to it. (2) Members of the administrative elite who participate and advise in the political decision-making process. They are predominantly state employees who largely work in secular professions, and the group has greatly increased since the revolution. (3) An outer circle consisting of the discourse elite is the most hetero-geneous group: its members participate in discourse on political, economic, and socio-cultural issues. Along with journal-ists, academics, and writers, members of this circle may come from the previous two circles, and it could be considered an intellectual elite (191-99). In addition, Rakel—based on Perthes—argues that the politically relevant elite not only distin-guishes itself through positions in state institutions, decision-making on domestic and foreign policy, or active involvement in policy formulation—but also through its participation in defining norms and val-ues. From this perspective, the definition of elite is hence much wider, including politicians of the opposition, journalists, high bureaucrats, leading economists, members of the security agencies, intel-lectuals, etc. Therefore, the politically rele-vant elite in Iran is not made up exclusively of "decision-makers," but rather incorpo-rates "opinion-makers" as well (Rakel 16; Perthes, *Arab Elites* 5).

The Iranian government and respective-ly the NEF defines elite in its *Statute of Recruitment and Preservation of Elites* ("Āʾin-nameh-ye jazb va negahdari-ye niru-ye ensani-ye nokhbeh") as a group of persons intelligent, capable, creative, and endowed with a brilliant mind. They are said to contribute to the acceleration of the country's growth and develop-ment with their intellectual activities and creations (*Āʾin-nameh-ye jazb va negah-dari*), while having a noticeable influence on the output and spread of science, art, technology, culture, and administration of the country (*Āshnayi ba zavabet* 12). Re-ferring to the categorization presented by Gächter (8), these state-defined elites can be classified as "performance elites" who are distinguished by above-average achievements in their respective profes-sional fields. In the current power system of the Islamic Republic, according to the models offered by Perthes and Reissner, such elites are part of the third and outer-most circle. They therefore belong to the intellectual-discourse elite as "opinion-makers" in the Iranian socio-political field of discourse.

Iranian Brain Drain

What factors and conditions have influ-enced this definition of elite? The Islamic Revolution of 1979 represented a major turning point. Starting in the 1950s, Iran's prospering economy, increasing oil rev-enues, and a change in Iranian society from traditionalism to modernism led an increasing number of upper- and middle-class families to send their children to schools and universities abroad, mainly in the US, Great Britain, West Germany, France, Austria, and Italy. With the Islamic Revolution, and closure of Iranian Universi-ties in 1980 that was to last for three years, a mass emigration of Iranian professionals began. The new government considered Western-educated professors and schol-ars *gharbzadeh*, which can be translated as "indoctrinated by the West" or "wes-toxicated," and did not mind them leaving. This attitude towards the emigrated elites remained predominant until the end of the Iran-Iraq War and the start of a new agen-da of economic policies under President Rafsandjani in 1989. In order to rebuild the war-torn country and its economy, the gov-ernment called for Iranian specialists and professionals to return home to Iran. How-ever, until 1993, only 2,600 highly skilled professionals and scientists answered this call. In light of an estimated diaspora of one to four million people of Iranian origin

worldwide, including relatively high educational qualifications among this group, the efforts of the Iranian government until then must be seen as highly unsuccessful (Torbat 276, 280; Hakimzadeh).

The term brain drain (*farar-e maghz-ha*) did not emerge in the official rhetoric of the Islamic Republic of Iran until the late 1990s. Awareness of not only a lack, but even a constant loss of know-how in the country emerged only during this decade. One of its consequences was the demand for more academic freedom in 1997 by Mostafa Mo'in, then-President Khatami's education minister. President Khatami's visit to the Unites States in 2000, during which he attended the UN Millennium Summit and expressed his concern over Iranian brain drain, along with an interest in attracting wealthy Iranians to invest in their home country, can be considered another landmark. Two years before, while addressing an Iranian audience in New York, he promoted financial engagement in Iran (Torbat 293-94). Considering the limited response and the small numbers of expatriates returning to Iran, scholars tend to declare this attempt a failure (Torbat 295; Hakimzadeh)—or at least, as not successful enough to have had an effect on the increasing brain drain.

In present-day Iran, an economic crisis and subsequent high unemployment rates,

social insecurity, limited freedom of the press, and living conditions in a political and social system saturated by religious-moralistic rules set the stage for a further outflow of know-how. The Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology assessed the financial loss caused by brain drain at about 38 billion US dollars each year. In past years, four out of five Iranian winners of international science Olympiads have chosen to leave the country for better opportunities abroad (Hakimzadeh).[2]

In 2004, the Iranian government initiated a new approach to safeguard the country's human resources: the focus shifted from recruitment of highly qualified specialists abroad, to the identification and support of professionals and experts already in the country. In September 2004, the council of ministers (*heyʾat-e vaziran*) passed the Statute of Recruitment and Preservation of Elites (*Āʾin-nameh-ye jazb va negahdari-ye niru-ye ensani-ye nokhbeh*), and on 31 May 2005, the NEF was founded by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution (*Shura-ye ʿAli-ye Enqelab-e Farhangi*). With the establishment of the NEF, a foundation for the support of more than 9,500 intellectually gifted individuals by 2011 was laid (Bonyad-e melli-ye nokhbegan, *Gozaresh-e barnameh-ha* 33).

Purpose and Practices of the Foundation

The foundation regards its own task as the identification, guidance, and financial and spiritual support of elites with the purpose of accelerating scientific and technological productivity and the country's development. With the foundation, an advanced scientific, technological, and economic position in the Middle East is to be attained. These defined goals lie within the framework of a perspective paper issued by the Expediency Discernment Council (*Majmaʿ-e Tashkhis-e Maslahat-e Nezam*), which came into effect in 2005. The paper outlines a distinct development of the country in the fields of economy, science, politics, culture, and society in four five-year plans until 2025, and shows that the Iranian government is well aware of the significance of highly qualified professionals in worldwide competition for new technologies and development. In fact, the NEF in its 2011 annual report expressly declared the migration of elites to be one of the fundamental challenges of the country (*Gozaresh-e barnameh-ha* 27).

The NEF has released and published more than 30 documents to date, including guidelines on the identification of elites at universities and research centers, financial support for academic travel and research trips, establishment of science competi-

tions, and procedural instructions for the assessment of international science contests.

The foundation's structure consists of the office of the president, a board of directors (*heyʾat-e omana*) that is in charge of the budget and accounting and includes the president of the Islamic Republic as one of its members, and the elites' council, which is responsible for interpretation of the foundation's statutes and principles. The position of the president of the NEF is currently occupied by Nasrin Soltankhah. As president of the foundation, she becomes titular vice of the country. Soltankhah has worked as a presidential advisor on scientific and technical affairs since 2005, and also acts as president of the Center for Women's and Family Affairs (*Markaz-e Omur-e Zanan va Khanevadeh*). To ensure coverage for the whole country, the foundation is not only located in the capital, but also maintains offices in two-thirds of the country's provinces, with several offices still in the planning stages. They serve as the outposts of the central office in Tehran, covering educational and research institutions in the respective provinces.

Upon examination of the structure of the foundation, the close interaction and integration of the institution's committees with the presidential office is particularly striking. The foundation's president is always

a vice president of Iran. The head of state himself, currently Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, both presides over the foundation commission and is a member of the Supreme Court of the Cultural Revolution, which approves modifications of the foundation's constitution. Such changes are in turn suggested by the board of directors, while the foundation president presents them to the Supreme Court of the Cultural Revolution. That the president wields considerable influence in supporting elites and allowing them to apply their skills could be considered an accurate estimation. The fact that the foundation was established during the presidency of former President Khatami raises the question of the previous president's involvement in the development and implementation of the NEF.

Types of Beneficiaries and Selection Criteria

Among the beneficiaries of the foundation's privileges and grants are students, undergraduates, graduate students, and doctoral candidates; along with lecturers, inventors, research scientists, junior researchers, winners of Quran competitions, and artists.

Support starts from elementary school, where talented students are assisted and backed in the "responsibility of performing their task in the construction and rise of the

country" (Bonyad-e melli-ye nokhbegan, *Āshnayi ba zavabet* 16). Beneficiaries at the university level qualify though university entrance exams (*konkur*), national and international science olympiads, inventions, creative and artistic activities, and top performance in their respective disciplines. The assistance includes financial aid and travel allowances. Inventors represent another important group of beneficiaries. An essential condition of admission is the marketability and practicability of their projects and inventions. The promotion of junior researchers and research assistants working in scientific centers and universities is linked to how innovative their research field is, and their former beneficiary status (i.e. as undergraduates or graduate students). Lecturers and researchers connected to scientific centers and universities can profit from different types of assistance. They qualify by measurement of their academic achievements and publications against the criteria of national and international scientific centers. Accordingly, grants consist of bestowing an academic chair, financial support for the acquisition of research equipment, travel allowances for domestic research trips and research-related journeys abroad, funding of a research assistant, and introduction to a number of ministries and committees. To facilitate beneficiaries' access to interna-

tional research and new technologies, the foundation furthermore seeks to establish a network of scientists on a national and international level. Another group of beneficiaries are artists: Every year eight individuals who stand out due to their innovative, creative work and their contribution to the development of Iranian-Islamic society are chosen. The benefits they receive include reduced or eased military service (applying only to male beneficiaries) and allowances for the *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca (also granted to other groups, see below). Winners of national and international Quran recitation competitions represent a further group among the foundation's beneficiaries. So long as they are enrolled at a university or theological seminary, they may receive undergraduate and graduate study or doctoral grants. Researchers in the field of theology have the possibility to obtain fellowships, innovation credits, and funding for Quran research, along with establishment of Quran classes (Bonyad-e melli-ye nokhbegan, *Āshnayi ba zavabet; Āshnayi ba āʾin-nameh-ha; Gozaresh-e barnameh-ha*).

With this category of beneficiaries, the character of the foundation as an institution embedded in a political system that regards religion as a self-evident part of its members' lives becomes clear. Another element of this are cash donations given to newlywed couples who have received grant benefits, accompanied by attendance of the foundation's president at the ceremony. Apart from financial support, the foundation has also set up programs for the moral, spiritual, and religious encouragement and edification of the beneficiaries, so they would "always feel in the service of the nation, the holy order of the Islamic Republic and its noble goals; not to remain in expectations but learn to pay their tax of knowledge and giftedness, and put it in the service of Islam and the Islamic nation" (Bonyad-e melli-ye nokhbegan, *Gozaresh-e barnameh-ha* 98). The stated aim of the NEF is to nurture a performance elite that is in the service of the Islamic republic and acts as one of its supporting pillars. Although the NEF's elites would be located only in the outermost circle in the above-discussed elite model, the Islamic republic's leaders are well aware of the elites' future influence as part of the country's discourse elite. One of the measures to ensure a proper attitude of these elites toward the Iranian-Islamic state is interweaving the country's national interests with religious state ideology through its diverse programs. Other non-material benefits include special privileges regarding military service and a onetime allowance for the *hajj*. The former is offered to all beneficiaries holding university student or a doctoral candidate status, as well as to inventors, artists, and winners of Quran competitions. In practice, university students are exempted from military service for the duration of their studies; a large part of their military service can be replaced by research relevant to the armed forces (Bonyad-e melli-ye nokhbegan, *Āshnayi ba zavabet* 45-6).

Beside these efforts for the identification and development of domestic elites, the Iranian government continues to devote attention to Iranian expatriate elites. A statute passed in 2009 expressly addresses expatriates by granting financial support for the acquisition of real estate and construction of buildings in Iran. Conditions include, of course, a return to Iran and taking up employment at a national science or research center (Bonyad-e melli-ye nokhbegan, *Gozaresh-e barnameh-ha* 38).

Conclusion

The Islamic Republic's official perception of elite demonstrates a strong focus on a scientific target group. This group, which can be referred to as a performance elite, belongs to the Iranian discourse elite, with its members acting as "opinion-makers" in Iranian socio-political discourse. Examining how the elites issue has developed over the past decades, a definitional focus becomes comprehensible. After a revolu-

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tion and almost a decade of war, the Iranian leadership and the country's economy have experienced the consequences of the emigration of predominantly highly educated and professionalized Iranians. Since the tendency of emigration from Iran has not stopped or reversed since then, the government continues to struggle against ongoing brain drain, which currently represents the largest loss of human resources in the region. Confronted with challenging global competition, especially in the field of technology, the Iranian government thus hopes to catch up in the international struggle for highly qualified specialists. The long-range objective is acquisition of an advanced scientific, technological, and economic position in the Middle East. One of the measures taken in this respect was the establishment of the NEF in 2005. Its programs aim at the recruitment and preservation of highly qualified professionals in order to accelerate the scientific, artistic, technological, and cultural growth and development of the country. The target group includes scientists, students, inventors, artists and winners of Quran competitions, to whom the foundation grants financial and material support. Beside material allowances, the foundation provides non-material benefits, which stand in contrast to material inducements and benefits by demonstrat-

ing that those in charge of the NEF are not only interested in nurturing a technically and scientifically highly professionalized elite, but also the beneficiaries' religious and moral education. This stems not only from Islamic holistic anthropology, which includes care and responsibility for the mental well-being of the members of Islamic society, but also from a calculated aim to mold the Islamic Republic's future cadres and elites.

A dominantly technical understanding of intellectual elites disregards the influence of opinion-making intellectuals and might turn out to be one of the major handicaps of such an approach. Regardless, the Iranian government is well aware of the elites' influence as part of the country's discourse elite. The foundation's inclusion of religious-ideological allowances likely reflects this. To what extent the efforts of the NEF will pay off remains to be seen. Since all programs and privileges provided by the foundation focus on pull factors and almost completely neglect the social and political dimensions of the problem, whether this will ease the situation and forward the country's struggle against brain drain remains questionable.

Notes

[1] This article is based on research conducted in the course of the author's bachelor thesis: Leube, Julie S.: "Migration und Braindrain im Iran." BA thesis. Philipps-Universität Marburg, 2011. Print.

[2] A positive aspect of brain drain and migration that has long been neglected is the backflow of migrants' resources, namely of knowhow and remittances to the home countries (Gibson and McKenzie 16). Given the lack of information and research on this issue with respect to the Iranian case, one can only speculate. Furthermore, the country's isolated political and economic situation makes Iran a special case deserving of further investigation.

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"Speaking Truth to Power?" Intellectuals in Iraqi Baathist Cultural Production

Leslie Tramontini

How free can intellectuals (writers, poets, and artists) be in a political system that exercises a huge amount of pressure, control, and censorship, forcing them to conform to its heavily skewed ideological and historical perspectives? The core question of a dispute among Iraqi intellectuals since 2003 has been: Who has the right to speak for Iraq? This question underlines the need to delve deeper; it touches upon the urgency of re-examining the political and cultural dynamics of Baathist rule, the cultural institutions of which provided a restrictive framework within an overall atmosphere of intimida-

tion, control, and surveillance. During this time, Iraqi intellectuals took on various attitudes, varying from compliance and collaboration, to resistance to the system or outright exile. The rift between Iraqi intellectuals is mostly between those on the "inside" and those on the "outside." This paper discusses the relationship between intellectuals and power and the peculiarities of Iraqi cultural production in Baathist times, and then analyses the role of intellectuals through two case studies, debating the strategies of survival and complicity.[1]

Intellectuals and Power

Who has the right to speak for Iraq? In the dispute among Iraqi intellectuals who belong to the "inside" and those who belong to the "outside," there is, however, no clear line between the two—although this is the terminology used by Iraqis themselves. Many intellectuals fled the country as recently as the 1990s to become critics of its policies.[2] Others chose to remain inside the country, for divergent reasons. Some of those "inside" chose to actively support the system, becoming its mouthpiece; others outwardly submitted to the political system while attempting to subvert the official discourse. Still others tried to keep silent and inconspicuous, somehow trying to keep their integrity. Openly opposing the system would have meant to expose oneself to severe dangers and attacks on life and property. Many had already gone into exile in the 1960s and '70s, and now—in the post-2003 era—former Baath officials are living in exile.

This Iraqi dispute on the freedom of intellectual activity is not only of academic concern; it is an ongoing debate among intellectuals. The main issue is the attitude toward Saddam Hussein, the Baath system, and the wars. Let's not forget that, up to his final days, Saddam Hussein was perceived by many on "the Arab streets" as a leader who dared to stand up to the

West (no matter how heavily he had been supported by Western powers during the Iran-Iraq War from 1980 to 1988!), as single-handedly defending the increasingly weakened notion of Arab nationalism, and of maintaining "Arab pride." Arab savior or brutal dictator, these conflicting perspectives have led to bitter in-fighting, and are mirrored in the dispute about cultural production and literary merit.

Dictatorial, repressive systems tend to employ intellectual works such as literature in the service of politics, thus creating dissonance between creative autonomy and the societal and political instrumentalization of artistic production. Fully aware of the inherent power of language and history, the Baath apparatus subjected language to its own ideology and agenda, abusing it to fit its "truth."[3] Bengio rightly speaks of the "rape of language" (203-11)[4] to describe a process whereby official language becomes devoid of meaning, yet full of phrases meant to construct a new reality. Lisa Wedeen's analysis of the Syrian Baath's system of compliance through hollow rhetoric and personality cult (723) also applies to the techniques and methods of the Iraqi Baath regime. Characterized by control, censorship, and the promotion of conforming artists, a cultural machinery was established in Iraq which "Baathificated" cultural production and subordi-

nated it to the principles of a monolithic literary canon—similar in some aspects to the cultural production of the former USSR (Kliems, Raßloff, and Zajac). Confronted by a dominant ideology paired with a hegemonic narrative of self and of history, cultural production was very often turned into an instrument of state power, reflecting the increasing militarization of society. The production of such an identificatory literary and historical narrative proved vital to the system and the construction of a new Baathist identity, with Saddam Hussein personally shaping the political discourse with his personality cult, choice of words, images, and myths (Bengio 123; Sassoon 68-9, 76).

The fact that Baathist discourse proved strong and exclusive enough to stifle opposition—at least for a time—and that censorship and control were tolerated and in some sense internalized by intellectuals *en masse* (artists, authors, and writers alike), has been explained in various ways. Toby Dodge analyzes the relationship of dependency and complicity between the state and intellectuals as a "coalition of guilt" (66). More sociologically, Isam al-Khafaji attests to the "atomization" of Iraqi society by the Baath, which facilitated the dependence of the individual on the patron-state through a kind of "vertical connection" (79-80; Davis 7). Sami Zubaida also stresses the

individuals' dependence on their relationships with members of the ruling clique. In this vein, Kanan Makiya in his analysis of state-individual relationship suggests that "complicity" ("Is Iraq Viable 30"; "All levels" 87ff.) played a vital role in the strategy of Baathist ideologists since they succeeded in co-opting and involving various layers of Iraqi society in support—if not always in the direct production—of official discourse: "The peculiarity of the Iraqi regime therefore is to have involved enormous numbers of people directly in its crimes over twenty years, while making the rest of the population at the very least complicit in their commission" (*Monument* 129). Achim Rohde stresses the polycratic character of Saddam Hussein's regime which was "(…) a bargain between the ruler and the ruled, however 'patriarchal' it might have been, and not a totalitarian one way street" (160). Although the analysis of state-society or state-individual relations may vary, all agree that the linkage between the two was tight and direct, preventing opposing group solidarity.

Now, in such a surrounding, what is to be expected of an intellectual? What role does he take on in society?[5] In a broader context, Edward Said has defined the role of an intellectual as to "speak truth to power" (85-102), echoing Noam Chomsky's famous saying of the mid-1960s that

"[i]t is the responsibility of intellectuals to speak the truth and to expose lies" (23). Vaclav Havel, a writer, activist, and former president of the Czech Republic, defines an intellectual as someone who

> […] should constantly disturb, should bear witness to the misery of the world, should be provocative by being independent, should rebel against all hidden and open pressure and manipulations, should be the chief doubter of systems, of power and its incantations, should be a witness to their mendacity. (167)

This normative view of the qualities an intellectual should possess may lead to the conclusion that intellectuals *usually* or *automatically* would oppose established authorities. However, juxtaposed to this normative approach stands the fact of mutual dependency between state and intellectuals. While intellectuals hold some kind of symbolic power, they are nonetheless subordinate to those with economic and political power—or, as Bourdieu put it, they are "a dominated fraction of the dominant class" (qtd. in Karabel 209), and there is mutual if ambivalent attraction, benefit, and dependence. Once a modus vivendi between intellectuals and authorities is reached with intellectuals willingly and consciously lending legitimacy to the prevailing order in return for privileges and other benefits, they will rather work toward reinforcing rather than undermining existing authority, as Jerome Karabel has found out. He even comes to the provocative, sobering conclusion that "what needs to be explained is less why intellectuals reach accommodations with the status quo than what it is that causes some of them, at certain historical moments, to rebel" (ibid.). According to him, for intellectuals to resist and oppose the system rather than accommodate it, several factors must be present, among them (1) the presence of well-organized groups, (2) a high number of "unattached" intellectuals, (3) a distinctive identity of the intellectual group, (4) a "moderately repressive" system that lacks the means and/or will to stamp out dissent, (5) divisions within the ruling group, and (6) a historically grounded cultural repertoire of resistance (211-14). In the case of Iraq, most of these conditions did not exist. As to Karabel's first condition, there were no well-organized groups. None of the former opposition groups which had formed mid-century had remained intact over the course of Saddam's long rule: not the Iraqi Communist Party which was crushed mercilessly at the end of the 1970s, nor Shiite resistance movements such as the *Daʿwa* group, nor important scholars like those of the Sadr Family. By the mid-80s, all had been silenced or forced to flee in exile. Second and third: Intellectuals (writers, journalists, and artists) were mostly embedded in some kind of official workplace, usually the Ministry of Information and Culture, the press, or some other kind of official state organization; e.g., they were dependent on the state and the goodwill of state officials. This made the formation of a distinctive identity of the intellectuals as a group difficult; they did not organize or even mobilize themselves into collective action. Fourth: the political system was by no means "moderately repressive" and did have the means and the will to crush dissent; and fifth, there were no visible divisions within the ruling clique. If there ever had been (as might be deducted by the sudden death of Iraq's defense minister, Saddam Hussein's brother-in-law ʿAdnan Khairallah in 1989),[6] they were immediately and ruthlessly obliterated. The conditions for the formation of overt collective resistance were not given. Karabel concludes:

> Put simply, terror works. (…) Given the considerable benefits of compliance and the high costs of opposition, it is hardly surprising that most intellectuals—including even those elite segments of the cultural and political intelligentsia most prone to dissent—will reach an accommodation with the powers-that-be. (220)

Although the decade-long sanctions after the disastrous Kuwait invasion with its huge humanitarian toll, societal deterioration, and the international and regional isolation of the country harmed the Iraqi population immensely, the regime's success in depicting Iraq as the true victim of international aggression and injustice seems to have fostered an even stronger bond of solidarity.

Cultural Production in Baathist Times

However, one of Karabel's preconditions seems to be met: the cultural repertoire of resistance. Within the literary canon, literary tropes such as the fatherland, death for the sake of the fatherland, and the notion of the poet as "speaker of the nation" have a long tradition in Iraq. Be it in the revolutionary poetry of the 1920 revolution (Tramontini, "Fatherland" 161-86); or in national icons Maʿruf al-Rusafi (1875-1945), Jamil Sidqi al-Zahawi (1863-1936) and Muhammad al-Jawahiri (1899-1997); or later in the committed poetry of Badr Shakir al-Sayyab (1926-1964) and his contemporaries up to the 1980s and beyond, this feeling of political responsibility informed them and their audience's perception of their role. These poets created and could refer to a canon of easily understood notions and tropes with which they fought colonial occupation, foreign interference, and homegrown grievances alike. Now, the question arises: How did poets in the Baath era, especially in the 1980s, make use of this canon? Did they speak truth to power?

Aiming at producing a kind of literature compatible with its ideology, especially in times of external threat like during the Iran-Iraq War, Baathist cultural production made use of this literary heritage and repertoire with the aim of boosting national pride and gaining legitimacy. To mobilize and motivate poets and the public alike, the notion of national sacrifice was made official doctrine in the 1980s. This notion had been in use since the 1920s when poets called for resistance against foreign domination; in the 80s, however, it was perverted into a prescribed and state-ordered attitude: death for the homeland as national duty. As a consequence of this *Baathification*, poetry served as instrument for political influence.

Eulogizing the War

As mentioned before, intellectuals had several options for how to deal with power. The poet ʿAbd al-Razzaq ʿAbd al-Wahid (b. 1930) chose to become the "poet of the Qadisiyya" (the official name of the Iran-Iraq War), eulogizing the war:

Your free blood is colocynth not to be tasted – so show the Persians its taste, oh Iraq / (…) // 'Tis a thousand (years) that Rustam's head is telling – shivering while the necks did suffer // 'Tis a thousand (years) that Qādisiyya is threatening – fixed in their hearts, unbearable (…) // Oh you mountains of iron, hardened by a thousand years – the iron mountains amongst us shine forth // Oh Saladin who from our sanctuary – leapt up so that the horizons raised a cry by this // Oh you Euphrates of the twenties, oh you Tigris of blessing – be proud of them both and surround them, oh you comrades // It is your glory altogether, so rise – it is the eternal, the magnificent: Iraq! (8-13; Walther 86)

And, addressing Saddam Hussein,

You stood among the people like a radiant lance / you were Iraq, challenging and proud // The currents of Tigris and Euphrates in your eyes / were churning, the anger in them a cosmic space // You stood like a lance, had anyone dared to touch / the skies would have split and cracked // All Iraqis' eyes / watched humbly your shining eyes // And when you spoke it was as if our martyrs / all spoke with your voice for us to hear // They told us with your solemn voice that / it is Iraq alone, all other talk is false // (…) Oh you, Iraq's pride and glory / oh you best of all brothers, leaders, and all. (309, 311)

The militarization of the cultural domain is obvious since in the first poem the diction of the poem echoes official rhetoric, switching between denigration (the term "Persians" [Furs] instead of Iranians), and self-aggrandizing; the reference to the historical battle of Qadisiyya in which the Persians were defeated by Arabs, to great Arab conquerors and military leaders like Saladin, to the strength of the army ("mountains of iron"); to the 1920 revolution which took its course from the Euphrates; and the overarching theme: Iraq, the eternal fatherland. The eulogy for Saddam Hussein is equally telling: written in 1984 when no one believed in a quick victory anymore and when the death toll was already quite high, ʿAbd al-Wahid tried to mobilize his audience. The identification of Saddam with Iraq repeats the official rhetoric; in the course of the war, this personality cult and merging of Saddam with the country constituted a major move of the Baathist propaganda machinery which made criticism synonymous with not loving the fatherland. Saddam is depicted as a menacing figure against his adversaries, proud and provocative (like a lance), with all the forces of nature (rivers and skies) at his command; he is the personification of Iraq, with all the people devotedly hanging on his lips (and eyes). It is through him that the martyrs appeal to the audience, that the defense of Iraq became the highest priority.

The Art of Survival: Spaces of Freedom

But there were other ways of dealing more subtly with the notion of fatherland, and war. A good illustration of the poet's constant tightrope walk across Baathist discourse is ʿAdnan al-Saʾigh, who later on became estranged from the official rhetoric and increasingly emancipated himself from it. Born in Kufa in 1955, Saʾigh served at the frontlines in the Iran-Iraq War and—like all intellectuals working in government institutions—was subject to official cultural policies, and for a period accommodated them to a degree. In the early 1990s he went into exile in Sweden (now in the UK), becoming a prolific critic of the Baath regime. The following poem is an example of how the topos of the fatherland (*waṭan*) can be evoked without falling into the propagandistic, martial or nostalgic tone of Baathist poets, and without eulogizing the war. In his poem "Special condition" (1984), in the middle of the Iran-Iraq War, he wrote:

O Fatherland… I carry it in my ribs / And travel like the wind behind the words / In search / Of a verse / That I can live in, / In search / Of a word that won't get torn to shreds / In the anthologies of the poets, / In search / Of a forgotten sea / Where no boats will roam with the fishers of words, / In search / Of forests in the eyes of a woman / Where no bird or poet / Is stolen out of the trees of her spell, / In search / Of an inch of my fatherland / Where no flowers of fiery steel blossom / And no revolutionary, / In search / Of a rivulet / Which was not crossed over by a passerby, / In search / Of a little apple tree / Where lovers haven't carved their first dates, / In search / Of a coffee shop / Where Bayātī does not sit… and Ḥussayn Mardān, / In search / Of sidewalks / That won't show their beauty to passersby, / In search / Of a bridge / On which no breeze of Sayyāb's breath passes, / In search of… / O fatherland / Wandering has tired me / I slept at your bosom for days / Without a poem! (658-59)

Patriotic love is not a sentiment prescribed from above, but rather an individual experience of belonging, best described as everlasting search. Expressing this longing for the unattainable fatherland, Saʾigh evokes a melancholy, reflective atmosphere devoid of any superficial propaganda aims. The fatherland is defined by absence, by the constant search for it. However, in sharp contrast to ʿAbd al-Wahid's pathetic tone praising the war, Saʾigh reflects the relation between fatherland and poetry. Immediately in the first

verses, the search for language and its role in society are made clear: Poetry is meant to give shelter, to protect, to provide a feeling of belonging and of home. The next verse about the words "that won't get torn" constitutes a fairly direct attack on other (Baathist) poets who "shred their words." Saʾigh refutes the above-mentioned instrumentalization of language in official rhetoric, which denies it its basic function: to act as counter-discourse and to offer an alternative vision of reality. He demands a language that remains true to itself, to the meaning of words, and does not fall prey to hollow slogans. To underline this attitude and to forego the danger of being accused of being unpatriotic, he recalls the older generation of famous Iraqi poets like Sayyab, Bayati, and Mardan, whose patriotism is beyond any doubt. For him, the love for the fatherland is an individual experience which cannot be separated from the self ("I carry it in my ribs"); not a submission to rules from above. This fatherland exists in minute spaces where there is neither war, nor fighting—only longing for peace. So, there were some spaces of "freedom," of maneuvering oneself between censorship and control while keeping one's integrity.[7] Saʾigh's poetry demonstrates the self-assertion of the poet as an individual with his own mind and plans, not subject to any external power. The poet and play-

wright Yusuf al-Saʾigh, one of his mentors, acknowledges and praises Adnan al-Saʾigh's literary merits straightforwardly:

The artistic value of this anthology confirms one fundamental truth: it is the expression of an authentic poetic experience (…) it strives to be original and keep its very own voice. (…) We can be sure that these poems represent a fundamental contribution to the development of a new generation of poets who embrace ambition and authenticity.[8]

Yusuf al-Saʾigh (1933-2005), a former communist turned Baathist, was a fine poet and an intellectual himself. According to ʿAbbud, he committed "suicide" (25) when finally giving in to Baathist pressure in the year 1983. He achieved a high-ranking career (his last official position before retiring was director of television and broadcast in the Ministry of Culture and Information); however, he continued to hold onto his clear literary judgment, providing encouragement to younger writers who did not conform to the state-dictated patriotism and praise the war.

Debating Survival and Complicity

Actively trying from within society to oppose the system and fight for freedom and democracy is a challenging and very often dangerous task; especially in a sys-

tem that does not value dissent and opposition. In the much more recent context of the Arab Spring, Syrian intellectual Sadiq Jalal al-ʿAzm warned against outright condemnation of those intellectuals who have arranged themselves within the system, coming to terms and making compromises. So does Kanan Makiya, in a way, when he judges the collaboration of the Iraqi intelligentsia in "(…) that they chose to *live* at the expense of their art (…). In the conditions of Iraq that is an obvious but by no means an easy choice to make" (*The Monument* 124; emphasis in the original). However, those who became mouthpieces of the regimes have lost their credibility and are no longer deserving of respect (Naggar).[9]

In his study *Thaqāfat al-ʿunf fil-ʿIrāq* (The Culture of Violence in Iraq) Salam ʿAbbud complains about the Baathists' literary recognition in the Arab world (61-72). He strongly condemns the appreciation of Sami Mahdi (b. 1940) and Hamid Saʿid (b. 1941), shapers and makers of Baath literary discourse and norms, who were received outside of Iraq as great artists having enriched the canons of Arab poetry. He claims that this was due merely to their high party rank; for him, they were "representatives of the war" (19).[10]

After the fall of the regime in 2003, the situation became yet more complex because the intellectuals categorized as "inside"

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and "outside" in the post-Saddam period were not necessarily in the same positions during Saddam's rule. Kanan Makiya observed that "victims and victimizers effortlessly changed roles both before and after 2003" ("Is Iraq Viable" 6). With former Baathists themselves now in exile, a new dimension to the inner-Iraqi split has arisen. Driven out of the country because of their Baathist affiliations, their opposition to the US military presence in Iraq—shared by many other Arabs, especially in neighboring countries—provides a good opportunity to present themselves as the victims of what has happened in Iraq over the last ten years, as "innocent," a fact which has caused anger, grievance, and annoyance among many Iraqis.

In a way, this struggle over representation can be compared to the inner German dispute after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. American scholar Andreas Huyssen argues that intellectuals of the two Germanies could never really come to terms with each other because West Germans had been turning a blind eye to the repressive side of the German Democratic Republic. Often, West German intellectuals romanticized the GDR as a "potentially utopian space" and as an antidote to the "unloved FRG [Federal Republic of Germany]." This compares to the nonchalance of non-Iraqi Arabs vis-à-vis the Baath re-

gime, their common admiration for Saddam Hussein, and their total ignorance of the miseries and grievances of the Iraqi people and the dilemma of Iraqi intellectuals. ʿAdnan al-Saʾigh bitterly laments this:

Many international and Arab politicians, leaders, scholars, intellectuals, poets, and artists came to Iraq without any of them worrying about us; they just disregarded what was happening there, out of various reasons: national, economic, confessional or propagandistic, while we died and rotted and were buried in silence. (694)

The question of complicity, one of the key issues that continue in the German-German controversy, remains contested in Iraqi circles. In retrospect, or in relative safety abroad, one tends to judge the intellectuals who stayed inside Iraq during the Baath years rather harshly. There, however, intellectuals developed a variety of attitudes and methods for dealing with the situation. There was no single manner with which to cope with the pressure exerted—no matter how much it may seem from the outside. The war(s) and the praise for the Baath system form the main crux of the inner Iraqi struggle. However, to come to terms with each other and with the past, a re-assessment of one's attitudes is needed, on both sides. It remains to be seen how intellectuals will proceed from ʿAbbud's

auto-critique:

It has to be clear that while being responsible for the first and the second Gulf War and probably for a third one—if it is his destiny—Saddam Hussein is (…) not responsible for the worsening of the cultural situation and the turmoil among the intellectuals. We, who are not responsible for Saddam's wars, bear a heavy responsibility for the pains and weaknesses of the cultural sphere; all of us without exception bear varying degrees of responsibility. (177-78)

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→ **Notes**

[1] This article is in large part informed by my article "The Struggle for Representation: The Internal Iraqi Dispute over Cultural Production in Baathist Iraq." Milich, Pannewick, and Tramontini 25-48. For further comments and remarks: tramont@uni-marburg.de

[2] The most prominent example is perhaps Muhsin al-Musawi, former editor-in-chief of the state-owned cultural magazine *Āfāq ʿArabiyya* and the series *Dīwān al-maʿraka* (Anthology of Battle), and now a well-known professor at Columbia University in New York and one of the chief experts on Iraq in the US.

[3] Beware of the widely practiced method of "repeating opinions into truths" (Pinkert 20).

[4] See also Stock in her case study on Saddam Hussein, 135–76; esp. 172-75. The Iraqi author and scholar Sinan Antoon creatively assimilates this critique in one of his novels: Antūn, Sinān. *Iʿjām*. Beirut: Dār al-ādāb, 2004.

[5] Compare Michel Foucault's characterization of the writer as "universal intellectual" par excellence who "is the supposed bearer of values and significations in which all can recognize themselves: 'the consciousness/conscience of us all'" (qtd. in Hall, Gary. "Answering the Question: What is an Intellectual." *Surfaces*. VI 212 (1996): 16. Print.).

[6] See Sassoon 68-9. On the history of the accident, see Tripp 249-50.

[7] See also the interesting findings of Achim Rohde (123-24; 143-56).

[8] Back cover of ʿAdnan al-Saʾigh's original *diwan* (Baghdad 1986). On Yusuf al-Saʾigh and his role as a former Leftist, see Yousif. For an analysis of Yusuf al-Saʾigh's long poem "al-Muʿallim" (The Teacher) and his succumbing to the official line see: Tramontini, Leslie. "Poetry post-Sayyāb. Designing the Truth in Iraqi War Poetry of the 1980s." *Poetry and History: The Value of Poetry in Reconstructing Arab History*. Ed. Ramzi Baalbaki, Saleh Said Adha, and Tarif Khalidi. Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2011. 289-312. Print; esp. 302.

[9] In other countries, similar situations prevail: so is the Egyptian literary critic Jabir Asfour, winner of the 2010 Gaddafi prize for literature and former culture minister under Mubarak, despite good academic credentials, now being accused of being the corrupt intellectual par excellence because he sided with power. Intellectuals like the Egyptian writer Sonallah Ibrahim demonstrate that there are alternative options to compliance and co-option: in the year 2003, he officially and publicly refused the Ministry of Culture's prestigious literary award (and the prize money) on the grounds that the ministry had no legitimacy and credibility for handing out such a prize—a scandal which earned him a lot of respect.

[10] Further, Abbud commented on Sami Mahdi (67), and on Hamid Said (174-75). What draws ʿAbbud's special wrath is that not only poets inside Iraq participated in the eulogy and flattering of those Baathist intellectuals but also the ones from exile like Saʿdi Yusuf (181).

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CLOSE UP

Mohammed Arkoun: An Intellectual in Revolt

Ursula Günther

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Mohammed Arkoun was born on February 1, 1928, in Taurirt Mimun in Great Kabylia, Algeria. He passed away on September 14, 2010, in Paris, and was laid to rest three days later in Casablanca, Morocco. He studied Islamic literature at the University of Algiers (1950-1954). After leaving Algeria on the eve of the War of Independence, he continued to study Arabic and literature at the Sorbonne, where he graduated with an *aggrégation* in 1956. It took another 12 years and getting through a number of conflicts before he established himself academically with his dissertation on Ibn Miskawayh in 1968. In 1971, he was brought to the University of Vincennes (Paris VIII) as a professor for the Islamic history of ideas, and he eventually went back to the Sorbonne as a professor. In

1980, he switched to the Sorbonne Nouvelle (Paris III), becoming director of the department of Arabic and Islamic history of ideas, and editor of *Arabica*. The chairs he held indicate his major field of interest: a critical reading of Islamic thought and the consequences this has for new approaches to Islam, and simultaneously to the Qur'an. His approach challenged and still challenges orthodoxy for going beyond the borders established and defended by such–needless to emphasize that this includes orthodoxy produced by and within Islamic studies, as well. Since 1993 until his death, he was professor emeritus and visiting professor at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London. Numerous decorations and awards honored his life's work.

The title for these reflections on Mohammed Arkoun appraising him as an intellectual refers to his own expression during one of our conversations. His conception of himself as an "intellectual in revolt" offers but a first approach to one of the key figures of contemporary Islamic thought. In addition to Arkoun's personal perception, or rather introspection, further aspects complement the presentation of this *chercheur-penseur*, or in the English rendering "reflective researcher"–another way he used to express his activities as both a scholar and an intellectual. Particular emphasis needs to be placed on the general intellectual and academic context for Arkoun's becoming an intellectual in revolt or reflective researcher, since subjective personal experience provided

the impulse that continued to guide his thought and criticism. He repeatedly stated that it was existential experience and not academic training that turned him into an intellectual (e.g. Arkoun, *L'Islam* 1). In addition to personal impressions and insights based on intensive exchanges over more than 20 years, the above-mentioned aspects will be analyzed against the background of some general ideas concerning intellectuals and their social roles.

Intellectual in Revolt and Reflective Researcher

Arkoun defined an intellectual as a person capable of questioning and criticizing the ideology within which he or she was educated and trained. Needless to say, such criticism only flourishes in a climate of free expression (Arkoun, *Pour une critique* 238). Apart from what political or societal context the intellectual is located in, his or her belonging to a scientific and/or intellectual community—including its stimulating and supportive power—is indispensable for the unfolding of a critical mind. There is no doubt about Arkoun's position within the international scientific and/or intellectual community, both in the West and East—bearing in mind the usual controversies—yet particular attention should be paid to one aspect

of the perception of intellectuals: the apparently explanatory designation Muslim for intellectuals and scholars due to their origin. Although it would be beyond the scope of this essay to elaborate in great detail on these controversies, some elements shall be pointed out in the form of questions in order to illustrate the dilemma about intellectuals that Arkoun often complained about: What is the rationale behind the designation "Muslim" for intellectuals who strive to retain the same free, independent, and critical position on themselves and their culture as their Christian or atheist colleagues? Why are Western experts referred to as Orientalists, Islam scholars, or Arabists, while their counterparts from the Middle East are classed respectively as modern, liberal, moderate, or Islamist Muslims? Despite prevalent criticism of Eurocentric positions, does hegemonic Western civilization continue to construct a hierarchical system of gradations within which not all intellectuals are held equally capable of critical distance and independent thought? However, this is just one side of the coin, as the other consists of Arkoun having been accused of Westernization and betrayal of his own cultural heritage by orthodox Muslims. The latter position has also been taken by some Western academics, who claim that Arkoun's

work with European philosophy resulted in a Western influence that makes it difficult, if not impossible, for him to relate to the Muslim world. Being straightjacketed into religious affiliation and classed respectively either as modern, liberal, or moderate Muslim met with his vehement objection. This dilemma of an intellectual like Arkoun may be illustrated by some reactions to his positions or his person, such as: "How reassuring to hear/read a liberal Muslim," or "Your discourse stands in contrast to Islam," or "Your ideas are well known in the West, even trivial, but you probably need them more as Muslims do not have modernity" (Arkoun, *Penser l'Islam aujourd'hui* 2-3).

Arkoun's self-concept as an intellectual in revolt seems persuasive, even more if one takes into consideration the context of his childhood, youth, and his student days in Algeria under French colonial rule with its particularly derogatory perception and treatment of the so-called indigenous population.[1] Let alone the rather complicated and complex love/hate relationship between France and Algeria, which left an indelible mark on the young scholar leaving for France on the eve of the independence war. "Intellectual in revolt" alludes on the one hand to Albert Camus' philosophical essay, "The Rebel. An Essay on Man in Revolt," as well as to Arkoun's

utmost concern on how to rethink Islam in the contemporary world, and simultaneously provides a counterpoint to predominant interpretations of both the Muslim world and the non-Muslim West. Camus' answer to the question "What is a rebel?" was a philosophical one: "A man who says no, but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation. He is also a man who says yes, from the moment he makes his first gesture of rebellion" (Camus 19). Arkoun's intellectual revolt was also a philosophical one because he always stressed the importance of criticism in the sense of a philosophical category. His revolt consists of not accepting intellectual or epistemological boundaries and processes of marginalization produced by these dogmatic closures. The *chercheur-penseur* or reflective researcher, a term he first used in 1997 for himself and fellow researchers (Arkoun, *L'Islam* XIX), clearly indicates an inherent characteristic of crossing intellectual and academic boundaries. By combining critical theology with the watchful stance of the secular philosopher, a reflective researcher provides an important contribution to the deconstruction of mechanisms through which meaning and sense are constructed, yet he or she goes beyond this by deconstructing the mechanisms of managing meaning, which the guardians of orthodoxy elevate as sacred and transcendent in order to protect them from subversive scholarship. Arkoun used the term *remembrement* (in the sense of a reintegration of that which has been excluded) to describe the philosophical and academic achievement of reflective researchers (Arkoun, "Du dialogue inter-religieux").

Intellectuals and Their Social Roles

The humanist Arkoun was not at all a prisoner of the ivory tower as a number of other scholars are, on the contrary his public presence—also internationally—was quite impressive. His influence on public and academic discourses—not only regarding France, his country of residence—was based on numerous forms of engagement: he was a passionate speaker, political consultant (e.g. he was member of the Stasi commission concerned with the *laicité* principle and the question of the veil), member of the board of governors of the Institute of Ismaili Studies, and a visiting professor at numerous universities and institutes. His work earned him numerous awards and honors. His writings and interviews revealed a fine nose for academic, political, and social tendencies. His sharp-witted intellect, his crossing borders—to wit, not only intellectually but also with regard to cultures, languages, traditions, and other systems of reference—are partly components of his Mediterranean Maghreb heritage, and partly components of personal processes, and equipped him to adopt early on a point of view lacking certainty, even if this entailed the end of clearly defined and unified truths. Today, his post-modern perspective has gained wide acceptance—although his rather unconventional approach was not always welcome then. Arkoun had to cope with the paradox of being perceived as awkward *and* avant-garde. However, numerous intellectuals seem to share the same lot.

Concluding Remarks

Mohammed Arkoun was a challenging intellectual and scholar who insisted his entire intellectual life on rethinking Islam as a cultural and religious system. Since he never accepted the concept of an ultimate truth, he pleaded for a radical change of perspective in order to prepare the ground for an exhaustive and inclusive vision of Islam, which no longer excludes what has been banished to the realm of the unthought and unthinkable—categories he introduced into Islamic studies. In other words, he was committed to (re-)establishing a plurality of meaning in Islam.[2] He considered himself part of all that is capable of conquering new intellectual fields.

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These reflections on Mohammed Arkoun—an intellectual in revolt—shall end with the last section of my obituary for him: "May his idea that thoughts develop a life of their own prove right, continuing to take effect beyond the walls of cognitive demarcations and dominant ideologies."

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Notes

[1] For further biographical details see Günther, *Mohammed Arkoun: Ein moderner Kritiker* 23 ff.

[2] For an in-depth analysis of this and further concepts, see Günther, *Mohammed Arkoun: Ein moderner Kritiker* and Günther, *Mohammed Arkoun: Towards a radical rethinking.*

[3] This is—according to the preface—more than "the forth revised and modified edition of the third edition (1998) of *Ouvertures sur l'Islam,*" which had the new title *L'Islam: Approche critique.*

[4] Second edition of *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought.*

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