Authenticity and Development in the Arab World

Views from the Maghreb

by

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Development theory has fallen on difficult days. Despite the clear need for improved standards of living in the Third World, neither Western social scientists nor Third World elites can reach agreement on how progress toward a better life might be defined. Socialists condemn the capitalist growth model for its indifference to inequality and to external dependency, and capitalists criticize socialists for inefficiency and authoritarianism. But both versions of the idea that growth is the essence of development have lost ground to those who stress environmental and psychological costs, which have become increasingly evident in the first and second world countries from which growth models have been derived.

The World Bank's effort to rally world support to the concept of basic needs, whatever practical benefits it may have produced, has not resolved the theoretical issues. Basic needs theory suggests that countries put off deciding what development means and concentrate in the interim on providing food, shelter and health services to their populations. It assumes that such needs can be objectively defined, which is by no means certain.

In the Arab world, the resurgence of fundamentalist movements has further intensified the debate about development. The assassination of Sadat and the shelling of Hama have dramatized the fundamentalist critique of existing Arab regimes as inauthentic

governments fostering inauthentic lifestyles in corrupt and inauthentic ways. By proposing a model anchored in the past, they assault modernizing versions of development theory head-on. A fundamentalist regime might well favor economic growth, greater equality and national independence, but the yardstick by which progress would be measured is a vision of Islamic authenticity, not GNP per capita or gini indexes or export-import ratios.

Although the resurgence of fundamentalist movements in opposition to Arab governments has reawakened interest in the idea of authenticity, and although those movements pretend to a monopoly on what it means to be authentic, the issue of authenticity extends throughout Arab political life. The effort to construct an Arab nation, to establish a socialism characterized as "Arab" or "Islamic," to govern countries such as Saudi Arabia in a manner consistent with the past and yet open to the future, or to link Egypt with its Pharaonic past--all reflect a persistent impulse toward authenticity. Every Arab state seeks to show, often without notable success, that it is not only modern in its outlook but true to its national, Arab, and Islamic heritage. Authenticity has become become an essential ingredient of legitimacy in both progressive and conservative countries. (Hudson, 1977: Chap. 2)

To say that the debates about authenticity have intensified does not signify a revival of the quarrel between tradition and modernity. Even if one granted the Muslim Brotherhood its claim to represent Islamic authenticity, it does not follow

that the Brotherhood or its offshoot groups are necessarily antimodern. They do not represent tradition in the sense of seeking to preserve an existing way of life. Instead, they propose to create a new society modeled after one located in the past and built upon modern economic foundations. The word tradition has caused confusion in Islamic studies by its use to translate both sunna, the living tradition of Islam, and hadith, a recorded report of what the Prophet or his companions said or did. The fundamentalists may be more hadith-minded, but remain dedicated to the overthrow of the living tradition represented by religious establishments and personal patterns of belief and action. Some of those "traditions" may date from pre-Islamic times; others date from colonial rule or the first decades of independence.

One may well oppose tradition and still aspire to authenticity. For example, Jean Duvignaud showed that so-called traditional behavior had lost its significance in the Tunisian village of Shebika. The local shrine no longer commanded respect, since it had not protected the community against economic deterioration. Duvignaud found the village unintegrated, lacking the sense of self and the faithfulness to its past that would permit one to call it traditional. For Duvignaud, the choice for Shebika lay not between tradition and modernity but among avenues for restoring identity and adapting to the modern world. (Duvignaud, 1970) The issue for the Shebikas of the Middle East is achieving modernity in the name of authentic values and lifestyles.

For a traditional society or movement, if there ever existed such a thing, the question of authenticity would not arise. Apter defines traditionalism as "validation of current behavior by reference to immemorial prescriptive norms." (Apter, 1965: 83) Only when an alternative to those norms becomes available, as has been the case in the Arab world since the European incursions of the 19th century, does an indiviudal or a group need to ask itself about the propriety of its own prevalent norms. To pose the question of authenticity is to step out of oneself and to examine one's own behavior; it is a modern question, raised insistently in Western political philosophy only since the 18th century.

Social scientists have largely abandoned the old dichotomy between traditional and modern. All societies seem to possess mixtures fitting both the traditional and modern paradigms. Even the prismatic model, developed by Riggs in recognition of this blend, does not challenge the notion of development as a movement from traditionalism to modernity; it does not specify in what ways tradition and modernity may be combined to produce progress, as defined by the citizens of a given country. (Riggs, 1964) The appeal of the concept of authenticity is its potential for suggesting a way out of prismatic society, one that responds to modern needs and ideas but is not alien.

Potential does not, of course, equal success; any theory of authenticity is fraught with difficulties. Prime among them is disagreement about what is to be rendered authentic.

Should authenticity be regarded as a goal of the community or of the individual? Most thinking about the Arabs' struggle to maintain and enhance their sense of identity despite the penetration of Western values has focused on community: the first Arab nahda, the salafiya movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, Arab nationalism, Arab socialism, all have proposed ideas about the nature of a community--Islamic, Arab, national or sub-national. Jacques Berque describes authenticity as a "lived" relationship between a group and its "bases." For some of these movements a moment in the distant past serves as the base; for others, the base is a modern formulation of community needs. For Berque, "Authenticity does not consist in an idea, a thing, a determinate behavior, however venerated these may be, but in a lived relationship between the group and its bases, a relationship that must be constantly be renewed." (Berque, 1980: 275) Even Abdallah Laroui, who rejects any notion of authenticity based on a transhistorical model, past or present, sees the problem of overcoming inauthenticity--"false consciousness" in his terms--as a collective endeavor. (Laroui, 1976)

In contrast, the prevalent Western understanding of authenticity, an understanding utilized and developed recently by several Maghribi writers, concerns qualities of the individual. Hichem Djait, Mohamed Arkoun, Abdelwahab Bouhdiba and Malek Bennabi have all elaborated on a concept of authenticity developed by Montesquieu and Rousseau and pursued by others including Sartre. The Greek word "authentes" means "not only a master

and a doer but also a perpetrator, a murderer, even a self-murderer, a suicide." "Authenteo" means "to have full power over; also to commit a murder."(Trilling, 1972: 131) Montesquieu believed traditional European society prevented the individual from realizing his or her potential. Rousseau, while accepting that judgment, rejected Montesquieu's contention that the blossoming of European cities such as Paris offered liberation from traditional conventions. He suggested that social institutions, modern as well as traditional, threatened a person's sense of self and being. (Berman,1970) Sartre found the authenticity of the subject in the fact of choice; the authentic person is one who accepts the responsibility of choosing his or her own values and world. Authenticity is "experiencing one's coincidence with freedom." For Sartre, the contrary is bad faith, which is denial of one's freedom. (Champigny, 1981: 96) Summing up much of the Western tradition, Lionel Trilling uses a Wordsworth phrase, "sentiment of being," to define authenticity, and he says: "The sentiment of being is the sentiment of being strong." (Trilling, 1972: 99)

To call these two viewpoints on authenticity "schools of thought" would be to exaggerate agreement within each camp. In fact, both communalists and individualists divide on the relationship between history and ideas. On the communalist side, Laroui denies the relevance of any model derived from the period of Arab glory. Berque's definition of authenticity also suggests the impossiblity of the fundamentalist enterprise, which takes revelation as the foundation for an authentic society.

Similarly, Arkoun and Djait, who are concerned with the development of an authentic Arab personality, differ about the need for an absolute frame of reference. Djait says that all values must stem from individual choice, even if those choices are necessarily constrained by historical circumstance. The gulf between idealists and historicists may be nearly as great as the conflicts between communalists and individualists.

It is the communal version of this debate about the nature of authenticity that has attracted attention, as a result of both fundamentalist and leftist criticisms of existing Arab states. Far from conclusive, the debate has revealed weaknesses in all communal conceptions of authenticity that render Arab politics the complicated and dangerous business that it is. In this light, the understanding of authenticity as a quality of individuals, rather than groups, deserves closer analysis, even though that viewpoint starts from a handicap: its association with Western thought and with the individualism cultivated by social mobilization and capitalist development. For Arabs of many persuasions, such individualism is a cause of alienation not a potential source of authenticity. The question is whether, despite this flaw, invididualistic notions of authenticity offer an escape from the dilemmas of development theory.

Communal Authenticity

The Arabs have been preoccupied with collective salvation

from the alienation produced by deterioration from within and attack from without. The idea of a "community of believers" as the basis for political organization; the linguistic unity of Arabs; the millet system of the Ottoman empire; the collective nature of the Western incursion into the Middle East--all have fostered this focus on community. The Western challenge arrived in the form of armies, national flags and great corporations. The power of the modern nation-state did not escape Arab observers. And when Arab elites steeped themselves in Western thought in search of possible responses, they encountered a social science dedicated to the study of nation-building and national development. The individual appeared to be an object of change, and often a reluctant one at that, rather than a protagonist. While elites demonstrated their exceptionalism, they believed themselves responsible for the rescue of their less enlightened brethren. Hence they tended to follow the teaching of their own history and Western political science about the need for strong states and collective solutions. Far from providing counteradvice, the socialist countries outdid the West in emphasizing the importance of a strong state.

Effective response to modern politial reality requires collective action. The larger the collectivity the greater its chances for economic viability and political respect in world politics. Supranational integration of Arab countries offers complementarity of resources as well as faithfulness to the idea of Arabism, hence some builtin authenticity. For

effectiveness, a rallying behind any one of the many available versions of community--from the level of village to that of the Islamic world--would be preferable to the debilitating individualism of the West. The Muslim Brotherhood, for example, has mustered its considerable power in part through its capacity to mobilize individuals into a collective endeavor.

The trouble is that no one concept of community has garnered general support. Those ideas that generate the greatest sense of authenticity, such as Arab unity and Islamic community, have been least effective as agents of action. The nation-state remains the principal focus for development but faces opposition from those with loyalty to either supranational or subnational communities. While the effort to portray Egypt as an nation may be thinkable, though difficult, as Anwar al-Sadat discovered, parallel attempts in a place like Lebanon start from a mere wisp of historical foundation. The idea of reconstructing a collective identity in Lebanon divides the country by its challenge to the primacy of other, competing communal ties. Any hypothesis about communal authenticity in the Arab world thus stumbles on the question, "Which community?" Even a Laroui, with his conviction that nation-states must reject all encumbering commitments to the past if they wish to reconcile Arab life with modernity, cannot escape an answer that opens him to challenge. Neither his defense that history specifies the nation-state as the currently appropriate actor nor the fundamentalist claim that God has designated the "community of believers" to be that actor will

convince opponents. The opposing claims appear self-evident or arbitrary, depending upon one's convictions.

Moreover, the debate between fundamentalism and historicism within the communalist perspective has progressively eroded the center ground. Syncretistic regimes, such as Nasir's in Egypt or those dominated by the Ba'ath Party in Syria or Iraq, find themselves vulnerable to attack from the extremes. By invoking Arabism and Islam in their constitutions, these states invite comparison with the Medina State or the great Arab empires of the past. Then when elites restrain their religious establishments and act against Arab neighbors for reasons of state power, they appear hypocritical. Insufficiently principled in the eyes of fundamentalists, they seem inadequately committed to move with the tide of history in the eyes of the left. Laroui qualifies such governments as "eclectic;" they cling to outmoded ideas for the sake of elite preservation, increasing rather than reducing the "historical retardation" of the Arabs. (Laroui, 1976) From this viewpoint, the Arabs would ~~would~~ avoid false consciousness only by advancing with the flow of history, even if that meant abandoning every vestige of the culture that has defined them as Arabs. Laroui believes history to be a unidirectional, universal process that is systematically mangling specificities. To search for authenticity is not only unhistorical but foolish, for it can only delay the day when the Arabs will reach the front ranks of change.

The Nasirist defense of the middle ground may be the best

available. Challenged by the Ba'ath party in the unity talks of 1964 to explain the meaning of Egyptian commitments, Nasir responded, in essence, that Egypt was democratic bacause the National Charter specified democracy. That is, Egyptians had chosen to be democratic, socialistic, Islamic. (See Kerr, 1971-:60-61) Because Egypt enjoyed political independence, those were authentic choices-- in the sense of Egyptians having power over themselves. An Egyptian official responded in a similar fashion to a question about the authenticity of a Meridien Hotel, exuding French culture, in downtown Cairo. "It is Egyptian because we decided to authorize its construction," he said. For him, and perhaps for Nasir, the question could not be pursued beyond that point. Though satisfying neither fundamentalists nor historicists, the position suffices for a leader of Nasir's stature. The authenticity of collective actions stems from the autonomy and legitimacy of those making choices. It means, however, that authenticity cannot be invoked as a support for the legitimacy that most Arab governments need so desperately.

A Nasirist theory of authenticity, as I reconstruct it, would include two elements: autonomous choice and authentic leadership. If Ajami is right that Nasir represented the "indigenous path" in Egyptian politics, it was partly because he set out to free the country from the remaining fetters of imperialism, to demonstrate Egyptian control over Egyptian decisions, to assert Egypt's leadership in the Arab world. (Ajami,1981) The authenticity of his pan-Arabism, his efforts to be non-aligned

and his commitments to Arab socialism derived from the fact that these were policies chosen by an independent Egyptian government. The great actions of the Nasirist era--land reform, nationalization of the Suez Canal, union with Syria, the move toward socialism and the confrontation with Israel in 1967--were decided in Cairo by Egyptians. Dependency theorists have subsquently popularized the view, fundamental to the Nasirist vision, that development means autonomy first and foremost.

Authentic leaderhip, the other ingredient of what I am calling the Nasirist theory of authenticity, surely meant leadership of Egyptian stock, unlike the deposed Farouk. But it also meant acting and living as an Egyptian rather than a European. As Ajami puts it:

> For all his faults, Abdul Nasser remained at home in Egypt. To be sure, his ambitions exceeded his country's means; he made more than his share of errors, but he was never a mimic. He lived and entertained simply; he kept his wife away from the spotlight. These images have power in a Muslim society. Ayatollah Khomeini's indictment of the shah was caused not so much by the shah's excessive power; it was his alienness, his distance from popular culutre and religion. Heikal's Nasser--a simple man with a taste for simple, modest things--taps the same sentiment: The implication is that Abdul Nasser never strayed from Egypt and that Sadat did. (Ajami, 1981: 119)

The authenticity of Nasir's Egypt rested neither on the legitimation by reference to an external model, either contemporary or historical, nor on the superior perspicacity of leadership--as in the cases of divinely inspired monarchy or of the faqih in Khomeini's idea of Islamic government. Nasir remained open to both the need for links with the past and for adaptation to history.

But he also jailed both fundamentalists and Marxists.

Personal Authenticity

About thirty years ago, in a book called Vocation de l'Islam, Malek Bennabi suggested that "post-Almohadian" man had lost his creative capacity, leaving the Arab world vulnerable to colonialism. "To liberate oneself from an effect, colonialism, one must first liberate oneself from its cause, colonizability." (Bennabi,1954: 85) The Muslim must take the initiative, return to the source of his inspiration, achieve renewal of the spirit in order to save himself and his society from its condition as a mere object of history. Bennabi's thoughts find some echo in the more recent work of two Tunisians, Abdelwahab Bouhdiba and Hichem Djait, and of a fellow Algerian, Mohamed Arkoun. These writers have formulated notions of authenticity based on the individual rather than society as a whole.

Bennabi observed that Maghribi society had disintegrated after the fall of the Almohads. Islam no longer performed its catalyzing mission of transforming biological man into a society; it lost its "historic role," and faith often became a plunge into maraboutisme, an escape. Under these circumstances, according to Bennabi, man himself lost his "élan civilisateur." Arabs became "incapable of assimilating and creating." As a result, a mere change in political system could no longer suffice to revitalize society. For Bennabi, this is the primary problem

of the Arabs.

> As long as our society has not liquidated this heritage of failure six centuries ago, as long as it has not renewed man in conformity with the genuine Islamic tradition and the Cartesian experience, its search for the equilibrium required for a new synthesis of its history will be in vain. (Bennabi,1953: 32)

Bennabi regarded this decline as a part of one of the natural historical cycles delineated by Ibn Khaldun.

In the confrontation with the West, the impotent Muslim world no longer exhibited its remarkable capacity to absorb new elements of culture. It borrowed by adopting "objects" and "needs" rather than "notions" and "means." Muslims borrowed from the outside "without any criterion, without any critique, partly from constaints placed upon them but especially out of snobbishness and indifference of mind." (Bennabi, 1954: 75) They concerned themselves more with "good appearance" than "well being." The forms of Islam remained and Arabs adopted the forms of Westernism, but both forms lacked substance. Thought and creativity were missing. "When thought is deficient or absent, action is inefficacious or impossible." (Bennabi, 1954: 79)

Neither reformists nor modernists had tackled this problem successfully, in Bennabi's view. Both neglected to identify the origins of thought, Islamic or Western as the case might be. Although Muhammad 'Abduh approached reform as a social, and ultimately an individual, problem, 'Abduh and his successors engaged in a debate that became increasingly scholastic. 'Abduh sought to restore the efficacity of belief through a reformation of theology, but the inaccessibility of reformist thought rendered

the movement incapable of reaching its objectives. It could not have hoped to restore faith without giving individuals the tools with which to regenerate their understanding of Islam. In this sense, Bennabi argued that the reformists had "denatured" the problem. The modernists similarly concentrated on the importance of European ideas without examining the roots of those ideas buried deep in European culture, without understanding the creative forces from which these ideas had emerged. However great the impact of both movements, neither succeeded in helping the Arab to grasp his reality and act on the basis of that apprehension. As a result, the Arab world gyrated between false optimism and absolute defeatism.

It is only by taking the initiative, by relearning how to create, and by acting as individuals that the Arabs can correct their path of decline. They will not find the answers ready-made either in their past or in the West. Nor will needs necessarily generate the proper response. If needs were the mother of invention, the Arabs would have responded long ago, according to Bennabi. The renewal of self he finds essential must come in part from religion; it must reach beyond the mind to the farthest corners of the self.

Bennabi's concludes that the contemporary chaos in the Arab world will end only when the "technical mind" assumes leadership. (Bennabi, 1954: 134) Trained as an engineer, he apparently identified the technical area as one of the most innovative, hence capable of taking the initiative so vital to the renovation

of the Arab world. This emphasis on personal initiative and creativity does not square easily with his belief in a cyclical pattern of historical determinism. His explanation would probably be that of Ibn Khaldun, whom he cites with admiration: that God acts through individuals to produce the great movements of history. Revealed truth remains the bedrock on which Bennabi believes the Arab future can be constructed.

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Mohammed Arkoun shares with Bennabi the conviction that the "transhistoric Qur'anic fact," as he calls it, must be the foundation for the reconstruction of the Arab world. For Arkoun, the contrast between modernity and tradition has been overdrawn. So-called traditional societies revealed greater dynamism, and modern socities have shown more irrationality, than scholars once believed. Development does not require a choice between tradition and modernity; rather, in Arkoun's view, development means integrating the past with the future, as Muhammad did so successfully in the seventh century. But to preserve its sense of self in that process, a people must seek the essence of its experience, the nugget of truth that can serve as the reference point for digesting and integrating vital elements of modernity.

> That is why it is today a matter of <u>deconstructing</u> all traditional cultures to reveal their mechanisms for cloaking, masking the <u>true</u> reality (by way of contrast with the purely psychological reality charac-

> terized as mythification, mystification, ideologization, alienation.) To the extent that religions have played a preponderant role in the development and epistemological control of cultures, it is inevitable that they be special targets for this deconstructive inquiry. (Arkoun, 1978: 136)

Arkoun thus defines his enterprise as the search for the secret to understanding the "true reality", the authentic nature, of Arab society.

Arkoun "deconstructs" Islam into three components: forces ($Islam_1$), forms ($Islam_2$) and individual belief ($Islam_3$). $Islam_1$ constitutes the most fundamental ideas and impulses of the religion; it derives directly from the "transhistorical Qur'anic fact." According to Arkoun,

> The Qur'an does not impose definitive solutions to the practical problems of human existence; it aims to elicit a type of regard /ital. in original/ of man toward himself, the world, the symbols (ayat) that constitute for all human beings . . . a metaphysical horizon. (Arkoun, 1978: 141)

Arkoun suggests that this most basic message, although revealed to Muhammad at a known moment in history, transcends that moment and remains impervious to the ravages of time emphasized by the historicists. In contrast, Islam has assumed many institutional forms, endorsed differing collective rituals, enjoyed a variety of relationships with secular authority. While $Islam_2$ derives from $Islam_1$, the mythologies, liturgies, and monuments created in historical time must not be confused with the basic forces of the religion. Finally, Islam as a set of personal beliefs ($Islam_3$) does not depend strictly on $Islam_2$. Islam puts the individual face-to-face with God, free to fashion a personal

individual face-to-face with God, free to fashion a personal understanding. In fact, however, the individual understanding operates under the constraints of society and personality. As he puts it: "Man is in language; language cannot be dissociated from the social, and society is in history. No serious, credible thinking can today elude, minimize or break this quadruple relationship." (Arkoun, 1978: 150) The problem then, for Arkoun, is not merely to elucidate $Islam_1$--that is to free Islam from history--but to clarify its role in history and, more particularly, its role in reshaping what he calls the "basic Islamic personality" (reflecting $Islam_3$) to accommodate the circumstances of modernity.

Mere theological articulation of the fundamental forces of Islam would not suffice for this purpose. Such a process, essentially the reformist enterprise, would tend to further isolate Islam from history and further aggravate the tensions between idealists and historicists. Theology could not prevent the demonstrable deterioration of the quality of Islam under the impact of demography, materialism, political manipulation and the claims of technicity, including those advanced by Bennabi. (Arkoun, 1978: 186)

> Doubtless, one can still encounter various spectacular demonstrations of faith (pilgrimmages, celebrations, prayers, fasts . . .); but it remains to be seen exactly how much these collective and individual behaviors have already been marginalized by a new system of psycho-social and cultural integration. (Arkoun, 1978: 187)

What's needed, according to Arkoun, is expression of the "concrete universal," a translation of the transhistorical Islam into contemporary terms comprehensible by the average person and

He looks to literature, and most especially to free poetry, to communicate universal Islamic truths by portraying the Arab plight in concrete terms. From the poetry of revolt and despair comes "another man, opening for himself new ways of access to the concrete universal."(Arkoun, 1978: 245)

Like Bennabi, then, Arkoun puts the problem of authenticity at the level of the individual. Both believe this means the generation of fresh thought, a thought "worthy of being called both Islamic and modern," as Arkoun puts it. (Arkoun, 1978: 188) This is a task for intellectuals who comprehend the liberating spirit of Islam, but the movement cannot be restricted to intellectuals. Only when the individual Arab personality understands its contemporary condition in the light of enduring Islamic truths can one speak of an end to alienation. For Bennabi, the key persons are the technocrats; for Arkoun they are the modern poets.

> One is justified in saying that it is in and through the new poetry that the most radical revolution has been accomplished in the Arab-Islamic milieu since the 1950s: not a destructive revolution (haddama), as the opponents claim, but a transmutation of the collective sensibility, an enlarging and reanchoring of the imaginary. (Arkoun, 1978: 244)

The capacity of poetry to reach the masses and to affect Islam3 is critical.

> It is in modern poetry, much more than in official pronouncements, that marginal persons and petits salariés can, to the extent that they have access to it, find the most adequate expression of the deaths, births and renaissances of which they have been more or less confusedly the subjects. (Arkoun, 1978: 245)

For Arkoun, even if such poetry explicity rejects religious

belief and propounds Marxist ideology, it nonetheless puts Arabs in touch with themselves and their past; the efforts of these poets reflect $Islam_1$, *réligion-forces*, even while rejecting $Islam_2$, institutions and liturgies. The result will be an evolving $Islam_3$, personal belief.

In the end, however, Arkoun seems to have saved little or nothing of Islam. At least it is not clear why the efforts of the poets should fall within the spirit of Islam, especially since many of the artists he admires deny attachment to universal values. They must raise the consciousness of the masses to their contemporary estrangement, but, as Louis Gardet puts it, the "good faith" thus achieved is not necessarily "faith." (Arkoun, 1978: 253) Bennabi's technocrats function in a God-determined world, but Arkoun's poets appear to confront an existential universe. I infer from Arkoun's work that he regards Islam as central to the Arab "sentiment of being." He intends, he says, to

> give an example of that which ought to constituite today an *ijtihad* faithful to the spiritual and intellectual tension of the great classic thinkers, but breaking in a reasoned way with the logical procedures, the epistemological postulates and the conceptual apparatus of these same thinkers. (Arkoun, 1978: 246)

But the nature of that fixed and unchanging Islam, the *réligion-forces*, which is the source of continuity, seems to emerge as the mere caboose on a train of which $Islam_3$ is the locomotive, the modern poet the engineer.

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Like Arkoun, Bouhdiba defines the essence of Islam as a metaphyiscal view of man and the world. But unlike Arkoun he regards even this view--Islam$_1$ in Arkoun's terms--as rooted in history. Islam is "a way of seeing the Eternal and Absolute. All the same, this way of seeing is historical." Mohammad's vision represented a "renovation of the World and renewal of the /contemporary/ view of Man and the World. And this Renewal, in turn, goes on renewing itself." (Bouhdiba, 1973: 134) Even the small handhold in the rock to which Arkoun tries to cling appears unavailable to Bouhdiba.

Yet Bouhdiba insists that Islam remains a fixture of Arab identity. Without it, he says, "our collective personality would see itself diminished and would evolve toward inconsistency, adventure and alteration." (Bouhdiba, 1973: 147) However, it is not religion that will remake the Arabs; rather the Arabs will re-create Islam. He extols the liberty of the Muslim who, "according to authentic Qur'anic teaching," confronts God without intermediary. That freedom permits individual acts of conscience, which in turn generate spiritual values. The authentic Islam depends, then, on human mind, conscience and creativity. "Faith is creative spirit," says Bouhdiba (Bouhdiba, 1973: 135)

If this is so, then why is it that a "certain Islam" has become the province of specialists attached to models located in the distant past and committed to the denial of historical process? Lack of information, says Bouhdiba. He speaks of

three sorts of information: anecdotal, which tends to be superficial and to deform rather than enrich; the general communicatiuon of ideas and techniques, as in journals or newspapers, and information as an example, a lifestyle to be imitated. Such examples can transform the society by helping people to understand themselves and their aspirations. What the whole Third World needs, he says, is a "stock of knowledge putting man in position to seize and utilize his own possibilities." (Bouhdiba, 1973: 69) He cites Berque, who calls these countries "underanalyzed." Bouhdiba notes that they are also underinformed. "Man finds himself separated from his own resources by his ignorance of himself." Bouhdiba, the sociologist, calls upon his compatriots to learn more about each other and about their common predicament, in order to liberate the conscience and permit the re-creation of an authentic Islam, which is vital to the Arab sense of well-being.

Bouhdiba identifies himself with a view he attributes to "authentic revolutionary reformism," the view that religion is essentially an understanding of self. Since religion moves in and through history, one must understand history to understand oneself. But human beings also make history. ("We are beginning to understand that history is in the end what we do." (Bouhdiba, 1973: 112) If faith is creativity, religion is a product of human activity and cannot guide human action in the reshaping of that same historical process of which it is a result. Bouhdiba calls for improved understanding of society as a prerequisite

for regeneration of the self:

> It is then necessary to dare to take a fresh breath and be ourselves in our Islamic personality. The wheel of history turns, and insane are those who let themselves be crushed by it. (Bouhdiba, 1973: 155)

The destruction has so far been great in the Arab world, but he detects, "in parallel, an effort of restructuration and recuperation of our authentic personality." (Bouhdiba, 1973: 181) The self recovers its authenticity by recognizing its responsibilities and shaping its own history. Islam appears to be a byproduct.

By endorsing this Sartrian notion of authenticity, Bouhdiba avoids the pitfalls that afflict even the attenuated idealism of a Bennabi or Arkoun. While Bouhdiba recognizes the possibility of eternal truth--in fact he portrays religion as a "feeling that consists in spanning the breech between the two elements composing a human being: mind and matter, or, if one wishes, eternity and historicity" (Bouhdiba, 1973: 136)--he insists that any representation of eternal truth is subject to the erosion of history.

Bouhdiba seeks to escape the burdens of the Arab-Islamic past. The question is whether, in doing so, he has not also abandoned continuity altogether. Why should the Arabs, starting from scratch, create a new, "authentic" personality that is either Arab or Islamic? More precisely, what would entitle one to call it either? On what grounds does one assume that Bouhdiba's liberated individuals make similar choices, much less choices promoting the greater well-being of the community as a whole? Only on the assumption that social sciences produce

meaning rather than confusion. Yet the social scientific analysis of development to which Bouhdiba seeks to contribute offers little reason for optimism on this score. Rather than a cure for the contemporary ills of development theory, then, his notion of authenticity appears to depend on a prior resolutiuon of the great debates that mark social science. Without such a resolution, the information Bouhdiba seeks as salvation for the Third World could well be the victory of "knowledge over life," as Nietzsche puts it, knowledge that undermines all ideas, all moralities, all possibilities of creativity and action--the very things Bouhdiba seeks to nurture.

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Hichem Djait sees the problem of authenticity in some of the same terms as Bouhdiba, but he does not share Bouhdiba's faith in social science. He pursues Bouhdiba's radical individualsim into a world of relative truths where all collectivist urges must be suspect and where liberal democracy, depsite its unthinkability in the contemporary Arab world, appears desirable as an avenue to an open future. Until the conditions for democracy mature in the Arab world, Djait recommends the strategy that Laroui rejects so emphatically: eclecticism.

Djait begins from the observation that Arab identity is bidimensional, Arab and Islamic. Together these ideas can arouse "enthusiasm or fanaticism" in the popular conscience, yet neither

is the focus of modern politics. Arab unity remains a dream, Islam has lost its "positivity," and the nation-state, a beast of Western inspiration, has seized the initiative, creating a "profound duality" between political realties and the "cultural and politico-ideological conscience." While the Arab world aspires to socio-economic development, he says, it does so "not just to save face before the exterior world but, as much or more, to live in a society made of better human material and in a civilization of quality." (Djait, 1974: 132) In the rush for collective modernity, nation-states tend to disregard these imperatives by ignoring the individual and his psychological baggage from the past.

The problem then is alienation of the individual in his Arabism, his Islam and even in his nationalism, which remains insecure. Djait concurs with the historicist view that the days of Arab glory cannot be reconstructed and that Islam, confronted by modern thought, cannot reacquire the unchallenged monopoly on truth that it once enjoyed. Nor is it realistic to believe that the ever increasing ascendancy of the nation-state can be reversed. Hence, the solution must lie with the individual, whom Djait calls upon to "reinvent his Ego and his life" from elements within himself. (Djait, 1974: 225) The Arab personality must accommodate economic and social change without losing its sense of originality.

Djait describes the Tunisian personality of the period between 1945 and 1954 as an example of both the strengths and

weaknesses with which the Arabs confront the problem of adaptation. He says the "basic personalilty" of Tunisians demonstrated heavy doses of preoccupation with virility, personal agressivity, magical elements and concern for honor and prestige. But these characteristics proved less intractable than many European scholars tended to believe. By 1965, for example, with colonialism gone and the place of bedouin culture diminished, the emphasis on virility had weakened. Although men still dominated society, women had moved toward emancipation. It is, therefore, quite possible to envision the gradual evolution of "new men" and women. (Djait, 1974: 267)

The state, which might be expected to spearhead the emergence of a new consciousness, has usually compounded the problem by its repressiveness.

> The power of the state, and the powerful elements in society more generally, have broken the initiative of the individual to the point where he has become a passive, dominated being, gripped by resignation and despair. (Djait, 1974: 228)

Instead of standing for truth and right, the state languishes in the grip of persons who exhibit the very personality characteristics that appear to impede accommodation among the population as a whole. Revolution would appear to be the only exit.

Djait, however, recommends a more cautious course. For him, the direction of history remains obscure. An individual chooses an identity within certain constraints; by the same token a society makes choices within parameters but without compulsion. For Djait, there exists no definitive metaphysics

to justify a single set of choices at either level. A society must be prepared to choose, suffer dissatisfactions, make new choices and suffer fresh regression. Just as the Arab individual must creatively combine elements of past and present, the society must pursue multiple objectives--some old, some new--simultaneously. He counsels patience, eclecticism, and wariness about seeking simple cures for complicated maladies. "Modernization," he notes, "is a project of civilization that goes beyond any social reform project." (Djait, 1974: 257)

For these reasons Djait eschews revolution and revolutionaries. Although he admires the Marxist approach, he fears the dogmatism of a regime committed to Marxism. Marxism depends for its effectiveness, he argues, on its generation of ideology, "with its certitudes, its limitations and its terrorism." (Djait, 1974: 268) Hence, he fears for the creativity of the individual on which further innovation and adaptation depends. Moreover, he regards as vain any effort to transform the state without a prior transformation of citizen attitudes. The question of authenticity precedes the choice of direction for the society as a whole. To take the radical course now would be to perhaps forego future choice, says Djait, "and our cultural heritage /would/ be shaken as would the very roots of the Arab soul itself." (Djait, 1974: 269)

Djait concludes that the Arab world, although currently far removed from the practice of democracy, must not lose sight of the democratic objective. Arab governments currently manipulate information. They invoke Islamic symbols to protect themselves

and their policies. They jail opposition leaders in fear of suffering worse fates if they relinquished control. In fact, the idea of legitimate opposition finds little resonance in Islamic culture, he says. But if the Arab world is to evolve and remain itself--that is, if individuals are to assert their authenticity by choosing their identities and their futures--then a political system based on such individual choice constitutes the only possible long-term solution. To get there, though, will require that "project of civilization" of which he speaks: "reform of man, an overturning of values, introduction of an authentic modernity [italics in original] over and above centuries of imposture and a present marked by untruth." (Djait, 1974: 264) Only when that project is complete will social consensus make possible the establishment of democratic institutions.

Djait suggests that continuity can best be preserved by a process of continual choice and evolution. Arabism and Islam persist so long as they remain the standards by which people choose to live. Of persons who learn to speak Arabic as children and who live in an Islamic context, the overwhelming majority will by instinct choose to be Arab Muslims. By this line of thinking, Islam resembles government by popular consent in the West; one is free to withhold consent by leaving the country, but for most persons that is not a choice. Tacit consent sustains the community beyond the generation of Founders who actually authorized a set of institutions. Change sustains continuity in that sense.

But change must occur without collective agents of change. In Djait's world of relative values and individual choice, governments cannot be stronger than the convictions of their citizens, which are in turn the relections of volition, not nature. Given the considerable variation in the human condition across the Arab world, consensus built upon similarity of circumstances appears difficult if not impossible. In apparent recognition of that fact, Djait accepts a politics of reconciliation; he explicity rejects a mobilization system (See Apter, 1965) for its potential inhumanity, and advocates partial, gradual, piecemeal change in the pursuit of multiple, conflicting, uncertain goals.

* * *

That Djait's thought offers some support for the syncretist urges of most modern Arab regimes may be disturbing to those who find the record of these regimes dubious or unsatisfactory. His thought depends on Western philosophy, especially in its French existentialist form, as much as many Middle Eastern countries depend on Western economies--a second reason for some to regard it as suspect. Actually, however, the policy implications of Djait's emphasis on individual choice conflict with the development practices of just about every state in the area. He subscribes, in effect, to the "principle of cognitive respect" and the "postulate of ignorance," as set forth by Peter Berger. (Berger, 1976) Development policies would take account of the views of individuals, even peasants, who need not have their consciousnesses raised

to know their own best interests and their relationship to the past. And policies would proceed from the assumption that consequences can never be fully understood before the fact, because the future is, as Hume pointed out long ago, unknowable. Bennabi, Arkoun, and Bouhdiba all draw near to that conclusion only to back off, suggesting ways in which the masses might yet be stirred, despite the individual nature of authentic experience, to collective action in the name of radical change. The thought of all three falters at that point. Djait, on the other hand, takes the difficulties of moving from individual to collective authenticity as a reality and a virtue. He steps back from Sartre's efforts to merge existentialism and Marxism. (See Poster, 1975: Part III.)

Essentially, these adovcates of individual notions of authenticity argue that "development" cannot be assigned a universal meaning. The past and the future both acquire significance by the process of choice rather than by the labors of religious scholars or the data analysis of social scientists. Such a conclusion must strike believers in both sets of circles as heresy. But, more importantly, it must leave governments who seize power to accomplish miracles and help their peoples overcome the "historical retardation of the Arabs," as Laroui terms it, feeling as if they are at sea without navigational aids. Governments, scholars, international organizations, bureaucrats, elites in general--all want coherence in development policies. Some want capitalist coherence; others want socialist coherence,

and still others seek Islamic coherence. But the works of writers such as Bouhdiba and Djait--and even Bennabi and Arkoun, for whom the source of universality is diminished to nothingness--imply that such coherence can only emerge from the individual mind. In a sense, they respond to the disarray in development thinking by embracing it and even welcoming it. In another way, they suggest a road out of the quagmire by bringing the emphasis on autonomy from the level of the state to that of the individual. They have taken the essence of Nasirism (and dependence theory), the insistence on national autonomoy as the prerequisite for development, and bolstered it in theoretical terms by suggesting that authenticity stems from the individual. It becomes a source of legitimation for those who, lacking Nasir's charisma, find it impossible to steer between the claims of fundamentalists and historicists.

If there is a single idea in development theory today that commands universal respect, it is the idea of national autonomy. Even though total independence can scarcely be a goal, the idea specifies a forum in which further decisions about development can be taken. Individual authenticity, whatever its Western origins, may contribute to the definition of that forum and help foster the emergence of development strategies not derived from ideologies imported from afar in time or space. If "be thyself" is the essence of authenticity, and if that sentiment commands widespread respect, then that idea cannot remain the preserve of those who seek to transform the Arabs into people

their ancestors may never have been, and it cannot be the whipping boy of those who wish to remake them according to historical fashion.

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