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Shamblain

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ISRAEL AS A FOREIGN STATE:

## THE ARABS' INTELLECTUAL DYNAMICS

In his **Representations of the Intellectual** Edward Said tells us that the intellectual's role is to speak truth to power. I shall later address some Arab intellectuals' view of their role, and also the question of political truth. But one should perhaps start by considering what "power" means. Edward Said primarily has in mind intellectuals who choose conformity for their comfort, thus not dissenting to authority where dissent is called for. Beginning his series of lectures with the distinction between two opposite role-models for the intellectual which he attributes to Antonio Gramsci and Julien Benda respectively, Said explains how Gramsci's traditional as well as organic intellectuals are in-built features of the societies in which they operate; Benda's intellectuals, on the contrary, are distinctly special and rare, more like "super-gifted and morally endowed philosopher-kings who constitute the conscience of mankind"(pp.6-7). But while distinctly separate, Benda's intellectuals are not disengaged. "They are never more themselves than when, moved by metaphysical passion and disinterested principles of justice and truth, they denounce corruption, defend the weak, defy imperfect or oppressive authority"(p.6). In his lectures, Said comes out more strongly in favor of Benda's intellectuals, and more clearly as having repressive authorities in mind when he speaks of power. However, Said is also keenly aware that power is not only that which is exercised by a repressive authority. Thus, he also tells us that "every intellectual is born into a language, and for the most part spends the rest of his or her life in that language, which is the principal medium of intellectual activity"(p.27). He later asks, "Does the fact of nationality commit the individual intellectual to the public mood for reasons of solidarity, primordial loyalty, or national patriotism? Or can a better case be made for the intellectual as a dissenter from the corporate ensemble?"(p.32). His answer, though more with the American media in mind, and those "lonely voices of dissent" for



whom the Vietnam war was unwise and unjust, is that it is the intellectual's task to show, regarding the consensus on group or national identity, how the group is not a natural or god-given entity but is a constructed, manufactured, even in some cases invented object. Here the intellectual may find himself/herself confronting a different kind of power, the chauvinist power of national consensus. Said does not in fact dwell on this kind of power, nor on the predicament of the intellectual confronting it. Less so on the power of the Arab politics and intellectuality of denial and rejection vis-à-vis Israel. But the power of national sentiment is, in a profound way, perhaps a more serious power to contend with than the power of a repressive authority. It is a power that holds back even great minds like Edward Said from returning home, but to the future rather than to the past.

I have chosen the general title "Israel as a Foreign State" for these presentations for the specific reason that I wished to highlight this **realpolitik** of denial and rejection rather than the moral politics of justice. While I wished on the one hand to underscore the significance of the foreignness of Israel in the Arab-Islamic milieu, I wanted on the other hand to highlight this general aspect of its image as viewed by her neighbors, as opposed to its being specifically Jewish, or specifically representative of the political ideology or interests of a 20<sup>th</sup> century Western, or American imperialism. Because it is my contention that it is not Israel's specific otherness –for example its Jewishness or ideological affiliation- which has been the fundamental cause of Arab intellectual and political turmoil, as this has been its foreignness pure and simple –an otherness or a foreignness that first bared its teeth and stood up to challenge the sweeping might of the Arabo-Islamic world in Vienna in 1683, forcing it to retreat, and which has since then continued to gather power and hegemony while the Arabo-Islamic world continued to shrivel and decline. Israel's creation in 1948, and its devastating defeat of the Arab armies in 1967 should thus be integrated into the larger picture of a continuously ascendant foreignness, coming at the heels of and perhaps crowning a three hundred year process of gathering power that began to challenge and eventually replace a political heritage of almost ten centuries of uncontested <sup>rule</sup> power and scientific ascendancy of the Arabo-Islamic world. Likewise, the Arab politics and intellectualism of denial and rejection vis-à-vis Israel could be better understood if viewed as a natural extension of <sup>a</sup> a general politics of denial and rejection of the other. Failed

and rejected

competing and even successful  
this is the case



ideologies and salvation formulas vis-à-vis <sup>Israel on a foreignness paradigm</sup> ~~this other~~ risk facing the same fate, in my view therefore, as those ideologies and formulas fared in the face of the Enlightenment, the Industrial revolution, and, finally, the revolution in science and information technology.

Perhaps nothing can be more indicative of this integral image of the other in the Arabo/Islamic mind than a survey of the Arab intellectual scene since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a survey which reveals a generic continuum of turmoil which erupted and was unleashed on the occasion of Napoleon's unsolicited and violent entry into the heart of the Arabo-Islamic world. It is to this intellectual eruption, first called "the awakening" or alnahda therefore that I shall devote the first of my two lectures. In the second lecture I shall try to draw a political lesson from these observations, a lesson that speaks truth to intellectual power, and more generally to the power of national sentiment, on how making peace with Israel can be considered a salvation rather than a defeatist strategy for the Arabo-Islamic world.

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There is hardly any disagreement among modern Arab thinkers on identifying 1798 as the year which shocked the Arab world out of its deep slumber. "Napoleon's guns in the Arab East created what has come to be known as 'modernity's shock' ", writes Syrian Mohammad Sayyed Risas in the popular leftist literary magazine al-ADAB. The questions which this invasion brought with it helped define the later streams of thought among Intellectuals. The questions had to do with coming to terms with the West's clear supremacy. Since then, Risas comments, all Arab thought has revolved around two main problems, the relationship with the past, and the relationship with the other, or with the West. Commenting in the same magazine on the same subject Moroccan intellectual Abd al-Ilah Balqiz identifies the end of the First World War and the Sykes-Picot agreement, as well as the Balfour declaration as the events which came to determine the agenda of the modern Arab intellectual. Four main schools of thought or ideologies evolved or developed in response to the modern challenge, Risas contends. These are Religious revivalism on the one hand, and liberalism, nationalism and Marxism on the other. But if there is almost consensus on the historical and temporal origins of contemporary



Arab thought, there is also a bitter critique of these ideologies and the intellectuals behind them. In his **ILLUSIONS OF THE ELITE** Ali Harb, cognizant of the remarks Edward Said made on the role of intellectuals, takes to task all ideologists and ideologies in the modern Arab world, lamenting their total failure to provide a functional answer to the questions of progress, freedom and democracy. Rather than being proactive thinkers who produce functional answers, he contends, these intellectuals have on the whole "continued in their ideological slumber, unable to do anything except to deny facts in order to make right their own concepts and theories"(p24). He describes them as having become guards of their own theories, policing them against reality and expectations. "They have come to preoccupy themselves with criticizing political systems, states, authorities and policies, while excluding from their purview the real and required critique of the very fundamental principles" that may explain where things have gone wrong. The Arab intellectual may debate freedom of expression in the limited context and space related to the expulsion of Syrian literary figure Adonis from the Federation of Arab writers for attending a conference with Israelis, but unless the intellectual frontally addresses the question of freedom in society, such a debate will remain but a worthless luxury.

Of course, not all modern Arab thinkers share Harb's sweeping critique. But the sense of a state of intellectual ossification prevails. Ever since the so-called Arab nahda or Awakening phase associated with such intellectual giants as Jamal Afghani and Mohammad Abdu, and, the latter's response (*al-Islam wa'l nasraniyyah ma'a'l-ilm wa'l madaniyyah*) to what was probably, in the wake of the then-developing indigenous presses in the Arab world, the first Arab print of a philosophical essay, the overall debate has not inched forward very much. Significantly, the Alexandria philosophy print in question, essayed in 1903 by one Farah Anton, notably a Christian Arab, was a Rushdian, or Averroist revivalist attempt, or an attempt, in other words, to re-introduce rationalism into Arab intellectual –mostly religion-associated- discourse, and to propound secularism. I say "significantly" because the essential underlying pattern of the contemporary Arab intellectual debate –in particular, secularism versus religious revivalism- does not seem to have changed much since then. One hundred year after the publication of that book on Averroes, progressive Egyptian film producer Yousef Shaheen had again found it necessary to re-introduce into public debate, through



his controversial film ALMASIR, the virtues of rationalism, using the life-model of none other but Averroes. And as if prescient of a *deja-vu*, Islamicist students at a Palestinian university recently protested the showing of this film on campus, claiming it undermines the proper spirit of true education.

The judgment that the "intellectual" debate has to all intents and purposes remained captive in its turn of the century framework of reference would indeed be harsh to make, but it would not be unique. "It is a matter of great sadness", recently deceased Egyptian liberalist philosopher Fuad Zakariyya writes in 1987, "that the Arab intellectual finds himself at the end of the twentieth century obliged to engage in a debate which Arab intellectuals had almost, at the end of the nineteenth century, been able to conclude in favor of Reason and progress". Writing as a co-author in France in a book entitled "***Un Siecle pour Rien***" which appeared only in the past few months former al-Nahar editor and well-known Lebanese intellectual Ghassan Tweini, looking at the last century of Arab intellectual progress, concludes that the direction has generally been circular, or that the terms of reference of the intellectual debate have essentially remained what they were at first, namely, an expression of the tension between a glorious past associated with Islam, and a subservient present associated with the overall hegemony of the non-Islamic World.

Indeed, even if one does not fully subscribe to such a harsh view, it is difficult nonetheless not to recognize the aridity, or numerical scarcity of argument-directions in the contemporary Arab intellectual debate.

This aridity must be reckoned against a long period of preceding scientific and political decline, manifesting itself, first, in an almost frozen scientific and intellectual activity for almost three centuries in which developments in the West since the Enlightenment almost went unnoticed in the Arabo-Islamic world, until a trepidly tentative and selective process of reclamation of science under Mohammad Ali in Egypt and the Sultanate in Istanbul began with a view to understanding the secrets of the West's military strength; and, second, in the loss or inability to gain territory in the north and East experienced by the Ottoman rulers, such as the defeats at Vienna, but later in the unsolicited visitations to Egypt, first in 1798 by general Napoleon, and a few years after that by the British under Horatio Nelson. Thus we witness a slow and gradual re-awakening, especially in the latter part of the nineteenth century,



by Turks as well as by Arabs, finally spilling into the twentieth century with the attempts at a response, in Turkey through a Turkic national revivalism, and in Egypt whether through the Urabi revolt or the birth of the NAHDA literature of Afghani and Abduh.

Thus the expressed concerns of the contemporary Arab intellectual have revolved around the perennial question of how to restore Arabo-Islamic strength, and remove the non-Muslim domination of the Arabs and Muslims. This, needless to say, is only perceived as having been crystallized in modern form and further entrenched through the establishment of Israel in 1948, and the devastating defeat in 1967. Indeed, while from Israel's point of view it may seem as if she had been singled out for Arab animosity, whether fairly or unfairly, the attitude towards her could be better understood if viewed as actually having been shaped and even defined by the Arabo-Islamic overall predicament with the suffocating reality, and challenges of a long process of decline, and the defeats suffered at the hands of the non-Muslim world.

But if the birth of Israel brought about sweeping changes in Arab regimes, and the hopes associated with a revival through some form of pan-Arabism or socialism, it was the Arab defeat in 1967 precisely of those regimes that seems to have occasioned an intellectual upheaval. For example it is in the aftermath of this war that Syrian philosopher Sadeq Jalal al-Azem wrote his controversial *Naqd al-Fikr al-Dini*, a sweeping and devastating critique of the Arab mentality that allowed, in his view, for Israel's victory. In the preface to this book al-Azem refers to the '67 defeat, and bitterly to a consolation note sent by Nasser to King Hussein affirming that God will yet come to the rescue of the Arab nation. But the essay, together with others published in the same volume, including a scathing attack on the rumours, widely carried in the Arab press at the time of the appearance of St. Mary in Egypt, addresses directly and boldly the restraining powers of the mythical mentality which has taken a grip of the Arabo-Islamic world, preventing it from being able to progress and meet its dangers and challenges. Al-Azem challenges such major Islamic scholars as Sayyed Qutub and Ali Abd al-Razeq for their contribution to the entrenchment of this backward mentality, insisting all the time that this mentality is at odds with the progress having been made in the West from Francis Bacon to Descartes to Galileo, Newton, Darwin and Marx. Indeed secular/nationalist,



materialist/Marxist as well as Islamic literalist or fundamentalist ideologies had begun to ferment in the Arab World right from the beginning of the twentieth century, and especially with the drastic changes brought about by the Sykes-Picot agreement (1917), which formalized, in the Arab mind, the usurpation of the Arab will by foreign powers. The installation of state-structures and local governors or governments did not remove the latent sense that the real will of the people had been usurped, and that a peoples' liberation struggle (pan-Arabism), a class struggle (Marxism), or a revival of genuine religiosity (the Islamic brotherhood of Sayyed Qutub and Hasan al-Banna) is required in order to regain true self-determination. Nothing could be more damning of these imperialist-installed structures and governments than their failure at best, or their collusion, as generally perceived, in the actual creation of the State of Israel- a State which was viewed as being, to all intents and purposes, an implantation by those foreign powers in the midst of, nay, even as a dagger in the heart of the Arab world, epitomizing or even embodying the Arabo-Islamic subjugation to imperialist rule.

And, while for a brief period much hope was pinned on the first wave of this much sought after Arab liberation movement led by Jamal Abd al-Nasser, Sadeq Jalal al-Azem was quick to be critical even of this movement following Sadat's shocking visit to Israel, arguing that this visit was clear proof of the movement's failure to stand up to the penetrating hegemony of the Western imperialist powers, a hegemony which had clearly succeeded in co-opting subservient allies among Arab political systems and rulers. In his view, Sadat's visit was a natural outcome of this failure, not an aberration of an otherwise sound process of emancipation. Even the Palestinian national liberation movement led by Yasser Arafat does not escape al-Azem's criticism, who, in a later book on Sadat's visit laments the seeming co-option of even this "darling" of Arab national liberation movements by the conservative, right wing governments in the Arab world, whose interests lie with the foreign West (and are hence conciliatory towards Israel) rather than with the people over whom they govern. Indeed, the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation fits neatly into the historical picture as I have presented it, for it has come to be viewed as encapsulating, in sharp relief, the entire predicament of the decline of the Arabo-Islamic world, or as a microcosm against which intellectual theories and remedies for an Arab renaissance are to be measured or tested. Does the Arab world submit to the



supremacy of the other (hence accept, for example, Westernization rather than modernization only, or accept normalization with Israel rather than nominalization – i.e. nominal peace treaties with Israel- only?) Or should the Arab world, mindful of its inner strength and superior past, rather seek the means to reject and deny the “other” totally, with a view to overcoming it? The intellectual dilemma of how the Arabo-Islamic world could release itself from its tethers, and reassume what is perceived as its rightful place, henceforth centers on or revolves around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, even the very existence of Israel. Perhaps without this being properly comprehended by either side, and certainly without it having been intended to be the case Israel thus becomes from an Arabic perspective a litmus test to ideologies that purport to deliver the Arab world from its historical predicament. Nor need this perspective only be seen in a negative light, as it has classically been by both sides. Al-Azem’s rejectionist message, for example, is clear: reconciliation with Israel is a submission to foreign rule. To shake off this foreign rule it is necessary to shake off the chains of religiosity, and to release the spirit of free scientific inquiry, alongside the economic and political emancipation of the people. Only thus is it possible to “rub out” negative reality as this has come to encroach itself on the Arab people. But surely al-Azem’s theory of rejection or denial may not be the way, let alone the best way to change a negative reality. Perhaps, quite the contrary, the Arab World’s emancipation can best be achieved through engagement, not denial or rejection.

Another work by another philosopher, Egyptian Abdullah al-Urwi, published in French just months before the ’67 war, but appearing in Arabic in 1970, reinforces the same message concerning the need of the Arab world to shake off its atavistic (salafi) burden, but calling for, unlike al-Azem, a merger with the West as a means for scientific and cultural survival. Egyptian father of Arabic positivism Zaki Nagib Mahmoud published in 1970 a work entitled *Renewal of Arab Thought* in which, while addressing the Islamic intellectual heritage, he called for the need to engage in a functional selective process, choosing from that heritage what was useful for the modern age, and discarding that which is no longer necessary.

An important benchmark in the evolution of the contemporary Arab intellectual debate was a conference sponsored by Kuwait University in 1974, which brought many of the intellectual



luminaries, some of them philosophers, together, and in many ways set the tone for the ensuing debates in the following two decades. Palestinian-born Issa Bullata does a beautiful job in defining the scene. Egyptian positivist Zaki Nagib Mahmoud, Anwar Abd al-Malik, Marxist Mahmoud Amin al-Alim, rising Moroccan star and philosopher Mohammad al-Jabiri, Syrian poet and literary critic Adonis (Ali Ahmad Sa'ïd), Egyptian liberalist philosopher Fuad Zakariyya, all of them were among the twenty two thinkers present to discuss what is to be done. And even those that could not attend (Marxist ideologist Mahdi al-Amil) later in the year published a scathing criticism of the colloquium, claiming that the real crisis in the Arab world was the inability of thinkers like those present at that colloquium to transcend their bourgeoisie analysis of the situation in the Arab world. Sadly, Mahdi al-Amil was the second intellectual victim of an assassination in the eighties by religious fanatics in Lebanon, the first being philosopher Hussein Mruwweh, author of a two-volume materialist reading of early Islamic philosophical thought. This appeared during the late seventies, contemporaneously with two other Marxist works by Syrian Tayyib Tizini, essentially dealing with how best to deal with the heritage in order to proceed with a genuine Arab revolution. Adonis, meantime, had also published the first volume of his compendium on the fixed and variable in Arab Thought – a study which took him from a reading of early Arabic poetry to an appraisal of the contemporary Arab condition, concluding that the entire structure of the past must be shaken in order to build successfully anew. His bold call for the replacement of God by Man, and religion by reason, as a means of change to bring about social justice, equality and progress drew strong criticism against him, like that against his co-patriot al-Azem, who in fact was brought to trial on charges of incitement against religious beliefs following the publication of his work in Lebanon.

The stage was already set for the interplay of ideas. There, on the one hand, was the glory of the Arabo-Islamic past but the impotence likewise of the present. And here, on the other hand, were the ideological tools to analyze and remedy this sick condition – a condition which, I must hasten to say, and going by the readings of some of the indicators of the recently published UN Human Development report, portends potential deterioration, even disaster if not duly remedied, with a population reaching the 450 million mark by the end of the next decade, with a staggering 40% of the population currently under 14 years of age, a 40 percent



illiteracy rate, a steady migration reaching almost 70 percent of the total population from rural to ill-prepared urban areas, an almost non-existent culture of research and development, and even less a serious investment in government-sponsored research, with barely five cited scientific articles in the entire Arab world as reported in '87. The list is both defiant and depressing. In the eighties, and mindful of these conditions as well as of the seventies debates, the intellectual output continued. In Beirut, the Center for Arab Unity Studies oversaw and organized the publication of a series of studies by economists, social scientists, political theorists and others, primarily addressing the predicament of social and economic stagnation in the Arab world. The West's exploitative role in this stagnation, and Israel's repressive influence, were major themes. On the theoretical front, a shift began to occur from the Marxists/socialists in Lebanon/Syria (Mruwwah, Tizini, Azem, Amel, Adonis, etc.) to the revivalists in North Africa, with the sharpened works of Mohammad al-Jabiri in Morocco, the Arabic translations of French-based Mohammad Arkoun, and Hasan Hanafi in Egypt, among others. Here we also begin to see the influence of Derrida and Foucault, whether in deconstruction methodologies or in post-modernist discourse reification and analysis, as well as a novel, almost leftist Islamicism, but all essentially still dealing with what, given the present, to do with the past. Discard it (Arkoun)? Build upon it (Jabiri)? Renew it (Hanafi)?

I call Arkoun's works revivalist only in the sense that his post-modernist analysis is applied to the Islamic heritage, in spite of the fact that its message is to break free from that heritage. Something similar might also have been said about Mruwwah's and other marxists' earlier materialist analysis of the same corpus. Jabiri, on the other hand, approaches the philosophical heritage analytically (his Arab commentators call the method "epistemic"), concluding with the need to build upon that heritage in intellectual history which genuinely stands for the upholding of rational and scientific inquiry. To him, Eastern Arabic intellectuals and philosophers, such as al-Farabi or Ibn Sina, in spite of the rationalist component of some of their works, still represent a Resigned Intellect, that is, a regressive, mystical or spiritual yearning which must be broken free from, along with other parts of the heritage. Western Arabic intellectuals and philosophers, on the other hand, such as Ibn Hazm and Ibn Rushd, can constitute a real foundation for a modern revival of Arabic intellectual activity. As for Hanafi,



discarding an orientalist, a Marxist-materialist or a post-modernist approach to analyzing the Islamic heritage need not necessarily mean reverting to a classical adoption or a whole-sale endorsement of that heritage, nor need it also mean turning a blind eye to Western culture and scientific development. With regard to the latter, a culture of occidentalism should rather be developed, or a conscious pursuit of understanding and analysis from a genuine Islamic perspective. With regard to the heritage, on the other hand, this is already so inbuilt in the contemporary cultural mentality and psyche that a rupture, as called for by some, would simply not be feasible. A process of revivication should rather be pursued commensurate with contemporary needs, and in line with the Islamic spirit and vision of bringing about justice, happiness and equality.

Hanafi's works and ideas are regarded by some as representing an enlightened and modernist Islam, those of Jabiri a rationalist treatment of the heritage that might allow the contemporary Arab world to move ahead, while Arkoun presents some with the latest and most fashionable reasons as to why one should leave one's heritage behind. But the terms of reference of the debate remain what they are. The historical terms of reference are also almost agreed upon, defined by Napoleonic's invasion, Israel's creation and the 1967 defeat. As we saw, the problem really started much earlier than Napoleon, but the consciousness as well as the intellectual reaction to it in the Arab world may well have been marked by the 1798 shock. The defining streams of thought have to all intents and purposes been rigid, still captured by Jamal al-Din Afghani's famous dictum that while the Arab is proud of his past ancestry, he is totally blind to his present and future.

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How does the Arab world, suffering from its backwardness and impotence as it does, deal with itself and with the reality of the dominant other (which has now come to include Israel) surrounding it? How does the Arab world free itself from its present and move towards a better future? And as if to reinforce this suspected or perceived existential dichotomy between itself and the other, the publications, in the past few years, of such works as Francis Fukuyama's **End of History** and Samuel Huntington's **Clash of Civilizations** once again stoked the fire. Does the Arab world pursue its politics of rejection of the (now Americanized)



West, whether on Islamicist, nationalist or Marxist grounds? And does it pursue its politics of denial of what it perceives as this West's embodiment in its midst, i.e. Israel ? The afore-mentioned leftist magazine **al-Adab** devoted a whole issue in the year 2000 to this (double) question. I shall refer simply to two observations made by two well-known contemporary Arab thinkers in that issue, Tayyib Tizini and Ahmad Barqawi. Tizini, subscribing to the Huntington thesis but from the opposite perspective, refers derisively to Sadat's visit to Israel (in '78) as an example of the misguided Arab bourgeoisie understanding that the gulf between the two civilizations can be bridged, or, as Sadat himself explained, the psychological wall can be broken. This gulf, or wall, in Tizini's view, is objective and reflects a material and irreconcilable conflict of interests, and it is not psychological or super-structural as Sadat, or Adonis, or (the late) Lutfi Khouli of the Egyptian "Copenhagen Peace Group" assume. The question is not, he contends, one of culturally bridging between two hitherto self-enclosed identities, hence normalizing the relationship between two potentially reconcilable national selves. Rather, the question is more fundamentally existential, and the answer must therefore be unilateral and absolute. Other writers, unlike Tizini, suggest that a dialogue between cultures and civilizations should replace the pessimistic Huntingtonian view. Ahmad Barqawi, finally, suggests a value-free understanding of history, or one which shows a constantly moving center of civilizational gravity, associated with interactions of internal forces pertaining to any specific society at any given time. A dominant civilization digests preceding cultures and proceeds to dominate. A latent (as opposed to an active) civilization cannot engage in a dialogue either, but is a recipient of the dominant culture. Barqawi contends that the real question therefore is not whether two civilizations are doomed to clash, or whether they can engage in a dialogue. The important question, rather, is whether a so-called latent civilization, such as that in the Arabo-Islamic world, has the internal conditions to allow it to activate itself, not by renewing something old, nor yet by whole-sale copying of what is dominant, but by creating something new, digesting and developing or building on the latest manifestation of the historical evolution of a universal civilization.

Meantime, and against the background of the continued retreats suffered by the Arab world, and the apparent failures of the various secular remedial ideologies, Arab Marxist and nationalist intellectuals and thinkers turned inward unto themselves to debate



whether their role is now at an end, and whether their failed theoretic remedies should now be pronounced dead, as also their pioneering revolutionary role. But the ugly alternative of capitulation looms before them. The problem, Barqawi argues, does not lie in the ideologies, their analytic content and just aims, but in reality itself, which cannot be changed simply by pronouncing the ideologies as failed or dead. And anyway who will replace the revolutionary pioneers for freedom, justice and independence but "the outsiders", or those disengaged or disconnected pseudo-intellectuals of Colin Wilson whose mediocrity suddenly assumes front-stage in a social theater where the repressive authority has succeeded in having total control of the people, where the official media tirelessly churns out false representations of reality, and the authority ideologists begin legitimizing peace-making with the national enemy? Who would throw away the dream and embrace the enemy but the disconnected outsider?

Let me close my remarks by returning to the characterization of speaking truth to power. Power, I suggested, is not only that of a repressive authority. Often it is more profoundly that of the intellectual environment, and of the public and national sentiment. Edward Said's intellectual, therefore, should speak truth to this power. But what is the political truth? Surely, just as a court-philosopher can please an authoritarian ruler by extolling his inner strength and beauty, so also a public intellectual can please a stagnant nation by harping on that nation's past glory, making it believe that its past glory shall yet be retrieved, in whole or in part, when the truth is that what is past is past. And surely also, just as a court-philosopher or conman can dazzle a pygmy ruler, making him believe that he can win over a giant, so also a public intellectual can soothe a nation's dejection by marketing make-believe theories about impossible victories, when the truth is that what is impossible is impossible. An intellectual's role, in short, is not to sell pipe-dreams. It is, first, to see and represent the present as it is actually; and second, to provide the remedy, however painful or unpopular, that will open up the possibility for a better future.