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After the Decline of the West: Decolonization and the Critical Philosophy of History in France and North Africa

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After the Decline of the West: Decolonization and the Critical Philosophy of History in France and North Africa

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Abstract

After the Decline of the West: Decolonization and the Critical Philosophy of History in France and North Africa

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The work of investigating and reconstructing historical events does not bear any obvious relation to that of formulating theories of historical development or asking metaphysical questions about history's meaning and direction. Yet every historian must make choices about which facts to highlight and how to represent and arrange them, and these choices have definite theoretical stakes. Elaborating these stakes and exploring their implications is one of the tasks of the critical philosophy of history, a mode of thought I examine in this dissertation by connecting it to French decolonization in North Africa. As this connection helps us understand, the critical philosophy of history also entails an essentially political task: judging and condemning the past in order to allow new life to emerge.

For North African intellectuals, decolonization was an occasion to rethink history and reimagine the future. How to break free of histories defined by foreign domination without being reduced to passive victimhood or completely renouncing France's significant cultural influence, which continues to mark the region? This question was central to the political and intellectual work of anticolonial nationalists for much of the

twentieth century, taking on particular urgency for a broad public after World War II. I examine the resulting discussions and debates in order to contribute to a reframing of twentieth-century French intellectual history, which I seek to extend beyond the hexagon and onto new conceptual ground.

The dissertation consists of four chapters following a loose chronological organization: the first two chapters begin with the interwar period—when mounting anxieties about Western decline coincided with heightened anticolonial agitation—and the second two focus on the era of decolonization. Chapter 1 examines the life and work of Mohand Tazerout (1893-1973), an Algerian-born intellectual best known for his translation into French of Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. In chapter 2, I develop my conception of the critical philosophy of history by reading works by the French political philosopher Raymond Aron (1905-1983) alongside a critique by his Moroccan student, the historian Abdallah Laroui (b. 1933). Chapter 3 delves more deeply into Laroui's work through a reading of his first book *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine* (Contemporary Arab ideology, 1967). Chapter 4 considers the postwar revival of interest in the medieval North African historian and philosopher Ibn Khaldun among Maghrebi and French anticolonial intellectuals. I conclude with a brief reflection on one of the dissertation's central themes, the concept of historical or cultural rebirth.

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Introduction

In letters to his brother written from Paris's La Santé prison in October, 1959, the Algerian nationalist militant Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi (b. 1932) discussed his plans for a pair of writing projects: a study of Albert Camus, to be titled "Camus the infidel"; and another of the medieval North African historian and philosopher Ibn Khaldun.[1] Imprisoned for his activities with the Algerian National Liberation Front's (FLN) French Federation, Ibrahimi had come to Paris as a medical student; in prison, he studied history and sociology and taught Arabic to fellow political prisoners.[2] An admirer of Camus's writings for the Resistance journal *Combat,* Ibrahimi lamented the Algerian-born author's failure to denounce France's use of torture in the Algerian War (1954-1961) or to call for Algerian independence.[3] Ibrahimi's interest in Ibn Khaldun, while less fraught, was equally complex. Evident in his brief sketch of his projected work is a concern with the specificity of North African culture and history, the region's unique relationships to the broader Arab region and to the West. For Ibrahimi, Ibn Khaldun seems to have simultaneously represented North African cultural authenticity—he was an exception to the rule whereby "all the great minds of the Maghreb were educated in the East"[4]—and an anomaly: alone among great Muslim thinkers, Ibn Khaldun's stature had been recognized by European intellectuals. Ibrahimi compared Ibn Khaldun to one such figure, the British philosopher of history Arnold Toynbee, who praised the North African thinker in his own

[1] Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi, *Lettres de prison : 1957-1961* (Alger: SNED, 1966), 59-60.
[2] On his writing and teaching in prison, see Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi, *Mémoires d'un algérien* (Alger: Casbah éditions, 2006), 122, 125, 130.
[3] Several passages in Ibrahimi's memoir convey both his admiration of and disappointment for Camus, whom Ibrahimi met through his work with the FLN's French Federation: ibid., 89, 96, 234-245. On Camus and Algeria see, for example, Albert Camus, *Algerian Chronicles*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013); Tony Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron and the French Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 116-21; James D. Le Sueur, *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics during the Decolonization of Algeria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), chapter 4.
[4] That is, the eastern part of the Arab region: the Mashriq (as opposed to the West or Maghreb).

work.[5] Both Toynbee and Ibn Khaldun had, Ibrahimi wrote, "an acute consciousness of witnessing the decline of a civilization"—classical Islam and the modern West, respectively—which they attempted to describe from within.[6]

It would be difficult to overstate the significance to contemporary French and Algerian history of the war for Algerian independence, which raged during Ibrahimi's years of study and imprisonment in France. France's current government, the Fifth Republic, was established following a coup d'état led by army generals seeking to ensure the survival of French Algeria by dissolving the Fourth Republic and installing Charles de Gaulle as president. The new constitution gave the executive sweeping police powers, which de Gaulle used in 1961 to put down a coup attempt by retired generals—some of whom had participated in the 1958 putsch—seeking, again, to keep Algeria French.[7] Tensions within the FLN created a similarly tumultuous political atmosphere in the early years of independent Algeria, inaugurated by the 1962 Évian Accords. Ibrahimi spent these years practicing medicine in Algiers and trying to avoid political intrigue, but he was arrested, imprisoned, and tortured, this time by agents of the postcolonial Algerian state, in 1964. After a coup led by army colonel and former defense minister Houari Boumédiène in 1965, Ibrahimi reluctantly accepted a post as Minister of Education in Boumédiène's administration—an undertaking he described in his memoirs as prison of another sort.[8]

The personal and political challenges the moment of decolonization created for figures like Ibrahimi were linked to intractable historical questions, discussions of which

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[5] See Robert Irwin, "Toynbee and Ibn Khaldun," *Middle Eastern Studies* 33, no. 3 (1997): 461–79.
[6] "Tous deux ont une conscience aigue qu'ils assistent au déclin d'une civilisation. Et ce qui donne un son de vérité à leur témoignage, c'est qu'ils décrivent ce déclin de l'intérieur." Ibrahimi, *Lettres de prison*, 99.
[7] On these events see, for example, Martin Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 233-6, 294-9.
[8] Ibrahimi, *Mémoires*, 216.

resonated throughout and beyond what was then known as the Third World during the "Bandung era" (roughly 1955-1975, named for the conference that gathered the leaders of newly independent African and Asian states in Bandung, Indonesia in April, 1955).[9] How could postcolonial subjects preserve their connection to cultural tradition while building thoroughly modern nation-states? Could newly independent nations hope to follow the path of Western-style technological and socioeconomic development, given that these countries found themselves in a position of structural dependence on the West that seemed to undermine such efforts?

To approach these questions required a new historical perspective: one in which the civilizational achievements of modern Europe would be understood not as the outcome of a progressive, linear development culminating in the perfection of human reason but instead, as one example among many of broader, perhaps cyclical, historical processes. Hence the appeal for anticolonial intellectuals of Toynbee, Ibn Khaldun, or (as we will see below, chapter 1) Oswald Spengler, each of whom posited recurrent sequences of great civilizations' historical growth and decay. These philosophies of history suggested that the West's cultural and geopolitical dominance, gained relatively recently, was destined to fade. They did not, however, address the crucial question of how formerly colonized nations could reinvent themselves. To think through this question, postcolonial intellectuals in the Maghreb turned both to previous attempts to revitalize Islamic thought and culture and, more importantly for our purposes, to European thinkers who engaged critically with the philosophy of history.

[9] I borrow the term and periodization "Bandung era" from Samir Amin, who describes it as a moment when "the world system was organized around the emergence of the third world." Samir Amin, *Re-Reading the Postwar Period: An Intellectual Itinerary* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1994), 14-15. On historicizing the Bandung Conference, see Christopher J. Lee, introduction to *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, ed. Lee (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 1-42.

THE CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

Another starting point for this introduction could be Paris's Latin Quarter, March, 1938, when Raymond Aron—a philosopher and political commentator who would become known for his Cold War anticommunism—defended his two doctoral theses, *Essay on the Theory of History in Contemporary Germany* and *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*.[10] Aron's thesis defense has become an iconic moment in twentieth-century French intellectual history both because of Aron's and his followers' later efforts at self-mythologization and because it seems to exemplify a generational shift. Aron's thesis jurors were members of an intellectual old guard whose belief in intertwined scientific and political progress lost much of its appeal after World War I. Many members of the "generation of 1905," too young to have served in the war but old enough to observe its devastating impact on European society,[11] rejected the idealism and faith in the progressive trajectory of Western humanity espoused by figures like Aron's thesis director, the Sorbonne philosophy professor Léon Brunschvicg (1869-1944). The young Aron's friends Jean-Paul Sartre and Alexandre Kojève, in particular, would reorient French thought around problems of concrete existence, including political ones like the historical class struggle first diagnosed by Karl Marx and newly urgent in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution.[12] If Aron's political views often differed from those of his peers, he shared many of their philosophical influences and preoccupations.

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[10] Raymond Aron, *Essai sur la théorie de l'histoire dans l'Allemagne contemporaine : la philosophie critique de l'histoire* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1938); Raymond Aron, *Introduction a la philosophie de l'histoire: Essai sur les limites de l'objectivité historique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938).

[11] Jean-François Sirinelli, *Génération intellectuelle : Khâgneux et normaliens dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), 14.

[12] On these figures' "search for a concrete philosophy," see Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott-Fox and J. M. Harding (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 16-20.

As it happens, Aron's name appeared on the sociology syllabus Ibrahimi followed in prison.[13] What else connects the two figures? Like the other authors I study in this dissertation, Ibrahimi and Aron both looked to the philosophy of history at moments of political and cultural crisis, when their societies of origin seemed on the brink of collapse and in need of regeneration. In other words, they approached the philosophy of history not as a metaphysical reflection on the direction of human progress but instead, as a way to inquire simultaneously into the nature of historical knowledge and the deeper meanings of contemporary political conflicts. In the chapters that follow, I will explore the apparent affinity between this approach to historical thinking—what I will call the critical philosophy of history—and French decolonization in North Africa.

I will not apply a preconceived definition of the critical philosophy of history in my readings of postcolonial North African authors but will attempt, instead, to reach a new understanding of this category by investigating the relationship, far from evident at first glance, between these authors and French thinkers like Aron. The Moroccan historian Abdallah Laroui, for example, is a former student of Aron's whose critical approach to historical and philosophical problems raises questions about the influence of his French academic training on his work, which includes writings on Arab intellectual history, Moroccan nationalism, and postcolonial politics.[14] As I try to show in chapter 2, reading Aron and Laroui as critical philosophers of history helps us better appreciate their political and intellectual resonances and discordances.

Although I attempt to rethink the critical philosophy of history as an analytic category, it will be useful to begin with a straightforward definition. The British

[13] Ibrahimi, *Mémoires*, 130. The authors he mentions reading alongside Aron are Karl Marx and the French sociologist Georges Gurvitch.

[14] Laroui himself has written about his intellectual formation, including his French years, in *Philosophie et Histoire* (Casablanca: Éditions la Croisée des Chemins, 2017). On his early work see below, chapter 3.

philosopher W. H. Walsh has proposed a distinction between speculative and critical philosophies of history based on history's well-known duality as, on one hand, "the totality of past human actions" and on the other, "the narrative or account we construct of them now."[15] By this view, speculative (or "traditional") philosophy of history would offer an ostensibly global, universal account of historical development as a whole in order to reveal the central purpose, meaning, or direction of what it seems appropriate, in this context, to call History with a capital H. Critical philosophy of history, in contrast, would treat history principally as a field of knowledge, asking how it differs from other forms of knowledge and how historical knowledge is constructed. Aron made a similar distinction in his secondary thesis, in which he discussed a critical or "modern philosophy of history" characterized by its "refusal of Hegelianism," Hegel being the philosopher with whom, in Aron's view, the traditional philosophy of history culminated. Whereas Hegel had attempted to show how universal Reason or Absolute Knowledge revealed itself historically, the German thinkers Aron studied were interested in history's epistemic conditions of possibility, or what Aron, evoking Kant, called the "critique of historical reason."[16]

My conception of the critical philosophy of history adds a political dimension to these basically epistemological views. Here I draw on Friedrich Nietzsche's definition of critical history as a tendency to judge and condemn the past in order to foster the emergence of new life.[17] Along these lines, Aron's Cold War liberalism can be linked to his interest in the critical philosophy of history, to which he was initially drawn by the

[15] W. H. Walsh, *Philosophy of History, an Introduction* (New York: Harper, 1960), 14.
[16] Aron, *La philosophie critique*, 15. The more proximate source of the idea of a critique of historical reason was one of Aron's protagonists, Wilhelm Dilthey; see Michael Ermarth, *Wilhelm Dilthey: The Critique of Historical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). For a discussion of Aron's theses see below, "'Western man' in peril: Aron's doctoral theses," chapter 2.
[17] Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, "On the uses and disadvantages of history for life," in *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 75-77.

political exigencies of the interwar period (in particular, the rise of Nazism) and which he saw as requiring the rejection of any totalizing, teleological view of historical evolution. For Aron, Marxism in particular stood in for any attempt to direct the course of history through coercive politics. His understanding of the limits of historical thinking led him to see politics as similarly limited to the demands of the present, which he saw as precluding belief in a utopian future.

Critical historical thought took on different political valences across the Mediterranean. North African intellectuals like Laroui and his compatriot Abdelkébir Khatibi rethought their region's history, and history's relationship to adjacent disciplines like philosophy and sociology, in order to condemn and move beyond orientalist scholarship, whose relationship to colonialism they were among the first to analyze. Equally, however, Laroui, Khatibi, and similar figures critically questioned elements of their own cultural heritage, thereby placing themselves in an ambiguous relationship to the nationalist politics that were central to decolonization. Surpassing both Western domination and the rigidity, corruption, and authoritarianism of postcolonial politics meant pursuing what Khatibi called a "double critique" directed simultaneously at Western and Arab thought.[18] I discuss this notion in chapter 4, where I focus on the appropriation and critique of Ibn Khaldun by anticolonial French and postcolonial Maghrebi intellectuals whose thinking and politics were also profoundly shaped by Marxism. In the postcolonial context, a critique of both Marx and Ibn Khaldun came to seem necessary in order to disaggregate these authors' useful insights from their earlier misuse by colonial administrators, orientalist scholars, or unreconstructed Stalinists.

[18] Abdelkébir Khatibi, "Double critique," in *Maghreb Pluriel* (Paris: Denoël, 1983), 47-111.

THE INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF DECOLONIZATION

This dissertation, then, highlights the relationship between its protagonists' political hopes and disappointments and what I argue were their comparable contributions to historical theory. My exploration of this relationship crosses a variety of political, cultural, and intellectual contexts and as such, situates itself at the intersection of a number of related historiographies. The simplest way to describe this historiographical nexus might be to say that it combines twentieth-century French intellectual history with the "colonial turn" in recent French history to contribute to a relatively new area of inquiry that could be called the intellectual history of decolonization.

For several decades, modern European intellectual historians have sought both to capture the peculiar character of postwar French existentialist, Marxist,[19] or phenomenological[20] thinking and to trace these intellectual currents' origins in the political and cultural conflicts of the interwar period. A key finding of this literature has been the importance of the French reception of Hegel's philosophy of history, particularly as interpreted by Kojève in his famous 1930s seminar at the École Pratique des Hautes Études.[21] The enormous influence of French Hegelianism perhaps constitutes a historical puzzle in light of what Michael Roth has called the postwar generation's

[19] Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1975).
[20] Ethan Kleinberg, *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France, 1927-1961* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Samuel Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).
[21] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel: leçons sur la Phénomenologie de l'esprit professées de 1933 à 1939 à l'École des Hautes Études*, ed. Raymond Queneau (Paris: Gallimard, 1947). On Kojève see, for example, Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*; Marco Filoni, *Le philosophe du dimanche: la vie et la pensée d'Alexandre Kojève*, trans. Gérald Larché (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2010); Stefanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism that Is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010); Kleinberg, *Generation Existential*; Michael S. Roth, *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).

"antihistoricist stance" and demotion of Hegel "as the locus of philosophical authority in France."[22] By exploring continuities in twentieth-century French thought, intellectual historians have worked to resolve this quandary and, in the process, to uncover the roots of concepts, attitudes, or methods—such as the decentered subject;[23] antihumanism;[24] or deconstruction[25]—central to "French theory."[26]

If anything can be said to unify the extremely diverse corpus that has drawn the interest of recent intellectual historians of modern France, it might be a radical skepticism of the Enlightenment faith in progress and reason that continued to inspire French philosophers well into the twentieth century. Numerous authors have shown how the century's catastrophes undermined old certainties about Western culture's progressive trajectory and reshaped societies across Europe, forcing intellectuals to develop new philosophical and social-scientific concepts and approaches. Most of this work has focused on the movement of ideas and thinkers within Europe, particularly from Germany (and points east) to France. It is only relatively recently, under the influence of a broader historiographical trend stressing the fundamental role of empire and colonialism in France's modern history,[27] that historians have begun to investigate the relationship of French intellectual life to empire and decolonization. Doing so has meant,

[22] Roth, *Knowing and History*, xii.
[23] Carolyn Dean, *The Self and Its Pleasures: Bataille, Lacan, and the History of the Decentered Subject* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).
[24] Geroulanos, *An Atheism that Is Not Humanist*.
[25] Edward Baring, *The Young Derrida and French Philosophy, 1945-1968* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[26] François Cusset, *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States*, trans. Jeff Fort (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
[27] The recent historiography of French empire and colonialism is enormous, and is perhaps best approached through review essays composed when the turn was nearing its peak: e.g., Alice Conklin, "Histories of Colonialism: Recent Studies of the Modern French Empire," *French Historical Studies* 30, no. 2 (2007): 305–32; Daniel J. Sherman, "The Arts and Sciences of Colonialism," *French Historical Studies* 23, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 707-29. More recently, Emmanuelle Saada has suggested that the colonial turn is "on the wane" and proposed a critical stock-taking: Emmanuelle Saada, "More than a Turn? The 'Colonial' in French Studies," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 32, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 34–39.

among other things, taking seriously one of postcolonial theory's central tenets: post-Enlightenment humanism was profoundly implicated in great European powers' military, political, and symbolic domination of much of Africa and Asia. It is not accidental, in other words, that the era of decolonization paralleled the development of antihumanist thinking in France and beyond.

We might say that the intellectual history of decolonization brings the philosophy of history—as opposed to the "antihistoricist" thought of the 1960s—back into focus insofar as anticolonial intellectuals often attached messianic hopes to decolonization. The most compelling work in this field has highlighted the concrete political struggles and innovations underlying these hopes (and the corresponding fears of more politically moderate observers), exposing institutional or ideological corollaries to the idea that decolonization could, in Frantz Fanon's well-known formulation, put an end to the "European game" and foster the emergence of a postcolonial "new man."[28] As Todd Shepard has argued, a certain French conception of decolonization aimed to neutralize these hopes by positing a logic of historical inevitability whereby France's increasingly costly and politically damaging overseas entanglements, notably in Algeria, were destined for a neat and orderly dissolution. This narrative's success led to the occlusion of colonialism's messy realities in subsequent political and historical discussions.[29] Writers and politicians in the colonies were, however, acutely aware of the injustices and contradictions of the "imperial nation-state," which led them to imagine forms of

[28] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (1963; repr., New York: Grove Press, 2004), 236, 239.
[29] Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2006).

postcolonial political affiliation with the former metropole that would be empowering rather than oppressive.[30]

Like these works, my dissertation emphasizes the political convictions and tensions that shaped my sources' views of history and decolonization. Further, my work is informed by, and complements, studies of the social sciences' relationship to colonialism. Built on a foundation of racial prejudice and belief in the "civilizing mission,"[31] French ethnology or anthropology, in particular, was transformed by the atrocities of World War II and the shifting postwar global order, including decolonization. In her study of Paris's Musée de l'Homme, Alice Conklin characterizes this as a shift from the field's early preoccupation with biological race to a postwar emphasis on cultural diversity. Interestingly, she also sees "the historically grounded studies of individual societies in which the 1930s ethnologists had excelled" as giving way to a reliance on ahistorical, "universalizing concepts" fostered, in her view, by Marxism and Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralism.[32] My focus on historical theory leads me, in contrast, to emphasize sociological or anthropological theories' vulnerability to historical critique.

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[30] Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

[31] Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997); Jürgen Osterhammel, *Europe, the "West" and the Civilizing Mission* (London: German Historical Institute, 2006).

[32] Alice Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850-1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 15. The literature on empire and the social sciences is large and varied. See, for example, Philippe Lucas and Jean-Claude Vatin, *L'Algérie des anthropologues* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1975); Fabien Sacriste, *Germaine Tillion, Jacques Berque, Jean Servier et Pierre Bourdieu: des ethnologues dans la guerre d'indépendance algérienne* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011); George Steinmetz, ed., *Sociology & Empire: The Imperial Entanglements of a Discipline* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); Université de Paris VII, *Le mal de voir: ethnologie et orientalisme : politique et épistémologie, critique et autocritique …* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1976).

Also relevant to my work are global histories of decolonization that have documented the variety of contexts in which anticolonial nationalism or Third World solidarity politics emerged and developed.[33] Though I do not offer an account of any analogous global process, these works have influenced my understanding of decolonization, which I treat both as a blow to European prestige and an occasion for formerly colonized countries to reimagine their national identities and experiment with new forms of transnational affiliation. The global history of decolonization has also inspired me to view the authors I study as intervening in a broad discursive field not confined to any national or regional context. Limiting myself to French-language sources has meant, however, that my readings of the North African writers I discuss necessarily differ from those of literary comparatists or Arab intellectual historians, whose insights I have nevertheless found indispensable.[34] Without writing a truly global history, then, I have tried to show how modern European intellectual history can expand in scope by focusing on a global event (decolonization) and using sources whose extra-Continental origins belie their intimate connections to European culture and history.

[33] Yoav Di-Capua, *No Exit: Arab Existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Decolonization* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018); Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third-World Nationalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Christoph Kalter, *The Discovery of the Third World: Decolonisation and the Rise of the New Left in France, c.1950–1976* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Lee, ed., *Making a World*; Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[34] Particularly useful to me have been Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss, eds., *Arabic Thought beyond the Liberal Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the* Nahda (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Hanssen and Weiss, eds., *Arab Thought Against the Authoritarian Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Olivia C. Harrison, *Transcolonial Maghreb: Imagining Palestine in the Era of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016); Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, 2nd ed. (1962; repr., Cambrige: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Hisham Sharabi, ed., *Theory, Politics, and the Arab World: Critical Responses* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

ANTICOLONIAL, POSTCOLONIAL, DECOLONIAL

The twentieth century was characterized by heightened anticolonial agitation, much of it channeled through the national liberation movements that began to take shape after World War I. Intellectuals from the colonies, many of whom were educated in metropolitan universities, played an important role in this process as theoreticians, propagandists, rank and file militants, and leaders. For these figures, the French and Russian revolutions and the ideologies they embodied served as inspiring models and guides for action. Equally, however, anticolonial movements were marked by the valorization of tradition. Insofar as it was theoretically informed, then, anticolonial politics involved an attempt to understand how European empires' violent superimposition of their own values, customs, and institutions onto the societies they colonized created unique social configurations with particular political challenges and possibilities. Understanding what the French sociologist Georges Balandier called the "colonial situation"[35] was thus indispensable to the effort to end colonial domination and achieve political independence and freedom.

Simple political independence would ultimately prove inadequate to the larger, more nebulous goal of national liberation. As observers like Fanon—who both participated in the Algerian independence struggle and tried to understand colonialism theoretically—saw clearly, it would take a herculean effort for societies marred by the entrenched violence and poverty of the colonial epoch to overcome these legacies of foreign rule. The leaders of internally divided anticolonial movements could not break the pattern of colonialism through authoritarian rule or concessions to former imperial powers or native elites, to say nothing of the often violent persecution to which

[35] Georges Balandier, "La situation coloniale: Approche théorique," *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie 11* (1951): 44–79.

postcolonial regimes subjected their political enemies, many of whom were former allies. Postcolonial theory, then, emerged amid the Bandung era's deflated hopes as a critical reflection on the inadequacies of decolonization and the nature of colonial power.

Both in its political militancy and its preoccupation with colonial domination, postcolonialism is a continuation of anticolonialism, whose main exponents are often portrayed as its predecessors or early exemplars.[36] Both anticolonial and postcolonial thinking exhibit tendencies toward, on one hand, an understanding of colonialism in terms of binary oppositions between dominant and dominated societies or social classes; and, on the other, an effort to illustrate the heterogeneous character of colonial societies and anticolonial struggles by highlighting the experiences of dominated groups. The former tendency is best exemplified by Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), an account of the discursive—at once scientific, aesthetic, and politico-military—formation of an absolute distinction between the "Orient" and the West. If Said's Orient is imaginary and thus silent, the group of Indian historians whose work began to appear in the journal *Subaltern Studies* in 1982 sought to illuminate the role in colonial history of the silenced masses and to criticize the historiographical overvaluation of colonial and nationalist elites. Uniting these tendencies was a concern with the subjective perspectives of the colonized and a critical awareness of the long shadow cast over the present by colonialism. As Said wrote in the foreword to a *Subaltern Studies* anthology, the "post-independence world" was "still dependent, still unfree, still dominated by coercion, the hegemony of dictatorial regimes, derivative and hypocritical nationalisms, [and]

[36] An interesting study of Fanon's posthumous canonization by postcolonial theorists, particularly Homi Bhabha, is Azzedine Haddour, "Fanon dans la théorie postcoloniale," *Les Temps modernes*, no. 635–636 (2006): 136–58.

insufficiently critical intellectual and ideological systems."[37] Postcolonial critics were determined to contest these regimes and systems in thought and act.

If one of postcolonial theory's premises has been that the (formerly) colonized must become subjects and not mere objects of their own histories, articulating scientific or philosophical insights and political demands in their own voices, the "post" of postcolonial indicates a temporal proximity to colonial domination that has made this process of subjective empowerment difficult to realize.[38] More recently, a related intellectual movement calling itself "decolonial" has emerged in Latin America, a region linked to Third World politics through the Cuban Revolution but where formal independence was achieved in the nineteenth century. As the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano explains in one of this movement's foundational texts, decolonial theory privileges the experience of Latin America as at once the original site of European colonial domination (in the form of Columbus's 1492 expedition and the ensuing waves of conquest) and a particularly devastating example of the genocidal violence colonialism often entailed. For Quijano, the extermination of the region's indigenous people was particularly significant insofar as henceforth, Latin American society and culture would be defined by European rather than native ways and knowing and being, a "coloniality" installed first at the epistemic and then at the political levels. "Decoloniality" would then designate an attempt to break free from Western modes of thinking in order to facilitate intercultural communication and cooperation.[39]

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[37] Edward Said, foreword to Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), x.

[38] Closely related to this problem was that of whether postcolonial scholars could represent experiences of colonial oppression without doing further violence to the oppressed: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313.

[39] Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2/3 (2007): 168–78.

I offer these brief descriptions of anticolonial, postcolonial, and decolonial thought not in order to affiliate myself with any particular camp but because the thinkers I study in this dissertation were caught up in the intellectual and political currents that produced these movements. Although I offer an account of twentieth-century French intellectual history largely focused on the contributions of North African authors, my purpose is not to "decolonize" this history but rather, to pose the question of what it might mean to do so and how the larger project of "decolonizing history" might have emerged. The idea that a monolithic, all-pervading "coloniality" permeates modern Western thought and politics seems particularly relevant here. If we accept this postulate of decolonial thought, then to think outside of a "colonial" epistemic framework is already to commit a radical political act. This idea is very far removed from Max Weber's postulate of relatively autonomous intellectual and political realms. Insofar, however, as Weberian sociology and postcolonial theory can be seen as different species of the critical philosophy of history, historicizing this mode of thought in relation to French decolonization helps us better understand the historical origins of current ideas about the history of colonialism and its contemporary legacies.

A NOTE ON METHOD

Intellectual history is one of the few disciplinary subfields that both enables and can sometimes seem to require its practitioners to closely examine the nature and premises of historical knowledge. A striking example of this is the 1980 essay in which Dominick LaCapra bemoaned the "documentary approach" most historians take to their sources, which, he argued, they thereby reduce to mere reflections of historical reality. LaCapra instead advocated a "dialogical" method that would recognize and engage with historical sources' "work-like" qualities, or their tendency to intervene in and shape their

own contexts. To pursue a critical historical dialogue with "complex texts" was to acknowledge that history, too, emerges from and embeds itself in a heterogeneous variety of discursive contexts.[40]

LaCapra wrote at what he identified as a moment of crisis for intellectual history, and one of his essay's purposes was to defend the field at a moment when other methods, notably social history, were gaining ground in the broader discipline.[41] More recent assessments of the state of the field, undertaken in calmer times, have celebrated intellectual history's expanding empirical reach and methodological diversity without necessarily engaging in the sorts of critical acrobatics that characterized the era of high theory and the "linguistic turn."[42] Intellectual historians have not always had trouble, in other words, adhering to the disciplinary norm of empiricism or "objectivity."[43] Yet the problem of history's relationship to theory, a relatively unimportant one for the discipline as a whole, remains urgent for intellectual historians, whose work demands that we seek in our sources not only historical data but ideas whose relationships to their contexts cannot be gleaned through superficial readings of archival documents but must be teased out critically.[44]

This dissertation can be seen as a dialogue with the past in two senses. On one hand, I have sought, with the help of my sources, to better understand the historical and

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[40] Dominick LaCapra, "Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts," *History and Theory* 19, no. 3 (1980), 250, 252.
[41] Ibid., 245.
[42] See, for example, the editors' introduction to Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn, eds., *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). On the largely missed encounter between history and the "linguistic turn," see Judith Surkis, "When Was the Linguistic Turn? A Genealogy," *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 3 (2012): 700–722.
[43] Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
[44] A recent plea by intellectual historians for the importance of theory is Ethan Kleinberg, Joan Wallach Scott, and Gary Wilder, "Theses on Theory and History," *History of the Present 10*, no. 1 (April 1, 2020): 157–65.

contemporary resonances of "decolonization." What is the relationship between decolonization, understood as an event with particular spatiotemporal coordinates, and the theoretical reflections it has inspired? How and why has it become commonplace to see decolonization as an unfinished process or colonialism less as a historical practice than an all-pervasive logic? More generally, how is historical experience related to historical knowledge or theory? I take this to be a necessary relationship: in the words of the pioneering conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck, "'history' refers experience and knowledge to one another."[45] Indeed, the dissertation's main empirical finding is simply that the moment of decolonization was a fruitful one for historical theory. To understand how or why this should be the case is more challenging. One approach might be an analysis based on Koselleck's argument that the "vanquished" of history tend to arrive at particularly penetrating insights into the historical process. However, this raises the question of whether decolonization should be understood as a victory or a defeat, and from whose perspective. I return to these problems in my conclusion.

As any attempt to understand historical theory historically must do, my dissertation stages a further dialogue between history and theory. Here my goals are modest. I have not tried to develop novel theories of historical interpretation or the relationship between texts and contexts but hope, rather, to encourage readers to consider anew history's relationship to the theories that ultimately make it possible for us to make sense of the past. Along these lines, I am tempted to endorse the Aronian dictum that "theory precedes history," if we understand "theory" loosely as an interpretive system

[45] Reinhart Koselleck, "Transformations of Experience and Methodological Change: A Historical-Anthropological Essay," in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 47.

informed by the historian's values and experience.[46] Notwithstanding the rarefied status "theory" has sometimes enjoyed in the academy, that is, historians use theories to interpret the past as a matter of course. This is no less true of the present study, critical readers of which will, I hope, be motivated to reveal and scrutinize my own (perhaps implicit or unconscious) theoretical premises.

PLAN OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation consists of four chapters divided into two chronologically and thematically connected pairs. Each of the first two chapters begins with the interwar period, when anticolonial movements were in the offing in Paris and elsewhere and French intellectuals responded to a perceived cultural and political atmosphere of decline or decadence with novel theories of history's relationship to life. Chapter 1 examines the life and work of Mohand Tazerout (1893-1973), an Algerian-born intellectual best known for his translation of Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* into French (Gallimard, 1931-1933). Through readings of Tazerout's writings alongside those of better-known French contemporaries, I explore his relationship to vitalist approaches to historical theory and his shifting political commitments, which mirrored a certain segment of the Algerian nationalist intelligentsia's abandonment of its early faith in a "good," republican France in favor of an uncompromising push for independence.

In chapter 2, I develop my conception of the critical philosophy of history by reading works by the French political philosopher Raymond Aron (1905-1983) alongside a critique by his Moroccan student, the historian Abdallah Laroui (b. 1933). Despite Aron's enthusiasm for the German sociologist Max Weber, who stressed the importance

[46] "Bien plus, on peut dire que *la théorie précède l'histoire*, si l'on entend par théorie à la fois la détermination d'un certain système et la valeur prêtée à un certain type d'interprétation." Aron, *Introduction,* 111.

of scientific value neutrality, I argue that their political commitments were equally central to the critical philosophy of history as practiced by Aron and Laroui. This led, naturally, to differing opinions both about appropriate theoretico-political models—with Laroui's Marx-inspired historicism clashing with Aron's Cold War liberalism—and about the historical fate of the postcolonial Arab world.

In my third and fourth chapters I turn my attention more directly to the postcolonial moment, asking how the political triumphs and failures of this period contributed to North African and French thinkers' critical engagements with the philosophy of history. Chapter 3 delves more deeply into Laroui's work through a reading of his first book *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine* (Contemporary Arab ideology, 1967), which I treat as a response to what Laroui saw as the particular deficiencies of Morocco's nationalist left. Equally, however, I try to show how Laroui's work was marked by his higher education in France, which led him to interest himself in and develop a critical attitude toward Marxist social and political theory. Laroui was both situated in and critical of the Western and Arab intellectual and political traditions he studied, lending his work an ambivalent character.

Chapter 4 considers the reception of Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) among Maghrebi and French anticolonial intellectuals. For both groups, Ibn Khaldun's thought allowed for a more authentic understanding of the Maghreb's history and politics than was possible with orientalist scholarship and perhaps even clarified contemporary problems like Third World underdevelopment. This was the argument of the Moroccan-born French geographer Yves Lacoste (b. 1929), whose writings on Ibn Khaldun I situate in a constellation of French Marxist discussions about paths toward and through capitalist development that would differ from those taken by the West or the Soviet Union. For Abdelkébir Khatibi (1938-2009) and other North African readers, Ibn Khaldun's work

called for a more critical treatment that would not only correct colonial readings' distortions but highlight the limitations of Ibn Khaldun's own analysis, thereby clearing the way for a new, perhaps genuinely "decolonized" understanding of the region's history and sociology.

Chapter 1: Spengler's Translator: Mohand Tazerout and the Politics of Vitalism

Perhaps unsurprisingly considering his work's emphasis on the historical relativity of Western global dominance, the philosopher of history Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) gained numerous admirers in the global South following the publication, immediately after World War I, of his magnum opus *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (*The Decline of the West*, 2 vols., 1918-1922). The Tunisian historian Hichem Djaït has written that unlike his more illustrious compatriot Hegel, Spengler "repudiates all forms of Eurocentrism, and reduces the history of the West to the normal proportions of the history of one great culture among others."[1] Unlike Karl Marx, who "identified Western civilization with civilization in general, almost consigning the Eastern world to barbarism," "Spengler's thought has the great virtue of trying to break out of the rut of its spatiotemporal origins."[2] As Michael Goebel points out in a wide-ranging history of twentieth-century anticolonial nationalist movements, Spengler was held in similar esteem by Latin American, Caribbean, West African, and Chinese writers and activists starting in the 1920s.[3] These figures—many of whom came, as did Djaït, to Paris to pursue higher education—were eager to welcome a "decline of the West" that could pave

[1] Whereas Hegel, in Djaït's view, marginalized Islam and other non-European civilizations in his account of "the advance of Spirit" ("la marche de l'Esprit") "Spengler répudie tout européocentrisme, réduisant l'histoire de l'occident aux proportions normales de l'histoire d'une grande culture parmi d'autres." Hichem Djaït, *L'Europe et l'Islam* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), 92-93; *Europe and Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 85 (translation modified).

[2] "La pensée de Spengler a le grand mérite de vouloir sortir de ses ornières spatio-temporelles, ce que Marx n'a pas fait, qui identifie la civilisation occidentale à la civilisation en géneral, rejetant presque dans la barbarie le monde oriental." Ibid., 102; 94 (translation modified). Cf. Edward Said's comments on Marx in *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), esp. 153-56.

[3] Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third-World Nationalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 258.

the way for the non-West's rise. If, given Spengler's dubious intellectual status,[4] his work is mostly of historical interest today, his reception in the erstwhile Third World is a promising avenue of research into questions that continue to trouble the postcolonial present.

This reception history is not without its ironies. Spengler's prophetic musings were driven, above all, by his despair at the German Empire's declining glory, as exemplified by events like the Second Moroccan Crisis of 1911.[5] And notwithstanding his contention that history was a process of inevitable, irreversible decline, his writings sometimes betrayed an equally potent German exceptionalism.[6] Overall, his conservative, nationalist politics appear closer, from today's historical vantage point, to those of Italian fascism or German National Socialism[7] than the predominantly liberal or socialist beliefs of the anticolonial activists who, inspired in part by Spengler's historical theories, would help reshape global politics in the second half of the twentieth century.

In this chapter, I explore the thought and politics of the Algerian-born translator into French of Spengler's *Decline,* Mohand Tazerout (1893-1973). Tazerout was perhaps typical of intellectuals from the colonies in combining an enthusiasm for Spengler's work with a critical stance toward it. In the preface to his translation, for example, he wrote that, having thoroughly studied Spengler's thought, he was "sincerely converted to that which is *necessary* and scientific in his doctrine," but not to Spengler's "politics and

[4] One of Spengler's few serious anglophone critics, the intellectual historian H. Stuart Hughes, nonetheless remarks that *Decline* is "obviously not a respectable performance from the standpoint of scholarship." H. Stuart Hughes, *Oswald Spengler: A Critical Estimate* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), 1.
[5] Hughes, *Oswald Spengler*, 6. This was a conflict between France and Germany over trading rights with Morocco. Germany accused France of violating an earlier treaty between the two countries, and its navy deployed warships to the port of Agadir; France prevailed thanks to the support of Britain, its partner in the Entente Cordiale of 1904.
[6] Hughes observes that "Spengler's national loyalty frequently got the better of his own theories." Ibid., 105.
[7] On Spengler's complicated relationship to the Nazi regime, which was far from being one of mutual approval, see ibid., chapter 8.

subjective preferences, which we do not share."[8] Spengler's greatest intellectual achievement, in Tazerout's view, was to have upended a longstanding historical fantasy according to which "the Germans, people of Culture," would "realize the Unity of Spirit, divided [*dissociée*] by the Asiatics, people of Nature, and by the Franco-English and Yankee Westerners, people of civilization, which is also Nature in opposition to Spirit."[9] According to Tazerout, Spengler denied the principle of (an implicitly German) "Spirit's" historical continuity by transforming "culture" and "civilization"—a distinction often used to oppose Germany's unique national character to British or French cosmopolitanism[10]—into elements of a theory of historical growth and decay:

> For the first time in history, the word West is no longer opposed, in Spengler's writings, to Asia or Germany, but to Greco-Roman antiquity, on one hand, and on the other, to the other historical cultures of our planet. Spengler consequently denies the principle of the "continuity of spirit" and transfers "spirit's" historical origin to the notion of *culture* itself, its logical realization to the correlative notion of *civilization*, finally its metaphysical foundation to the notion of *Destiny*. In accordance with the logic of destiny, *immanent* to the history of our planet, every

[8] "Connaisseur de Spengler, que nous étudions depuis huit ans, et sincèrement converti à sa doctrine dans ce qu'elle a de *nécessaire* et de scientifique—non dans sa politique et ses préférences subjectives, que nous ne partageons pas—nous croyons que le *postulat de la non-continuité* est la seule hypothèse viable pour une connaissance *scientifique* des phénomènes de l'histoire." Mohand Tazerout, preface to Oswald Spengler, *Le déclin de l'Occident : esquisse d'une morphologie de l'histoire universelle*, trans. Tazerout, vol. 1: *Forme et réalité* (Paris: Nouvelle Revue française, 1931), 11. Emphasis in the original.

[9] The central idea behind the "dreamer's antithesis" ("antithèse de rêveur") between culture and civilization was, Tazerout wrote, that "il appartient aux Allemands, peuple de Culture, de réaliser l'Unité de l'Esprit, dissociée par les Asiatiques, peuple de Nature, et par les Occidentaux franco-anglais et yankees, peuple de civilisation, qui est aussi la Nature par opposition à l'Esprit." Ibid., 9.

[10] Norbert Elias has argued that the opposition originated as one between the courtly aristocracy and bourgeoisie of Germany's absolutist states and became a national antithesis as the bourgeoisie rose in social status in the period leading up to German unification. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, ed. Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom, and Stephen Mennell (Oxford ; Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 5-30. Andrew Sartori, who offers his own description of the culture/civilization dichotomy, argues that the terms' "lexical opposition" became widespread only in the late nineteenth century: "Elias's analysis was seeking to derive the later emergence of the lexical opposition from an earlier, eighteenth-century *conceptual* opposition between external institutions and inner life that was the precondition for nationalist homologies." Andrew Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 28.

> culture necessarily realizes itself in civilization, that is to say that its death is given with its birth and is its *supreme meaning.*[11]

One of Tazerout's reasons for admiring Spengler, then, was that—as Djaït would observe much later—he had denaturalized the concept of the West, thereby upsetting Eurocentric assumptions about Western superiority. Tazerout also appreciated Spengler's attempt to develop a theory of universal history, a project he sought to dissociate from Spengler's German nationalism.

Born in the village of Aït Ouchen in Algeria's mountainous Kabylia region, Tazerout learned French early in addition to his traditional Quranic education and was ultimately sent to the École normale de Bouzaréah, near Algiers, to be trained as a teacher.[12] Dissatisfied with this role, he joined the French army at the beginning of 1914, a few months before the outbreak of the First World War, and subsequently became a naturalized French citizen.[13] A popular legend has it that after abandoning his teaching duties, but before joining the army, he traveled to Russia, China, Persia, and elsewhere,

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[11] "Pour la première fois dans l'histoire, le mot Occident ne s'oppose plus, chez Spengler, à l'Asie ou à l'Allemagne, mais à l'antiquité gréco-romaine, d'une part, et, d'autre part, aux autres cultures historiques de notre planète. Spengler nie en conséquence le principe de la « continuité de l'esprit » et il en transfère l'origine historique à la notion de *culture* même, la réalisation logique à la notion corrélative de *civilisation*, enfin le fondement métaphysique à la notion de *Destin*. Conformément à la logique du déstin, *immanente* à l'histoire de notre planète, toute culture se réalise nécessairement en civilisation, c'est-à-dire que sa mort est donnée avec sa naissance et en est le *sens suprême*." Tazerout, preface to Spengler, *Le déclin*, vol. 1, 9-10. As Hughes points out, Spengler's "general preoccupation," noted here by Tazerout, "with Greece, Rome, and Western Europe," could also be seen as a byproduct of his relative ignorance of Asian, African, or Latin American cultures, his discussion of which in *Decline* Hughes concurs with Spengler's critics in characterizing as "fragmentary and spotty." Hughes, *Oswald Spengler,* 58.

[12] Jacques Fournier, "Témoignage et réflexions sur un itinéraire singulier," in Fournier, ed., *Mohand Tazerout : la vie et l'oeuvre d'un intellectuel algérien* (Paris: Riveneuve Éditions, 2016), 14. According to Fournier, Tazerout learned French from a French couple to whom he remained close throughout his life and to whose son he dedicated one of his books.

[13] Ibid., 16. Tazerout's naturalization document can be found at "Décret de naturalisations algériennes du 1er juin 1914," BB/34/440 document 171, Archives nationales de France, https://www.siv.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/siv/UD/FRAN_IR_057269/YI002490. To become a French citizen, he renounced his Muslim "personal status" in accordance with the Sénatus-Consulte law of July 14, 1865. On this law see James McDougall, *A History of Algeria* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 122.

acquainting himself with these societies' languages and cultures.[14] Expressing suspicion that Tazerout could have accomplished this feat in just a few months, Alain Messaoudi has suggested that he could have spent this time assisting the German ethnologist Leo Frobenius (1873-1938) on the Algerian expedition the latter led in 1913-1914 and documented in *Volksmärchen der Kabylen* (Kabyle folktales, 3 vols., 1921).[15] An acquaintance with Frobenius could partially explain Tazerout's attraction to Spengler, insofar as the former's theory of "cultural morphology" resembles the latter's historical theories.[16]

Although neither story has been definitively proven, it is perhaps worth pausing to consider the contrasting ways in which they help fill out the still rather murky picture of Tazerout's biography that emerges from the available sources. On one hand, the image of Tazerout as a polyglot globetrotter with an encyclopedic knowledge of world history has become a central component of his memory in Algeria, where it is perhaps important that he be seen as a distinguished contributor to universal culture rather than a defector to France (and thus, a traitor to his own family and culture).[17] This story could also help account for Tazerout's Spengleresque work *Au congrès des civilisés* (The congress of the civilized, 5 vols., 1955-1959), in which he imagined how representatives of a variety of

[14] The first written source of this legend seems to be Rachid Benaïssa's obituary, "L'écrivain algérien Mohand Tazerout n'est plus…," *El Moudjahid*, November 23, 1973.
[15] Portions of this work have appeared in English translation in Leo Frobenius, *African Genesis* (New York: B. Blom, 1966).
[16] Nedhma Adbelfattah Lalmi, "Mohand Tazerout ou l'impossibilité d'une voix tierce ?," in *Savoirs d'Allemagne en Afrique du Nord, XVIIIe-XXe siècle*, ed. Ahcène Abdelfettah and Alain Messaoudi (Saint-Denis: Éditions Bouchène, 2012), 249–74 (reprinted in Fournier, ed., *Mohand Tazerout*, 61-110). According to his personnel file, which Lalmi cites, Tazerout left his teaching post at Théniet el Had at the end of September, 1913, and enlisted in the army at the end of January, 1914. Tazerout's file can be found in "Dossiers des fonctionnaires de l'Instruction publique et des Beaux-Arts (1880 à 1968), TARDIEU à TERROINE," F/17/25606, Archives nationales de France. On Tazerout and Frobenius, see Lalmi, "Mohand Tazerout," 249, 251, 254n32 (as the note on page 249 explains, Messaoudi introduced this hypothesis while preparing the article for publication after Lalmi's untimely death).
[17] Lalmi notes that his departure inspired the composition of a Kabyle-language poem, apparently still known and recited in his home town, lamenting his break with his family; "Mohand Tazerout," 253.

cultures—the "Near East," the "Far East," classical antiquity, Western capitalism, and Soviet communism—would represent themselves at a fictional conference presided over by an Egyptian pharaoh. On the other hand, linking Tazerout to Frobenius helps explain one of his main intellectual preoccupations, German social science, and perhaps his ambition to conduct his own scholarly inquiries.

The hard-won knowledge on display in Tazerout's writings was the product, largely, of his multifaceted encounters with the French educational system and French intellectual life, starting with his apparent reluctance to act as an intermediary between the Algerian colonial regime and its indigenous subjects.[18] Instead, through his work, he would act as an intermediary between French and German social thinkers, whose role he saw as essentially pedagogical. In another multi-volume work, *Les éducateurs sociaux de l'Allemagne moderne* (Social educators of modern Germany, 3 vols., 1943-1946), he specified that the "social education" he had in mind was "a broader method of reflection, which tends to train [*former*] mature men, already more or less instructed by public or private school, and who are not necessarily required [*astreints*] to prepare and obtain university or state diplomas."[19] The figures he focused on were thus an eclectic group of poets, statesmen, philosophers, and sociologists.

Tazerout was mobilized in the first regiment of Algerian *tirailleurs* for less than a month at the outset of World War I in August, 1914, before being struck in the chest by machine gun bullets and captured on the first day of the Battle of Charleroi, in Châtelet,

[18] For an argument that the purpose of institutions like the EN Bouzaréah was to produce intermediaries between the dominant and dominated fractions of colonial Algerian society, thereby perpetuating social inequality through the very mechanisms of "assimilation," see Fanny Colonna, *Instituteurs Algériens, 1883-1939* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1975).

[19] "…nous avons entendu, sous le nom d' « éducation sociale », une méthode de réflexion plus large, qui tend à former des hommes mûrs, déjà plus ou moins instruits par l'école publique ou privée, et qui ne sont pas nécessairement astreints à préparer et à obtenir des diplômes universitaires ou d'Etat." Mohand Tazerout, *Les éducateurs sociaux de l'Allemagne moderne*, vol. 3, *Critique de l'éducation allemande (de Kant à Hitler)* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1946), 8.

Belgium. He spent more than two years in captivity, first in Germany and then in Switzerland, where he was transferred as part of a projected prisoner exchange. These years were decisive on a number of levels: the imprisoned Tazerout mastered German and met his future wife, Angèle Foucher, a schoolteacher in la Roche-sur-Yon, who entered into correspondence with him as a "war godmother" (*marraine de guerre*).[20] He would eventually pursue higher education in France, first at Bordeaux, where he earned a *baccalauréat* and a *licence* in German; then at Poitiers, where he prepared a *diplôme d'études supérieures*; and finally at Strasbourg, where he prepared for the *agrégation* in German, for which his war injury prevented him from sitting for the oral portion.[21] He planned, but did not complete, a doctoral thesis on Spengler and German sociology that was to be directed by the Durkheimian sociologist and philosopher Celestin Bouglé (1870-1940).[22] He dedicated his decades-long teaching career—largely limited, because of his lack of an *agrégation*, to provincial *lycées*[23]—to serving the French state, whose values he apparently did not see as entirely incompatible with the anticolonial sentiments he would express forcefully in his later writings.

[20] Lalmi, "Mohand Tazerout," 252; Fournier, "Témoignage," 23.
[21] Lalmi, "Mohand Tazerout," 253-54.
[22] In 1931, just before the publication of the first volume of his Spengler translation, Tazerout was awarded funds by the French government to travel to Germany and observe sociological laboratories in Münster, Grünberg, and Frankfurt (the famous Institute for Social Research, where Max Horkheimer had just become director). He was in Cologne when he applied for the funds, having taken a leave of absence from his teaching position in 1930. In his report on the trip, he describes his thesis as dealing broadly with "postwar German sociology" ("la sociologie allemande d'après-guerre"). Mohand Tazerout, "Compte rendu de mission en Allemagne," F/17/17287, Archives nationales de France.
[23] Lalmi, "Mohand Tazerout," 254. In 1933, Tazerout (apparently unsuccessfully) lobbied Jean Zay, then a Radical Party deputy from the Loiret department, to raise this issue in parliament; see "Dossier 1 : Enseignement," fonds Jean Zay (667AP/32), Archives nationales de France. Tazerout's *dossier de pension* includes a letter dated November 18, 1936, to Zay, now minister of education, requesting a transfer from Nantes to the collège Chaptal (now lycée Chaptal) in Paris, where Tazerout taught from 1936 until 1945 before ending his teaching career at the lycée Charlemagne (now lycée Albert Schweitzer) in Raincy. Only in Paris, Tazerout explained in the letter, would he be able to continue his "sociological studies"; yet his status as a "professeur non-agrégé" disqualified him from teaching in the capital's secondary schools. Tazerout folder, F/17/25606, Archives nationales de France.

The puzzle of Tazerout's simultaneous embrace of French universalism and a pluralistic openness to cultural difference—particularly the language and thought of France's traditional rival, Germany[24]—will be one thread of the argument I pursue in this chapter. The problem of universalism and difference has long been, and remains, a crucial and vexing one to French society and politics. The Revolution of 1789 both enshrined universal human rights and gave rise to contentious debates about the status in the republic of women, religious minorities, and the institution of slavery.[25] If the Third Republic (1870-1940) was arguably "the golden age of French universalism," with classrooms like the ones Tazerout taught in becoming "the prime loci of the dissemination and transmission of an ideology of France as an elite nation and guardian of civilization,"[26] this was also a time of rampant antisemitism, emblematized by the Dreyfus Affair. In the interwar period, the presence in French cities of students, migrant workers, and war veterans from the colonies once again brought into focus the conflict between republican values and the realities of inequality and discrimination, with anticolonial nationalist leaders like Messali Hadj (1898-1974) decrying French hypocrisy and urging their followers to embrace their own (non-universal, non-French) cultural identities.[27] Tazerout both embraced Spengler's cultural relativism and voiced strong

[24] In a 1930 article on the potential for Franco-German reconciliation, Tazerout advocated a kind of reciprocal ethnology of French and German social mores, arguing that "there can only be a durable rapprochement between peoples when one group has made an empirical sociological study of the collective and daily habits of the neighboring group, leaving aside any moral, philosophical, aesthetic or even historical preoccupations" ("il n'y aura de rapprochement durable entre les peuples que dans la mesure où chacun d'eux aura étudié en sociologie empirique les habitudes collectives et quotidiennes de son voisin en dehors de toute préoccupation morale, philosophique, esthétique et même historique"). Mohand Tazerout, "Quelques conditions méconnues d'un rapprochement franco-allemand," *Revue internationale de sociologie* 38 (1930), 221.

[25] A selection of documents from these debates can be found in Lynn Hunt, ed., *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief History with Documents*, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016).

[26] Naomi Schor, "The Crisis of French Universalism," *Yale French Studies*, no. 100 (2001), 47.

[27] On Messali Hadj and French republican hypocrisy, see Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*, 238. On universalism and difference in the interwar period more generally see, in addition to Goebel, Jennifer Anne Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis: The Urban Grounds of Anti-Imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris*

republican sympathies in many of his writings; not until the 1950s, when Algerian independence had come to seem ineluctable, did he express more overtly nationalist sentiments.

Another problem central to this chapter is how, precisely, to situate Tazerout in the broader intellectual-historical landscapes of twentieth-century France and North Africa. On one hand, Tazerout's interests in the philosophy of history and German social thought would seem to align him with such luminaries as the Russian-born philosopher Alexandre Kojève (1902-1968), famous for the seminar on Hegel at the École Pratique des Hautes Études that energized a generation of French thinkers; and Kojève's friend Raymond Aron (1905-1983), whose early work focused, like Tazerout's, on German sociology.[28] On the other hand, Tazerout's sympathetic reading of Spengler placed him on the margins of French historical thinking,[29] and his hope that "social education" could revive European societies devastated by total war seems redolent of an idealistic attitude incongruous with many of his contemporaries' grim realism.

If Tazerout appears as a marginal figure from the perspective of French intellectual history,[30] he is perhaps more central to the intellectual history of postwar decolonization. In the 1950s, galvanized in part by the events in Morocco that led to the

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(Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[28] For a comparison between Tazerout and Aron, see the conclusion to this chapter.

[29] Lucien Febvre, in particular, discussed Spengler in mocking tones and suggested, as Hughes later would, that Spengler's work was undignified to be considered as historical scholarship. See his reviews of André Fauconnet, *Un philosophe allemand contemporain : Oswald Spengler (Le prophète du déclin de l'Occident)* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1925), *Revue d'histoire moderne* 3, no. 14 (1928): 151-152; and of Spengler's *Decline* alongside Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* (in which Febvre saw slightly more merit): "De Spengler à Toynbee : Quelques philosophies opportunistes de l'histoire," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 43 (1936), 573-602. I will discuss the latter review below..

[30] Tazerout seems to have acknowledged this marginal status in a letter to subscribers to *Au congrès des civilisés*—which he published in serial form and at his own expense—when he described the work as "doomed to a conspiracy of silence by almost the entire French press" ("vouée à la conspiration du silence par la presse française presqu'entière"). The letter is reprinted in the fourth appendix to Fournier, *Mohand Tazerout*, 277-78.

forced exile of Sultan Mohammed V in 1953, Tazerout was led increasingly toward what Sadek Sellam has characterized as a "progressive engagement" in anticolonial causes.[31] One form this engagement took was a reevaluation of North African history. Like Mohamed Chérif Sahli (1906-1989)—a friend of Tazerout's and "the only nationalist intellectual [he] seems to have known"—Tazerout wrote a revisionist account of this history in which he sought to limit his reliance on French works and to debunk the historical myths perpetuated by authors in thrall to colonial ideology.[32] Along these lines, another recent commentator has compared Tazerout to the Algerian nationalist leader Ferhat Abbas (1899-1985) "and other Algerian intellectuals, who believed in integration [i.e., of the European and indigenous populations], observed its unrealizability and would progressively claim Algerian identity for themselves and support the armed struggle leading to independence."[33]

The "Manifesto of the Algerian people" that Abbas coauthored in 1943 characterizes French imperialism as a system whose development and maintenance assumes "the simultaneous existence of two societies, one oppressing the other."[34] Abbas and the manifesto's cosignatories condemned France's failure to create an integrated

[31] Sadek Sellam, "Mohand Tazerout (1893-1973) : de l'assimilation à l'anti-colonialisme radical," in ibid., 117.
[32] Ibid., 118-19. See Mohamed Sahli, *Décoloniser l'histoire : introduction à l'histoire du maghreb* (Paris: François Maspero, 1965). Sahli was a French-educated Algerian philosophy teacher who, in addition to publishing this and other works, was an active nationalist militant, ultimately serving as a diplomat for the newly independent state.
[33] Fournier, "Témoignage," 43. Abbas's famous statement in favor of assimilation via the recognition of Algerian Muslims' rights was "En marge du nationalisme. La France c'est moi !", *L'Entente franco-musulman* 24, February 27, 1936, reprinted in Claude Collot and Jean-Robert Henry, eds., *Le Mouvement national algérien: textes, 1912-1954* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1978), 65-67. Though he claimed, in this text, that the Algerian nation was a "myth" and denied being a nationalist, by the 1940s he would turn away from assimilation and toward nationalism.
[34] "Manifeste du peuple algérien," in ibid., 161. This was a key document in the Algerian independence struggle, leading to the formation of the Amis du manifeste et de la liberté (AML), one of the groups behind the mass agitation in Sétif, Guelma, and elsewhere in 1945, the French military's heavy-handed response to which resulted in thousands of deaths. I briefly discuss Tazerout's response to these events in this chapter's final section.

Algerian society, in addition to recognizing the violence and injustice wrought by French colonialism: "The European and Muslim blocs remain distinct from each other, without a common soul." And: "Politically and morally, this colonialism can have no other concept than that of two societies foreign to one another."[35] If Abbas and his followers still hoped, at this stage, for a political solution that would to some extent ameliorate France's historical crimes, these remarks seem to suggest that it had nevertheless become difficult for them to imagine that France and Algeria could share a historical destiny. Anticolonial nationalism contained its own "principle of non-continuity"—the feature of Spengler's thought that, according to Tazerout, constituted "the only viable hypothesis for a *scientific* knowledge of historical phenomena."[36]

Spengler's postulate of cultural discontinuity was part of a larger "morphological" theory according to which cultures were individual organisms with comparable structures—the "organs" of religion, science, art, etc.—and life cycles. If, in Spengler's view, cultures were unique and rarely communicated or directly influenced each other, his method allowed the historian to identify moments of "contemporaneity" in which different cultures lived through the same developmental stages or expressed similar "organic" outgrowths. These contemporary moments would undoubtedly *not* coincide on the plane of homogeneous, linear historical time. Nor did Spengler's philosophy allow for continuous, cumulative historical progress. Instead, he saw history as a kind of blank landscape, analogous to the relatively untouched land inhabited by subsistence farmers, from which cultures sprang up and took shape according to their own logic.

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[35] "Le bloc européen et le bloc musulman restent distincts l'un de l'autre, sans âme commune…. Politiquement et moralement, cette colonisation ne peut avoir d'autre concept que celui de deux sociétés étrangères l'une à l'autre." Ibid., 163.

[36] Tazerout, preface to Spengler, *Le déclin*, vol. 1, 11.

To what extent did Tazerout's early enthusiasm for Spengler contribute to his later support for North African independence struggles? How are these aspects of Tazerout's thought and politics related to the pro-French sentiment that runs through many of his writings? In this chapter, I will explore these questions by situating Tazerout's work in the context of twentieth-century French intellectual history. I focus, in particular, on the historian and founding coeditor (along with Marc Bloch) of the famous *Annales* journal, Lucien Febvre (1878-1956), whose sarcastic and dismissive discussion of Spengler contrasted sharply with Tazerout's; and Kojève, the resonance of whose work with Tazerout's intellectual project we have noted above. All three thinkers, I will argue, were led by the interwar atmosphere of cultural, political, and economic crisis to articulate their own versions of a vitalist ethic that assigned the intellectual (whether historian, philosopher, or sociologist) a privileged role in confronting the era's challenges.

Although *vitalism* typically refers to the scientific or philosophical position that living and merely mechanical matter must be seen as somehow distinct, I use the term to characterize the idea, shared by Tazerout, Febvre, Kojève, and numerous other interwar thinkers, that seemingly moribund political institutions or intellectual traditions could be revitalized through appropriate modes of thought and action. My understanding of vitalism broadly follows that of Monica Greco, who has argued that vitalism should be seen as "*an ethical and political* problem" rather than, as in some recent work on the topic, "*an epistemological and ontological problem* regarding the distinction between the living and the non-living."[37] Whereas the view she contests often takes biology to be the only field capable of addressing the vitalist problem, Greco draws on the philosophy of

[37] Monica Greco, "Vitalism Now – A Problematic," *Theory, Culture & Society* 38, no. 2 (2021), 49-50; emphasis in the original.

Georges Canguilhem and Alfred North Whitehead, detecting in these thinkers a "vitalist ethos" asserting life's priority over the knowledge it conditions. My readings of Tazerout, Febvre, and Kojève suggest that these authors were informed by a similar ethos.[38]

The vitalism I discuss in this chapter was by no means an exclusively French or European phenomenon. A major component of the Algerian national liberation movement was Islamic reformism, institutionalized with the 1931 formation of the Association of Algerian Muslin Clerics (Association des oulémas musulmans algériens; AOMA), which saw itself as the agent of an Islamic renaissance. Forged within, in response to, and against the colonial situation, the AOMA's Islam was ostensibly at once pure, authentic, and resolutely modern.[39] As we will see below, some of Tazerout's works echoed this movement's conviction that Islam was a uniquely universal, rational religion. Another link between Tazerout and Islamic reformism is Sahli, who wrote for AOMA journals[40] and founded his own "North African review of social education," *L'Ifrikia*. Vitalist rhetoric is front and center in Sahli's contributions to the latter: in the inaugural issue, published in March of 1939, he extolled Islam's liveliness relative to a declining Christianity afflicted by "indifference and free-thought" and lamented that "the vitality of our people" had been endangered by "poverty, mortality, famine and grave illnesses." The task facing them was, *L'Ifrikia*'s editors wrote, "to give our people a new face, a new life."[41]

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[38] For a consideration of Canguilhem's and Febvre's contemporaneous attempts to forge conceptual links between life and mechanism, see Carlos Estellita-Lins and Flavio Coelho Edler, "Charting Links between Life, Science, and Technique: Georges Canguilhem and Lucien Febvre," *Transversal: International Journal for the Historiography of Science*, no. 4 (2018): 90-107.

[39] For an overview of the historiography of Islamic reformism emphasizing the problem of the reformers' relationship to colonialism, see Augustin Jomier, *Islam, réforme et colonisation: une histoire de l'ibadisme en Algérie, 1882-1962* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2020), 18-20.

[40] See, for example, his contributions to *Le Jeune musulman: organe de l'Association des Oulamas musulmans d'Algérie : Alger 1952-1954* (Dar al-gharb al-islami, 2000).

[41] "Les grandes religions chrétiennes reculent peu à peu au profit de l'indifférence et de la libre-pensée. A ce déclin s'oppose l'éttonante vitalité de l'Islam." Chérif Sahli, "L'Avenir de l'Islam," *L'Ifrikia* no, 1

By the time Tazerout published his *Histoire politique de l'Afrique du Nord* (Political history of North Africa, 1961), the Algerian nationalist movement had left behind the meliorist tendencies of the earlier Abbas or Tazerout himself as the country erupted into a prolonged, bloody struggle for independence. If this was the immediate context that led Tazerout to write about his native region's history and politics, I suggest that the Spenglerian precepts of the mortality and mutual irreconcilability of historical cultures (which led Tazerout to advocate a rationalist politics of "peaceful coexistence") were equally crucial to his thinking. It is clear, further, that with decolonization, the terrain of debate surrounding France's or the West's historical relationship to the Maghreb or the Arab world shifted, moving beyond Tazerout's concern—which his own work sometimes skeptically undermined—for cultural vitality and world peace.

PUBLISHING SPENGLER IN FRANCE

Insofar as Spengler's *Decline* seemed to capture the anguish and rage of a defeated and humiliated post–World War I Germany, a favorable French reception of the book was unlikely. At the same time, *Decline*'s surprising success in Germany perhaps made its French publication a tempting business proposition for Gaston Gallimard, who wrote to the book's German publisher, Oskar Beck, inquiring about translation rights toward the end of 1924.[42] A few months later, Gallimard wrote to the writer and translator Paul Amann, an acquaintance of Spengler's then living in Vienna, requesting Spengler's contact information and copies of his work and announcing that "I would be happy to

(1939), 6. Regarding the "task" at hand: "il s'agit de donner à notre peuple un visage nouveau, une vie nouvelle…. Déjà la misère, la mortalité infantile et de graves maladies, longtemps ignorées, ne cessent de miner la vitalité de notre race." "Notre Programme," *L'Ifrikia* no. 1 (1939), 2.

[42] Gaston Gallimard, letter to Oskar Beck, December 12, 1924, dossier "Spengler jusqu'à 1950," Gallimard archives.

make him known to the French public."[43] For reasons that are unclear, the project does not seem to have progressed until Gallimard came into contact with Tazerout in 1930, seemingly through the Polish-born art critic Waldemar-Georges, who published an excerpt of Tazerout's translation-in-progress in the journal he edited, *Formes*.[44] Tazerout's interest in Spengler may have been sparked by André Fauconnet, the author of the first book-length study in French of the German philosopher[45] and a professor at the Faculté des lettres at Poitiers, where Tazerout studied in 1924. It is possible, further, that Fauconnet encouraged Tazerout to pursue his doctoral project on Spengler and German sociology, an endeavor that led him to seek Spengler out in person and apparently coincided with his translation work.[46]

A missionary zeal animates much of Tazerout's correspondence with Gallimard and the translation's eventual editor, André Malraux. In a letter of January 30, 1930, after outlining the conditions of what he claimed was a preferential deal offered by Spengler, "who I know very well," to Tazerout alone—better, even, than the one given to "Mr. Mussolini himself" to publish the book in Italy—he noted that the two other Parisian houses he had approached balked at the price at which Spengler's German publishers insisted the book be sold. Behind this financial scruple lay, Tazerout suggested, unease at "the *novelty* of the Spenglerian doctrine." For his part, Tazerout was convinced of the

[43] "Peut-être pourriez-vous me donner le moyen de l'atteindre, car je serais heureux de le faire connaître au public français, et peut-être de donner une traduction de son principal ouvrage, intitulé je crois 'La Décadence de l'Occident.'" Gaston Gallimard, letter to Paul Amann, March 5, 1925, dossier Spengler, Gallimard archives.

[44] Oswald Spengler, "Les Lauréats de la Renaissance vainqueurs de l'Esprit Renaissant," trans. Mohand Tazerout, *Formes : revue internationale des arts plastiques*, no. 10 (1930): 7–11.

[45] André Fauconnet, *Un philosophe allemand contemporain : Oswald Spengler (Le prophète du déclin de l'Occident)* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1925).

[46] Lalmi, "Mohand Tazerout," 253-54. Fauconnet's brother Paul, a Durkheimian sociologist, sat on Raymond Aron's thesis jury and was responsible for the memorable remark that Aron must be either "desperate or satanic." See below, chapter 2. As Lalmi points out, it is quite possible that Aron and Tazerout crossed paths in Cologne in 1930. Ibid., 258.

book's immense significance: "*[F]or me,* there is no doubt that the *Decline of the West* is the inexhaustible source of all postwar German historical, sociological, philosophical, aesthetic, and scientific thought." This was the case, he maintained, despite the negative critical attention the work had received, of which he cited two examples by French authors: Henri Massis's *Défense de l'Occident* (Defense of the West, 1927) and Ernest Seillière's *Les Pangermanistes d'après guerre* (Postwar pan-Germanists, 1924).[47] In a letter to Malraux, Tazerout claimed that the bad press *Decline* had received in Germany had not prevented the book from "exercising a global influence that no book of this type has exercised since Nietzsche."[48]

Like Gallimard, Malraux was aware of and interested in *Decline* well before Tazerout arrived on the scene. He could have learned of Spengler's work through his German-speaking wife Clara (née Goldschmidt), who brought a copy of *Decline* back from a 1921 or 1922 trip to Berlin; or from reading the Gallimard-published literary journal *La Nouvelle Revue française* (*NRF*), where the philosopher Bernard Groethuysen reviewed the book in 1920.[49] Many of Malraux's works bear the influence of *Decline*,

[47] "J'ai traduit cette dernière [i.e., *Decline*], qui comprend 2 vol. de 600 pages chacun, à peu près aux 2/3, et Spengler que je connais très bien consent volontiers à une publication en France de ma traduction, sous la seule réserve, imposée par ses éditeurs, que le prix de l'édition française ne soit pas inférieur au moins au prix allemand de 28 *au* 36 marcs les 2 volumes actuellement. Ce sont des conditions de faveur qu'il n'accorde qu'à moi, puisqu'il exige des autres sollicitants, dont M. Mussolini en personne, les conditions du prix anglo-américain de 12 dollars, conformément au contrat passé entre l'éditeur de Munich et celui de New York. Malgré cela, les éditeurs parisiens (Alcan et Payot) auxquels seuls j'ai fait des offres, reculent devant le prix, ou peut-être, comme je le crois, devant *la nouveauté* de la doctrine spenglérienne, dont vous pourriez voir un aperçu dans l'article que publiera «Formes» prochainement et dans deux extraits que j'enverrai aussi à M. Waldemar Georges." Further on: "Car *pour moi*, il n'est pas douteux que le «Untergang des Abendlandes» est la source inépuisable de toute la pensée historique, sociologique, philosophique, esthétique et scientifique de l'Allemagne d'après-guerre." Mohand Tazerout, letter of January 31, 1930, dossier Spengler, Gallimard archives. Tazerout did not mention the intended recipient—apparently Gaston Gallimard—by name.

[48] "Les « âneries » de la critique dont vous me parlez ne m'étonnent pas du tout, les Allemands en avaient dit de plus grosses encore entre 1920 et 1924. Mais cela n'a pas empêché Spengler d'exercer une influence mondiale que n'a exercée encore aucun livre de ce genre depuis Nietzsche." Mohand Tazerout, letter to André Malraux, November 29, 1931, dossier Spengler, Gallimard archives.

[49] Bernard Groethuysen, "Lettre d'Allemagne," *La Nouvelle Revue française,* no. 86 (1920): 792–805.

starting with *La tentation de l'occident* (*The Temptation of the West*, 1926): an epistolary novel in which the French A.D. and Chinese Ling, having traveled in each other's countries, share their observations about the two cultures, understood in a Spenglerian manner as self-contained and incommensurable. In a late-in-life interview, Malraux referred to *Decline* as "one of the century's most considerable books."[50]

To some extent, *La tentation*, which Tazerout praised in his letters to Malraux, can be read as a rebuke to the Action française–affiliated Massis, whose *Défense* Malraux reviewed for the *NRF*.[51] Massis wrote in response to what he saw as "the Asiatic peril" threatening Western values: "[p]ersonality, unity, stability, authority, continuity," and above all, the notion of an "abstract, universal man."[52] He traced this putative threat's origins to World War I, which, he wrote, destroyed "European unity" and paved the way for an "awakening of Asian and African peoples, turned by Bolshevism against Western civilization."[53] In Massis's view, Germany's defeat in the war had equally turned its "spirit, [which] perpetually hesitates between Asiatic mysticism and Latinity," definitively toward the East; he saw Spengler's work, which repudiated "the classical idea of man," as symptomatic of this shift.[54] Malraux, who as a young man founded a

[50] Myriam Sunnen, "Malraux, lecteur du *Déclin de l'Occident* d'Oswald Spengler," *Dialogues littéraires et philosophiques*, no. 15 (2020), 123, 128, 135. The interview she cites is "Entretien d'André Malraux avec Jean Vilar," *Magazine littéraire* 54 (1971): 10-14, at 23.

[51] Mohand Tazerout, letters to André Malraux, June 28, 1930 and November 29, 1931, dossier Spengler, Gallimard archives. On Malraux and Massis, see Raphaël Aubert, "*Tentation de l'Occident (La)*," in Charles-Louis Foulon et al., eds., *André Malraux: Dictionnaire* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2011), 745.

[52] "La crise de l'Occident, le péril de l'asiatisme ne sont plus désormais des questions réservées aux seules méditations des hommes de l'esprit." Henri Massis, *Défense de l'Occident* (Paris: Plon, 1927), 3. "Personnalité, unité, stabilité autorité, continuité, voilà les idées mères de l'Occident." Ibid., 15-16. "De cet optimism trompeur qui fonde sa croyance sur l'homme abstrait, universel" (this, for Spengler, as an "illusion"). 30.

[53] "L'unité européenne, spirituellement défaite depuis la Réforme, a été physiquement brisée en 1914." Ibid., 8. "Jusqu'alors, les formidables problèmes que pose le réveil des peuples de l'Asie et de l'Afrique, dressés par le bolchevisme contre la civilisation d'Occident, restaient à peu près incompris." Ibid., 4.

[54] "Et d'abord en Allemagne, dont l'esprit perpétuellement hésite entre la mystique asiatique et la latinité, et qui semble constituée en état de protestation permanente contre l'idée romaine." Ibid., 19. "Spengler enseignait qu'aucune culture, aucune civilisation ne saurait s'arroger de titres à une absolue précellence, car

newspaper in colonial Indochina seeking to promote "franco-annamite rapprochement" and critical of the colonial administration, gave voice to a similarly antihumanist sentiment through his Chinese protagonist Ling in *La tentation*: "For you [i.e., the West], absolute reality was God, then man; but *man is dead*, after God, and you anxiously seek someone to whom you will be able to entrust his strange heritage."[55] Responding to Massis's claim that "Asia" had turned the West's ideas against it in the form of a budding anticolonial nationalism, Malraux agreed that Western imperialism was responsible for the destruction of "traditional authority" and "spiritual values" in the East, but argued that the "Asiatic" threat to the West was much less grave than the West's to colonial Asia; between "the English government and the Indian people, it is perhaps not the English government that needs to be defended."[56]

Without necessarily sharing Massis's right-wing Catholic perspective, Spengler's French critics tended to see the German philosopher of history as an exemplar of the peculiar strain of national chauvinism—what Seillière called "aesthetico-racial mysticism"—on the rise in Germany after the war.[57] Interestingly, both Massis and

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la valeur universelle sur quoi l'on se fonde pour la légitimer, l'idée classique de l'homme, n'est qu'une fausse entité, contredite par la nature et par l'histoire." Ibid., 31-32.

[55] "La réalité absolue a été pour vous Dieu, puis l'homme ; mais *l'homme est mort*, après Dieu, et vous cherchez avec angoisse celui à qui vous pourriez confier son étrange héritage." André Malraux, *La tentation de l'occident* (1926; repr., Paris: Grasset, 1988), 128. Compare Spengler: "'Mankind' is a zoological expression, or an empty word." Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, vol. 1: *Form and Acutality*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Knopf, 1926), 21.

[56] "La grande impudence européenne est dans l'aide que nous n'avons cessé de prêter à la destruction de l'autorité traditionnelle qui, dans toutes les contrées d'Asie, était liée à la culture. La substitution des valeurs d'énergie persévérante aux valeurs spirituelles est la marque même des temps modernes." André Malraux, "*Défense de l'Occident*, par Henri Massis," *La Nouvelle revue française*, no. 165 (1927), 815. "Nous pourrions répondre" to Massis's claim that Asia "prépare à la révolte" "que, du Gouvernement anglais et du peuple de l'Inde, ce n'est peut-être pas le gouvernement anglais qui a besoin d'être défendu." Ibid., 814.

[57] Seillière wrote that *Decline* exemplified an "old-school German sensibility, very sensitive to artistic emotions, very hostile" to the country's "economic evolution" since 1870, and nostalgic for the rule of Frederick III "and the government of *Junkers*" responsible, according to this view, for Germany's "unity and grandeur" ("ces pages traduisent de façon pour nous fort instructive, l'état d'esprit d'un Allemand de la vieille école, très sensible aux émotions de l'art, très hostile à l'évolution économique, si rapide et si

Seillière attempted to buttress their arguments with references to rebellion in the colonial Maghreb: "the revolt of a Berber rogue" made the French public aware of the emerging Asiatic threat, according to Massis, while Seillière pointed to "the adventure of a certain marabout from southern Algeria" as evidence that the "mysticism" he saw as underlying German nationalism was dangerous and illusory.[58] For both authors, Spengler and rebellious colonial subjects could be associated as threats to French universalism, embodied either by the Catholic church or the republic. The Algerian-born Tazerout, however, distanced himself from Spengler's politics while defending the merits of *Decline*, a work whose cultural relativism and political pessimism were arguably incompatible with the nationalism Spengler expressed in his more explicitly political works.[59]

As Tazerout's interest in Spengler demonstrates, the latter's French reception was not limited to propagandists like Massis or Seillière, who countered Spengler's nationalism with their own pro-French sentiments. It extended, rather, to the world of

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brillante, que sa patrie sut accomplir après 1870, mais pénétré cependant de reconnaissance et d'admiration pour la Prusse frédéricienne et pour ce gouvernement des *Junkers* qui avait fait l'unité et la grandeur de l'Allemagne, en un mot un adepte distingué, lui aussi, comme MM. Mann et Keyserling du mysticisme esthético-racial"). Ernest Seillière, *Les Pangermanistes d'après guerre* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1924), 94.

[58] "Quant à l'esprit public, en France, il a fallu la révolte d'un rogui berbère pour qu'il commençât d'entrevoir les significations profondes d'un événement qui importe moins encore par ce qu'il est que par ce qu'il préfigure." Massis, *Défense*, 4. "Je rappellais volontiers, à ce propos, l'aventure de certain marabout du Sud algérien qui exalta ses coreligionnaires en leur persuadant que les balles des « roumis » tomberaient sans force à leurs pieds pendant la bataille, en vertu de la protection d'Allah." Seillière, *Les Pangermanistes*, 3. It is unclear which precise events Massis or Seillière had in mind, but the latter's reference to a southern marabout seems to evoke Sheikh Bou Amama, who led an insurrection in the Sahara in 1881 that made an outsize impression on French public opinion. See Charles Robert Ageron, *Les Algériens musulmans et la France (1871-1919)*, vol. 1 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1968), 62-66.

[59] Georg Lukács has argued, for example, that Spengler's claim, in *Preussentum und Sozialismus* (*Prussianism and Socialism*, 1919), that "Prussian socialism" would triumph over both English individualism and Marxist "working-class socialism" seems to contradict his argument in *Decline* that the dominant form of politics in the wake of Western cultural decline would be "Caesarism," or endless imperialist war conducted by ruthless authoritarian leaders. Georg Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason* (1954; repr., Atlantic Highlands, N.J: Humanities Press, 1981), 473-74.

serious scholarship. At a 1926 meeting, members of the historian Henri Berr's Centre international de Synthèse, including Lucien Febvre and Marcel Mauss, discussed the "project for a historical atlas" presented by Spengler at the Congress of Orientalists held in Munich in 1925. Febvre, who would later publish a scathing review of *Decline* (discussed below), agreed to dedicate further study to the proposal, which resonated with his own interest in bringing together history and geography.[60] As for Tazerout, he would not write at length about Spengler until his mostly dispassionate study, belonging to the genre of the sociology of knowledge rather than political polemic, of Germany's "vitalist education," published in 1946. To better understand his debt to Spengler, and his thought more generally, it will thus be necessary to situate Tazerout's work in the broader twentieth-century French intellectual milieu. This will be my task in the following pages, in which I first examine Tazerout's relationship to vitalist thought in the interwar period before turning to his postwar writings on decolonization and Algerian history.

SPENGLER, TAZEROUT, AND INTERWAR FRENCH VITALISM

In his 1940s study of Germany's "social education," Tazerout developed an idiosyncratic definition of vitalism as a mode of social or historical thought focused on "mathematical extension in living or geopolitical space," as opposed to the "individual interiorization in abstract time" central to the idealism that preceded it. Unlike Marxist thinkers such as the Frankfurt School philosopher Max Horkheimer, whose 1934 essay "The Rationalism Debate in Contemporary Philosophy" he discussed, Tazerout did not distinguish between historical materialism and German "life-philosophy"

[60] Centre international de synthèse, "Séances hebdomadaires (Extraits des procès-verbaux)," *Bulletin du Centre international de synthèse*, no. 1 (1926), 11–15.

(*Lebensphilosophie*).[61] Instead, for Tazerout, "Marx's critique of the materialist philosophy of Epicurus and the juridical philosophy of Hegel" marked the transition from "idealist education" to "vitalist education."[62] The end result of this education, according to Tazerout, was World War II, animated by Hitler's catastrophic doctrine that the German people lacked living space. Though Tazerout did not equate Marx with the Nazi chancellor, he argued that both figures thought in terms of the quantitative expansion and spatial extension of social groups destined to come into conflict. As interpreted by Tazerout, Marxist class struggle could be reduced to a mathematical equation: the swelling masses of impoverished workers would overwhelm the capital-owning minority by sheer force of numbers.

Though Tazerout placed Spengler squarely within the tradition of German vitalism, he argued that his "morphological" method, which allowed for comparisons between cultures widely dispersed in time and space, demonstrated the limits of a purely quantitative or "mathematical" approach to sociology. For Tazerout, that is, Spengler's complementary principles of historical irreversibility and cultural discontinuity showed that the study of a basically quantitative, homogeneous social space was incompatible with an understanding of the sentimental or spiritual qualities of heterogeneous cultures:

> [T]he irreversibility of life and the discontinuity of space are the mathematician's evident axioms, taken from his own experience as an *a priori* builder [of theorems]. Whereas sentiment, which no longer carries this mathematical certainty, is only a plausible hypothesis that is admissible on the condition that it is then demonstrated by historical morphology. Is not Spengler's morphological

[61] Max Horkheimer, "The Rationalism Debate in Contemporary Philosophy," in *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings*, trans. G. Frederick Hunter, Matthew S. Kramer, and John Torpey (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 217–64.

[62] "A ce moment précis, inauguré par la critique de Marx sur les philosophies matérialiste d'Epicure et juridique de Hegel, l'éducation idéaliste fit place peu à peu à l'éducation vitaliste, la méthode de l'interiorisation individuelle dans le temps abstrait céda à la méthode contraire de l'extension mathématique dans l'espace vital ou géopolitique." Tazerout, *Les éducateurs sociaux*, vol. 3, iv.

> and no longer mathematical demonstration the manifest proof that the mathematical method has limits impossible for sociology to cross?[63]

By this line of reasoning, Horkheimer more closely resembled Spengler than Marx when he argued, in Tazerout's summary, that "rational analysis" was "only realizable in its application to a definite historical reality, that is to say, in the first place, to a distinct social class."[64] The social classes Horkheimer had in mind were not, according to Tazerout, the antagonistic proletariat and bourgeoisie of Marx's time, when there "still existed only one unique capitalist class." Instead, "today's historical reality" was one in which "each individual tends to be enlisted in a party."[65] For Tazerout, this contemporary reality—that is, the historical fragmentation of the capitalist class into numerous political factions—could only be understood through something like Spengler's morphological method.

This brief glimpse into Tazerout's account of Germany's "vitalist education," to which I will return below, gives some idea of the importance of vitalist thinking not only to Tazerout's work but to the broader historical landscape of post–World War I Europe. In this section, I explore a portion of this landscape through my own analytical conception of vitalism, which I treat as an intellectual and political challenge to a postwar status quo widely perceived as exhausted or lifeless. In placing Tazerout's relatively

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[63] "Répétons-le sans nous lasser : l'irreversibilité de la vie et la discontinuité de l'espace sont des axiomes évidents de mathématicien, pris dans sa propre expérience de constructeur *a priori*. Tandis que le sentiment, qui ne porte pas encore en lui cette évidence mathématique, n'est une hypothèse vraisemblable et licite qu'à condition d'être ensuite démontrée par la morphologie historique. La démonstration morphologique et non plus mathématique de Spengler n'est-elle pas la preuve manifeste que la méthode mathématique a des limites impossibles à franchir en sociologie ?" Tazerout, *Les éducateurs sociaux,* vol. 3, 89.

[64] "Donc, conclut Horkheimer presque en Spenglérien, qu'il n'est pas et qu'il se défend d'être : l'analyse rationnelle est indispensable comme condition de la vérité, mais elle n'est réalisable que dans son application à une réalité historique déterminée, c'est-à-dire en tout premier lieu à une classe sociale distincte." Ibid., 91.

[65] "Nous pensons que ce raisonnement, qui rend bien compte en effet de la réalité historique d'aujourd'hui, où tout individu tend à être embrigadé dans un parti, ne pouvait pas être celui de Marx et de son temps, où il n'existait encore qu'une classe unique capitaliste." Ibid., 92.

unknown contributions to interwar French vitalist discourse alongside those of the well-known and extremely influential Febvre and Kojève, I do not intend to suggest any particular connection between the three thinkers beyond their common participation in this discourse. Nor do I argue that Tazerout's thought is any more or less insightful or revealing than Febvre's or Kojève's. I hope, instead, that considering his work alongside prominent representatives, respectively, of historiography and the philosophy of history will allow me to approach an understanding of Tazerout's historical significance and advance my inquiry into the relationship between decolonization and historical theory.

Living for history or history as life? Febvre and Tazerout on Spengler

Beginning his remarks to a group of students at the École normale supérieure (ENS), where he gave a series of lectures orienting them to historical study in 1941, Lucien Febvre called "abominable" the practice of "making two parts of one's life; giving one to work, dispatched joylessly [*sans amour*]; reserving the other for the satisfaction of one's deep needs."[66] For the historian, he argued, writing history should satisfy these (implicitly emotional or spiritual rather than material) needs. As an intellectual practice, history was not merely the dispassionate application of reasoned interpretation to a set of facts seen as separate from the historian's life, but a way of life in its own right. Febvre argued that to see history in this way was also to confront what he described as a greater crisis in which, insofar as science and technology now threatened to enslave rather than serve humanity, a long-cherished conception of scientific reason as the handmaiden of social progress was in jeopardy. Beginning at the end of the nineteenth century—"when the difficulties in the division of the world [among

[66] "De sa vie faire deux parts ; donner l'une au métier, expédié sans amour ; réserver l'autre à ses besoins profonds : voilà qui est abominable, quand le métier qu'on a choisi est un métier d'intelligence." Lucien Febvre, "Propos d'initiation : vivre l'histoire," *Annales* 3, no. 1 (1943), 5.

European powers] announced themselves"—the bourgeoisie, confronted with a rising social mass "claiming more and more imperiously a higher quality of life," increasingly abandoned its former "belief in Science and Progress, whose bankruptcy it proclaimed."[67]

In decrying what he called this "Tragedy of Progress" and envisioning a partial remedy to the resulting cultural and intellectual crises via the infusion of "life" into history, Febvre displayed, in the words of André Burguière, "traces of the vitalism that permeated twentieth-century thought and fueled the attack on scientistic rationalism."[68] Another historian of the early *Annales* school has detected, as a dominant motif in the work of Febvre and across a wide swath of post–World War I French thought, "the search for a way out" of what seemed to be foreclosed historical possibilities. By this account, which in some ways accords with Febvre's sentiments in his ENS lecture, a longstanding sense, rooted in the cultural atmosphere of the fin de siècle, that "French values" were being or should be questioned was reactivated by the war and eventually led, through a "delayed-action effect," to the dawning of "another era—the years of desperation,"

[67] "How I would have liked to show you the creators, the animators of the strong bourgeois societies of the nineteenth century, founding their power on Reason, supporting this power with the help of a clearly rationalist philosophy—and then, toward the end of the nineteenth century, when difficulties in the division of the world announced themselves, when the masses organized and reclaimed more and more imperiously a higher quality of life—changing course, throwing Reason overboard, and at the very moment when they delivered their lives to technology; to these applications of the Science that their fathers formerly exalted in the very name of Progress—(these applications of Science that no longer served, but enslaved them)—ceasing to believe precisely in the Science of Progress whose bankruptcy they proclaimed…." ("Comme j'aurais aimé vous montrer les créateurs, les animateurs des fortes sociétés bourgeoises du XIXe siècle fondant les commencements de leur puissance sur la Raison, soutenant cette puissance à l'aide d'une philosophie nettement rationaliste—et puis, vers la fin du XIXe siècle, quand les difficultés dans le partage du monde s'annoncent, quand les masses s'organisent et réclament de plus en plus impérieusement un niveau de vie plus élevé—faisant volte-face, jetant la Raison par-dessus bord, et, au moment même où ils livrent leur vie aux techniques ; à ces applications de la Science que jadis leurs pères exaltaient sous le nom même de Progrès—(ces applications de la Science qui ne les servaient plus, mais les asservissaient)—cessant de croire précisement à la Science du Progrès dont ils proclamaient la faillite….") Ibid., 16.

[68] André Burguière, *The Annales School: An Intellectual History*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 17. However, he writes elsewhere that the "repeated invocation of life in the writings of the founders of the *Annales* must not be confused with the fin de siècle vitalism, tinged with irrationalism, that invaded the literary and philosophical world in the interwar period." Ibid., 25. What, precisely, distinguished rationalist from irrationalist vitalism would seem to be an open question.

stretching from the 1930s to the 1960s.[69] Buoyed by their origins "in a pre-catastrophe world," Febvre and his colleagues responded by attempting to revitalize history, particularly economic and social history—an urgent task in the 1930s, when global economic depression loomed and political and social discontents periodically erupted in violence.[70]

If Spengler, whose philosophy relied on a conception of historical cultures as living organisms, was part of the same vitalist trend and similarly inspired by the threats to national or imperial glory that preoccupied his French contemporaries, Tazerout's reading of *Decline* can help us discern a fundamental difference between Spengler's and Febvre's conceptions of and attitudes toward history. Introducing his translation of the second volume of *Decline*, Tazerout claimed that the "metaphysical side" of Spengler's theory of historical morphology—which took distinct historical entities, encapsulated in cultural symbols, to be analogous to living beings—had "completely escaped" his critics. Central to this metaphysics was the notion of an "absolute man" or *fellah* (Arabic for "peasant": a reference to the Egyptian peasants living in the wake of Rome's fall):[71]

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[69] H. Stuart Hughes, *The Obstructed Path: French Social Thought in the Years of Desperation, 1930-1960* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1966), 1-2, 6.

[70] Ibid., 20, 39. Interestingly, Febvre insisted to his *normalien* audience that any distinction between history as such and "economic and social history" as promulgated by the *Annales* must be a false one: "You say to me: 'History tout court? No, since you announce talks on "Economic and Social" History.' —But precisely the first thing I have to tell you is that there is, properly speaking, no Economic and Social History." ("Histoire tout court ? me direz-vous. Non, puisque vous annoncez des causeries sur l'Histoire « Economique et Sociale ». —Mais précisement, la première chose que je tiens à vous dire, c'est qu'il n'y a pas, à proprement parler, d'Histoire Economique et Sociale.") If economic and social, rather than political, literary, or religious history had taken center stage in the French academy, Febvre continued, there were historical reasons for this, above all the heritage of Marxism: "There are historical reasons, very easy to determine—and the formula that occupies us is nothing else, in the last analysis, than a residue of a heritage: that of the long discussions to which, over the last century, what we call the problem of historical Materialism has led" ("Ce sont des raisons historiques, très faciles à déterminer—et la formule qui nous occupe n'est pas autre chose, en dernière analyse, qu'un résidu ou qu'un héritage : celui des longues discussions à quoi a donné lieu, depuis un siècle, ce qu'on nomme le problème du Matérialisme historique"). Febvre, "Vivre l'histoire," 6.

[71] The term Spengler used was *Fellache*, a loanword from Arabic seemingly originating in nineteenth-century Orientalist literature (see https://www.dwds.de/wb/Fellache). For the original text of the passage

> After the ruin of Thebes, Babylon or Rome, soon to be that of London, Paris, Berlin, and New York, the Egyptian, Mesopotamian, "ancient," or Western peasant home remains and will always remain what it was and has everywhere been: that of the "fellah," that is of the absolute man, who is neither educated, civilized, nor primitive. It is thus impossible to learn about this man through a scientific theory of history or a philosophy of history, to which all the positivist, idealist, or materialist speculation of the nineteenth century is in the last analysis reducible, including the sociologies of Comte, of Spencer, of Hegel, of Durkheim and of the Marxists. This metaphysical side of [historical] Morphology has completely escaped Spengler's critics, who are visibly unsettled, and who have only been able to oppose to him those question-begging arguments of which I have said once and will say again that they are "nonsense" and nothing else.[72]

Whereas Febvre saw history as a lively and invigorating mode of thought and life, this was true of Spengler only in the limited sense that he understood historical cultures as analogous to living organisms. This meant, however, that while history might offer occasional flashes of inspiration, its ultimate result was always the same: death. Only "absolute," ahistorical humanity endured.

To further highlight this contrast, we can note that whereas Spengler saw the *fellah* as fundamentally ahistorical, Febvre and *Annales* cofounder Marc Bloch prioritized the historical study of rural life, while their intellectual heir Fernand Braudel pioneered a *longue-durée* approach that would historicize human beings' relationship to the natural

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quoted at the end of the next citation, see Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umrisse einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (1918–1922; repr., München: Dt. Taschenbuch-Verl, 2006), 760.

[72] "Après la ruine de Thèbes, de Babylone ou de Rome, bientôt de Londres, Paris, Berlin et New York, la maison paysanne d'Egypte, de Mésopotamie, de l' « antiquité », ou de l'Occident reste et restera toujours ce qu'elle fut, ce qu'elle avait été partout : celle du « fellah », c-est-à-dire de l'homme absolu, qui n'est ni cultivé, ni civilisé, ni primitif. Homme par conséquent, impossible à connaître par une théorie scientifique de l'histoire ou par une philosophie de l'histoire, auxquelles se réduit en dernière analyse toute la spéculation positiviste, idéaliste ou matérialiste du XIXe siècle, y compris les sociologies de Comte, de Spencer, de Hegel, de Durkheim et des marxistes. Ce côté métaphysique de la Morphologie a complètement échappé à la critique anti-spenglérienne qui est visiblement gênée, et qui n'a pu lui opposer encore que ces pétitions de principe, dont j'ai déjà dit et redis encore qu'elles sont des « balivernes » et rien d'autre." Mohand Tazerout, introduction to Oswald Spengler, *Le déclin de l'Occident : esquisse d'une morphologie de l'histoire universelle*, trans. Tazerout, vol. 2: *Perspectives de l'histoire universelle* (Paris: Nouvelle Revue française, 1933), 3-4. For Spengler on the *fellah* see, e.g., ibid., 241: "The successors to culture are *peasant people*, of which the Egyptians of the Roman epoch are the most famous example." ("Les successeurs de la culture sont les *peuples de fellahs*, dont les Égyptiens de l'époque romaine sont l'exemple le plus célèbre.")

environment.[73] Indeed, Febvre's writings sometimes betray nostalgia for a time before the advent of what Spengler called "civilization," marked by an accelerating pace of technological change. As we have seen, Febvre saw the mounting industrialization and imperialism of the late nineteenth century as a "tragedy of progress." In a later piece paying tribute to the late Bloch, executed by the Gestapo in 1944, Febvre lamented that in the West, what was traditionally "a civilization of historians" had, thanks to "technical revolutions engendering in our societies veritable psychological mutations every fifteen or twenty years," lost its "taste for history."[74] He argued, however, that historians should try to adapt to the accelerated pace of contemporary civilization. The historian of the future would, he wrote, be "the leader of a team" whose intellectual training and sensitivity to "the great problems that life, each day, poses to societies and civilizations" would be matched by his ability to manage equipment and personnel and, ultimately, to create in "six months to a year" a scholarly product superior to what "an isolated worker" might produce in a decade.[75] For Febvre, unlike Spengler, that is, the historian's task was

[73] On Febvre's and Bloch's early works on rural and provincial France, see Burguière, *The Annales School*, 57. On the *longue durée* ("a history in which all change is slow, a history of constant repetition, ever-recurring cycles… [an] almost timeless history, the story of man's contact with the inanimate"), see Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, vol. 1, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 20.

[74] "Car elle" (i.e., "notre civilisation") "est, en son fond et dès ses origines, une civilisation d'historiens." Further on: "Or que, dans les dernières décades, beaucoup de porteurs de la civilisation occidentale se soient dépris brusquement de leur vieux goût par l'histoire ; qu'ils aient marqué avec force leur désillusion d'hommes qui avaient trop cru dans ce qu'il leur plaisait d'appeler ses « leçons » ; que la cadence même, si furieusement accélerée, des révolutions techniques engendrant tous les quinze ou vingt ans dans nos sociétés de véritables mutations psychologiques, correspondant chaque fois à de nouveaux changements : chemins de fer, puis automobiles, puis avions, et la peau de chagrin se rétrécissant par secousses ; vapeur, puis force électrique, puis énergie atomique en voie de domestication – et tout le reste, qu'il faudrait des pages pour énumérer, tout ce qui affecte le genre de vie, le comportement individuel ou collectif, les réactions sensorielles des hommes ; – que cette cadence même, que cette accélération prodigieuse des bouleversements creuse chaque fois davantage le fossé qui sépare les générations et rompe les traditions : voilà qui n'est point à demontrer longuement." Lucien Febvre, "Vers une autre histoire" (1949), in *Combats pour l'histoire*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Armand Colin, 1965).

[75] "Il" (that is, the isolated armchair historian of old) "aura fait place au chef d'équipe, alerte et mobile, qui, nourri d'une forte culture, ayant été dressé à chercher dans l'histoire des éléments de solution pour les grands problèmes que la vie, chaque jour, pose aux sociétés et aux civilisations, saura tracer les cadres

to revive culture, here emblematized by historical writing, within the framework of the civilization that threatened to destroy it.

Largely on political grounds, Febvre found Spengler's work execrable. Reviewing *Decline* in 1936, he highlighted the prophetic aspects of the book, linking Spengler in the process to the rise of Nazism. Apostrophizing Spengler's "sermons" to the German youth, Febvre wrote: "Stop wasting your time on poetry, philosophy, painting. Dead past. Orient yourselves toward what lives. Form in yourself the primary material from which great men will arise, and which they will use…."[76] Spengler's first readers, Febvre went on to write, were "future faithful Nazis." Although Spengler would ultimately fall out of favor with the Nazi leadership, he and these "future Nazis" indeed shared what Febvre identified as a set of "common enemies: democracy, bourgeois liberalism and Marxism."[77] Spengler's work gave voice to a "violent hatred" of the natural sciences, liberalism, the concept of progress, and academic specialization that appealed, Febvre argued, to the sensibility of devastated postwar Germany: "a certain pathos, a resolute anti-intellectualism, the heroic notion of destiny, anti-aestheticism, the human being's thrill before the ample majesty of History."[78] The "vitalist metaphors" on which Spengler

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d'une enquête, poser correctement les questions, indiquer précisément les sources d'information et, ceci fait, évaluer la dépense, régler la rotation des appareils, fixer le nombre des équipiers et lancer son monde à la quête de l'inconnu…. Six mois, un an : l'enquête est prête à être livrée au public. L'enquête d'un travailleur isolé aurait mis dix ans à ne point faire aussi riche, ni aussi vaste, ni aussi probante." Ibid., 427.

[76] "« Ne perdez plus votre temps à la poésie, à la philosophie, à la peinture. Passé mort. Orientez-vous vers ce qui vit. Formez en vous la matière première d'où surgiront les grands hommes, et qu'ils utiliseront…»" Febvre, "De Spengler à Toynbee," 578.

[77] "C'est que, en ce temps-là, Spengler et ses lecteurs, les futurs Nazis de stricte obédience, avaient des ennemis communs : la démocratie, le libéralisme bourgeois et le marxisme." Ibid., 579.

[78] Although Spengler had earned a doctorate in natural sciences with his dissertation on Heraclitus, Febvre wrote, *Decline* "testifies to a violent hatred against the respect with which too many Germans surround the natural sciences and the liberalism of their adepts, notably their conception of progress; progress, liberalism, the gods whose cult was imposed on the young Spengler by his familial milieu, his teachers and schoolmates" ("porte témoignage d'une haine violente contre le respect dont trop d'Allemands entouraient les sciences naturelles et le libéralisme de leurs adeptes, leur conception de progrès notamment ; progrès, libéralisme, les dieux, dont le culte avait été imposé au jeune Spengler par son milieu familial, ses maîtres et ses compagnons d'étude"). Ibid., 575. Further on: "In the 1920s Spengler surrounded himself with the

relied had, according to Febvre, already been exhausted by French thought (specifically, the linguist Arsène Darmesteter) by the end of the nineteenth century; Spengler's intellectual contribution, therefore, was negligible.[79]

The issue of Spengler's relationship to Nazism also loomed over Tazerout's translation, the second part of which appeared in June of 1933, several months after Hitler's ascendancy to the German chancellorship. Spengler's critics' failure to discuss "the fundamental postulate of his 'historical Morphology'" not only meant, Tazerout argued, that they would "never understand Spengler himself" but also, consequently, that they would "understand nothing… of the events in Germany unfolding before our eyes" at the time of his writing.[80] As his subsequent work on the history of German thought made clear, Tazerout saw Spengler as belonging to what he called a vitalist dialectic stretching from Marx to Hitler.[81] To study his work was apparently, then, both to glean what Tazerout saw as Spengler's valuable insights into the specificity and incommensurability of historical cultures and to see how, as a "social educator," Spengler had helped drive his country to the brink of disaster. Unlike Febvre, that is, Tazerout

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most coveted commodities" ("Spengler tenait boutique, en ces années 20, des denrées alors les plus convoitées"): "disons, un certain pathétique, un anti-intellectualisme résolu, la notion héroïque du destin, l'anti-esthéticisme, le frisson de la créature humaine devant la majesté, l'ample majesté de l'Histoire." Ibid., 579.

[79] Ibid., 576-77.

[80] "Tant qu'on n'aura pas discuté d'abord le postulat fondamental de sa « Morphologie historique », on ne comprendra donc pas Spengler lui-même, et on ne comprendra rien non plus, par conséquent, dans les événements d'Allemagne qui se déroulent sous nos yeux." Tazerout, introduction to Spengler, *Le déclin*, vol. 2, 1-2.

[81] Tazerout, *Les éducateurs sociaux*, vol. 2, *L'éducation vitaliste* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1946). Lalmi points out that the publisher of Tazerout's trilogy on Germany's "social educators," Fernand Sorlot, was close to the far-right group Action française and also published the first French translation of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*; Lalmi, "Mohand Tazerout," 270-71. Because of this association Tazerout's first volume, *L'éducation idéaliste*, was briefly banned following France's liberation from the Germans, when Sorlot was accused of collaboration. For documentation of this controversy see the second appendix to Fournier, *Mohand Tazerout*, 243-49. As these documents show, the experts consulted on this work's content and merits included Kojève's friend and student, Georges Bataille. Ibid., 248.

sought to avoid the sort of nationalist reading that Spengler's writings, insofar as they expressed pro-German chauvinism, seemed to invite.

I will return to Tazerout's conception of what he called the dialectic of modern German thought, and to the question of how his own shifting political allegiances and intellectual interests might have borne the influence of these studies. Before doing so, I will consider Tazerout alongside another towering figure in interwar and postwar French intellectual and political life, Alexandre Kojève. The Russian-born philosopher's work overlapped significantly with Tazerout's in its subject matter, but his thinking and sensibility—to say nothing of his subsequent lionization as the godfather of twentieth-century French philosophy[82]—are in sharp contrast to those of Tazerout, who wrote in a drier style, offered somewhat milder claims about the trajectory of world history, and has left barely any trace on the historiography of modern French thought.

Kojève enthralled his auditors with visions of the simultaneous perfection of philosophy and politics at the end of history, the potential for which Hegel had, in his view, been the first to grasp—and whose work Kojève's students would perhaps see themselves as responsible for completing. Many commentators detect in Kojève's lectures on Hegel a subversive, perhaps violent energy, linking him both to postwar existentialism and May '68 (though Kojève himself is reputed to have said of the latter: "blood did not flow, therefore nothing happened").[83] The philosopher Vincent Descombes, for example, has written that "in Kojève's version, Hegelian thought

[82] Accounts in which Kojève's influence features prominently include Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott-Fox and J. M. Harding (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Stefanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism That Is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010); Ethan Kleinberg, *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France, 1927-1961* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Michael S. Roth, *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).
[83] Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, 13 (translation modified). Kristin Ross has identified the similar claim that "no one died in '68" as an often repeated historical myth. Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 186.

presents certain traits that could seduce a Nietzschean: there is something adventurous and risky about it, it endangers the thinker's very person, his *identity*, it goes beyond common measures of good and evil."[84] For Tazerout, however, Hegel merely represented a crucial step in the historical procession of German social thought. Tazerout both criticized this German tradition and, in doing so, positioned himself as the proponent of an intellectual and political rationalism ostensibly able to pacify violent, entropic historical forces.

The life and death of philosophy and the state: Kojève and Tazerout

Kojève's youth coincided with what his biographer Marco Filoni describes as a Russian "philosophical renaissance," central to which were a critique of modernity—and thus of the West, though this movement's philosophical influences were mostly German—and a preoccupation with the individual's relationship to the universal, often thought of in Christian terms.[85] In this intellectual milieu, a yearning for spiritual rebirth went hand in hand with the revolutionary fervor that gripped the Russian intelligentsia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A particularly influential figure in this regard, according to Filoni, was the poet Aleksandr Blok (1880-1921), who saw in political revolution the possibility of "exiting the epoch of agony and decadence of the modern world's culture" and whose thought was marked by the distinction between culture and civilization that was so fundamental for Spengler.[86] Kojève was immersed in this intellectual atmosphere at an early age, attending salons in Moscow with his parents where literary and philosophical themes were discussed. He would go on to write a

[84] Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, 14 (translation modified).
[85] Marco Filoni, *Le philosophe du dimanche: la vie et la pensée d'Alexandre Kojève*, trans. Gérald Larché (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2010), 40-41.
[86] Ibid., 46.

doctoral dissertation on the religious philosophy of Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900), a strong influence on Blok and his ilk.[87]

Unsurprisingly given this early immersion in apocalyptic philosophy, Kojève read the first volume of Spengler's *Decline* in 1920, when he was eighteen, and found its gloomy prophecies rousing. Somewhat like the anticolonial nationalists discussed by Goebel, Kojève saw in the "decline of the West" the potential for a "new culture" to rise, buoyed by a new philosophical system—one that would be rooted in Russian culture but equally premised on a new mathematics (Kojève found Spengler's discussion of the cultural specificity of mathematical systems particularly compelling) and an "Indian (Oriental) renaissance." Filoni suggests that these thoughts, recorded in the "philosophical journal" Kojève began to keep in his late teenage years, reflect not only a "typically adolescent" wish "to assume a universal philosophical mission," but also traces of the longstanding wishes of many Russian intellectuals to synthesize Eastern and Western thought.[88] Though Spengler's influence on Kojève was not a lasting one, the latter's interest in "Oriental" (especially Indian and Chinese) philosophy and religion would endure, with his first mature philosophical work inquiring into the philosophical implications of an "atheistic religion" like Buddhism.[89] Although he did not make cultural rebirth or renewal explicit themes of his philosophical writing—the opposite almost seems to be true insofar as Kojève's concept of the end of history can be interpreted as "a

[87] Ibid., 38.
[88] Ibid., 192-93.
[89] This text, originally written in Russian in 1931, was published posthumously in French translation as Alexandre Kojève, *L'athéisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998); in English, *Atheism*, trans. Jeff Love (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018). For a discussion of this work in the context of Kojève's broader philosophical project, see Geroulanos, *An Atheism That Is Not Humanist*, chapter 3, esp. 136-45. In short, Kojève's interest in atheism was crucial to his development of the concept of an "ontological dualism" separating humanity from nature (as opposed to the traditional metaphysical dualism between humanity and divinity)—a concept further indebted to Kojève's studies of the phenomenologists Edmund Husserl and especially Martin Heidegger.

final decadence in which humans are distinguished from other animals only by their pretentiousness"[90]—Kojève was caught up, to some extent, in the vitalist currents that inflected much of interwar French and German thought.

Further, something like the interwar vitalism of Spengler and Febvre was evident in Kojève's famous 1930s lectures on Hegel—which he later described as "a work of propaganda destined to strike the spirits" of his auditors.[91] Through an extended reading of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, 1807), these lectures describe the realization, through the combined work of the philosophical "Sage" (Hegel) and the warmaking statesman (Napoleon), of a "universal and homogeneous state" and thus, the end of history. Though we cannot discuss this reading in detail here, it will be

[90] These are Michael Roth's words in *Knowing and History*, 139. In this passage Roth discusses an amendment to a footnote included in Kojève's published Hegel lectures. In the original note, Kojève described the end of history as leading to the disappearance of "Man properly speaking, that is to say negating Action of the given and of Error, or in general the Subject *opposed* to the Object" ("l'Homme proprement dit, c'est-à-dire l'Action négatrice du donné et l'Erreur, ou en général le Sujet *opposé* à l'Objet"). In the addendum, included in the book's second (1962) edition, Kojève attempted to situate the end of history at a precise moment in the past (everything that had happened after Hegel's time, he now claimed, "was nothing but an extension in space of the universal revolutionary power actualized in France by Robespierre-Napoleon" ["ne fut qu'une extension dans l'espace de la puissance révolutionnaire universelle actualisée en France par Robespierre-Napoléon"]) and to identify the way of life proper to posthistory. This, he decided, would be Japanese "*Snobisme*"; and since "no animal can be a snob," human subjectivity as such would not in fact degenerate into mere animality. Instead, "post-historical Man must continue to *detach* 'forms' from their 'contents,' no longer doing so in order to actively transform the latter, but in order to *oppose* himself as a pure 'form' to himself and to others, taken as indifferent 'contents'" ("l'Homme post-historique doit continuer à *détacher* les « formes » de leurs « contenus » en le faisant non plus pour trans-former activement ces derniers, mais afin de *s'opposer* soi-même comme une « forme » pure à lui-même et aux autres, pris en tant que n'importe quels « contenus »"). Interestingly, then, Kojève's posthistory could be seen as a fusion of East and West, thanks both to his focus on Japan (the first Asian country to embrace Western-style industrialization) and his description of "the Sovietization of Russia and the Communization of China" as "the Sino-Soviet actualization of Robespierrian Bonapartism." Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel: leçons sur la* Phénomenologie de l'esprit *professées de 1933 à 1939 à l'École des Hautes Études*, ed. Raymond Queneau (1947; repr., Paris: Gallimard, 2014), 509-11.

[91] This remark came in a letter to the Vietnamese philosopher Tran Duc Thao, who reviewed Kojève's published Hegel lectures for *Les Temps modernes* in 1948. After explaining that, in certain aspects of his reading, he had deliberately distanced himself from Hegel's thinking, Kojève added: "D'autre part, mon cours était essentiellement une oeuvre de propagande destinée à frapper les esprits." Gwendoline Jarczyk et al., "Alexandre Kojève et Tran-Duc-Thao : correspondence inédite," *Genèses*, no. 2 (1990), 134. See Tran Duc Thao, "*La phénomenologie de l'Esprit* et son contenu réel," *Les Temps modernes* 3, no. 36 (1948): 492–519.

worthwhile to examine Kojève's remarks on the nature and role of the intellectual or philosopher, as well as the character of and potential for a perfect, final political state. Tazerout considered similar questions in his writings on German intellectual history and the renovation of the French state, reaching quite different conclusions.

In his lectures, Kojève repeatedly stressed the importance of distinguishing between the Greek Stoic, the Christian believer, or the bourgeois intellectual—protagonists of various of Hegel's dialectical stages, all of whom, according to Kojève, renounce the goal of self-transcendence through historical action and instead take refuge in thought or belief—and the Hegelian philosopher, who aspires to a kind of godlike omniscience or wisdom. Hegel's *Phenomenology* could, Kojève argued, be read as an attempt to answer "the question: 'what am I?'"—that is, what is the philosopher?[92] But while Kojève argued that for Hegel, to answer this question in a comprehensive and coherent way was already to be the "*fully* and *perfectly self-conscious*" sage, he also distinguished between philosophy—the "*love* of" or "*aspiration* to" wisdom (*sagesse*)—and "wisdom itself."[93] The philosopher who aspired to wisdom was "the man who, essentially, *changes*… who wants to become and be *other* than he is… because he does

[92] "En effet, Hegel écrit la PhG pour répondre à la question : « que suis-je? »." Ibid., 335.

[93] "I speak of 'philo-sophia,' the *love* of Wisdom, the *aspiration* to Wisdom, as opposed to 'Sophia,' Wisdom itself." ("Je parle de la « philo-sophie », de l'*amour* de la Sagesse, de l'*aspiration* à la Sagesse, par opposition à la « Sophia », à la Sagesse elle-même.") He defined the "sage" as "the man able to respond in a *comprehensible*, even satisfactory, manner to *all* the questions we could pose to him regarding his acts, and respond in such a fashion that the *whole* of his responses would form a *coherent* discourse" ("le Sage est l'homme capable de répondre d'une manière *compréhensible*, voire satisfaisante, à *toutes* les questions qu'on peut lui poser au sujet de ses actes, et répondre de telle façon que l'*ensemble* de ses réponses forme un discours *cohérent*"). Ibid., 317. The philosopher capable of coherently and comprehensively answering the question "what am I?"—a question only a philosopher would pose in the first place, according to Kojève—would necessarily be a sage: "Indeed, the man who gives a *complete* response to the question 'what am I' is by definition a Sage. That is to say that in *responding* (in the strong sense of the word) to the question: 'what am I,' one necessarily responds not with: 'I am a Philosopher,' but 'I am a Sage.'" ("En effet, l'homme qui donne une réponse *complète* à la question « que suis-je » est par définition un Sage. C'est-à-dire qu'en *répondant* (en sens fort du mot) à la question : « que suis-je », on répond nécessairement non pas : « je suis un Philosophe », mais « je suis un Sage ».") Ibid., 335. Here and in other quotations from this work, emphasis is in the original.

not *know how* to be satisfied by what he is."[94] This satisfaction would only be available to the sage, who in turn would necessarily be a citizen of the universal and homogeneous state at the end of history, the circularity of whose discourse would be the mark of its completeness and finality.[95]

Had the universal and homogeneous state and the scientific system of philosophy to which it must correspond in fact been realized? At various points, Kojève gave his auditors reason to doubt that this was the case, even from Hegel's own perspective. Concluding his discussion of the relationship between philosophy and wisdom, for example, he proposed that perhaps Hegel had "only affirmed the presence in the world of the *germ* of this State and the existence of the necessary and sufficient conditions of its flourishing."[96] And if the definitive, final state was a possibility, so was the definitive, final philosophical system that would explain humankind's arrival at perfect self-consciousness. The lesson Kojève intended to transmit to his followers was thus apparently that there was "no need to abandon Philosophy and flee into Religion," racism, or nationalism.[97] Just as Febvre urged students to live and act through and for

[94] "…le Philosophe est l'homme qui, essentiellement, *change*… qui veut devenir et être *autre* qu'il n'est, et ceci uniquement parce qu'il ne se *sait* pas être satisfait par ce qu'il est." Ibid., 329.

[95] On circularity as indicative of absolute knowledge: "In posing any question, we arrive sooner or later, after a more or less lengthy series of questions and responses, at one of the questions that is found inside of the Sage's circular Knowledge. Starting from this question and progressing logically, we arrive *necessarily* at the point of departure. We thus see that we have exhausted *all* possible questions and responses. Or, in other words, we have obtained a *total* response: each part of circular Knowledge has for its response the *whole* of this Knowledge, which—being circular—is the whole of *all* knowledge." ("En posant n'importe quelle question, on arrive tôt ou tard, après une série plus ou moins longue de réponses-questions, à l'une des questions qui se trouve à l'intérieur du Savoir circulaire que possède le Sage. En partant de cette question et en progressant logiquement, on arrive *nécessairement* au point de départ. On voit ainsi qu'on a épuisé *toutes* les questions-réponses possibles. Ou, en d'autres termes, on a obtenu une réponse *totale* : chaque partie du Savoir circulaire a pour réponse l'*ensemble* de ce Savoir, qui est – étant circulaire – l'ensemble de *tout* savoir.") Ibid., 336-37.

[96] "[Hegel] affirmait seulement la présence dans le Monde du *germe* de cet État [parfait] et l'existence des conditions nécessaires et suffisantes à son épanouissement." Ibid., 339.

[97] "Yet, if this State is possible, so is Wisdom. Thus, no need to abandon Philosophy and flee into Religion; no need to subordinate my consciousness of myself to an awareness of what I am not: of God, or of some inhuman perfection (aesthetic or other), or of race, people, or nation." ("Or, si cet État est possible, la

history, Kojève encouraged his own auditors to philosophize not only for the sake of philosophy, but in order to become wise and achieve a social order in which the Hegelian master–slave dialectic would be resolved and universal, reciprocal recognition would reign. As initiates of Hegelian philosophy, Kojève further implied, his students would be uniquely qualified to realize perfect philosophy and the perfect political order; and indeed, these figures often appear in accounts twentieth-century French intellectual history as members of an *engagé* intellectual elite.

Though Tazerout devoted to Hegel a chapter of his work on modern Germany's "social educators," his account bore little resemblance to Kojève's. While Kojève sometimes appeared to accept Hegel's claim that absolute knowledge had been (or could be) achieved, Tazerout claimed forthrightly that Hegel was Germany's "first theorist of relativity."[98] Although, wrote Tazerout, Hegel's philosophy of history was ostensibly one of movement, with human freedom driving forward the progress of "spirit,"

> precisely in this philosophy of history, the movement of spirit is only understood as the political history of peoples, not the history of nature, or even the history of society as a whole. When it comes to natural history, we indeed know that nature is not free, and Hegel again specifies that its "circular movement repeated ceaselessly" produces "nothing new under the sun." As for the history of humanity, he reserves it expressly to that of nation-states and refuses to see its beginnings in the family, society, languages or the historical migrations of men. It is quite surprising to see excluded by a philosophy of "universal history" such an important part of a movement that nevertheless claims to be absolute. We might say that the content of this movement is relative and absolute at the same time.[99]

Sagesse l'est aussi. Et alors nul besoin d'abandonner la Philosophie et fuir dans Religion quelle qu'elle soit ; nul besoin donc de subordonner la conscience que j'ai de moi-même à une prise de conscience de ce que je ne suis pas : de Dieu, ou d'une perfection inhumaine quelconque (esthétique ou autre), ou de la race, du peuple ou de la nation.") Ibid., 340.

[98] "Hegel fut pour l'Allemagne le premier théoricien de la relativité." Mohand Tazerout, *Les éducateurs sociaux*, vol. 1, *L'éducation idéaliste* (Paris: Sorlot, 1943), 183.

[99] "Or, précisément dans cette philosophie de l'histoire, le mouvement de l'esprit ne s'entend que de l'histoire politique des peuples, non de l'histoire de la nature, ni même de l'histoire sociale entière. Pour ce qui est de l'histoire naturelle, nous savons en effet que son « mouvement cirulaire répété sans cesse » uniformément ne produit « rien de nouveau sous le soleil ». Quant à l'histoire de l'humanité, il la réserve

In other words, Tazerout questioned whether a purely idealist philosophy of history could be truly universal or absolute, given that important aspects of human experience (or "natural" occurrence) would necessarily escape its grasp. Along similar lines, he wrote in the final volume of *Les éducateurs sociaux* that Hegel had "allowed to be recognized what he himself did not explicitly recognize, namely *the relativity of all* historical and social syntheses. He thus left to posterity a first element of pessimism regarding the value of idealist syntheses, and this is perhaps the most durable result of his thought."[100] Whereas Kojève saw the circularity of Hegel's system as the mark of its completion, Tazerout argued that Hegel had exhausted the possibilities of idealist philosophy.

Interestingly, Kojève seems to have been affected by something like what Tazerout characterized as idealist pessimism in his lectures on Hegel, in which a tension between his own ontological dualism (distinguishing between natural and human being) and Hegel's monism is sometimes evident. In a 1948 letter to the Vietnamese philosopher Tran Duc Thao written in response to the latter's review in *Les Temps modernes* of the published Hegel lectures, Kojève wrote: "I prefer to speak of dualism between Nature and Man, but it would be more correct to speak of a dualism between Nature and Spirit, Spirit being the very Nature that implies Man. Thus, my dualism is not 'spatial,' but 'temporal': Nature first, Spirit or Man next."[101] Although Tazerout described German

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expressément à celle des Etats nationaux et refuse d'en voir les débuts dans la famille, dans la société, la langue et les migrations historiques des hommes. Il est assez surprenant de voir écarter par un philosophe de « l'histoire universelle » une partie aussi importante d'un mouvement qui prétend néanmoins à l'absoluité. On dirait que le contenu de ce mouvement est absolu et relatif en même temps." Ibid., 183-84.

[100] "La supériorité de Hegel sur Schiller est d'avoir permis de reconnaître ce qu'il n'a pas reconnu lui-même explicitement, à savoir la *relativité de toutes les synthèses* historiques et sociales. Il lègue ainsi à la posterité un premier élément de pessimisme sur la valeur des synthèses idéalistes, c'est là peut-être le résultat le plus durable de sa pensée." Ibid., vol. 3, 18. Emphasis in the original.

[101] "[J]e préfère de parler de dualisme entre la Nature et l'Homme, mais il serait plus correct de parler d'un dualisme entre la Nature et l'Esprit, l'Esprit étant cette même Nature qui implique l'Homme. Donc, mon dualisme est non pas « spatial », mais « temporel » : Nature d'abord, Esprit ou Homme ensuite." Jarczyk et al., "Alexandre Kojève et Tran-Duc-Thao," 135.

idealism in somewhat similar terms (i.e., as a dialectic of time, in contrast to the "vitalist" dialectic of space), Kojève seems here to advance a line of thought that, informed by philosophical references absent from Tazerout's account (the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and especially Martin Heidegger), could not be expected to fit into the latter's schema. And whereas Kojève arguably injected a Marxist conception of the proletariat's historical role into his reading of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, Tazerout depicted Marx as a new departure in German thought, which henceforth projected itself into the world instead of remaining content with introspection and "a narrow vision of time":

> Marx was the first to teach the Germans to look around and not exclusively within themselves, who taught them to discover space instead of indulging exclusively in their narrow vision of time. He greatly expanded their political and geopolitical horizons by showing them, successively, that the German idealists lived in a myth of temporal objectivity; that the French revolutionaries lived in the juridical fiction of the social contract; and that the English capitalists lived in the contradiction of economic surplus-value. And all the experiences of the three European nations constituted for Marx national values, life itself being the value par excellence, an international value, whose dialectical determination would be the philosophy of value, opposed under the name of "historical materialism" to the Germans' inveterate transcendental idealism.[102]

Tazerout argued, then, that through his critiques of German, French, or British "values," Marx reoriented German social thought toward a vitalist philosophy responsible,

[102] "C'est Marx qui enseigna le premier aux Allemands à regarder autour d'eux et non exclusivement en eux-mêmes, qui leur apprit à découvrir l'espace, au lieu de se complaire exclusivement dans leur vision étroite du temps. Il élargit grandement leur horizon politique et géopolitique en leur montrant succesivement que les idéalistes allemands vivaient dans le mythe de l'objectivité temporelle ; que les révolutionnaires français vivaient dans la fiction juridique du contrat social ; et que les capitalistes anglais vivaient dans la contradiction de la plus-value économique. Et toutes les choses dont vivaient les trois nations européennes constituaient pour Marx des valeurs nationales, la vie elle-même étant la valeur par excellence, valeur internationale, celle dont la détermination dialectique sera la philosophie de la valeur, opposée sous le nom de « matérialisme historique » à l'idéalisme transcendental invéteré des Allemands." Tazerout, *Les éducateurs sociaux,* vol. 3 , 47. See also the chapter on Marx in ibid., vol. 2.

ultimately, for the country's ruthless aggression on the world stage between the late nineteenth century and World War II.[103]

Concluding his study of German social thought, Tazerout wrote that the idealist and vitalist dialectics he traced could be described together as "a *philosophy of catastrophe or eternal war*," which he counterposed to what he called the French "logic of peace." To overcome the two societies' "reciprocal incomprehension," exemplified by the recently concluded war, it would be necessary to rethink "all of our systems of thought… in order to extract a veritable logic of human reason."[104] As he made clear here and elsewhere in his work, he associated this rationalist project, at once intellectual and political, both with his own sociological method and with Arab thought, which he saw as a historical intermediary between conflicting Western ideas. I will return to this point below. In order to further specify Tazerout's place in interwar French vitalism, however, I now turn to his work on the renovation of the troubled Third Republic.

Revitalizing French republicanism

Tazerout's *L'état de demain* (The state of tomorrow, 1936) appears somewhat out of sync with the European political thought of its time to the extent that the latter was characterized by skepticism toward parliamentary democracy. The German political and

[103] Tazerout's volume on Germany's "vitalist education" was published just after the war, in 1946. The figures he included in the German vitalist dialectic, which he grouped in sets of three (representing the dialectical stages of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis), were Marx, Richard Wagner, and Friedrich Nietzsche; Otto von Bismarck, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Ferdinand Tönnies; and Moeller van den Bruck (originator of the concept of a Third Reich), Spengler, and Hitler. Each triad corresponded, in Tazerout's schema, to a dialectical conflict: between individual and society; culture and civilization; and race and science, respectively.

[104] "On peut appeller les deux méthodes une *philosophie de la catastrophe ou de la guerre éternelle*.

"Mais ne pourrait-on pas les comparer avec notre logique de la paix, que la France ne cesse de proclamer et d'enseigner d'instinct à ses générations de libres citoyens? … Cette incompréhension réciproque est la source de confusions communes qui vicient tous nos systèmes de pensée, figés mais non périmés, et qui doivent tous être révisés, notamment le spiritualisme et l'idéalisme, le positivisme et le matérialisme historique, afin d'en extraire une véritable logique de la raison humaine." Tazerout, *Les éducateurs sociaux*, vol. 3, 119.

legal theorist Carl Schmitt, for example, argued in a famous 1923 essay that parliamentary government (rule by open discussion) was in fatal contradiction with democracy (rule by the will of the people) and surveyed a number of anti-parliamentary political tendencies, from Marxism to syndicalism to fascism, that seemed poised to win the day over the unstable republican systems then in place in Germany and France.[105] For Tazerout, in contrast, the Third Republic's political sclerosis was the product of the doctrine of the separation of powers, which he saw as *weakening* parliament. Although the Third Republic's constitutional laws gave parliament sole legislative authority, Tazerout argued that the executive nevertheless held disproportionate power: hearing and voting on presidential and ministerial proposals left insufficient time in the five-month legislative session for deputies to devote to their own work.[106]

In *L'état de demain*, Tazerout called for nothing less than the "complete refoundation" of the French state as a collection of rationally reorganized parliamentary commissions. To accomplish this would, he argued, be to redefine the state as "*the dynamic exercise of parties' political powers over the property of their compatriots* [*nationaux*]," in the particular sense of "party" he proposed in the book's opening chapters (to be discussed below). "The personality of these compatriots," he continued, "indeed escapes the grasp of political parties, because it is the eternal Revolution that none of them can ever master, but which all strive to channel and direct by the general method of the representation of property. This method is the political State properly

[105] Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, trans. Ellen Kennedy (1923; repr., Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

[106] Moreover, the president possessed a number of unaccountable powers, among them dissolving the Chamber of Deputies (with the Senate's approval), declaring war, and negotiating international treaties whose details he was not required to share with parliament. Mohand Tazerout, *L'etat de demain: theorie et realisation d'une democratie parlamentaire en France* (Paris: Les presses universitaires de France, 1936), 84-86.

speaking."[107] The state's function, then, was to channel the primordial popular (or "national") energies that both exceeded it and called it into being.

In the first part of the book, which he invoked in the passage quoted above, Tazerout established the general theoretical principles on which his political proposals rested, starting with a definition of property as humanity's "taking nature into possession."[108] The fundamental question for political theory, according to Tazerout, was to whom property belonged.[109] In practice, this question would be decided legally, and law was "necessarily the work of men" who would impose "*their law* on all, always *a posteriori* and following a political act incumbent only on them." Such political acts—presumably constituting the appropriation of land and other goods ("nature") or, more abstractly, the seizure of property—would be the work of "*political parties*."[110] (The founding acts of European political history, Tazerout argued, were the Crusades.[111]) If the party was the basic political actor, the state was a "system of forces" defined, above all, by the actions of parties, validated after the fact by legal regulations and further political maneuverings.[112]

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[107] "…une refonte complète de l'État qui se définira désormais comme *l'exercice dynamique du pouvoir politique des partis sur la propriété de leurs nationaux et sur elle seule.* La personnalité de ces nationaux échappe en effet d'elle-même à l'emprise des partis politiques, parce qu'elle est l'éternelle Révolution qu'aucun d'eux n'a jamais pu maîtriser, mais que tous s'efforcent de canaliser et de diriger par la méthode générale de la représentation de la propriété. Cette méthode, c'est l'État politique proprement dit." Ibid., 81. Here and elsewhere, emphasis in the original.

[108] "Cette prise en possession de la Nature, par l'homme, c'est *la propriété*." Ibid., 3-4.

[109] "La seule question qui se pose pour le théoricien de la politique, c'est de savoir *quels hommes* possèdent la propriété constatée par lui *hic et nunc*." Ibid., 6.

[110] "Il reste donc que ce Droit est nécessairement l'oeuvre des hommes, et comme ils ne l'ont pas tous également sur une propriété déterminée, il est précisement aux mains de ceux-là qui font le Droit pour tous, toujours *a posteriori* et après un acte politique incombant seulement à eux. Tous les hommes accomplissant cet acte politique *sont des partis politiques*." Ibid., 21.

[111] "Before the Crusades, the right to property did not exist, so to speak, in Europe." ("Avant les Croisades, le droit de propriété n'existait pour ainsi dire pas en Europe.") Ibid., 6.

[112] "The state is therefore not the nation, but a system of forces within this nation. This system of forces is *the party or parties*." ("L'État n'est donc pas la nation, mais un système de forces au sein de cette nation. Ce système de forces, c'est *le parti ou les partis*.") He further defined the state as "a social system whose genesis is always political, but whose subsequent organization must, in order to last, be juridical and

For Tazerout, a democratic system would harmonize the polity's competing interests,[113] and parliament would be the instrument of this harmonization.[114] He distinguished repeatedly between the people's "revolutionary" energy, on which democratic sovereignty was based,[115] and the legislative acts through which parliament—not, he emphasized, the president, ministers, or leaders of private industry[116]—would exercise this sovereignty. If the people was not yet ready to govern itself directly,[117] it could perhaps become so through political education overseen by the state's institutions. Together with this political education, the reorganization of parliament and recognition of its full sovereignty would accomplish the French state's revitalization, transforming it into a true democracy and bringing an end to "anarchic" clashes between parties and "government."[118]

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political at once" ("un système social dont la genèse est toujours politique, mais dont l'organisation postérieure en vue de durer est nécessairement juridique et politique à la fois"). Ibid., 23.

[113] "*What is democracy?* A political regime in possible harmony with all the aspirations of men, of *all the men of a nation indiscriminately*." ("*Qu'est-ce que la démocratie ?* Un régime politique en harmonie possible avec toutes les aspirations des hommes, de *tous les hommes d'une nation indistinctement.*") Ibid., 67.

[114] "The Parliament of the French Republic results, essentially, from the agreement renewed each day between this individualist revolution and this political maneuvering; it is the only political power sovereignly reigning over the property of the French, *because it cannot reign over the French individual as a whole*." ("De l'accord renouvelé chaque jour, entre cette révolution individualiste et cette manoeuvre politicienne, résulte en gros le Parlement de la République française, il est le seul pouvoir politique régnant souverainement sur la propriété des Français, *parce qu'il ne peut pas régner sur l'homme français tout entier*.") Ibid., 93.

[115] "We are all revolutionaries…. It is therefore on this revolutionary basis that democracy must be constructed." ("Nous sommes tous révolutionnaires…. C'est donc sur ce fonds révolutionnaire qu'il faut construire la démocratie.") Ibid., 68.

[116] One of the ways in which the problem of political representation could be approached was, Tazerout suggested, by posing the question: "*are the men of a nation represented by political parties or by labor unions and economic corporations*?" ("*les hommes d'une nation sont-ils représentés par des partis politiques ou par des syndicats et des corporations économiques* ?") Ibid., 48.

[117] "Reform must, indeed, be made by the parties themselves, *it cannot at any price be entrusted to the Government* or even the electors: the first is not sovereign, the second are not *yet* competent [to govern]." ("Il faut en effet que la réforme soit faite par les partis eux-mêmes, *on ne saurait à aucun prix la confier au Gouvernement,* ni même aux électeurs : le premier n'est pas souverain, les seconds ne sont pas compétents *actuellement*.") Ibid., 99.

[118] "La réorganisation des Commissions parlementaires est la charpente maîtresse de l'État démocratique de demain, dans lequel le Français cessera d'être le plus anarchique des nationalistes, et ceux qui le dirigent les plus rétrogrades des Gouvernements." Ibid., 102.

Yet the program Tazerout presented was not a utopian one, and he argued that attempts to establish and codify the principles of democratic political order—for example, through the various "constitutions resulting from the French Revolution"—betrayed a fundamental misunderstanding of the relationship between law and politics.[119] He was critical both of actually existing French, British, or American liberal democracy—a point of partial agreement with the anti-parliamentarians[120]—and fascist, Soviet, or syndicalist alternatives to it. Concluding a discussion of the nature of political representation in the modern state focused, in particular, on the case of the Soviet Union, Tazerout wrote that democracy was

> essentially a mode of representative government. And if Soviet representation is also a democracy, [this representation] cannot be incumbent either on a single man, a single party, or parties stripped of their own sovereignty by their ministers. None of these errors is democratic in the proper sense of the term. The first of these pseudo-democracies is the state of Hitler or Mussolini; the second, undoubtedly temporary, is that of the current Soviet republics and of international syndicalism in all its forms; the third, in place since the capitalist bourgeoisie's accession to power, and principally since Montesquieu, is the false parliamentarianism of France, England and the United States, to say nothing of the states to which we disdainfully refuse the dishonorable honorific of "great powers."[121]

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[119] "L'erreur fondamentale de toutes les Constitutions issues de la Révolution française, c'est qu'elles font dépendre régulièrement ces lois parlementaires d'un droit abstrait, qui s'évapore à mesure qu'on en parle. Les pseudo-parlements libéraux légifèrent ainsi pour le ciel qui est au-dessus d'eux, au lieu de légiférer pour la nation dont on leur confie la propriété ; et comme ils ne gouvernent jamais que cette propriété de leurs nationaux et non leurs âmes, ils agissent finalement, au nom de la Nation, contre ces âmes, et contre cette propriété." Ibid., 87-88.

[120] Schmitt, for example, lamented that "in a few states, parliamentarism has already produced a situation in which all public business has become an object of spoils and compromise for the parties and their followers, and politics, far from being the concern of an elite, has become the despised business of a rather dubious class of persons," in *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, 4. One can imagine Tazerout agreeing with this general sentiment, though he placed the blame for the situation Schmitt described not on "the parties" but what Tazerout called "government."

[121] "Comme on le verra surtout dans le chapitre suivant, essentiellement un mode de gouvernement représentatif. Et si la représentation soviétique est aussi une démocratie, elle ne saurait incomber ni à un seul homme, ni à un seul parti, ni à des partis et à des ministrables de ces partis ainsi dépouillés de leur propre souveraineté. Aucune de ces erreurs n'est démocratique au sens propre de ce mot. La première de ces pseudo-démocraties est l'État de Hitler ou de Mussolini ; la seconde, sans doute provisoire, est celle des Républiques soviétiques actuelles et du syndicalisme international sous tous ses formes ; la troisième enfin,

True democracy, in other words, was nowhere to be found in the interwar world, though he implied that a proper understanding of the representative state (as "government of property by parties"[122]) could help correct the "errors" characteristic of the various "pseudo-democracies."

Among the targets of Tazerout's criticism in *L'état de demain* was the Belgian syndicalist leader Hendrik de Man (1885-1953), whose 1933 work *Die sozialistische Idee* (The socialist idea) Kojève translated into French in collaboration with Henry Corbin.[123] As head of the Belgian Workers' Party (POB), de Man advocated a "voluntaristic" socialist politics that would avoid what he saw as the "passive," determinist posture of orthodox Marxism[124] and whose cornerstone would be a mixed economy in which credit and key industries would be nationalized.[125] Despite the popularity of these proposals—

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qui dure depuis l'avènement de la bourgeoisie capitaliste au pouvoir, et principalement depuis Montesquieu, c'est le faux parlementarisme de la France, de l'Angleterre et des États-Unis, pour ne pas parler de celui des États auxquels on refuse dédaigneusement le titre honorifique ou déshonorant des « grandes puissances »." Tazerout, *L'état de demain*, 56-57.

[122] "Cette existence de l'Etat dépend uniquement des trois facteurs que nous venons d'analyser : *la propriété comme objet, les partis comme sujets, la représentation comme modalité du Gouvernement de la propriété par les partis.*" Ibid., 54.

[123] Henri de Man, *L'idée socialiste : suivi du Plan de travail*, trans. H. Corbin and A. Kojevnikov (Paris: Éditions Bernard Grasset, 1935).

[124] "The labor movement must give up its passive attitude with regard to the economic crisis. It should replace its deterministic theory of the business cycle—basically of capitalist origin—with a voluntaristic policy, the immediate though partial goal of which would be to eliminate unemployment and to defeat the crisis." This was the third of de Man's "Thèses de Pontigny," presented at an international conference on socialist planning and included as the first appendix to *L'idée socialiste*, 531. "The Theses of Pontigny," in *A Documentary Study of Hendrik de Man, Socialist Critic of Marxism*, trans. Peter Dodge (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 302 (translation modified). For a discussion of the relationship between de Man's "voluntarist politics" and the theory of socialism presented in *L'idée socialiste* and other works, see Peter Dodge, *Beyond Marxism: The Faith and Works of Hendrik de Man* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), chapter 5.

[125] In both the Pontigny theses and his "Plan du Travail"—first presented at a 1933 POB congress and included as the second appendix to *L'idée socialiste*—de Man advocated a mixed economy (national and private sectors) as a necessary source of economic dynamism. Among the industries that should be nationalized were the "private monopoly of credit" and "the principal monopolized industries producing raw materials or power." De Man, "Plan du Travail," in *L'idée socialiste*, 535-37; "The *Plan du Travail*," in *A Documentary Study*, 291, 293.

The "Plan du Travail" was enthusiastically received by portions of the French left, who would produce similar plans—though these did not win favor with the Popular Front leader Léon Blum. See Dodge, *Beyond Marxism*, 147; Philip Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era*

which arguably paved the way for aspects of postwar social democracy—and his voluminous output as a socialist theoretician, de Man's reputation was subsequently tarnished by his collaborationist activities during the Nazi occupation of Belgium. Responding to his country's defeat at the hands of the German invaders, de Man exhorted his fellow socialist activists to "[p]repare yourselves to enter the cadres of *a movement of national resurrection that will embrace the living forces of the nation*, of its youth, of its veterans, within a single party—that of the Belgian people, united by its fidelity to its King and by its desire to realize the Sovereignty of Labor."[126]

Leaving aside the controversial question of de Man's fascist sympathies and their relationship to his thought,[127] we can observe in this quotation another expression of

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(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 27-28; Tommaso Milani, *Hendrik de Man and Social Democracy: The Idea of Planning in Western Europe, 1914-1940* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), chapter 7. Interestingly, Milani shows that by 1947, Blum was ready to embrace a program similar to those of the interwar *planistes* ("a form of revisionism not so different from the one he had once opposed"). Ibid., 255.

Tazerout saw the distinction between public and private economic sectors on which advocates of state-directed economic development relied as an "arbitrary division" that obscured what he saw as the true political–economic problem: property should be seen as held in common by all members of the nation: "Ce n'est pas l'antithèse du national et du privé qui y est d'abord en jeu, elle se superpose seulement ensuite comme un enveloppe trop commode pour cacher la même réalité tangible unique : la propriété égale des hommes dans la nation où ils servent." Tazerout, *L'état de demain*, 138.

[126] Quoted in Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France*, trans. David Maisel (1986; repr., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 23; emphasis added. Sternhell also cites admiring correspondence between de Man and Benito Mussolini, who wrote to the former in praise of his 1926 work *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus* (*The Psychology of Socialism*), translated into Italian in 1930. "It is precisely," de Man wrote in his response to Mussolini, "because, belonging, like you, to the 'generation of the front,' and influenced, like you, by the ideas of Georges Sorel, *I do not close my mind to any manifestations of creative force*, it is precisely because I am not afraid to do justice to certain organizational aspects of the fascist enterprise, that I follow its progress with a passionate interest." Quoted in ibid., 21-22; emphasis added.

[127] Miliani takes issue with Sternhell's claim that de Man's thinking was essentially fascist, arguing that this amounts to a teleological projection of de Man's later collaborationism back onto a dynamic and evolving political and intellectual trajectory; *Hendrik de Man and Social Democracy*, 12. Though we cannot pronounce a definitive judgment on this matter, a glance at de Man's preface to *L'idée socialiste*—in which he took pains to distinguish his own critique of Marxism from what he called the Nazis' "anti-Marxism"—would seem to vindicate Milani (that is, if we take de Man at his word): "Je devais à ce livre," wrote de Man, "qui revendique pour le socialisme la qualité d'exécuteur testamentaire de tout le passé humaniste de notre civilisation, de le présenter d'une façon qui exclut toute confusion possible entre cet « anti-marxisme »" (of the Nazis) "et mon « au delà du marxisme »." De Man, preface to *L'idée socialiste*, 8.

interwar vitalism, with the workers' movement (seen as a broad coalition of political forces) serving as the engine of national renewal. Cultural regression was a major theme in de Man's work no less than in Spengler's;[128] but while the latter envisioned a process of inexorable decay, de Man held out hope for a revolutionary revitalization, whose agents would include not only politicized workers but philosophers and other intellectuals.[129] It seems likely that this was one source of his appeal for Kojève, whose own project of "striking the spirits" of the philosophically-inclined auditors to whom he offered a narrative of the conjoined realization of a perfect philosophy and a perfect state were seemingly inflected with the *planiste* fervor of the interwar European social-democratic left.[130]

In contrast, Tazerout located political vitality not in statecraft or theory but the "social education" that would mediate between them, transforming the raw energy of political contests to control property into dispassionate legal order.[131] Tazerout's own

[128] For de Man, this regression or "decadence" was one aspect of a broader crisis brought on by the advent of mass society; Dodge, *Beyond Marxism*, 98-99. Sternhell names de Man and Spengler as adherents to a widespread current of interwar thought advocating an "ethical socialism" and concerned, above all, with combating materialism; Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left,* 131. However, the two thinkers evidently held different attitudes toward the crisis they and many of their contemporaries acknowledged: Dodge cites a series of articles on the "New Germany" published by de Man in 1921 in which he explicitly rejected Spengler's pessimism. Dodge, *Beyond Marxism,* 61.

[129] As Dodge points out, this led to charges that de Man favored an "elitist socialism"—charges he denied without abandoning his "conviction of the particular importance of the intellectuals to the socialist movement" as policymakers and propagandists. Ibid., 112-13.

[130] This observation would seem to complicate the common interpretation of Kojève whereby his lectures were somehow Marxist and partially responsible for a renaissance of French Marxism, since the *planiste* left with which he seems to have sympathized was in open conflict with orthodox Marxist parties like Germany's Social Democratic Party and the French Section of the Workers' International (Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière, the precursor to today's Parti Socialiste).

[131] Kojève's philosopher is, however, not entirely distinct from Tazerout's social pedagogue. In the passage from Kojève's lectures cited above regarding the philosopher as "the man who changes," for example, Kojève goes on to claim that insofar as dialectical philosophical discourse reveals change and thus progress, it can be regarded as "a pedagogical dialectic or a dialectical pedagogy": "Le discours dialectique du Philosophe qui révèle son changement, révèle donc un progrès. Et puisque tout progrès *révélé* a une valeur *pédagogique*, on peut dire, en résumant, que toute Philosophie est nécessairement (comme l'a très bien vu Platon) une dialectique pédagogique ou une pédagogie dialectique, qui part de la première question relative à l'existence de celui qui la pose et qui aboutit finalement, du moins en principe, à la Sagesse,

social position—decidedly marginal to the political or cultural power centers to which de Man and Kojève, who spent the latter part of his career as a high-ranking civil servant, were able to gain access—would seem, in part, to explain this difference in perspective. To understand how this position, to which his Algerian origins were crucial, contributed to his intellectual outlook and development, we must now consider Tazerout's relationship to and attitude toward North African history and culture, a theme that cropped up throughout his writings and became his explicit focus in several late works.

FROM FRANCE TO ISLAM AS SITES OF POLITICAL VITALITY

Among the rationalized parliamentary commissions Tazerout advocated creating in *L'état de demain* was one that would consolidate the functions of the colonial and foreign affairs ministries. Concluding his discussion of the duties that would fall to this proposed "commission of external affairs," Tazerout suggested that "certain colonies, like North Africa," would benefit from the removal of the "governors and residents general" who ruled over them and the creation of "regional and municipal councils, in which French and native representation would both result from *the same political education* as in France, beginning with universal suffrage."[132] He went on to decry the favoritism the French administration showed to certain segments of North African society—traditional indigenous military units or regional governors; "Jews, Spaniards, and Italians"[133]—while it discriminated against others, particularly the "'young Turks' of Algeria, Tunisia, or

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c'est-à-dire à la réponse (ne serait-ce que virtuelle) à *toutes* les questions possibles." Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, 329-30.

[132] "Cette collaboration loyale" (of "natives" in colonial politics) "pourrait être obtenue dès maintenant dans certaines colonies, comme l'Afrique du Nord, par la substitution aux gouverneurs et résidents généraux, de conseils régionaux et municipaux, où la représentation indigène et française résulterait également de *la même éducation politique* qu'en France, à commencer par le suffrage universel." Tazerout, *L'état de demain*, 149-50.

[133] Ibid., 150. Colonial Algeria's Jewish and European immigrant populations became naturalized French citizens through, respectively, the "Crémieux decree" of 1870 and the nationality law of 1889. See McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, 107, 115.

Morocco" who, Tazerout claimed, were being prevented from exercising in their own country the skills and insights they had gained thanks to their French schooling.[134] He closed the chapter with an ominous (and prescient) warning that without reform, the political situation in the region could become "extremely grave."[135]

Included in Tazerout's call for French political renovation, then, was an appeal to French authorities to allow his country's politicized intelligentsia—the "Young Algerians," whose ranks would include the future nationalist leader Ferhat Abbas—to play a role in government.[136] In his work on Germany's social educators, he made similar—though now more abstract—claims about the potential for Arab or "oriental" thinking to breathe new life into shopworn German or French paradigms. In the conclusion to this work's last volume, amid speculations about a potential "logic of peace" between France and Germany, Tazerout argued that the apparent antithesis between the two nations—the one Catholic and torn between spiritualism and materialism, the other Protestant and divided between idealism and vitalism—obscured a crucial "third factor," which he called "oriental rationalism":

> To explain the artificial reconciliations whereby we seek in vain to find a German antithesis to our French spiritualism and materialism, while they themselves know nothing but their national idealism and vitalism, we should now take into account

[134] "Il est tout à fait vain, par exemple, et d'ailleurs contradictoire et dangereux, de s'en remettre à l'angélique loyalisme des caïds et des mokhazni arabes ou berbères, qu'on oppose naïvement au séparatisme des « jeunes Turcs » d'Algérie, de Tunisie ou de Maroc, parce que ceux-ci ont très souvent le mérite de voir plus clair que leurs corréligionnaires chargés de décorations superflues. Ces « jeunes Turcs » ont vu clair au contact de l'école française et par elle seule ; pourquoi leur ferme-t-elle ensuite l'horizon qu'elle a entr'ouvert ?" Drawing on his own experience, he also asked why teacher training should be segregated: "Pourquoi existe-t-il à Bouzaréa une « école normale » d'instituteurs pour les uns, un « cours normal » d'instituteurs pour les autres ?" Tazerout, *L'état de demain*, 150. On this issue, see Colonna, *Instituteurs algériens*, 132.

[135] Tazerout, *L'état de demain*, 151.

[136] On the "Young Algerians" see McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, 140, 148-49; Charles-Robert Ageron, *Histoire de l'Algérie contemporaine*, 5e ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974), 71-76; Gilbert Meynier, *L'Algérie révélée: la guerre de 1914-1918 et le premier quart du XXe siècle* (1981; repr., Saint-Denis: Bouchène Editions, 2015), 212-23.

> a third factor, too often hidden, especially since Renan, and hated as if pleasurably by all historians of philosophy, who perhaps understand it no more than did Ernest Renan: I speak of *oriental rationalism*, that of al Farabi and Avicenna, of Spinoza and of Marx.

Tazerout alludes, here, to the nineteenth-century orientalist and polymath Renan's famous lecture positing an antithesis between Islamic faith and scientific reason. This lecture provoked an equally famous rebuttal from the Islamic modernist Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, a key intellectual precursor to Algeria's reformist *oulémas,* whose basic attitude about Islam's affinity with rationalism Tazerout seems, in this passage, to share. Tazerout went on to refer to this as an "[o]riginal rationalism" found "in its pure state [only] in Brahmanic India and with the Muslims, who transplanted it to Europe…."[137] At once Islamic and universal, this rationalism would, he argued, be crucial to a postwar "conciliation" between France and Germany.[138]

In positing an "oriental rationalism" that encompassed ancient Arab and modern Western thinkers, Tazerout perhaps made use of Spengler's morphological technique,

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[137] "Mais pour expliquer ces rapprochements artificiels, où nous cherchons en vain à trouver chez l'Allemande l'antithèse de notre spiritualisme et de notre matérialisme français, alors qu'eux-mêmes ne connaissent que celle de leur idéalisme et de leur vitalisme nationaux, il convient de tenir compte maintenant d'un troisième facteur trop obscurci, surtout depuis Renan, et honni comme à plaisir par tous les historiens de la philosophie, qui ne le comprennent peut-être pas plus qu'Ernest Renan : je veux parler du *rationnalisme oriental*, celui d'Al Farabi et d'Avicenne, de Spinoza et de Marx." And further on: "La rationalisme originaire n'est ni catholique, ni protestant, ni grec, ni chrétien : on ne la trouve à l'état pur que dans l'Inde brahmanique et chez les Musulmans, qui l'ont transplanté en Europe, vraisemblablement sous l'influence d'Ibn Sina, dit Avicenne." Tazerout, *Les éducateurs sociaux*, vol. 3, 122. See Afghani's "Answer of Jamal ad-Din to Renan," in Nikki R. Keddie, *An Islamic response to imperialism; political and religious writings of Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn "al-Afghānī"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 181-87. On the Renan–al-Afghani controversy, see Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, 2nd ed. (Cambrige: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 120-23. For an account stressing the racial theories underpinning Renan's view of Islam, see Albert Hourani, "Islam and the Philosophers of History," *Middle Eastern Studies* 3, no. 3 (1967), 250-52.

[138] "Mais la conciliation pourrait être possible, si on a le courage d'extirper, chez les deux peuples en même temps, le mythe religieux de la race et le culte idolâtre de l'argent, par une éducation rationaliste à longue échéance, mais aussi à très longue portée." Tazerout, *Les éducateurs sociaux*, vol. 3 127. He also seemed to view such a postwar settlement as inseparable from some form of socialism: "Mais ceux qui ont foi dans la raison humaine doivent opter pour l'hypothèse socialiste, qui seule voit dans chaque société historique un principal causal et final de la production de l'homme par le travail humain, au lieu de ce principe exclusivement finaliste de la répartition des marchandises, et de la distribution des hommes nécessaires pour produire celles-ci." Ibid., 132.

which could identify transhistorical affinities between cultures otherwise seen as unique and hermetic. As we saw above, Tazerout saw Spenglerian morphology as a necessary supplement to what he characterized as Marx's "mathematical" sociology, inapplicable in Tazerout's view to societies comprising a plurality of groups distinguished by sentiment as well as material interest. As we will see shortly, he would draw a similar analogy between France's civilizing mission and the Islamization of North Africa. Despite his intellectual dedication to Spenglerian cultural relativism, the politics of decolonization would push Tazerout to align himself explicitly with Arab culture and the Algerian nation. Further, in his postwar writings Tazerout would develop a theory of civilizational coexistence, one of whose purposes was seemingly to reconcile his own dedication to French (or Arab) universalism with the particularist politics of national liberation.

In both *L'état de demain* and *Les éducateurs sociaux*, Tazerout seems to see the French state as the site and principal beneficiary of his imagined rationalist political project, notwithstanding the emphasis he also places on Islam or the Young Algerians as crucial political and intellectual forces. Political collaboration with indigenous North Africans was, Tazerout wrote in the former work, necessary "[i]f the French want to conserve their colonial empire."[139] In the conclusion to *Les éducateurs sociaux*, he called France the "protecting nation par excellence of Muslim rationalism" and mused that for this reason, the new rationalism he called for might well emerge there.[140] At this stage of his life and career, in other words, Tazerout wrote as a loyal French citizen whose

[139] "Si les Français veulent conserver leur empire colonial, il leur faudra admettre un jour ou l'autre une collaboration indigène à la politique concernant aussi la propriété de ces indigènes." Tazerout, *L'état de demain*, 148.

[140] "Mais d'où jaillira un jour cette flamme, cette étincelle de raison, ce nouveau paraclet providentiel ? De la Chine ou de l'Islam, qui restent encore des Orientaux ? Ou bien des Soviets ou des États-Unis, qui sont déjà si impliqués dans nos conflits occidentaux ? Mais pourquoi pas aussi et principalement de la France, nation protectrice par excellence du rationalisme musulman ?" Tazerout, *Les éducateurs sociaux*, vol. 3, 123.

avowed patriotism seemingly precluded him from questioning France's imperial prerogatives. If he criticized certain of the French imperial state's deficiencies or abuses, he did so in order to advocate the existing system's reform rather than its abolition.[141]

Recent commentators have pointed to Tazerout's letter to Paul Tubert—the general assigned by Charles de Gaulle to write a report on the May, 1945 events in which French police and soldiers killed thousands of protesting Algerians at Sétif and Guelma[142]—as the clearest example of his assimilationist beliefs. Addressing Tubert as "my dear compatriot" and praising his report as the "most intelligent" account of Algerian affairs he had read in a long time, Tazerout went on to address the questions of how to define "modern colonization"; how to characterize its effects on "the colonizing people"; and how France would develop its empire (here employing the future tense).[143]

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[141] It may, however, be misleading to impute any consideration of France as an *imperial nation-state* to Tazerout, since he does not appear to have recognized the inequalities and abuses of the colonial situation as constitutive of French republicanism. In this way we can perhaps contrast Tazerout to the writers and statesmen Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor, whose work Gary Wilder discusses in *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); and *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

[142] On the widely varying estimates given for these events' death toll—from fifteen hundred (the colonial administration's estimate) to as high as forty-five thousand (according to some Algerian nationalists), with a "sober estimate" of eight thousand gaining support among historians—see McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, 371n4. Tazerout would cite the 45,000 figure in his *Histoire politique de l'Afrique du Nord* (Rodez: Éditions Subervie, 1961), 141; see below for a discussion of this work. The Tubert report has been published as A. Taleb Bendiab and Tayeb Chenntouf, "Un Document inédit sur le 8 Mai 1945 dans le constantinois. Le rapport du général Tubert. Note et présentation," *Revue algérienne des sciences juridiques, économiques et politiques* 11, no. 4 (1974): 289–315.

[143] "Monsieur et cher compatriote

"Je viens de lire au JO [*Journal officiel*] votre intervention du 10 juillet concernant les incidents de Sétif et de Guelma. Permettez-moi de vous en féliciter, en vous disant que c'est la plus intelligente qui me soit tombée sous les yeux, depuis longtemps, sur les affaires algériennes auxquelles je m'intéresse toujours en tant que natif de ce pays et en tant que sociologue désinteressé des politiques et des idéologies internationales. …

"Le problème en discussion me paraît devoir se décomposer ainsi : 1° Qu'est-ce que la colonisation moderne ? 2° Quelles conséquences en découlent pour le peuple colonisateur ? 3° Comment la France développera-t-elle son empire ?" Tazerout, "Lettre au général Tubert," third appendix to Fournier, ed., *Mohand Tazerout*, 252. For Fournier's reading of the letter see his "Témoignage," in ibid., 33-34.

For an earlier theoretical consideration of French colonialism from Tazerout, this time in the context of a review of Georges Hardy's *La politique coloniale et la partage de la terre aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, see Mohand Tazerout, "A propos de la colonisation," *Revue internationale de sociologie* 45, no.

After presenting a series of proposals for political, economic, and educational reform in Algeria, Tazerout claimed that by realizing these reforms, France would demonstrate "to the entire world its vitality, to Islam in general its active brotherhood and to the other French and foreign colonies the superiority of assimilation to all other imperial methods" (i.e., what he called the Anglo-Saxon method of "association" and the Russian method of "incorporation," discussed elsewhere in the letter).[144] Here as elsewhere in his work, that is, Tazerout maintained that the French state could improve itself through democratic government and applied rationalism. The Sétif and Guelma massacres—which Tazerout does not seem to have witnessed firsthand—were, he claimed, "attributable half to the French, half to the natives, but in their totality to the obsolete institutions still reigning in Algeria and even in France."[145]

Tazerout did not, however, fail to see that the impasse France's imperial project had reached was to some extent built into the project itself. Colonialism was, he argued, essentially a program of economic development (originating, he also noted, in "war and trickery [*la ruse*]"); and "every economic growth implies a natural double tendency which is the synergy of efforts or their reciprocal paralysis."[146] One source of

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11–12 (1937): 637–644. Hardy was a historian, geographer, and colonial administrator whose book appeared in the "Bibliothèque de synthèse historique" series directed by Henri Berr, the *Annales* school*'s* most significant intellectual ancestor.

[144] "Quand la triple réforme sera réalisée, la France aura démontré au monde entier sa vitalité, à l'Islam en général sa fraternité agissante et aux autres colonies françaises et étrangères la supériorité de l'assimilation à toutes les autres méthodes imperiales." Tazerout, "Lettre au général Tubert," 272. On the three "imperial methods," ibid., 255.

[145] "Celui qui est comme moi convaincu que les responsabilités de Sétif et de Guelma sont imputables pour moitié aux français, pour moitié aux indigènes, mais pour leur totalité aux institutions désuètes qui régissent encore l'Algérie et même la France, celui qui a cette conviction raisonnée depuis longtemps, ne peut que proposer des remèdes pour l'avenir et laisser les partis politiques se quereller vainement pour le présent." Ibid., 264.

[146] "Mais une autre conséquence de cette recherche inéluctable" (for economic growth via the labor of colonized people) "est que chaque croisement économique implique une double tendance naturelle qui est la synergie des efforts ou leur paralysie réciproque." Ibid., 254. On colonies as products of "war and cunning," ibid., 256.

"paralysis"—a limit to colonial growth, which would ideally be enriching to both colonizer and colonized—was the "dogma of the impenetrability of races,"[147] or as he put it in another passage, the argument "opposing France to Islam as an invincible obstacle to social progress." On the contrary, he argued, the real "obstacle to social progress" in Algeria was "the double individual course of illicit enrichment" pursued in tandem by the "*colons*" and the colonial regime's "functionaries," whose practices were both "ruinous to the colonial collectivity" and "independent from the Church and from Islam."[148] To bring "synergy" to the colonial situation in Algeria was thus both to reform the political institutions that had allowed corruption and injustice to reign and to correct the prejudice toward Islam that colonialism had instilled and reinforced.

During the Algerian War, Tazerout published a number of works whose political agenda shifted from French institutional reform to civilizational coexistence, his concern for which led him to embrace Soviet internationalism as well as North African nationalism. At the close of *Au congrès des civilisés*—an attempt to define the particular contributions of a wide variety of world-historical cultures whose form and approach were clearly indebted to Spengler—he praised the "dictatorship of the proletariat, assumed in 1917 by the Russian Bolshevik Party at the vanguard of the Soviet masses," as "the only example we have seen so far of a true establishment of the collective responsibility of the intelligence of each before its consciousness, and of consciousness before intelligence."[149] This declaration, delivered in the voice of the Egyptian pharaoh

[147] "Ce dogme de l'impénétrabilité des races aboutit tôt ou tard à la destruction du croisement économique lui-même, sur lequel se trouvent bâtis tous les édifices coloniaux." Ibid., 255.
[148] "Il y a ainsi en Algérie, chez les Européens et les Indigènes indistinctement, une double course individuelle à l'enrichissement illicite ; celle des colons et celle des fonctionnaires également ruineuses à la collectivité coloniale et également indépendantes de l'Eglise et de l'Islam. Par conséquent, l'argument est dénué de valeur, qui consiste à opposer à la France l'Islam comme une entrave invincible au progrès social poursuivi par le colonisateur." Ibid., 261.
[149] "La dictature du prolétariat, assumée en 1917 par le parti bolchévique russe à l'avant-garde des masses soviétiques, est l'exemple unique jusqu'à ce jour d'une véritable instauration de la responsabilité collective

who presides over the imagined conference that serves as the book's framing device, was the final article of a "sociological law of coexistence" presented for the approval of the conference's attendees. In this law's preamble, Tazerout called "consciousness and intelligence" the "common denominator" of the modes of knowledge he saw each of the historical cultures he discussed as contributing (i.e., metaphysics from the Far East [China or India]; monotheism from the Near East; ancient Greek philosophy; and mathematics from the capitalist West).[150] His discussion of the dynamics of consciousness and intelligence—the "universal qualities of man" separating humanity from "animals and things"[151]—somewhat resembled his theory, in *L'état de demain*, of the relationship between political parties, the state, and the law, and served as a refutation of what he described in *Les éducateurs sociaux* as the dichotomous German dialectics of idealism (time) and vitalism (space). "It is in the complete simultaneity of intelligence and consciousness," Tazerout wrote, "that resides the absolute beginning of spatial intelligence and temporal consciousness, inseparable by definition." He also claimed, however, that intelligence—the capacity for choice or judgment—was responsible for the "primordial revolution" leading a culture to develop its signature ideas and was uniquely

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de l'intelligence de chacun devant sa conscience, et de la conscience devant l'intelligence." Mohand Tazerout, *Au congrès des civilisés*, vol. 5, *La communisme soviétique et la sociologie de la coexistence pacifique* (Rodez: Éditions Subervie, 1959), 282-83.

[150] "J'en conclus que les mathématiques et en général une science quelconque ont elles-mêmes pour guides nécessaires les cinq principes que je propose, ceux-ci ayant tous pour dénominateur commun la coexistence fondamentale de la conscience et de l'intelligence chez les hommes." Ibid., 279. Four of the "five principles" were echoed in the titles of *Au congrès*'s different volumes: vol. 1, *La métaphysique intellectuelle d'Extrême-Orient* (1955); vol. 2, *La foi religieuse du Proche-Orient* (1956); vol. 3, *La philosophie amoureuse de l'antiquité* (1956); vol. 4, *Le capitalisme mondial du XIVe siècle à nos jours* (1958). Each volume was written in the voice of a representative of the culture in question, ostensibly as a lecture given before an audience of the other representatives and the pharaoh. To his summary of these four modes of knowledge Tazerout added the "practical man" who constituted "all of these speculators at once united." Ibid.

[151] Ibid., 133.

capable of "transform[ing] each movement" of human thought or action "into progress."[152]

Although Tazerout imagined that many aspects of the law of coexistence would meet with universal approval—for example, an article stating that the "common civilizing effort of consciousness and intelligence" should be "continuous and progressive," lest a regression to barbarism or decadence ensue—others, like the one praising the Bolsheviks, met with skepticism from the "capitalists" in attendance.[153] If progress was a universal value ensured, to some extent, by the structure of human nature (i.e., the synergistic complementarity of consciousness and intelligence), Tazerout did not fail to acknowledge obstacles to progress, which he seemed to attribute to conflicting cultural values. In a work published shortly after *Au congrès*, *Histoire politique de l'Afrique du Nord* (Political history of North Africa, 1961), he addressed the conflict between France and the Algerian nationalists, questioning in the process the myths about Islam and North

[152] "En s'opposant aux identifications et confusions abusives, l'intelligence réalisa vraiment la première révolution universelle dans l'ensemble des êtres existants, dans la coexistence universelle des écritures de civilisation.

"A partir de cette révolution intellectuelle primordiale, historiquement attestée sous la forme de toutes les écritures de civilisation, il devient possible de parler correctement d'une évolution progressive de l'intelligence scripturale et de sa conscience en même temps…. La détermination de la naissance des êtres et la prévision subséquente de la durée de la vie sont des privilèges intellectuels que la conscience n'a pas en propre ; elles donnent à l'intelligence seule la possibilité de transformer chaque mouvement en progrès, chaque repos anarchique en révolution sociale, même chaque cessation de la vie en paradis ou en enfer." Ibid., 280.

[153] "To be effective," the article reads, "the common civilizing effort of intelligence and consciousness must be continuous and progressive. Every stagnation of one or the other force marks a rupture of reciprocal responsibilities, which equates to a regression that is a return to barbarism and a degeneration. Stagnation and regression are equally disastrous to intelligence and consciousness: they characterize the decadence of civilization, whether it prides itself selfishly on the level it has reached, or whether forgetting its writings makes it snobbishly adopt the writings of others, which it does not and cannot understand." ("L'effort civilisateur commun de l'intelligence et de la conscience doit pour être efficace, être continu et progressif. Chaque stagnation de l'une ou de l'autre force en action marque une rupture dans les responsabilités réciproques, laquelle rupture équivaut à une régression qui est un retour à la barbarie et une dégenerescence. La stagnation et la régression sont également funestes à l'intelligence et à la conscience : elles caractérisent la décadence de la civilisation, soit qu'elle se complaise égoïsement dans le niveau atteint, soit que son oubli des écritures lui fasse adopter en snob les éctritures des autres, qui lui restent incomprises et incompréhensibles.") Ibid., 281.

Africa's Arab and Berber populations that had been central to the colonial venture.

One such myth was that Arab conquerors had brutally imposed Islam on the region's Berber population. From the perspective of colonial ideology, Berbers were culturally proximate to Europe and thus more readily assimilable to French values than Arabs were.[154] Tazerout sharply distinguished the Maghreb's long history of conquest at the hands of invading empires from the Islamization of the Berber population that followed the Arab conquest of the seventh century. He argued that, in accordance with the Islamic principle of *ikhtilaf* (tolerance), this conversion was voluntary, and should not be characterized as a geopolitical clash of civilizations. Rather, the Berbers' conversion was "a universal fact of religious monotheism, which effaced all possible racism in equalizing little by little the social conditions of the Arabs and the Kabyles of North Africa."[155] The Arabs, Tazerout further argued, had not come to the Maghreb "to enrich themselves with war booty and slaves," something "Europe had accused them of… since the lamentable failure of its own crusades." Rather, "they came to free the consciousnesses of a suffering part of humanity from the colonial yoke that enslaved it,

[154] See Patricia Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria* (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1995).

[155] "La conversion acceptée des Berbères à l'Islam n'est pas un fait géographique du géopoliticien, mais un fait universel du monothéisme religieux, qui a effacé tout racisme possible en égalisant peu à peu les conditions sociales des Arabes et des Kabyles en Afrique du Nord." Mohand Tazerout, *Histoire politique*, 78. Though he began this work with a "geographical introduction," Tazerout denied that geography was destiny: "Il n'existe pas de déterminisme géographique, comme celui qu'enseignait naguère Ratzel"—Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904), originator of the concept of *Lebensraum*—"à ses élèves pangermanistes." Ibid., 11. This view distinguishes him from Febvre and his successor as editor of the *Annales*, Fernand Braudel, both of whom were enthusiastic readers of Émile-Félix Gautier (1864-1940): a geographer and colonial administrator whose works on the Maghreb and Islam sought to naturalize the civilizational opposition of East to West. See Florence Deprest, "Fernand Braudel et la géographie « algérienne » : aux sources coloniales de l'histoire immobile de la Méditerranée ?," *Materiaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 99, no. 3 (2010): 28–35. Gautier was one of Sahli's targets in *Décoloniser l'histoire*, though Sahli exonerated Febvre and Braudel of the geographical determinism that he, like Tazerout, denounced. Mohamed Chérif Sahli, *Décoloniser l'histoire*, 59-60.

because they themselves had received from their Qur'an the sacred order to convert all the world's people to monotheistic salvation."[156]

The "Arabs of Islam" had, Tazerout argued, been the "only foreign people" able to "assimilate [the Berbers of North Africa] in assimilating themselves to them from 640 to 1830" (i.e., between the Arab and French conquests). In contrast, the Maghreb's other conquerors had attempted to efface "the specific personality of the Berbers in liberating them progressively from the colonial tutelage of the foreigner who oppressed them" through "a series of barely interrupted revolutions."[157] In one case, assimilation was reciprocal and therefore successful; in the others, unilateral and thus inadequate or even fraudulent. By the time of the French conquest, Tazerout seems to imply, the North Africans' "specific personality" had come to include Islam, "European conquerors'" misunderstanding and denigration of which served to justify colonialism. He made these claims in the course of a discussion of the term *jihad*, which he defined as "military service" in accordance with the Islamic principle of conversion, or *ijtihad*—not "holy war," as European propagandists would have it:

> There is nothing more false and perfidious than conflating [*d'assimiler*] this word with the supposed "holy war" with which all European conquerors batter our ears, undoubtedly in order to legitimate their own shameful plunder by colonial revenge. This racist assimilation derives solely from their ignorance and disdain of Islam, which they present everywhere as a false doctrine of "resignation,"

[156] "Ils n'étaient pas venus pour s'enrichir du butin de guerre et d'esclaves, mâles ou femelles, dont l'Europe les accuse seulement depuis l'échec lamentable de ses propres croisades. Mais ils étaient venus pour libérer en conscience une partie souffrante de l'humanité, du joug colonial qui l'asservissait, parce qu'eux-mêmes avaient reçu de leur Coran l'ordre sacré de convertir tous les hommes de la planète au salut monothéiste." Tazerout, *Histoire politique*, 80-81.

[157] "Cette histoire entière nous apparaîtra comme une suite de révolutions à peine interrompues, qui furent plus ou moins longues et plus ou moins violentes, et qui avaient pour but uniforme de dégager la personnalité spécifique des Berbères, en la libérant progressivement de la tutelle coloniale de l'étranger qui l'opprimait. Un seul peuple étranger, les Arabes de l'Islam, a pu l'assimiler en s'assimilant lui-même à elle de 640 à 1830." Ibid., 17.

> whereas the very word *Islam* means positive "salvation," just as the word *mouslim* exclusively designates man "saved" from Adam's sin.[158]

In the course of France's brutal war with Algeria, then, Tazerout shifted his political allegiance from the French state (seen as capable of living up to its republican ideals, notwithstanding its colonial excesses) to the independent Algerian nation that now seemed poised to become politically sovereign. Further, the passage quoted above seems to suggest that something like Spengler's doctrine of cultural discontinuity helped him to understand and express this shift.

Tazerout offered a somewhat equivocal vision of Algeria's future. In one passage, he appeared confident that a "future Algerian nationality" would indeed emerge, and that it would equally embrace the National Liberation Front (FLN) and its armed forces (the National Liberation Army, or ALN); Algeria's "clandestine communists"; and "the famous 'French left,' barely tolerated today in their own country." This nationality would not be the product of diplomatic negotiations with France ("a Gaullist government with its handful of native sycophants [*« Béni-oui-oui »*] around a magical 'round table'") but rather, "the Algerian personality" itself.[159] Elsewhere, Tazerout sounded a more cautious note, speculating that de Gaulle could elect to eschew negotiations over "cease-fire and self-determination" and instead take a destructive, "Hitlerian" turn, setting the world ablaze in "a cruel universal nuclear war."[160] Tazerout, in other words, had no trouble

[158] "Mais il n'y a rien de plus faux, et de plus perfide en même temps, que d'assimiler ce dernier mot avec la prétendue « guerre sainte », dont tous les conquérants européens nous rabattent les oreilles, et cela sans doute pour légitimer leurs propres rapines inavouables par la vengeance colonialiste. L'assimilation raciste qu'ils en font provient uniquement de leur ignorance et de leur dédain de l'Islam, qu'ils présentent partout comme une fausse doctrine de la « résignation », alors que le mot même d'*Islam* signifie positivement « le salut », comme le mot *mouslim* désigne exclusivement l'homme « sauvé » du péché d'Adam." Ibid., 61.

[159] "Non seulement la « personnalité algérienne » cesse de dépendre désormais d'un gouvernement gaulliste et de sa poignée de « Béni-oui-oui » autour d'une magique « table ronde », mais encore elle devient génératrice de la nationalité algérienne de demain, qui comprendra tout le F.L.N. et son armée de libération, tous les communistes clandestins d'Algérie et la majorité des partisans de la fameuse « gauche française », à peine tolérée aujourd'hui dans son propre pays." Ibid, 125-26.

[160] "Le régime colonial dont souffrent depuis 1830 les Algériens ne peut pas durer indéfinement, mais il s'agit de savoir si la France colonialiste désabusée voudra discuter enfin loyalement, devant l'instance

imagining that a unified Algerian nation would coalesce out of heterogeneous social and political forces whose relations were far from harmonious and whose interests often clashed. He had his doubts, however, that this nation could withstand the force of French political and military power.

If the Algerian War, together with the rise of de Gaulle (whose regime Tazerout saw as undemocratic and as marginalizing the French left), make it easy to understand the shift in Tazerout's politics, questions remain about the nature of his intellectual project and its relationship to the contexts of twentieth-century France and Algeria. How did Tazerout, who seemed at times to subscribe to the Spenglerian postulate of irreducibly distinct historical cultures, reconcile his allegiance to France, of which he became a naturalized citizen early in his life, with his Algerian roots—or fail to do so? How, if at all, did Spengler's philosophy of history inform Tazerout's understanding of the "Algerian personality"? Do we need to understand Tazerout's intellectual and political projects separately, as he argued was necessary with Spengler? *Can* they be understood separately?

A further exploration of Tazerout's own philosophy of history—if we can call it that, given his apparent opposition of his own critical method to any definitive philosophical system—could perhaps yield tentative responses to these questions. His thinking about peaceful coexistence and historical evolution seems to have allowed him to enact a kind of mediation between his conflicting national identifications, in addition to arriving at his unique formulation of interwar vitalism. Productive conflict, leading to

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internationale de l'ONU, les conditions proposées du bout des lèvres par son chef suprême sur « le cessez le feu et l'autodétermination » des musulmans d'Algérie ; ou bien si ce chef absolu se sentira assez hitlérien pour mettre le monde à feu et à sang dans une cruelle guerre atomique universelle." Ibid., 150. On de Gaulle's actions in Algeria as President of the Fifth Republic, many of which (including French nuclear testing on Algerian soil, which began in 1960) Tazerout alludes to here, see McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, 227.

progress, was central to Tazerout's conception of human life and history; so, however, was merely destructive conflict, leading to political and cultural regression. In developing these views, he had recourse to an intellectual heritage he shared with his French contemporaries and with the German authors he both criticized and drew inspiration from (principally, it would seem, Marx and Spengler). In Tazerout's thought, original, pure rationalism—which he identified, at different times, either with France, Islam, or their fateful (and ultimately, failed) association—was a product of the dialectical conflicts that could exhaust or reinvigorate it; social education unleashed cultural and political forces destined, just as surely, to fade out of existence.

CONCLUSION

For Tazerout, Febvre, and Kojève, life and history were somehow synonymous. Each figure formulated this equation differently, however, with Febvre stressing the intimate link between the historian's intellectual practice and broader life; Kojève taking a similar attitude toward philosophy, seen as a means of accomplishing history's end; and Tazerout sharing Spengler's focus on historical cultures as organisms whose lives took shape in accordance with central ideas, symbols, or styles. To this focus, Tazerout added an emphasis on contradiction partially inspired, it would seem, by his own experience of the long-simmering tensions of colonial Algeria, which exploded onto the historical stage late in his life.

More precisely mapping the coordinates of Tazerout's disparate political and intellectual commitments—the relationships between, for example, his republicanism, socialism, or Algerian nationalism; between his rationalism and vitalism; or between the latter and Spenglerian pessimism—remains a crucial task for intellectual historians. For now, we can perhaps limit ourselves to observing a basic tension in Tazerout's work

between what we might call the politics of progress—a conviction in the necessity of political and social evolution, if necessary through revolution—and the politics of translation, or the belief that cultural differences can be understood and overcome. If the former led him to make policy recommendations and political forecasts that appear unrealistic from today's historical perspective, the latter seemingly drove him to imbue these pronouncements with the sorts of internal conflicts that would, he believed, propel history forward. To translate and juxtapose ideas and works spanning world-historical cultures and epochs was, for Tazerout, both to expose their contradictions and to clear the ground for their reconciliation, perhaps in a future permutation of culture or civilization.

If Tazerout did not explicitly elaborate this distinction in his own work, a younger generation of North African intellectuals marked by the experience of decolonization (as well as its own encounter with French culture) was well prepared to do so, though on somewhat different terms. Writing several years after Tazerout's death, Djaït—with whose reflections on Spengler we began this chapter—distinguished between culture and modernity, the second of which he used as shorthand for industrialization and its social consequences. Modernity, he argued, necessarily extinguished culture (as, we can observe, did Spengler's "civilization"). This had already happened in the West—he cited the work of Michel Foucault as a contemporary example of cultural exhaustion[161]—and might yet do so in the Muslim world, where the "temptation of technological modernization" had accompanied a "rejection of colonial domination" and consequent

[161] "It is significant," Djaït wrote, "that Foucault began by particularizing European culture in order to then proceed to a historical or, to use his term, 'archaeological' examination. Twenty years earlier, a gifted French philosopher would commit himself to a sui generis tradition and follow its course. This return to the self is a sign that a culture has reached its end." ("Il est significatif que Foucault ait d'abord particularisé la culture européenne pour se livrer ensuite à un examen historique, « archéologique » selon ses propres termes. Vingt ans auparavant, un philosophe français doué s'inscrivait dans une tradition *sui generis* et en poursuivait la course. Ce retour sur soi est révélateur de l'achèvement de la culture.") Djaït, *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 165; *Europe and Islam*, 151 (translation modified).

"reintegrati[on]... into contemporary historicity."[162] To avoid this, it was "crucial to preserve other forms of value: an identity, a culture, a civilization."[163] By safeguarding their cultural traditions from the onslaught of modernity, that is, the Arabs could avoid the fate of decadent Western civilization.

Djaït's Moroccan contemporary, the historian Abdallah Laroui,[164] would examine the Maghreb's confrontation with modernity in numerous works, starting with *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine* (Contemporary Arab ideology, 1967; see my discussion below, chapter 3). The vicissitudes of decolonization meant that these works tended to conceive of North Africa as part of the Arab world, much as Tazerout had in his *Histoire politique*—not, as in Tazerout's earlier works (and in accordance both with colonial dogma and, to some extent, Tazerout's own intellectual formation, aspects of which his successors shared), as an extension of France. Tazerout's basic interpretive framework—whereby civilizational conflicts disrupted primordial historical energies, impeding progress—gave way to narratives of irreconcilable cultural difference, which Laroui approached with critical circumspection.[165] The problematic relationship between

[162] "On the one hand, the rejection of colonial domination and the partial but important liberation movements that followed had the effect of reintegrating the Muslim countries into contemporary historicity. On the other hand, the temptation of technological modernization has never presented itself more insistently than it does today, as if rediscovered historical dignity demanded imitation of the victorious-vanquished West." ("D'un côté, le rejet de la domination coloniale et les libérations partielles mais importantes qui ont suivi ont eu pour effet de réintégrer les pays musulmans dans l'historicité contemporaine. De l'autre, jamais la tentation de la modernisation technologique ne s'est offerte avec autant d'insistance qu'aujourd'hui, comme si la dignité historique retrouvée postulait l'imitation du vainqueur-vaincu qu'est l'Occident.") Ibid., 183; 168 (translation modified).

[163] Because, wrote Djaït, the historical gap between the Muslim world and the modern European one was "impossible to fill" ("*impossible à combler*"), "il importe de préserver d'autres lignes de valeurs : une identité, une culture, une civilisation." Ibid., 186-87; 172 (translation modified).

[164] For a comparison of Djaït and Laroui, see Idriss Jebari, "L'histoire et « l'avenir possible » : Laroui, Djaït et la modernité du Maghreb dans les années 1970," *L'Année du Maghreb*, no. 10 (2014): 189–206.

[165] Interestingly, Djaït credits Laroui with adopting an approach at once "historical" and "rational" to the problem of the Arab world's "backwardness [*retard*]": "We must at all costs maintain both a sense of rationality and a sense of history. On this point, Laroui's observations are correct: however false it may be in absolute terms, the notion of 'backwardness,' applied to the Muslim world, is nonetheless real." ("*Il nous faut donc maintenir coûte que coûte le sens rationnel autant que le sens historique.* Sur ce point Laroui a

progress and translation would, however, remain central for postcolonial thinkers, as would questions about the nature, trajectory, and meaning of history.

Before turning our gaze away from Tazerout, it will be useful to briefly compare him to the next chapter's protagonist, Raymond Aron. Both figures traveled to Germany in the early 1930s and published works on German social thought. Both were motivated to do so by a desire to encourage Franco-German reconciliation in the wake of World War I. The older Tazerout, however, witnessed the war's horrors firsthand, and his combat experience radically shaped his life trajectory. His war injury prevented him from pursuing a traditional academic career and confined him to the margins of the French intellectual field, whereas Aron was educated and taught at France's most prestigious institutions and became known internationally as both a scholar and a political commentator. If Aron would trade his youthful pacifism and socialism for anti-totalitarian liberalism, Tazerout seems to have maintained his hope that a "logic of peace" would prevail and sometimes expressed sympathy for Soviet communism. Finally, when Aron argued in 1957 that France should give up its claim on Algeria and end the Algerian War, he did so on the grounds that the conflict was costly and harmful to France's international reputation. As we have seen, Tazerout's anticolonialism reflected a deep sympathy for the Algerian people and contempt for the de Gaulle administration.

In addition to these biographical and political divergences, Tazerout wrote a review of Aron's first book, *La Sociologie allemande contemporaine* (*German Sociology*, 1935), that allows us to reflect on the two authors' intellectual differences. Initially, Tazerout wrote of Aron's book, "we were a bit dazzled by the expository talent that the

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vu juste : si fausse qu'elle puisse être dans l'absolu, la notion de « retard », appliquée au monde musulman, n'en est pas moins réelle.") Djaït, *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 186; *Europe and Islam*, 171 (translation modified). Emphasis in the original.

author learned at the École normale supérieure in Paris." He went on, however, to raise a number of objections, principally that Aron had seemingly sought "to resolve his own dream of a 'logic of history'" without taking into account "either historical materialism or Spenglerian morphology." In Tazerout's view, that is, Aron neglected Spengler and Marx and overvalued the contributions of Max Weber, whom Aron credited with synthesizing "systemic" and "historical" sociology. According to Tazerout, however, Weber's "most certain influence consisted solely in the notion of scientific independence (*Wertfreiheit*)." Weber had not synthesized historical and systemic sociology—a false opposition, in Tazerout's view—but had emphasized the central problem confronting all sociologists: "whether sociology was *a science or a philosophy*."[166]

In his doctoral theses, which build on his study of German sociology, Aron, drawing inspiration from Weber, considered the question of whether *history* was a science or a philosophy. More precisely, he sought to show how a group of German thinkers, including Weber, had pursued a "critique of historical reason" inquiring into the conditions of possibility for historical knowledge. How could history be at once scientific and rooted in human experience? In *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (1938),

[166] "A la première lecture, on est ébloui un peu par la talent d'exposition que l'auteur a appris à l'École normale supérieure de Paris." He went on to take issue with Aron's characterizations of the French and German people and to note that the French went to Germany "much less to find Germans than to rediscover themselves" ("la plupart des Français… vont en Allemagne beaucoup moins pour y trouver des Allemands que pour s'y retrouver eux-mêmes"). Along these lines, he compared Aron to Celestin Bouglé, the author of an earlier book on German sociology: "M. Bouglé, en 1895, espérait y rencontrer Durkheim, comme M. Aron crut y résoudre son propre rêve d'une « logique d'histoire », sans d'ailleurs vouloir se mesurer ni avec le matérialisme historique ni avec la morphologie spenglérienne."

On Weber: "Et Max Weber ne sera pas davantage la synthèse ou le couronnement de cette sociologie : d'abord parce qu'il mourût trop tôt pour pouvoir influencer les autres sociologues, ensuite parce que son influence la plus certaine n'a justement consisté que dans la seule notion de l'indépendence de la science (*Wertfreiheit*). Le grand débat – mais nullement la synthèse – légué par Max Weber aux sociologues allemands n'a justement pas porté sur l'antithèse du système et de l'histoire, il n'a visé que l'antithèse de la science et de la philosophie : il s'agissait, pour Weber et pour tous, de savoir si la sociologie était *une science ou une philosophie*." Mohand Tazerout, review of Raymond Aron, *La Sociologie allemande contemporaine, Revue internationale de sociologie* 44, no. 5-6 (1936), 321-22.

Aron offered his own contribution to this genre. In his framing, neither Marx nor Spengler was properly "critical" insofar as both developed totalizing philosophies of history without grappling with these systems' arbitrary or subjective features. Of Spengler in particular, Aron argued that he had attempted to combine the contradictory principles of "morphology and legality." On one hand, that is, Spengler posited the historical "law" of "solitary cultures'" cyclical emergence, development, and disappearance. On the other, his morphological conception of historical cultures cast doubt on history's lawlike character by positing that each culture was distinct and unique.[167]

As we saw, Tazerout argued that morphology was the aspect of Spengler's philosophy that could facilitate a multi-dimensional sociological or historical method that would surpass merely "mathematical," quantitative approaches. Seen from a particular angle, that is, Spengler might be comparable to the "critical philosophers of history" Aron studied in his secondary thesis, who, attempting to give history a strong scientific grounding, were continually thwarted by the insoluble challenge of historical relativism. As this brief sketch suggests, Tazerout's and Aron's differing views of Spengler are explicable, in part, by their differing personal circumstances and intellectual backgrounds. These differences, in turn, help us understand how the critical philosophy of history expresses itself differently in different contexts. Similar conclusions emerge from a comparison of Aron to his former student Laroui. In chapters 2 and 3, below, I examine these authors' work, and their relationship to the critical philosophy of history, in detail.

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[167] "Y a-t-il contradiction entre morphologie et legalité (au sens que la connassance scientifique donne à ce mot) ?" Raymond Aron, *Introduction a la philosophie de l'histoire: Essai sur les limites de l'objectivité historique* (1938; repr., Paris: Gallimard, 1986), 303. "A la double tradition occidentale, unité de l'histoire humaine, évolution millénaire vers un but plus ou moins fixé d'avance, Spengler a opposé les deux dogmes contradictoires : cycles inévitables à l'intérieure de cultures solitaires." Ibid., 304.

Chapter 2: The Scholar as Politician: Raymond Aron, Abdallah Laroui, and the Critical Philosophy of History

> If the West were still confident in its mission, we would write, collectively or individually, a universal history that would show how solitary adventures led to the progressive accession of all societies to present-day civilization. What makes such a history impossible is that Europe no longer knows if it prefers its contributions to what it destroys. It recognizes creative expressions and existences in their singularity and threatens at the same time to destroy unique values. Man fears his conquests, his instruments and slaves, science, inferior classes and races. – Raymond Aron[1]

> To varying degrees, "postcolonial studies" as well as "historical sociology" work with representations, incessantly pass moral judgments, don't always distinguish between truth and what is taken for truth, manipulate causal series that are by definition contingent, and are ultimately inheritors of the same discursive genre—the "critical philosophy of history." – Achille Mbembe[2]

In an essay on the French reception of postcolonial theory, Achille Mbembe has argued that the often hostile or dismissive character of this reception reflects "a dynamic begun in the middle of the 1930s."[3] The "passage from anti-fascism to anti-communism"

[1] "Si l'Occident avait aujourd'hui encore confiance dans sa mission, on écrirait, collectivement ou individuellement, une histoire universelle qui montrerait, à partir d'aventures solitaires, l'accession progressive de toutes les sociétés à la civilisation du présent. Ce qui rend une telle histoire impossible, c'est que l'Europe ne sait plus si elle préfère ce qu'elle apporte à ce qu'elle détruit. Elle reconnaît les singularités des créations expressives et des existences, au moment où elle menace de détruire les valeurs uniques. L'homme craint ses conquêtes, ses instruments et ses esclaves, la science, les classes et les races inférieures." Raymond Aron, *Introduction a la philosophie de l'histoire: Essai sur les limites de l'objectivité historique* (1938; repr., Paris: Gallimard, 1986), 361; *Introduction to the Philosophy of History: An Essay on the Limits of Historical Objectivity*, trans. George J. Irwin (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 287 (translation modified).

[2] "À des degrès diverse, aussi bien les «études postcoloniales» que la «sociologie historique» travaillent sur des représentations, passent incessamment par des jugements moraux, n'opèrent pas toujours la distinction entre ce qui est vrai et ce qui est tenu pour vrai, manipulent des séries causales par définition contingentes et constituent, en fin de compte, des héritiers d'un même genre discursif – la «philosophie critique de l'histoire»." Achille Mbembe, "Faut-il provincialiser la France ?," *Politique africaine* 119, no. 3 (2010), 175; "Provincializing France?," *Public Culture* 23, no. 1 (2011), 99-100 (translation modified). In subsequent citations of this article I have included references to the English translation, which does not reproduce the original in its entirety, where available.

[3] "Au fond, ce grand mouvement de redistribution des cartes conceptuelles et la transformation décisive de l'espace idéologique qui en résulte ont commencé bien avant la décolonisation proprement dite. Celle-ci sert surtout d'accélérateur à une dynamique amorcée au milieu des années 1930." Mbembe, "Faut-il provincialiser," 165.

that started in the interwar period and culminated with the Cold War, Mbembe argues, was accompanied by a conservative, inward-looking trend that was reproduced in reactions against Third Worldism and so-called "68 thought."[4] In each case, the defeat of revolutionary internationalism led to a resurgence of reactionary parochialism. Mbembe associates these reactionary moments with French imperialism and decolonization, writing that "empire having been so deeply inscribed into French identity, particularly between the two world wars, its loss (notably that of Algeria) appeared as a veritable amputation in the national imaginary, suddenly deprived of one of its sources of pride."[5] In response, patriotic French thinkers waged ideological war on modes of thought seen as threatening to French culture, whose multifarious connections to other nations—particularly former colonies—could no longer be acknowledged without defensiveness, panic, or suspicion.

Raymond Aron (1905–1983), one of twentieth-century France's most celebrated and controversial intellectuals, participated in multiple waves of postwar political reaction, notably through a critique of totalitarianism inflected with Cold War anticommunism. It is in this guise—as the author, specifically, of *Democracy and Totalitarianism* (1965), the final volume of Aron's "industrial society" trilogy[6]—that he

[4] "Mais c'est au cours de la période de la guerre froide que le passage de l'antifascisme à l'anticommunisme atteint le point de non-retour." Ibid. "Mus par une ferveur toute pentecôtiste, ils [i.e., French critics of postcolonial theory] se servent avant tout de la pensée postcoloniale comme d'autres, avant eux, se sont servis du «tiers-mondisme» et de «la pensée 68» – comme d'un chiffon rouge." Ibid., 172-73. The classic polemic against "68 thought" is Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *La pensée 68: essai sur l'anti-humanisme contemporain* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985).

[5] "De fait, l'empire s'étant inscrit en profondeur dans l'identité française, surtout entre les deux guerres mondiales, sa perte (notamment celle de l'Algérie) prend l'allure d'une véritable amputation dans l'imaginaire national, soudain privé de l'une des ressources de sa fierté." Mbembe, "Faut-il provincialiser," 161; 87-88 (translation modified).

[6] As conceptualized by Aron, this was a form of society that encompassed both liberal democracy and Soviet Communism, which, he argued, differed primarily in terms of their political regimes rather than their economic structures. The trilogy consists of *Dix-huit leçons sur la société industrielle* (1963); *La Lutte des classes* (1964); and *Démocratie et Totalitarisme* (1965), all published by Gallimard.

appears in Mbembe's citations.[7] Yet Aron was also a progenitor of the critical approach to historical thought that, for Mbembe, subsumes postcolonial theory and the work of some of its French skeptics, whose ideological objections tend to conceal themselves behind overblown disciplinary distinctions. (The political scientist Jean-François Bayart, for example, has unfavorably compared postcolonial studies to what he calls comparative historical sociology.[8]) The phrase with which Mbembe names these intellectual opponents' epistemic common ground—*the critical philosophy of history*—was also the one Aron used to designate a group of German thinkers whose shared intellectual project he discussed in his secondary doctoral thesis, completed in the 1930s.[9] Aron seems to have acknowledged the political ambiguity, also noted by Mbembe, of the critical philosophy of history when he claimed in his *Memoirs* that the "idea of a critique of historical reason," which originated with Wilhelm Dilthey (one of the protagonists of Aron's secondary thesis), culminated with Aron's youthful friend and later ideological opponent Jean-Paul Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960).[10] Situated at opposite poles of political debate among the French intelligentsia, that is, Aron and Sartre were nevertheless engaged in closely related intellectual projects.

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[7] Mbembe, "Faut-il provincialiser," 165n19.

[8] Jean-François Bayart, "Postcolonial Studies: A Political Invention of Tradition?," trans. Andrew Brown, *Public Culture* 23, no. 1 (2011): 55–84.

[9] Raymond Aron, *La philosophie critique de l'histoire: essai sur une théorie allemande de l'histoire* (1938; repr., Paris: Éditions Points, 2018). Recent editions of this work such as the one cited here invert Aron's original title and subtitle.

[10] "La notion de critique de la Raison historique vient de Wilhelm Dilthey et aboutit, me semble-t-il, à la *Critique de la Raison dialectique* de Sartre." Raymond Aron, *Mémoires* (1983; repr., Paris: R. Laffont, 2008), 156. (Subsequent citations of this work include references to the abridged English edition, where available.) Aron wrote a book-length critique, which originated with his course at the Collège de France, of Sartre's book: *Histoire et dialectique de la violence* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973). Iain Stewart argues that in responding to Sartre, Aron acknowledged that Sartre's *Critique* was itself a response to Aron's *Introduction*. For Stewart, the two figures' political differences were inextricable from their differing readings, in the 1930s, of German critics of positivism, particularly Dilthey. Iain Stewart, "Sartre, Aron and the Contested Legacy of the Anti-Positivist Turn in French Thought, 1938—1960," *Sartre Studies International* 17, no. 1 (2011): 41–60.

The question of philosophy's relationship to politics or history—or more broadly, that of theory to practice—was central to Aron's primary thesis, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (1938). Following the German critics of historical reason he discussed in his secondary thesis, Aron asked how an objectively valid historical account could be written by a subject situated in the flux of historical becoming. Following Max Weber, the German critic with whom he most sympathized, Aron suggested that historical objectivity was attainable but circumscribed. The historian's personal values or worldview marked the limits of objectivity even as they allowed investigators in the human sciences to construct the conceptual models (*ideal types*) that would inform and shape their interpretations of empirical data.[11]

Weber famously argued that the scholar's or scientist's work should be sharply distinguished from the politician's, lest the university lectern become a secular pulpit.[12] To avoid presenting themselves as prophets, scholars should frankly disclose their own political or cultural values and strive, to the extent possible, for value neutrality in their work. Although Aron, who worked for many years as a political commentator (most notably for the conservative daily *Le Figaro*), can hardly be accused of concealing his political commitments, many of his works blur the distinction between scholarly and political work. In the *Introduction*, which culminates in a disquisition on the nature of political action, Aron seems to cast doubt on the philosophy of history's potential to treat value neutrality even as an orienting ideal. As perhaps befits its close relationship to his

[11] For Weber's conception of objectivity see, for example, Max Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy," in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, ed. and trans. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (New York: The Free Press, 1949), 49–112.

[12] Weber's best known statement of this distinction came in a pair of lectures he delivered to a student audience in Munich in 1919, recently reissued in English as Max Weber, *Charisma and Disenchantment: The Vocation Lectures*, ed. Paul Reitter and Chad Wellmon, trans. Damion Searls (New York: New York Review Books, 2019). The first book-length translation of Weber into French was an edition of these lectures to which Aron contributed a long preface: Max Weber, *Le savant et le politique*, trans. Julien Freund (Paris: Plon, 1959). I discuss this preface briefly in the conclusion to this chapter.

youthful study of Marxism,[13] whose dual status as a "secular religion" and a mode of historical or social-scientific inquiry was one of Aron's persistent obsessions, *Introduction* depicts the philosophy of history as inherently political while simultaneously pursuing a philosophical critique that would draw precise boundaries between reflection and action.

In this chapter, I discuss Aron's historical theories in order to ask whether, following Mbembe (but diverging somewhat from the details of his argument),[14] we might think of the critical philosophy of history as a broad discursive field able to both accommodate and relativize postcolonial theory, narrowing the rhetorical ground that separates the latter from its critics. I address this question in the chapter's final section by examining a critique of Aron's ambitious late work *Penser la guerre, Clausewitz* (*Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, 1976), by his former student, the Moroccan historian Abdallah Laroui (1933-). Although Laroui does not position himself as a postcolonial theorist, his works contain criticisms of orientalist scholarship and theories of historical temporality that seem to anticipate the contributions of Edward Said and Dipesh Chakrabarty.[15] More to the point, Laroui's critique of *Clausewitz* makes evident his

[13] "In 1930," Aron wrote, "I decided to study Marxism in order to submit my political ideas to a philosophical revision." ("En 1930, je pris la décision d'étudier le marxisme pour soumettre à une révision philosophique mes idées politiques.") Aron, *Introduction*, 66; 51 (translation modified). This reading would have closely followed Aron's decision, recounted in his *Memoirs*, to dedicate his life to understanding man's historical condition, a project for which *Introduction* supplied the philosophical basis. Aron, *Mémoires*, 83-4; *Memoirs: Fifty Years of Political Reflection*, trans. George Holoch (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1990), 39.

[14] Mbembe does not include Aron in his discussion of critical historical epistemology, instead citing works by Paul Ricoeur and Michel de Certeau.

[15] For comparisons of Laroui to Said—which the former dismissed—see below, 135-136. On Laroui and Chakrabarty, see Nils Riecken, "Periodization and the Political: Abdallah Laroui's Analysis of Temporalities in a Postcolonial Context," ZMO Working Papers (Berlin: Zentrum Moderner Orient, 2012).

conviction, developed extensively in his own early writings, that ideology inevitably informs and, in a sense, drives history.[16]

To the extent, then, that we can detect differences in Aron's and Laroui's articulations of the relationship between theory and practice, how can we understand these differences—or, for that matter, the two figures' equally pronounced intellectual affinities—in relation to the historical moment of decolonization? It is not enough, I will argue, to see the juxtaposition I stage here of Aron and Laroui as one between a patriotic French subject and a patriotic Moroccan subject, each of whose perspectives—including toward each other[17]—was shaped by identifiable social, cultural, political, and academic

[16] Chapter 3, below, analyzes in detail Laroui's first book, *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine* (1967). Laroui's own account of his intellectual development, including his conceptions of ideology and historicism, can be found in Abdallah Laroui, *Philosophie et histoire* (Casablanca: Éditions la Croisée des Chemins, 2017).

[17] Laroui's political differences with Aron, about which I will have more to say below, did not prevent him from expressing his respect and admiration for his former teacher, traces of which can be found in Aron's papers. Forwarding his review of Aron's work, Laroui wrote that he hoped the coming year would "allow us to read a book from you as important as the *Clausewitz*." ("Permettez-moi de vous présenter, bien qu'avec retard, mes meilleurs voeux pour l'année 1977, espérant qu'elle nous permettra de lire de vous un livre aussi important que le *Clausewitz*.") Abdallah Laroui, letter to Raymond Aron, January 20, 1977, fonds Raymond Aron (NAF 28060), box 188, Département des Manuscrits, Bibliothèque nationale de France. Aron responded by thanking Laroui for "the care you have taken to read and understand me." ("Votre analyse me paraît dans l'ensemble fort pertinente et je vous dois une dette de reconnaissance pour le soin que vous avez pris à me lire et à me comprendre.") Letter to Abdallah Laroui, January 31, 1977, fonds Aron, box 188.

Aron's archive also contains a dossier of material related to Laroui's doctoral work at the Sorbonne. Pleading ignorance of Laroui's thesis topic (the history of Moroccan nationalism), Aron recused himself from serving as director but agreed to be on the jury, noting cheerfully that this would give him an opportunity "to see you again and chat with you." ("Du coup, l'occasion me sera donnée de vous revoir et de causer avec vous.") Raymond Aron, letter to Abdallah Laroui, April 9, 1976, fonds Aron, box 51, dossier A. Laroui. There is little indication in the archive of what, if anything, Aron thought of Laroui's work, but Aron did write, at Laroui's request, a letter endorsing him during his time as a visiting professor at UCLA. This laudatory but rather terse statement reads in its entirety: "I have met a few time Mr. Abdallah Laroui and I have been very favorably impressed by his knowledge and intellectual maturity. He has combined some true elements of islamic culture with the french culture. His book 'L'idéologie arabe contemporaine' seems to me to be stimulating. I am convinced that his contribution to the Department of History of your University will be very productive." Letter to Eugen Weber, sent care of Laroui, February 27, 1968, fonds Aron, box 51, dossier A. Laroui.

How to interpret these exchanges? They don't seem to tell us much that could not be easily surmised from the basic facts of Aron's and Laroui's relationship: the former, an internationally renowned public intellectual, made a strong impression on the latter, who worked in a different intellectual field than Aron and wrote for a different (largely left-wing and Arab) audience and in whose work Aron thus does not

contexts. We must also understand them as employing a mode of thought—the critical philosophy of history—that led them to see political action and historical reflection as mutually reinforcing and, thus, to efface any neat boundary between thought and politics.

This interpretation may seem to do Aron an injustice in light of his painstaking attempt, in the *Introduction*, to specify the limits of historical objectivity and differentiate history from philosophy and sociology. At different points in his career, he produced works fitting into each of these genres (and others still) in addition to straightforwardly polemical efforts. Aron knew which register he was deploying in each book, essay, or editorial and arguably sought, at least to some extent, to avoid contaminating his scholarly work with political dogma. Yet Aron was also skeptical of Weber's conception of scientific value neutrality, and I focus on works in which his own political and intellectual projects are nearly impossible to disentangle. The most obvious example of this is his attack on French intellectual Marxism, *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (1955), which I discuss below after giving an overview of his doctoral theses in which I make an initial attempt to discern the values that informed his work.

Laroui's critique of *Clausewitz*, another work that mixed scholarship and politics,[18] emphasizes the book's ideological dimension even as it admiringly elucidates Aron's critical approach. Reading Laroui on Aron helps us understand how this approach inevitably created openings for further political and epistemic critique. The critical philosophy of history was, in this way, well suited to the moment of decolonization,

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seem to have seen much reason, beyond professional obligations and perhaps personal esteem, to interest himself.

[18] On the political valences of Aron's *Clausewitz* project, see Joël Mouric, "'Citizen Clausewitz': Aron's *Clausewitz* in Defense of Political Freedom," in *The Companion to Raymond Aron*, ed. José Colen and Élisabeth Dutartre-Michaut (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 77–90; Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins, "Why Did Raymond Aron Write that Carl Schmitt Was Not a Nazi? An Alternative Genealogy of French Liberalism," *Modern Intellectual History* 11, no. 3 (November 2014): 549–74.

when world-historical crisis coincided with new opportunities for intellectuals like Laroui and Aron to explore the limits of and conditions of possibility for historical knowledge.

ARON'S DOCTORAL THESES: "WESTERN MAN" IN PERIL

Was it possible for an observer situated in the flow of historical time to offer an objective account of historical experience? This was the central question of Aron's primary doctoral thesis, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, which he presented to his Sorbonne jury along with a secondary thesis on four German "critical philosophers of history" in March of 1938, shortly after Germany's annexation of Austria.[19] Influenced by the thinkers he studied, particularly Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) and Max Weber (1864-1920), Aron argued that because of historians' inevitable subjective involvement in their own work, historical knowledge should be distinguished from natural-scientific knowledge. Like Dilthey, that is, Aron thematized the distinction between the human and natural sciences; and like Weber, he argued that historical objectivity was inherently limited. In making this argument, Aron had, he wrote, avoided representing history as "the type of science proclaimed in advance to be the only truly scientific one. On the contrary," he wrote, "we follow the natural movement leading from individual self-consciousness to an awareness of collective becoming. We use a descriptive or, if you like, phenomenological method."[20] Aron's phenomenological method and flirtation with historical relativism allow us to situate him among the generation of French thinkers who confronted the interwar atmosphere of social, political, and cultural crisis by drawing on

[19] On the timing of the defense, which he claims the contemporaneous summary published in the *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* misrepresents, see Gaston Fessard, *La philosophie historique de Raymond Aron* (Paris: Julliard, 1980), 36. Both the original summary and Fessard's more detailed version are included as appendices to the latest edition of *Introduction*, 441-57.

[20] "Nous ne tâchons pas de le ramener à un type de science proclamé à l'avance seul veritablement scientifique. Tout au contraire, nous suivons le mouvement naturel qui va de la connaissance de soi à celle du devenir collectif. Nous utilisons une méthod descriptive ou, si l'on veut, phénoménologique." Aron, *Introduction*, 10; 9 (translation modified).

German philosophical traditions—phenomenology, existentialism, and Marxism—whose status in French university teaching was marginal at best. This "generation of 1930" was characterized by its rejection of what Vincent Descombes has called the "optimistic view of history" behind the Third Republic's dominant philosophies: on one hand, Durkheimian "sociological positivism"; on the other, the "neo-Kantian rationalism" of Aron's thesis director, Léon Brunschvicg (1869-1944). "Although opposed to each other," Descombes writes, "both these doctrines teach that mankind, from its distant origins onwards, has not ceased to progress towards the agreement of all human beings upon certain reasonable principles—precisely those on which Republican institutions are based."[21]

Each of these branches of the philosophical old guard was represented on Aron's jury, whose perplexed reception of his work has become the stuff of legend. The Durkheimian sociologist Paul Fauconnet concluded his intervention in a particularly devastating manner, addressing to Aron "an act of charity in reiterating to you my admiration and sympathy; an act of faith in the value of the theses you condemn; and an act of hope that in the future, the youth will not follow you."[22] In his *Memoirs*, published 45 years later, Aron recalled that several days before the defense, Fauconnet asked him

[21] Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott-Fox and J. M. Harding (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 6-7. Descombes identifies the year 1930—hence "generation of 1930"—as a turning point in the French reception of Hegel: ibid., 10, 12. A similar designation, "generation of 1933," appears in Ethan Kleinberg, *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France, 1927-1961* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005). Kleinberg draws inspiration from François Sirinelli's history of interwar *normaliens*, including Aron: Jean-François Sirinelli, *Génération intellectuelle : Khâgneux et normaliens dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (Paris: Fayard, 1988). Yet whereas Sirinelli uses the label "generation of 1905"—the year many of these figures, again including Aron, were born—Kleinberg emphasizes the later "year that [this] group… turned away from the institutions of their formative years and toward alternative venues for critical and philosophical thought." Kleinberg, *Generation Existential*, 4n1.

[22] "« Je termine, conclut M. Fauconnet, par un acte de charité, en vous redisant mon admiration et ma sympathie ; un acte de foi dans la valeur des thèses que vous condamnez, et un acte d'espérance qu'à l'avenir la jeunesse ne vous suivra pas. »" Quoted in "Thèses de doctorat," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 45, no. 3 (1938), 29. Cf. Fessard, *La philosophie historique*, 41.

"with indiscretion and kindness if domestic affairs had influenced the tone of my writings. Tempted to laugh," Aron continued, "I evoked the threats that weighed on our country, the coming war, France's decadence."[23] In the *Introduction,* he linked the decline of historical "evolutionism" to the waning authority of "the two values on which the nineteenth century's confidence was founded, positive science and democracy."[24] He had observed this process of decline firsthand during a scholarly visit to Germany in the early 1930s in which, in addition to researching the "critique of historical reason" that would inspire his theses, he witnessed Nazi book burnings and heard speeches by Goebbels and Hitler.[25] In addition, then, to diverging from the dominant schools of Third Republic French philosophy by questioning the epistemic foundations of the human sciences and casting doubt on the inevitability of historical progress, Aron's work evoked the concrete process of historical regression unfolding across the Rhine, which would shortly engulf Europe as a whole.

Building on the work of Kant, Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, the "critical philosophers of history" Aron discussed in his secondary thesis[26]—Dilthey, Heinrich Rickert, Georg Simmel, and Weber—combined a will to put the study of human culture and morality on a firm scientific grounding with skepticism that sociology and modern

[23] "Quelques jours auparavant, au cours de la visite que je lui fis conformément à la coutume, il me demanda avec indiscrétion et bienveillance si des affaires domestiques influaient sur le ton de mes écrits. Tenté de rire, j'évoquai les menaces qui pesaient sur notre pays, la guerre prochaine, la décadence de la France." Aron, *Mémoires,* 150; 75 (translation modified).
[24] "L'évolutionnisme est devenu historisme le jour où les deux valeurs sur lesquelles se fondait la confiance du XIXe siècle, la science positive et la démocratie, c'est-à-dire au fond le rationalisme, ont perdu leur prestige et leur autorité." Aron *Introduction,* 367; 290 (translation modified).
[25] On the relationship between Aron's doctoral work and his experience of the rise of Nazism, see Sophie Marcotte-Chenard, "Thinking in Uncertain Times: Raymond Aron and the Politics of Historicism," in *Historicism: A Travelling Concept,* ed. Herman Paul and Adriaan van Veldhuizen (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 141-61, esp. 144-47.
[26] This work was written before, and originally intended as, the primary thesis. See Aron, *Mémoires*, 158.

society could, as the Durkheimians hoped, move forward in tandem.[27] For these figures, the human sciences—particularly history and sociology—were "human" not only by virtue of their chosen object but insofar as, unlike the natural sciences, they inevitably bore the mark of their creators' subjective values. Aron would situate his work in the same tradition, characterizing *Introduction* as his own attempt at a critique of historical reason.[28] For this reason, and because Aron would later place great emphasis on these works' role in his intellectual development, a preliminary look at his doctoral theses can help us gain insight into the relationship between Aron's thought and politics. This, in turn, will allow us to approach the question of how to more broadly conceptualize the critical philosophy of history in order to examine its relationship to the postcolonial moment.

What was the critical philosophy of history, for Aron in the 1930s? He wrote that the protagonists of his study followed in the wake of Hegel's "completion [*achèvement*]" of the "traditional philosophy of history." "The modern philosophy of history," Aron wrote, "begins with the refusal of Hegelianism" and accordingly, of any attempt to discover "the ultimate meaning of [historical] evolution."[29] Instead, the critical philosophers of history explored the philosophical consequences of history's nineteenth-century emergence as an autonomous scientific field. Of these consequences, perhaps the most important was that historical investigations were predicated on "values which are

[27] In his memoirs, Aron described this Durkheimian precept as one of the pillars of "the vulgar mode of belief in progress" ("la modalité vulgaire de croyance au progrès") he had rejected in the *Introduction*. Ibid., 165; 80.
[28] Ibid., 158.
[29] "La philosophie traditionnelle de l'histoire trouve son achèvement dans le système de Hegel. La philosophie moderne de l'histoire commence par le refus du hegelianisme. L'idéal n'est plus de déterminer d'un coup la signification du devenir humain, le philosophe ne se croit plus dépositaire des secrets de la providence. La *Critique de la raison pure* interdisait l'espoir d'accéder à la vérité du monde intelligible : ainsi la philosophie critique de l'histoire renonce à atteindre le sens ultime de l'évolution." Aron, *La philosophie critique*, 15.

the principles of selection" of the problems or data to be analyzed. Historical reason was dialectical insofar as it both emerged from and determined these underlying values.[30] Unlike the Hegelian dialectic, however—in which the end of history was synonymous with the attainment of absolute knowledge—the dialectic of historical reason, as imagined by Aron's critical philosophers, was indefinite, lacking any discernible goal or end point.[31]

This presentation of the problem of historical reason leaves open the question of how, precisely, to characterize the relationship of historical science to its object. According to Aron, three of his critical philosophers proposed distinct responses to this question: "either historical reality's own character imposes specific methods" (Dilthey), "or the direction of curiosity explains the logical structure of history" (Rickert), "or finally one refuses both points of departure and limits oneself to incessantly opposing real history to history-science, taking note of the gap [*décalage*] between lived becoming and the narrative of events" (Simmel).[32] These authors attempted in different ways to find a universal basis for historical knowledge but, according to Aron, failed because the tension between subjectivity and objectivity that lay at the heart of historical inquiry was

[30] "Quant à la *dialectique* de la raison historique, elle résulte de notre incapacité à déterminer de manière universellement valable les valeurs qui sont les principes de la sélection." Ibid., 16.

[31] Aron made this point in his discussion of Dilthey, for whom, in contrast to Hegel, "the subject of evolution is not reason, doctrines do not represent an epoch, there is no final system, [and] contradiction is not the principle of movement" ("le sujet de l'évolution n'est pas la raison, les doctrines ne représentent pas une époque, il n'y a pas de système dernier, la contradiction n'est pas le principe du mouvement"). Instead, Dilthey's attempt to grasp "the philosophical scope of the history of philosophy" led him to conclude that "all philosophies are false but they are also all true, because each one expresses an aspect of life and the whole truth is made of their totality" ("toutes les philosophies sont fausses mais elles sont aussi toutes vraies, parce que chacune exprime un aspect de la vie et que la vérité totale serait faite de leur totalité"). Ibid., 96.

[32] "Plus explicitement, ou bien ce sont les caractères propres de la réalité historique qui imposent des méthodes spécifiques, ou bien c'est la direction de la curiosité qui explique la structure logique de l'histoire, ou bien enfin on refuse l'un et l'autre point de départ et on se borne à opposer sans cesse l'histoire réelle et l'histoire-science, à noter le décalage entre le devenir vécu et le récit des événements." Ibid., 18.

"anterior and superior" to science and could not be resolved by purely scientific means. In contrast, Weber had asked not "in what conditions is historical science universally valid?" but rather, "which parts of historical science are universally valid?" For Weber, Aron claimed, only historical causality and not the values underlying historical judgments could be studied objectively. There could be no scientifically valid "total historical vision" accounting simultaneously for history's objective and subjective dimensions. For Aron, his acknowledgement of this fact meant that Weber had made "the only legitimate statement [*énoncé*] of the critical theme" in the philosophy of history.[33]

Aron's affinity for Weber seems to explain his decision to pursue the direction in which, he wrote, his study led in "dogmatic order": a book (i.e., the *Introduction*) on Weber's idea of "the limits of historical objectivity." In "historical order," in contrast, Aron wrote that his work on the critical philosophy of history pointed toward "contemporary historicism, phenomenology and existentialism [*Existenzphilosophie*]."[34] Investigating these fields would perhaps have taken him closer to prominent currents of postwar French thought associated, in particular, with the young Aron's friends Sartre and Alexandre Kojève. Like Aron, Sartre and Kojève went against the grain of early twentieth-century French academic philosophy by importing German existentialist and phenomenological ideas and giving them a forward-looking political thrust.[35] The

[33] "Dès qu'il s'agit d'une vision historique totale, on retombe dans des conflits que la science ne saurait résoudre parce qu'ils lui sont antérieurs et supérieurs.

"Dans ces conditions, le seul énoncé légitime du thème critique, lorsqu'il s'agit de la raison historique, est bien celui de Weber : non pas « à quelles conditions la science historique est-elle valable universellement ? » mais « quelles parties de la science historique sont valables universellement ? »." Ibid., 289-90.

[34] "Ce livre n'est donc qu'une introduction. Dans l'ordre dogmatique, il conduit à un autre livre qui reprendrait l'idée de Weber : les limites de l'objectivité historique. Dans l'ordre historique, il conduit à l'historisme contemporain, à la phénoménologie et à l'*Existenzphilosophie*." Ibid., 291.

[35] Another of Aron's contemporaries, Georges Canguilhem, has pointed out that while many of the authors Aron discussed in his theses were known to French scholars and had been discussed in a number of publications, philosophy students of his and Aron's generation tended not to know or care about them. Georges Canguilhem, "Raymond Aron et la philosophie critique de l'histoire," *Enquête*, no. 7 (1992), 4.

inspiration Aron drew from Weber would prove decisive in differentiating his intellectual and political trajectories from those of Kojève, Sartre, and similar figures, leading him away from youthful pacifism or socialism and toward his post–World War II rightward shift.

Aron's interest in Weber seems to have largely stemmed from his association of the latter with political action. Weber had, according to Aron, sought to separate the properly scientific elements of historical inquiry from "the will and perspective of the historian." Since, however, he was "at once a politician and a scholar," Weber tended to focus on "the characteristics of historical knowledge that action demands."[36] In the *Introduction* Aron, too, argued that historical knowledge must be oriented toward action; the book's final chapter ("Man and history") offers a theory of political action that, Aron would later claim, informed his thinking throughout his career.[37] At moments when political order was disrupted, Aron wrote, "political choices reveal their nature as historical choices."[38] Further, recognizing the historicity of politics meant acknowledging that there could be no such thing as a purely rationalist, "scientific politics." Instead, Aron argued, the relationship between politics and historical thinking boiled down to a "fundamental antinomy between a *politics of understanding* [*entendement*] and a *politics of Reason*." The first, exemplified by Weber and Aron's former teacher Alain, saw history's unfolding as fundamentally disordered and perpetually self-renewing; the

[36] "La question : « A quelles conditions transcendantales la science du passé est-elle valable pour tous ? » disparaît. Et il lui substitue la formule : « Quelles parties de cette science sont indépendantes de la perspective et de la volonté de l'historien, de manière à valoir pour tous ? ». Et d'autre part, homme politique en même temps que savant, il en arrive à élucider de manière définitive les caractères de la connaissance historique qu'exige l'action." *La philosophie critique*, 19.
[37] Aron, *Mémoires*, 175; 85.
[38] "Mais dans les périodes critiques"—as opposed to "les époques tranquilles" in which political ideas expressed rather than challenging existing social ideals—"les choix politiques révèlent leur nature de choix historiques." Aron, *Introduction*, 408; 323 (translation modified).

second, exemplified by Marxism, saw history as evolution rather than chance and claimed "to foresee at least evolution's next step [*terme*]."[39]

For Aron, the problems of political action and historical relativity were closely connected. This is evident in the structure of *Introduction*, whose chapter on history's relationship to political action follows a consideration of the limits of historical relativity, which in turn follows a chapter on what Aron characterized as the book's central Weberian theme, the limits of historical objectivity. Contained in his discussion of relativism are remarks that would have understandably annoyed followers of Durkheim like Fauconnet, whose "science," Aron wrote, "confirmed… the values to which they spontaneously adhered…. Fully confident, [they] substituted society for God."[40] In a slightly more conciliatory tone, he wrote that the crisis of historicism—the German controversy over the relationship between history and religious or ethical values, in whose shadow the critical philosophers of history he studied had worked—was rooted in "the encounter of contradictory ideas: one discovered the impossibility of a philosophical truth and the impossibility of not philosophizing."[41] To pursue "philosophical truth" was, in a sense, to attempt to verify the subjective values that motivated and informed historical research. Failing to do so, or acknowledging this task's impossibility—as a

[39] "A vrai dire, nous rencontrons ici une antinomie fondamentale entre une *politique de l'entendement* et une *politique de la Raison*, qui correspond à l'antinomie du hasard et de l'évolution….

"Le *politique de l'entendement* – Max Weber, Alain – cherche à sauvegarder certains biens, paix, liberté, ou à atteindre un objectif unique, la grandeur nationale, dans des situations toujours nouvelles qui se succèdent sans s'organiser….

"Le *politique de la Raison*, au contraire, prévoit au moins le terme prochain de l'évolution. Le marxiste sait la disparition inévitable du capitalisme et le seul problème est d'adapter la tactique à la stratégie, l'accommodement avec le régime actuel à la préparation du régime futur." Ibid., 413-14; 328 (translation modified).

[40] "Les sociologues français, démocrates, libres penseurs, partisans de la liberté individuelle, confirmaient par leur science les valeurs auxquelles spontanément ils adhéraient…. On substituait en toute confiance la société à Dieu." Ibid., 375; 296 (translation modified).

[41] "La crise de l'historisme tient à la rencontre de ces idées contradictoires : on découvrait l'impossibilité d'une vérité philosophique et l'impossibilité de ne pas philosopher." Ibid., 376; 297.

scientific or "critical" attitude seemed to demand—could lead to fatalism or pessimism. Nevertheless, admitting that historical knowledge was a human construct, and thus inherently fragmented and uncertain, could open up a margin of free choice and action, "of triumph over nihilism through objective knowledge and philosophical reflection."[42]

In the *Introduction,* Aron suggested that just as philosophies of history led to political action, "Western man" was naturally inclined toward the sort of idealism that animated the traditional philosophy of history. In a discussion, focused on Marxism, of the relationship of the philosophy of history to ideology, he wrote: "Man, Western man in particular, is essentially a being who creates gods, a finite being unsatisfied with his finitude and incapable of living without an absolute faith or hope."[43] As he made clear here and would repeatedly stress in subsequent work, Aron saw Marxism as a "secular religion" substituting revolutionary hope for religious faith.[44] To historicize Marxism was to acknowledge that it was not universal or absolute but particular: "Legitimate particularism, if concrete interpretations of history are inevitably historical."[45] Marxism and similar ideologies were illegitimate, however, to the extent that they subordinated historical interpretations to ostensibly universal laws.

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[42] "Malgré tout, la dissolution de la totalité historique permet de surmonter la résignation, en révélant la liberté et l'obligation du choix, de triompher du nihilisme par la connaissance objective et la réflexion philosophique." Ibid., 378; 298 (translation modified).

[43] "L'homme, l'homme occidental, en particulier, est par essence l'être qui crée des dieux, l'être fini, insatisfait de sa finitude, incapable de vivre sans une foi ou un espoir absolus." Ibid., 392; 311 (translation modified).

[44] Raymond Aron, "L'avenir des religions séculaires," *La France libre,* July 15, 1944, 210–217 and *La France libre,* August 15, 1944, 269–277. Communism as a secular religion would be a major theme of *L'Opium des intellectuels*, discussed below.

[45] "Cette fois nous concluons" (having previously concluded that Marxism was "une philosophie et non une science" because it eschewed "l'analyse causale"): "la doctrine marxiste, liée à une volonté politique et à une attitude vitale, est particulière comme celles-ci, et non universelle comme le savoir objectif ou peut-être la réflexion. Particularité légitime, si les interprétations concrètes de l'histoire sont inévitablement historiques." Aron, *Introduction,* 393; 312 (translation modified).

The theorist or critic, as discussed and embodied by Aron, walked a fine line between the absolute (philosophical) and relative (scientific) registers of historical discourse. If Aron seems to have embraced relativism—or rather, a conception of objectivity able to account for the role therein of the scientist's subjective perspective—important passages of *Introduction* flirt with the absolute. Toward the end of the book, for example, we read that "for man to be completely in agreement with himself, he must live according to truth, recognizing himself as autonomous both in his creation and his consciousness of it. Ideal reconciliation, incompatible with the destiny of those who don't put an idol in the place of God."[46] Like his critical philosophers of history, Aron was both skeptical of this ideal and acutely sensitive to its importance. To be "critical" in his sense was perhaps not to renounce philosophy or religion in favor of science but rather, to embrace scientific rationalism while recognizing that it could never fully satisfy humanity's longing for truth. Historical knowledge and political action were distinct from, but also somehow complementary to and even called forth by, this need for truth.

At his thesis defense, Aron said that in writing these works, he had attempted to show "the necessity of rediscovering a faith in man and seeking to understand our historical situation."[47] If, along with his critical questioning of religious or ideological belief, he can be said to have promoted an "idol" of his own, we might describe this idol as secular, Western humanity, defined by its historicity[48] (including its belonging to a

[46] "Or, pour que l'homme fût totalement accordé avec lui-même, il faudrait qu'il vécût selon la vérité, qu'il se reconnût autonome à la fois dans sa création et dans la conscience qu'il en prend. Reconciliation idéale, incompatible avec la destinée de ceux qui ne mettent pas d'idole à la place de Dieu." Ibid., 437; 347 (translation modified).

[47] "Ainsi"—i.e., by drawing out and building on "les consequences de l'athéisme… en supposant que puissent disparaître et le capitalisme et le rationalisme progressiste"—"je crois avoir montré la nécessité de retrouver une foi en l'homme et de chercher à comprendre notre situation historique." Quoted in Fessard, *La philosophie historique*, 45.

[48] In a passage of *Introduction* influenced, Iain Stewart argues, by his reading of Heidegger, Aron wrote that history is "inseparable from man's very essence." ("Une telle affirmation"—i.e., that "l'homme a une histoire"—"va plus loin, elle implique une certaine manière de concevoir la conservation du passé dans le

particular world-historical civilization). Perhaps, further, "a thought of the end of history as Idea of Reason"—one, however, that "could only ever be virtual"—was Aron's response to what Sylvie Mesure has called the "antinomy of historical reason" between teleology and relativism:[49] historical science could approach, but never quite reach, its ultimate end. The question remains whether Aron's writings on the philosophy of history imply a particular politics. How did Aron's concern, in these early writings, with the historical destiny of secular, Western "man" inform his later thinking about the Cold War or decolonization?

CRITICAL PHILOSOPHER AS COLD WARRIOR: *THE OPIUM OF THE INTELLECTUALS*

Aron's trajectory as a political thinker and his conception of the critical philosophy of history are difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle. His inquiry into the philosophy of history was, he told his thesis jury, prompted by the question: "Why am I a socialist?"[50] For Aron, to justify this or any other political position philosophically meant understanding the constraints and opportunities felt by political actors at a particular historical juncture. It also meant renouncing any pretension to anticipate the future on the basis of historical knowledge. Philosophies of history predicated on the belief in a unified, unidirectional evolution leading to a definite end state were, in Aron's view, driven by secular faith rather than the search for historical objectivity. This view had

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présent et suggère que l'histoire est inséparable de l'essence même de l'homme.") Aron, *Introduction*, 43; 36. Quoted in Iain Stewart, *Raymond Aron and Liberal Thought in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 69.

[49] Sylvie Mesure, *Raymond Aron et la raison historique* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1984), 117. Aron suggested that history might be thought of as assigning to humanity a "vocation" implying a "final unity" in *Introduction*, 101; 82. ("Ou bien l'histoire aboutit à une pluralité incohérente dans laquelle on se situe en se comparant et en se choisissant, ou bien elle assigne à l'humanité une vocation qui subordonne les missions diverses des hommes et des groupes à une unité finale, unité d'un impératif abstrait ou d'une tâche collective.") For references to other works in which Aron expressed similar ideas, see Mesure's note to this passage, ibid., 478.

[50] Fessard, *La philosophie historique*, 42.

enormous political consequences, fueling an anti-Marxism that would define his intellectual career.

Aron's description of himself as a socialist in the 1930s was itself historically contingent. The "non-conformist" strand of the French left to which the young Aron adhered fell into oblivion shortly after his thesis defense,[51] while the international communist movement he consistently opposed would capture the imagination of large segments of organized labor and the intelligentsia, including many of his friends, students, and colleagues. It is not my purpose here to judge, categorize, or explain Aron's politics, as many of his commentators have quite skillfully done (was he a Cold War liberal?[52] an early neoliberal? a proto-neoconservative? a leftist intellectual?[53]). Relating his politics to his intellectual development will, however, be useful to the attempt I make in this chapter to reconceive of the critical philosophy of history.

Characterizing the intellectual life of late-1950s France, which saw widespread disillusionment with the French Communist Party (PCF), Abdallah Laroui has written: "The virulent effect of Raymond Aron's pamphlet *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (1955) began to be felt." In Laroui's view, the decision of figures like Louis Althusser or François Furet to look beyond Marx and toward, respectively, Spinoza or Tocqueville for inspiration bespoke a "detoxification" prompted equally by political events like Khrushchev's "secret speech" or the Hungarian Revolution, on one hand; and on the

[51] On Aron's early heterodox socialism, see Stewart, *Raymond Aron and Liberal Thought*, 29-38; Gwendal Châton, "Entre désir d'engagement et passion de l'indépendance : L'itinéraire politique singulier de Raymond Aron," in *Les intellectuels et le pouvoir : déclinaisons et mutations*, ed. François Hourmant and Arnaud Leclerc (Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012), 53-56.

[52] Jan-Werner Müller, "Fear and Freedom: On 'Cold War Liberalism,'" *European Journal of Political Theory* 7, no. 1 (2008): 45–64.

[53] Christophe Prochasson, "Raymond Aron est-il un intellectuel de gauche ?," in *Raymond Aron, philosophe dans l'histoire*, ed. Serge Audier, Marc Olivier Baruch, and Perrine Simon-Nahum (Paris: Fallois, 2008), 219–28. Tony Judt has suggested that despite or in addition to his avowed liberalism, Aron "remained at heart a member of the left-leaning community," in *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron and the French Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 144.

other, the at once political and literary event of Aron's *Opium*.[54] Whatever one makes of this specific claim,[55] Aron's polemic against those of his intellectual peers whom he saw as Soviet fellow-travelers can certainly be read as a symptom of Stalinism's decline as both a global and a French political and intellectual force. Further, in *Opium*, Aron blurred the lines between philosophical and political critique even as he condemned his adversaries for adhering to a philosophy of history driven by utopian political hopes.

Central to *Opium* are a pair of chapters—on "the meaning of history" and "the illusion of necessity"—in which Aron returned to the arguments of *Introduction*. History, Aron insisted, had no singular meaning or direction (*sens*) but instead, a plurality of meanings (*significations*). These meanings were predicated both on historians' recognition of and curiosity about "the other" and on "a certain community between the historian and the historical object."[56] Historians, and historical actors, could bring unity to the "[e]nsemble of historical meanings" through interpretations grounded in individual and collective experience, but the "gap between human experience and historical reconstructions" created a "risk of the arbitrary."[57] Exacerbating this potential for interpretive imprecision or ambiguity was the fact that historians and sociologists dealt

[54] Laroui, *Philosophie et histoire*, 52.

[55] While it seems dubious to interpret Althusser's interest in Spinoza as a turn away from Marx, Laroui's more general claim—that the publication of *Opium* coincided with and perhaps exacerbated a crisis in French Marxist thought—is uncontroversial. Introducing a recent edition of *Opium*, for example, Nicolas Baverez writes that the book "laid the groundwork for the reconciliation of French intellectuals with liberalism [*la liberté*] that intervened in the 1970s." Nicolas Baverez, introduction to Raymond Aron, *L'opium des intellectuels* (1955; repr., Paris: A. Fayard-Pluriel, 2010), XII. On the decline of French intellectual Marxism more generally (but with no mention of Aron), see Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (London: Verso, 1983).

[56] "L'historien doit se libérer de lui-même, faire effort pour découvrir l'autre dans son altérité. Mais cette découverte suppose une certaine communauté entre l'historien et l'objet historique." Aron, *L'opium*, 148; *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, trans. Terence Kilmartin (New York: Norton, 1962), 138.

[57] "Ensemble de significations, il"—i.e., the "texte d'un traité" or, one assumes, any historical primary source—"ne prend d'unité, comme la bataille, que dans l'esprit qui le repense, esprit d'un historien ou d'un personnage historique." Ibid., 149; 139 (translation modified). "Avec l'élargissement de l'écart entre l'expérience des hommes et la résurrection par l'historien s'accroît le risque d'arbitraire." Ibid., 150; 140 (translation modified).

sometimes with "ideal ensembles"—the legal or philosophical doctrines behind human action—and sometimes with the "real ensembles" resulting from these principles' application.[58] Toward the end of his chapter on "the illusion of necessity," Aron charged his ideological opponents with converting "reality into an idea" in their conception of a "so-called dialectic of social history."[59] Only by viewing history as the movement of a metaphysical totality (and thus, *not* as a concrete, dynamic reality) was it possible, in Aron's view, to envision an inevitable triumph of socialism over capitalism.

Aron's distinction between ideal and real historical facts corresponded to one between events and scientific or artistic works, which, he argued, followed distinct logics of historical development. "The correct solution to a [scientific] problem or the formulation of a law," according to Aron, was "neither the effect of a cause nor the reaction to a conjuncture" but "derive[d] from a capacity for judgment, present in both the historian and the historical person, which events favor or paralyze, orient or divert, but do not constrain."[60] Developing this distinction was another way of driving home the point that history was not global, total, or unified, but irreducibly plural. The only "legitimate" way to interpret history as a totality—under which events and works, real and ideal would be subsumed—was, Aron wrote, to take "*one* problem" as "constitutive of human destiny." This, he argued, was what the "Hegelian system" did by treating history as a succession of attempted solutions to a fundamental problem, whose ultimate,

[58] "La distinction essentielle sépare moins des catégories de conduites que les ensembles idéels et les ensembles réels." Ibid., 151; 141 (translation modified).
[59] "La prétendue dialectique de l'histoire sociale résulte d'une métamorphose de la réalité en idée." Ibid., 200; 189.
[60] "La solution juste d'un problème ou la formulation d'une loi n'est ni effet d'une cause ni réaction à une conjoncture, elle dérive d'une capacité de jugement, présente en l'historien comme en la personne historique, que les événements favorisent ou paralysent, orientent ou détournent mais ne contraignent pas." Ibid., 196; 185 (translation modified).

"*radical* solution" would define the historical totality.[61] However philosophically "legitimate" this system might be, however, Aron argued that the "Promethean ambition" to "manipulate history" in this way was "one of the intellectual origins of totalitarianism."[62]

Despite reiterating his argument from *Introduction* that historical consciousness "makes the limits of our knowledge apparent,"[63] the Aron of *Opium* was seemingly uninterested in theorizing his own role as a practitioner of the critical philosophy of history. Were we to pursue a critique along these lines, we might point out that the "revolutionary" he consistently denounced was an ideal type, the product equally of Aron's observation of his peers' political positions and his disapproving attitude toward them, which he brought together in an ironic appropriation of Marxist ideology critique. As he acknowledged in his *Memoirs*, his distaste for his philocommunist peers stemmed not only from their apparent faith in Stalinist dogma but their tendency to question this dogma, which, he argued, made them irresponsible political actors: "Faced with a total doctrine, a secular religion with universal pretensions, only two attitudes strike me as decent: adhesion or refusal."[64] To "combine the yes and the no" in considering the

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[61] "La seule interprétation légitime de la totalité, qui ne supprime ni le caractère aléatoire du déterminisme ni la pluralité des significations, est celle qui s'attache à *un* problème, tenu pour constitutif du destin humain. Si ce problème comporte des solutions, dont chacune est la condition nécessaire de la suivante, si, enfin, on situe, au terme du mouvement, une solution *radicale*, l'histoire deviendra totalité dans la succession : l'état privilégié donnera le sens de l'ensemble.

"Telle est, en effet, l'idée maîtresse du système hégelien." Ibid., 198; 187-88 (translation modified).

[62] "Tout au contraire"—as opposed, that is, to the "manipulation des phénomènes physiques" through technology, which led to the dissolution of "la représentation d'un *cosmos*"—"l'espoir d'une manipulation de l'histoire semble être né de la représentation d'un ordre social ou d'un ordre du devenir, déterminé par des lois inaccessibles aux désirs ou aux révoltes des individus….

"Cette ambition prométhéenne est une des origines intellectuelles du totalitarisme." Ibid., 210; 199 (translation modified).

[63] "La conscience historique fait apparaître les limites de notre savoir." Ibid., 204; 193 (translation modified).

[64] "Face à une doctrine totale, à une religion séculière à prétention universelle, deux attitudes et deux seulement me paraissent décentes : l'adhésion ou le refus ; la participation sans adhésion, le

question of whether the Soviet Union was truly revolutionary was "to violate… the imperative of engagement."[65] The targets of his polemic in *Opium* had, in other words, diverged both from his own critical philosophy of history, according to which the future was unknowable and historical judgments were always subject to change; and, relatedly, from his theory of political action, which called for a firm decision to support a particular regime.

Were Aron's historical theories, formulated at a moment of mounting totalitarianism and imminent global war, applicable to the quite different context of the postwar world, characterized by decolonization and the Cold War? Considering that this might not be the case allows us to imagine versions of the critical philosophy of history that would differ from Aron's. We might demand, for example, a greater emphasis on the subjectivity of historical or social-scientific judgments, as Aron's erstwhile assistant Pierre Bourdieu did by urging sociologists to submit themselves to a reflexive "socioanalysis" of the historical conditions influencing their own thought and practice.[66] Or one might push Aron's critical philosophy of history in a more Hegelian or Marxist direction by emphasizing the logical over the "aleatory" determinants of historical

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compagnonnage sans les contraintes du militantisme, en bref la conduite du compagnon de route me répugnait intellectuellement." Aron, *Mémoires*, 434.

[65] "Étrange réponse" (of Francis Jeanson to Albert Camus in a debate in *Les Temps modernes* on the problem of socialist revolution): "l'homme historique, conscient de sa condition, ne peut pas ignorer qu'il s'engage sans connaître les conséquences ultimes de son action ou du mouvement historique auquel il se rallie; éluder la décision à l'égard de l'Union soviétique ou combiner le oui et le non, c'est violer, de toute évidence, l'impératif de l'engagement." Ibid., 423; 221 (translation modified).

[66] See, for example, Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Bourdieu criticized Aron in his book *Les règles de l'art* (1992) as a "conservative intellectual" who sought to conceal the extent of his involvement in the production of "dominant ideology." Châton, "Désir d'engagement," 51-52. A more sympathetic discussion of Aron—who he associates with Sartre as "[p]ure products of a triumphant academic institution" whose prestige remained intact in "an economically and politically diminished France"—can be found in Bourdieu's *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse* (Paris: Raisons d'Agir Éditions, 2004), 38-39.

processes,[67] as Laroui seems to have done in his formulation of "historicism." In an autobiographical account of his intellectual development, Laroui called historicism history's transcendent dimension, defined by its tendency to "[impose] itself as an order."[68] To be historicist, in this sense, was to intervene politically by recognizing and pursuing history's logical direction. Lenin provided "the most concise and most correct definition of historicism" when he described "the Hegelian dialectic… [as] the algebra of revolution."[69] Any "theory of political action" must, Laroui argued, be predicated on historicism: "What do the UN, the World Bank, Doctors without Borders, the League of the Rights of Man, etc., do, if not constantly put it into practice?"[70]

Opium was a turning point in Aron's career, marking his definitive alienation from the French intellectual left and the end of a period, beginning with the outbreak of World War II, when political activities eclipsed his academic work.[71] With Aron's return to the university—he would teach at the Sorbonne, Sciences Po, the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, and the Collège de France—came a prolific and varied published output consisting of political pamphlets; his "industrial society" trilogy; analyses of international relations and military strategy; and contributions to the history of ideas. These works undoubtedly all reflected, to some extent, both Aron's political convictions and his early interest in the nature of historical consciousness and the limits

[67] For his conception of a "determinism of chance" (*déterminisme aléatoire*), see Aron, *Opium*, 173-79; 162-68.
[68] "L'histoire s'ordonne elle-même ; elle est transcendance et immanence à la fois. Immanence tant qu'elle se manifeste comme activité consciente de l'homme, et c'est le niveau de l'historisme ; transcendance quand elle s'impose comme un ordre, un exemple à suivre sous peine d'échec, et c'est le niveau de l'historicisme." Laroui, *Philosophie et histoire*, 78.
[69] "Lénine a parlé du noyau rationnel de la dialectique hégélienne, en disant qu'elle était l'algèbre de la révolution ; c'est la définition la plus concise et la plus juste de l'historicisme comme on le verra plus loin." Ibid., 67.
[70] "L'actualité prouve sans cesse que, sans lui" (i.e., historicism), "la théorie de l'action politique est impensable. Que fait l'ONU, la Banque Mondiale, Médecins sans frontières, la Ligue des droits de l'homme, etc., sinon le mettre constamment en pratique ?" Ibid., 80.
[71] Nicolas Baverez, *Raymond Aron, qui suis-je ?* (Lyon: La Manufacture, 1986), 16-17.

of historical knowledge—though not always in obvious or explicit ways. To continue our inquiry into the ways in which the critical philosophy of history might be reformulated or applied beyond the scope of Aron's early work, it will thus be useful to consider a critique of Aron by a figure—Laroui, his former student—who shared many of his intellectual and political concerns but not necessarily his values. This will be my task in the chapter's next, final section.

WAR, IDEOLOGY, AND DECOLONIZATION: LAROUI ON ARON

That Aron would devote his last major scholarly work to the Prussian general, military strategist, and philosopher Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831) is understandable, given that Aron's perspective was profoundly shaped by the wars of the twentieth century and that he often dealt in his work with Clausewitz's central theme, the relationship between war and politics. By his own account, Aron first became aware of Clausewitz during his time in Germany, when he met the historian Herbert Rosinski, an enthusiastic reader of the Prussian strategist who published an article on his thought in 1935.[72] Aron first read Clausewitz's "masterpiece" *On War* in 1955 while "reflecting on the politico-strategic consequences of nuclear weapons" in the context of the Cold War. How could nuclear weapons serve as a means of limiting the geographical extent of military conflicts, particularly one between the United States and the Soviet Union? Would the use of nuclear weapons in such a conflict inevitably lead to the two superpowers' mutual annihilation? More generally, "*when* and *why* [did] wars ascend to extremes"? Was it possible "for men to limit them" and if so, how?[73] Aron's reflections on these and similar

[72] Raymond Aron, *Penser la guerre, Clausewitz. I, L'âge européen* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 9; *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, trans. Christine Booker and Norman Stone (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), vii. The English translation combines both parts of Aron's study into one volume; subsequent references will be to the appropriate volume of the French edition and to this translation.

[73] "Je lus pour la première fois l'oeuvre maîtresse de Clausewitz il y a une vingtaine d'années, vers 1955, quand parut la traduction française de Mme Naville, alors que je réfléchissais sur les conséquences politico-

questions made for a substantial body of work of which *Clausewitz* can be seen as the culmination.[74]

If Aron's choice of Clausewitz as a subject seems natural, the extent to which he, a French Jew, apparently empathized with the antisemitic German patriot is perhaps surprising. Aron himself acknowledged this incongruity in the book's preface, in which he nevertheless described Clausewitz as a "*résistant*" to Napoleonic domination whose "eloquence" in "refus[ing]… the peace of surrender… move[d] men of my generation" who experienced Germany's occupation of France.[75] In his review of the book, published in four parts in the Moroccan weekly paper *Libération*,[76] Laroui gave his own explanation for Aron's attitude toward Clausewitz: "It is one of R. Aron's characteristics as an interpreter of great classical thinkers to make us feel that each of them is in his domain unsurpassable, more modern than the moderns."[77] Responding by letter to Laroui, who sent him a copy of the review, Aron took his former student to be saying that he had "idealized" Clausewitz or "put him systematically in the right," a charge he denied. Although he acknowledged that in his discussions of contemporary conflicts he had

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stratégiques des armements nucléaires." Ibid., 10; vii. "Le contraste entre les guerres en dentelles du XVIIIe siècle et les guerres de la Révolution et de l'Empire offrit un point de départ à sa" (i.e., Clausewitz's) "réflexion ; cent trente ans plus tard, l'ampleur hyperbolique des guerres déclenchées en 1914 et en 1939, puis la menace de l'arme nucléaire obligent le citoyen, l'observateur, le sociologue à se demander *quand* et *pourquoi* les guerres montent aux extrêmes, *si* et *comment* les hommes peuvent les limiter." Ibid., 11; viii (translation modified).

[74] Christian Malis makes this point repeatedly in *Raymond Aron et le débat stratégique français: 1930-1966* (Paris: Economica : Institut de stratégie comparée ; Commission française d'histoire militaire, 2005), e.g. 20, 450.

[75] "Résistant, Clausewitz a refusé la paix d'abdication avec une éloquence qui émeut les hommes de ma génération…." Aron, *Clausewitz I*, 13; x.

[76] This is the French-language journal of the Union socialiste des forces populaires, formerly the Union nationale des forces populaires, a dissident leftist offshoot of the Moroccan nationalist Istiqlal party.

[77] "C'est d'ailleurs une des caractéristiques de R. Aron interprète des grands penseurs classiques, de nous faire sentir que chacun d'eux est dans son domaine indépassable, plus moderne que les modernes." Abdallah Laroui, "La guerre et la politique ou Clausewitz interprété par Raymond Aron : La méthode," *Libération*, December 3, 1976, 11.

"spoken in my [own] name while referring to [Clausewitz]," he maintained that he sought simply "to put [Clausewitz's] conceptual system to the test, nothing more, nothing less."[78]

For Laroui, Aron's identification with Clausewitz pointed to a deeper tension in the latter's work, and perhaps in Aron's own, between philosophy (or "theory") and politics or history. Clausewitz had, Laroui observed, experienced the Napoleonic wars both as a military officer for whom a theory of war could serve as a guide to action; and from the perspective of "a people when it defends itself, led by patriotic faith." Laroui argued that this ambiguous position led Clausewitz to pose two different questions. On one hand, what was the essence of war? On the other, what was the relationship between war and politics? "Can we not think," Laroui asked rhetorically, "that soldiers [*militaires*] always pose the first question and politicians the second?" According to Laroui, Aron had refused to confine his interpretation of Clausewitz to one side of this divide, instead arguing that Clausewitz had "resolved all the contradictions that [his work] seems to contain." In order to make this argument it was necessary to equate "the essence of war… with its function in the life of states,"[79] reconciling "the concept of war with real war" by bridging the gap between theory and history. The only suitable definition for this purpose

[78] "Quelques remarques en passant suggérées par ma lecture de votre compte-rendu : mon intention n'était pas d'idéaliser Clausewitz et de lui donner systématiquement raison ; il s'agissait de mettre à l'épreuve son système conceptuel, rien de plus, rien de moins.

"Dans le deuxième tome, je parle souvent en mon nom tout en me référant à lui ; inévitablement le lecteur se demande de temps à autre si c'est lui qui s'exprime ou si c'est moi, mais je ne tenais pas toujours à dissiper cette équivoque." Raymond Aron, letter to Abdallah Laroui, January 31, 1977, fonds Aron, box 188.

[79] "Double admiration" (of Clausewitz for Napoleon): "du chef de guerre quand il attaque avec une armée appropriée, du peuple quand il se défend entraîné par sa foi patriotique; voilà l'origine de l'ambiguité de Clausewitz." On the questions of war's essence and its relation to politics: "Ne peut-on pas penser que les militaires poseront toujours la première question et les politiques la seconde ?" On Aron's interpretation: "Il soutient que si Clausewitz n'a pas achevé son oeuvre, il est arrivé néanmoins à résoudre toutes les contradictions qu'elle semble contenir comme le montre le plan du chapitre premier du livre premier." And: "Pour que la pensée de Clausewitz soit conséquente avec elle-même, il faudrait supposer que l'essence de la guerre se confonde avec sa fonction dans la vie des Etats; il faudrait rapprocher cette pensée de celle des auteurs positifs telles que Montesquieu ou Machiavel." Laroui, "La méthode," 10.

was war as "reasonable action undertaken by the state," a definition that spoke to Aron's own ostensible desire to bring rationality and prudence to Cold War strategy.[80]

This desire informed Aron's conviction that, in Laroui's words, "the reversal of [Clausewitz's] formula"—war as politics with the addition of other means—"is both illegitimate and unjustifiable."[81] Here we can note a significant difference between Aron and his colleague at the Collège de France, Michel Foucault, who gave a course on the relationship between war and politics in 1976, the year *Clausewitz* was published. For Foucault, reversing Clausewitz and seeing politics as war by other means was a way of usefully reformulating the problem of political power. He hypothesized that Clausewitz's own formula was symptomatic of the historical emergence of the modern state, whose monopoly on violence was possible due to the gradual disappearance of "the bellicose relations that had permeated [society] through and through during the Middle Ages."[82] Aron, for his part, took for granted that war was the responsibility of heads of state even as he asked to what extent this principle held true for Cold War geopolitics. In Laroui's summary, Aron made the "bet" that "in today's nuclear world, in which inequality of forces is the rule, there is no salvation for humanity outside of Clausewitz's doctrine, which thus becomes a formula allowing man to act again in a world he controls only with difficulty."[83] Evidently, then, Aron wrote not merely to put Clausewitz's theories to the

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[80] "Comment passer ensuite du concept de la guerre à la guerre réelle? L'une ne peut être déduite de l'autre. On passe nécessairement par hiatus de la théorie à l'histoire; on garde la définition non pas comme un étalon par rapport auquel on mesure la réalité, mais comme un instrument pratique servant à ordonner les idées se rapportant aux faits de la guerre." And: "La guerre n'est pensable que si on la définit comme une action raisonnable entreprise par l'Etat." Ibid., 11.

[81] "R. Aron affirme que le renversement de la formule est à la fois illégitime et injustifiable." Abdallah Laroui, "La guerre et la politique ou Clausewitz interprété par Raymond Aron : L'interprétation," *Libération*, November 26, 1976, 13.

[82] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*, ed. Mauro Bertani, Alessandro Fontana, and François Ewald, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 48.

[83] "Du reste, le pari d'Aron est compréhensible : dans le monde nucléaire d'aujourd'hui où l'inégalité des forces est la règle, où quelques Etats peuvent détruire des dizaines d'autres impunément, il n'y a pas de

test, as he claimed, but in order to align Clausewitz with his own politics. Along these lines, in his discussion of Lenin as a reader of Clausewitz, he criticized the Bolshevik leader for overestimating the global conflict between socialist and imperialist states and underestimating the importance of "national passions." Lenin's Marxist "philosophy of history," wrote Aron, "permits at once the determination of a *true* [*juste*] meaning of war and the *justice* of a cause," a move he claimed was "radically foreign" to Clausewitz's writings.[84]

Laroui found Aron's preference for a theory of war as the reasoned action of states "understandable" but saw the theory itself as too sweeping and, moreover, Eurocentric. To follow Clausewitz in defining war as a "civilized" affair conducted between ostensibly equal powers acting in accordance with basically rational calculations was to discount the possibility that states might not be rational actors or that war could break out between unequally equipped combatants. To adhere to a theory of war rooted in the political realities of eighteenth-century Europe was, further, to ignore non-European history:

> Is it true that the majority of historical wars were non-wars? This is undoubtedly true of those for which we possess written reports, but what of those, outside of Europe, that were not analyzed, not rationalized? "According to its pure concept, any war between states whose forces present a notable inequality would appear to be an absurdity, thus an impossibility," writes Clausewitz. But these rationally

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salut pour l'humanité en dehors de la doctrine de Clausewitz, qui devient ainsi une formule permettant à l'homme d'agir encore dans un monde qu'il ne contrôle plus que difficilement." Laroui, "La méthode," 11.

[84] "Pour définir la nature de la guerre, Lénine écarte avec indifférence les passions nationales et s'en tient à l'analyse marxiste de la société des États." Raymond Aron, *Penser la guerre, Clausewitz. II, L'âge planétaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 75; 276. Lenin had "certainly understood *one* of the elements of Clausewitz's thought," i.e. that war was only "a moment" or "an aspect" of the "political totality." ("Lénine a certainement compris *une* des composantes de la pensée clausewitzienne : la totalité politique contient la guerre qui n'en constitue qu'un moment ou même un aspect toujours partiel, y compris durant les hostilités.") Yet: "En revanche, la philosophie de l'histoire qui permet tout à la fois de déterminer la signification *juste* d'une guerre et la *justice* d'une cause, me semble radicalement étrangère à l'officier prussien." Ibid., 76; 277 (translation modified).

> impossible and absurd wars are the most numerous outside of Europe, even today.[85]

One might find plenty of "non-wars"—in which the belligerents diverged from war's "pure concept" by acting with relative moderation, avoiding an "ascent to extremes"—in the historical record, but relatively few in the Cold War world of political instability and asymmetric conflicts.

Laroui's claim that "R. Aron's interpretation [of Clausewitz] forms a whole" perhaps betrays the "Hegelian tendencies" that, he wrote to Aron, prevented him from reading *Clausewitz* "with total abandon"—notwithstanding the "pleasure and great profit" he also took from it, his "admiration" for and "fascination" with Aron's "will to lucidity."[86] Whereas Aron's reading of Clausewitz and his previous interpreters was, Laroui wrote, "passionately anti-Hegelian"—instead of seeing "the truth of a doctrine" as "the sum of its interpretations realized in history," Aron "thinks that through methods of historical, philological, and semantic critique we can most closely encapsulate [*cerner*] an author's doctrine"—Laroui read *Clausewitz* as Aron's attempt to impose order on chaotic Cold War history-in-the-making.[87] Specifically, Laroui argued, Aron sought to secure the advantages of Clausewitzian thinking, already enjoyed by the "Marxist camp,"

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[85] "Est-il vrai que la plupart des guerres historiques furent des non-guerres? Sans doute est-ce vrai pour celles dont on possède un compte-rendu, mais celles, hors d'Europe, qui ne furent pas analysées, pas rationalisées? «D'après son pur concept, toute guerre entre Etats dont les forces présentent une inégalité notable apparaîtrait comme une absurdité, donc une impossibilité», écrit Clausewitz. Mais ces guerres rationnellement absurdes et impossibles sont les plus nombreuses hors d'Europe, même de nos jours." Laroui, "La méthode," 11.

[86] "L'interprétation de R. Aron forme un tout." Ibid. "Il se peut que ces pages ne laissent pas transparaître assez clairement le plaisir et le grand profit que j'ai tirés de ma lecture, il se peut aussi que mes tendances hégéliennes ne m'aient pas permis de lire votre ouvrage avec un total abandon; mais je tiens à souligner ici l'admiration et, oserai-je dire, la fascination que je ne cesse d'éprouver devant votre volonté de lucidité." Laroui, letter to Aron, January 20, 1977, fonds Aron, box 188.

[87] "Un hégélien dirait volontiers que la vérité d'une doctrine est la somme de ses interprétations réalisées en histoire, il nierait qu'une œuvre puisse être méconnue ou demeurée incomprise. Aron est passionnément anti-hégélien; il pense que par les moyens de la critique historique, philologique, sémantique, on peut cerner au plus près la doctrine d'un auteur." Laroui, "L'interprétation," 12.

for the West.[88] If, as we saw above, Laroui was unimpressed by Aron's Clausewitzian "theory of war," he was nevertheless, he wrote, intrigued by what he took to be Aron's "conclusion" that "the danger of war today resides in the West's excessive fear and the outrageous militarization of their political thought."[89]

Concluding the first part of his review, Laroui acknowledged his own subjectivity by posing a question to, and with, his audience: "We may now ask how Clausewitz and his commentator can interest us, we Arab readers." It was, he continued, "not easy for today's Arab reader to read [*Clausewitz*] without a certain malaise" since Aron was "a fierce defender of Israel's right to existence and consequently opposes the Palestinians' long-term goals."[90] In his analysis of the Israeli situation in *Clausewitz,* Aron argued that the Jewish state faced a "contradiction between [its] political objective and the military demands of [its] security." In order to secure recognition by its Arab neighbors, Aron argued, Israel was forced to engage in a military standoff with them as a safeguard against its own potential annihilation.[91] By Laroui's interpretation, Aron had thereby portrayed Israel as existing in a state of "total war that no longer needs to be rationalized

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[88] "Si l'Occident n'est pas en majorité fidèle à Clausewitz, si celui-ci n'est pas vraiment militariste, et si le camp marxiste est, lui, clausewitzien, il est donc urgent que l'Occident revienne au message du Général prussien car il y a alors possibilité de limiter les risques de guerre et de consolider la coexistence pacifique." Ibid.

[89] "Habituellement nous sommes tentés d'être d'accord avec les analyses de R. Aron et de rejeter ses préscriptions, cette fois-ci c'est sa conclusion qui est séduisante (le danger de guerre aujourd'hui réside dans l'excès de peur des Occidentaux et la militarisation outrée de leur pensée politique) plutôt que sa théorie de la guerre dont le souci d'orthodoxie clausewitzienne me paraît ni justifiée ni indispensable." Ibid., 13.

[90] "Demandons-nous maintenant en quoi Clausewitz et son commentateur peuvent nous intéresser, nous lecteurs arabes.

"Aron aime à rappeler à juste titre qu'il a recommandé à Edgar Faure en 1955 de hâter le retour de Mohammed V et qu'il a croisé le fer avec Jacques Soustelle au sujet de l'avenir de l'Algérie; mais il ne cache pas non plus qu'il est un défenseur farouche du droit d'Israél à l'existence et qu'il s'oppose par conséquent aux visées à long terme des Palestiniens." Ibid.

[91] "De toute manière, ils éprouvent la contradiction entre leur fin politique et les exigences militaires de leur sécurité." Raymond Aron, *Clausewitz II*, 196; 354 (translation modified).

or limited, so much as justified by ideas to which reason and even life are subordinate."[92] In his unqualified support of Israel, this reading would seem to suggest, Aron had let his critical guard down and yielded to the temptations of ideology.

Aron wrote in his *Memoirs* that while an appreciation of "the plurality of cultures (or civilizations) already belonged, in 1938, to the spirit of the times," the French academic and political elite as he knew them during his student years were committed to "rationalist progressivism" and relatedly, French imperialism: "The moderate left of the time still believed in the 'civilizing mission' of France or the West."[93] Yet when, at the height of the Algerian War, Aron spoke out in favor of Algerian independence, he used a logic of historical inevitability seemingly at odds with the anti-positivist arguments he developed in the *Introduction* and to which he gave a Cold War spin in *Opium*.[94] Aron returned to this subject in *Clausewitz*, writing—in Laroui's summary—that the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) was able to succeed "not because of its reputedly invincible guerrilla tactics, but because it was carried by an irresistible historical current: national liberation."[95] Algeria's nationalist politics were destined to win the day, despite France's military advantages.

Aron's controversial pamphlet on the Algerian War, *La tragédie algérienne* (The Algerian tragedy, 1957), dramatized the tension, often present in Aron's work, between

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[92] "Quand il pense à l'action d'Israél, au destin d'Israél seul, non à celui de l'humanité dans son ensemble, Aron a besoin de penser la guerre dans son concept, puisqu'il affirme qu'une seule défaite signifera la fin de l'Etat et du peuple d'Israél. La guerre absolue n'est plus alors la guerre dans l'absolu, mais la guerre totale qui n'a plus tant besoin d'être rationalisée, limitée, que d'être justifiée par des idées auxquelles est soumise la raison, et même la vie." Laroui, "La méthode," 11.

[93] "La gauche modérée de l'époque croyait encore à « la mission civilisatrice » de la France ou des pays occidentaux." Aron, *Mémoires*, 165; 81 (translation modified).

[94] Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 69.

[95] "Si le FLN a fini par obtenir gain de cause, ce n'est pas en raison de sa tactique de guerilla réputée invincible, mais parce qu'il était porté par un courant historique irrésistible : la libération nationale." Abdallah Laroui, "La guerre et la politique ou Clausewitz interprété par Raymond Aron : La réalité," *Libération*, December 24, 1976, 11.

objective analysis and subjective passion. In this text, Aron combined coldly logical economic and demographic arguments in favor of Algerian independence with fatalistic statements suggesting that he regarded this outcome as inexorable. "Independence," he wrote, "is a magic word, nationalism the cement of the Islamic masses."[96] To negotiate with nationalist groups, as France had already done in neighboring Tunisia and Morocco, was to make their calls for independence all the more irresistible. Aron bridged the economic, demographic, and nationalist arguments by writing that "Algeria is not a part of France, it must not be, it cannot be: excessive population and poverty make it into an underdeveloped country that must be treated as such."[97] Though the "tragedy" of his title referred to the disastrous war that was reaching new heights of mayhem as he wrote—and whose escalation, as he argued, made a politically desirable resolution to the conflict ever more elusive—he also highlighted the personal drama the war entailed for French patriots like himself: "France without North Africa will be another France. The crisis that marks the passage from a global to a continental power is pathetic. Each of us lives it intensely, in revolt against others and oneself."[98] In making the case for Algerian independence, Aron channeled this pathos into an apparently dispassionate set of arguments for political moderation and military restraint. Interestingly, the tortuous path of his argument led him to confess his own faith in the civilizing mission, if only to immediately disavow it: "Personally, for both moral and economic reasons, national as well as universal, I believe in the 'mission' of France in Africa, I believe in France's 'African vocation.' But neither

[96] "L'indépendance est un mot magique, le nationalisme est le ciment des masses islamiques." Raymond Aron, *La tragédie algérienne* (Paris: Plon, 1957), 15.
[97] "L'Algérie n'est pas une partie de la France, elle ne doit pas l'être, elle ne peut pas l'être : l'excès de population, la pauvreté en font un pays sous-développé, qui doit être traité comme tel." Ibid., 43-44.
[98] "La France sans l'Afrique du Nord sera une autre France. La crise qui marque le passage de la puissance mondiale à la puissance continentale est pathétique. Chacun de nous la vit intensément, révolté contre les autres et contre lui-même." Ibid., 35.

this mission nor this vocation is compatible with refusing the right of African peoples to govern themselves."[99]

Laroui offered his own frankly partisan analysis of Moroccan decolonization in an essay written in the context of the country's territorial conflict with Algeria over the western Sahara, which coincided with the publication of *Clausewitz*. Like Aron, Laroui portrayed decolonization as an act of political will on the part of the colonizer: "the colonial or imperialist power abandons [its colony] when it is convinced that the game is no longer worthwhile, and this is the very definition of a revolutionary war, which, unfortunately, is not a war so much as a bloody political struggle."[100] Beyond this, however, Laroui argued that decolonization had made the historical process of colonization intelligible. An analysis of this process, he claimed, revealed a series of steps—"developmental stages of triumphant capitalism and phases of the global market's constitution"—whose systematic reversal decolonization represented.[101] Yet he did not see this process as a fait accompli. Rather, insofar as formerly colonized countries would necessarily pass through their own processes of economic development—submitting to "the law of the global market"—they ran the risk of once again becoming dependent on

[99] "Personellement, pour des raisons morales aussi bien qu'économiques, nationales aussi bien qu'universelles, je crois à la « mission » de la France en Afrique, je crois à la « vocation africaine » de la France. Mais ni cette mission ni cette vocation ne sont compatibles avec le refus aux peuples d'Afrique du droit de se gouverner eux-mêmes." Ibid., 50-51.

[100] "Nulle part, le résultat n'est dû seulement au courage des hommes, bien que celui-ci soit l'élément qui fasse tout de même la différence : c'est lorsque la Puissance coloniale ou impérialiste est convaincue que le jeu n'en vaut plus la peine que qu'elle abandonne et c'est d'ailleurs la définition même la guerre révolutionnaire qui n'est pas tellement une guerre qu'une lutte politique sanglante, malheureusement." Abdallah Laroui, *L'Algérie et Le Sahara Marocain* (Casablanca: Serar, 1976), 132.

[101] "La vérité, c'est que ce processus ne nous a été rendu compréhensible que lorsqu'à commencé précisément celui de la décolonisation. C'est l'analyse critique de celui-ci qui nous a permis de distinguer des différentes étapes qui sont en même temps des stades de développement du capitalisme conquérant et des phases de constitution du marché mondial ; nous avons pu ainsi distinguer les traits distinctifs du colonialisme mercantiliste des XVI-XVIème siècles, de l'expansionnisme « anti-colonial » de l'Europe liberale du XIXème et l'impérialisme guerrier d'avant la première guerre mondiale." Ibid., 130.

Western powers.[102] To avoid this, vigilance was called for at both the national and international levels—a Third World solidarity against which the dispute between Morocco and Algeria constituted, in Laroui's view, a transgression.

CONCLUSION

What does it mean, then, to see Aron and Laroui as critical philosophers of history? What relation, if any, does this intellectual affinity bear to postcolonial politics? From quite different perspectives, the two thinkers combined the work of scholar and politician, theorist and historian, in their analyses of war and decolonization. For both authors—although it must be said that Laroui produced a body of work on the subject whose complexities I have only hinted at in this chapter—the political and cultural contradictions of colonialism made decolonization inevitable. This must have seemed particularly obvious at a time when African and Asian nations gained their independence in quick succession and the Third World emerged as a self-conscious geopolitical force. It would become less so as the developmentalist project ostensibly dedicated to modernizing the Third World led to new forms of structural dependence on former metropolitan powers. Laroui recognized this and did not shy away from a quasi-Marxist analysis of global inequalities, while for Aron the most pressing political challenge of the postwar world was the danger posed, in his view, by the Soviet Union.

Whatever their intellectual or personal affinities, then, Aron and Laroui had serious political differences. In particular, their positions on Israel constitute an ideological *différend* that is frankly acknowledged as such in their correspondence and in

[102] "Même lorsque toutes les précautions sont prises, lorsque l'Etat est capable de défendre ses intérêts, on ne peut cependant s'empêcher de se poser la question de savoir si à la longue cette attitude [i.e., the welcoming attitude of postcolonial governments toward private industry] ne dénote pas par elle même la volonté de jouer le jeu des Puissances dominantes, c'est à dire de se plier à la *Loi* du marché mondial et si on ne se retrouve pas à un stade plus élevé la même domination sous le signe d'une *Loi* pré-établie, intangible, et qui n'est qu'une autre face de l'impérialisme mondial ?" Ibid., 137.

Laroui's review. In his reply to Laroui, Aron called "the conflict between the Arabs and the Israelis" an issue "that directly touches you as well as myself." He did not accept—nor did he explicitly acknowledge—Laroui's claim that he supported Israel at the Palestinians' expense, instead claiming to have treated the conflict "as objectively as possible, without favoring one or the other camp." In the same breath, however, he reminded Laroui that "I indicated [in the book] that it was impossible to find a criterion or judge [*arbitre*] that would allow for a decision between the extant theses."[103] It is clear, in other words, that the two authors' differing values marked a limit beyond which their arguments could not be reconciled on an objective basis. The same could be said of Aron's and Laroui's differing choices of *maîtres à penser*: for the former, Weber and Clausewitz (and, elsewhere in his work, Montesquieu, Tocqueville, and others); for the latter, Hegel, Marx, and Lenin (among others). Nevertheless, Aron and Laroui shared an awareness of themselves—and of intellectuals more generally—as historical actors implicated in the political and cultural developments they sought to understand. In different ways and with varying degrees of vigilance, they both treated this fact as a problem to be approached with the tools of critical historical and philosophical inquiry.

As we have noted above, the Aron of *Introduction* was drawn to what he saw as Weber's strict separation of scientific objectivity from subjective values, though he claimed to follow Weber in seeing both of these elements as indispensable to historical knowledge. If this was Aron's starting point, another of Weber's crucial distinctions—between forms of political morality that seem to correspond to what the young Aron called the politics of reason and the politics of understanding—apparently marked him

[103] "Un dernier mot sur un sujet qui vous touche directement ainsi que moi-même. Je crois avoir analysé le conflit entre les Arabes et les Israéliens aussi objectivement que possible, sans donner raison à l'un ou à l'autre camp, bien plus, j'ai indiqué qu'il était impossible de trouver un critère ou un arbitre qui permette de trancher entre les thèses en présence." Aron, letter to Laroui, January 31, 1977, fonds Aron, box 188.

more durably. In his introduction to the French edition of Weber's vocation lectures, published in 1959, Aron argued that Weber's inquiries into "the limits of science and the antinomies of action" led him to develop, against his best intentions, relativist philosophies of history and human nature.[104] Aron himself threw in his lot with the "universal morality" ("that of Christ or of Kant") that, he claimed, was also Weber's own, and which Aron associated with the "morality of responsibility" (politics of understanding) that Weber opposed to that of "conviction" (politics of reason).[105] "The antinomy [between the two moralities] seems to me to be essential," Aron wrote, "even though, in most cases, prudence would suggest a reasonable compromise."[106]

In Aron's view, that is, history was not a "war of gods"—Weber's term for the irreconcilable conflict between worldviews that he saw as essential to politics. For Aron, the correct way to approach political problems was instead to follow the "universal" morality he associated with Christianity or Enlightenment philosophy. Similarly, he associated the "industrial" form of society he analyzed in other works—what a Marxist might call capitalist society—with the "responsible" political morality he favored. To be "hostile to industrialization or to unconditionally refuse private ownership of the means

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[104] "Je ne me suis aventuré sur le terrain de la philosophie que pour marquer les limites de la science et les antinomies de l'action." Aron, preface to Weber, *Le savant et le politique*, 44. In this passage, Aron imagines Weber's response to a charge brought by Leo Strauss: that "la *radicale irrationalité des décisions dévaloriserait le souci de la discrimination rigoreuse entre science et politique, entre rapports aux valeurs et jugements de valeur*" (ibid., 42; emphasis in the original). For Strauss on Weber, see Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), chapter 2. Toward the end of his preface, Aron wrote that Weber had "transpos[ed] an indisputable fact – men have made incompatible representations of the world – into a philosophy that no one lives or thinks because it is contradictory (all representations are equivalent, none of them being either true or false)." ("La formule de la « guerre des dieux » est la transposition d'un fait indiscutable – les hommes se sont fait des représentations incompatibles du monde – en une philosophie que personne ne vit ni ne pense parce qu'elle est contradictoire (toutes les représentations sont équivalentes, aucune n'étant ni vraie ni fausse).") Aron, *Le savant*, 55.

[105] "Mais la politique est guerre et la morale universelle, celle du Christ ou celle de Kant, qui était restée, dans l'inconscient de Max Weber, *la* morale, est paix." Ibid., 47. On the two moralities, ibid., 26.

[106] "L'antinomie me paraît essentielle, quand bien même, dans la majorité des cas, la prudence suggérerait un compromis raisonnable." Ibid., 46.

of production" was, Aron wrote, to eschew reasonable political discussion. To embrace the morality of conviction was both to intervene in and to misconceive of history, casting it as "an inexorable struggle between men, parties, and gods."[107]

Aron argued that Weber's account of the two moralities "rationalize[d] his own contradictions" and reflected the "torn consciousness of a 'political cleric.'"[108] Laroui made a similar point in his review of *Clausewitz* when he noted that Aron had repeatedly projected views forged in the Cold War's crucible onto the Prussian general. As described in Aron's early work, the critical philosophy of history was an attempt to overcome historical relativism by accounting for the role of subjectivity in history. Aron argued in his theses and demonstrated throughout his career that such an attempt inevitably failed: critique could not liquidate subjectivity (particularly political subjectivity); rather, the two elements tended to complement each other. In the following chapter, we will encounter a similar dynamic in Laroui's early work.

[107] "Qui demeure hostile à l'industrialisation ou qui refuse inconditionnellement la propriété privée des instruments de production n'entre pas dans cette discussion raisonnable : il est dans l'histoire et celle-ci est faite d'une lutte inexpiable entre les hommes, les parties et les dieux." Ibid., 49.
[108] "Il rationalise ses propres contradictions dans l'antinomie des deux morales qui, au niveau de la phénoménologie de l'action politique, me paraît une conceptualisation fidèle de la conscience déchirée du « clerc dans la politique »." Ibid., 47.

Chapter 3: Decolonization as Crisis of Historicism: Reading Abdallah Laroui's *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine*

Introducing *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine* (Contemporary Arab ideology, 1967; hereafter, *IAC*), a book-length essay in which he considers the past, present, and future of the Arab world through the lens of its modern intellectual history, Abdallah Laroui wrote that the work "was born of a reflection on a particular situation: that of today's Morocco. Nobody," he continued, "can avoid surprise at the political weakness and cultural sterility that the Moroccan elite has displayed in the past decade"[1]—that is, since Morocco gained its independence from France in 1956. Instead of lingering on this subject, however, he quickly shifted his focus to a broader "Arab problematic" that, he claimed, united Moroccan thinkers with those of other Arab countries. This problematic begins with "a definition of the Self [*Soi*]. But since every definition is a negation, the self [*moi*] is faced with an Other, or more exactly it is with respect to the Other that the Arabs define themselves. This Other is the West."[2] To trace the Arab self's historical emergence was thus to historicize "the notion of the West" as it was developed in the writings of prominent Arab thinkers, from the intellectual "awakening" (*Nahda*) of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the volatile postcolonial moment in which Laroui wrote.

Is the Arab self whose emergence Laroui attempted to trace more properly represented in the first or the third person? This question seems implicit in his linguistic slippage, in defining the "Arab problematic," from a "*Soi*" determined to give itself an

[1] "Il est né d'une réflexion sur une situation particulière : celle du Maroc d'aujourd'hui. Personne ne peut s'empêcher de s'étonner de l'impuissance politique et de la sterilité culturelle, que l'élite marocaine montre depuis dix ans." Abdallah Laroui, *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine* (Paris: François Maspero, 1967), 3.
[2] "D'abord une définition de Soi. Mais comme toute définition est une négation, en face du moi se pose l'Autre, ou plus exactement c'est par rapport à l'Autre que les Arabes se définissent. Cet Autre est l'Occident." Ibid., 4.

objective, positive definition, to a "*moi*" defined negatively and subjectively against the Western Other. A central theme of *IAC* is this tension between an identity proud of its cultural achievements and jealous of Western dominance and a reality defined by what Laroui called the Arab world's historical delay (*retard historique*) relative to the West. To resolve this tension, Laroui argued, Arab intellectuals—or "ideologues," a term he preferred for reasons that will soon become clear—would have to develop historical consciousness, which he saw as lacking from Arab thought. Since the Arabs found themselves in a state of historical instability or flux,[3] this would be no simple task. It was not enough to adopt the positivist methods of European orientalist scholars, whom Laroui saw as vulnerable to a self-deception similar to the Arabs' own.[4] The orientalist, Laroui wrote, always "overestimates the past and the present, for fear of going beyond observable reality," while the Arab intellectual "already places himself in an inoperative [*non effectif*] future."[5] Both groups were mired in ideology, which a historical critique like Laroui's could identify and bring to the surface but never quite eliminate.

Although Laroui's critical remarks regarding orientalist scholarship have led some commentators to compare him to Edward Said,[6] the former's "Arab problematic" is

[3] Laroui contrasted periods of historical change or "mutation" to periods of stability or "repetition," claiming that in the latter, "consciousness is at the level of social structure" while in the former, the link between culture and social base was broken: "Toute société connaît des périodes de répetitions et des périodes de mutations. Dans un cas, le conscience est au niveau de la structure sociale ; des correspondances, des réflexions directes sont alors facilement perceptibles et on peut aisément échafauder une image structurée de la société où tout est à place dans un équilibre parfait. Dans le second cas, une grande partie des oeuvres culturelles se délestent de cet esprit intime qui leur donnait forme et consistance et vont se perdre dans un océan d'objets inertes sur lequel plane la conscience interrogative. Aucun lien direct n'existe plus alors entre cette conscience et les oeuvres culturelles." Ibid., 6.

[4] For example, Laroui wrote of the Moroccan nationalist leader Allal al-Fasi: "Critique pour l'autre et naïf pour soi-même, comme Renan et Goldziher le furent de leur temps quand ils parlèrent de l'Islam" Ibid., 44.

[5] "Et l'orientalisme, tout entier, bascule ainsi du côté de l'idéologie car si le présupposé de l'idéologue arabe est de se placer déjà dans un avenir non effectif, celui de l'orientaliste est toujours de surestimer le passé et le présent, de peur d'aller au-delà de la réalité observable." Ibid., 124.

[6] See, for example, Youssef Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography: Historical Discourse and the Nation-State* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 191; Hosam Aboul-Ela, "The Specificities of Arab Thought: Morocco since the Liberal Age," in Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss, eds., *Arab Thought Against the Authoritarian*

by no means reducible to the latter's account of "the Orient" as an imaginative product of Western imperialism.[7] For Laroui, the Orient—at least where Arabs were concerned—was a product of its *own* imagination, inflamed equally by the resentful valorization of tradition and a desire to follow the Western path to modernization (as many newly independent Arab states indeed attempted to do). Both Said's orientalist and Laroui's Arab ideologue suffer from what Laroui described as the fundamentally "duplicitous" character of the historical encounter between Occident and Orient,[8] but with different consequences in each case: for the orientalist, redoubled confidence in the justice of Western hegemony; for the Arab ideologue, false consciousness and political weakness.

Laroui associated the Arab ideologue's subjective split with a particular temporal register: "the future anterior." "In Morocco," he wrote, "our consciousness floats between past determinations and the call of the future."[9] The future anterior—an anticipated future capable of giving the present a new historical meaning—expressed this suspended subjective state, which Laroui took to be indicative both of intellectual eclecticism and a disjuncture between social being and consciousness. To understand this condition, he argued, the historian must recognize "two lines of determination: one at the level of apparent social facts" or the "*real*," "the other at the level of ideology" or the "*objective*": "that which results logically from the facts currently accepted by Arab thought, not that which is actually current in society."[10] This division, in turn, was a further index of

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Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Present (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 154; François Pouillon, "Orientalism, Dead or Alive? A French History," in Pouillon and Jean-Claude Vatin, eds., *After Orientalism: Critical Perspectives on Western Agency and Eastern Re-Appropriations* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 3.

[7] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

[8] Laroui, *IAC*, 39.

[9] "Notre conscience, au Maroc, flotte entre les déterminations du passé et l'appel de l'avenir." Ibid., 66.

[10] "Pusqu'il y a une coupure radicale entre l'être de la société arabe et sa conscience, il y a donc deux lignes de détermination : l'une au niveau des faits sociaux apparents, l'autre au niveau de l'idéologie. L'analyse empirique ne voit que la première, l'analyse positiviste statique fait coïncider les deux en les mettant en relation directe ; l'analyse socio-historique, utilisée ici, est obligée de distinguier l'une de l'autre. Et ainsi

historical delay: modernization along Western lines loomed as a possibility whose realization would validate certain ideological understandings of the Arab world's historical trajectory and allow others to be overcome.

In historicizing what he called Arab ideology, then, Laroui argued that it was necessary to account for the effects both of ideas and the social environments in which they arose, and to recognize this bifurcation as the product of divided consciousness and historical delay. Another symptom of these conditions, according to Laroui, was Arab ideologues' tendency to prioritize action over knowledge. If Western intellectuals had the luxury of acting in order to know (or of "separating the time of research from that of application"), Arab thinkers sought knowledge in order to act, with historical analogies serving as pragmatic blueprints.[11] Along similar lines, Arab thinkers borrowed theoretical models from the West, but in a particular way: taking Western ideologies (positivism or Marxism) to be closed systems—the better to appropriate and apply them—rather than methods of open-ended inquiry. Arab ideology was "really advanced and objectively delayed": meant to foster future-oriented political action, it nonetheless took "a surpassed form of the West" as its ultimate horizon.[12] Laroui concluded that "critical consciousness"

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elle nomme la première *réelle* et la seconde *objective*. Est objective, ce qui découle logiquement de données déjà acceptées par la pensée arabe, et non pas ce qui est courant effectivement dans la société." Ibid., 68.

[11] "Pour agir, il est nécessaire d'avoir un plan, un programme, un modèle et comme on n'a pas le temps de scruter attentivement une réalité, qui souvent ne répond pas d'une manière univoque, on a recours à l'analogie." Ibid., 130. The positivist "commet… une erreure flagrante qui provient du fait qu'en Occident il avait la possibilité de séparer le temps de la recherche et celui de l'application. Dans la société arabe, au contraire, le temps est compté, l'autonomie relative, qu'il revendique pour la connaissance, semble un luxe et cette société préfère prendre ce que l'Occident a déjà trouvé et vérifié. En un mot, elle accepte le positivisme en tant que système constitué, pour servir de guide à l'action, et le refuse en tant que méthode qui pourrait donner des résultats non concordants avec ceux de l'Occident qu'il faudrait alors vérifier et contrôler : luxe qui est hors de sa portée." Ibid., 131.

[12] The national state's "pratique est une *réaction* contre l'impérialisme. C'est cette action-réaction qui condamne, faute de temps, la réflexion et l'étude détachées, qui oblige cet Etat à utiliser des techniques qu'il ne s'assimile pas réellement. Il n'est donc pas étonnant que l'idéologie arabe soit, par rapport à l'action, à la fois en avance (puisqu'elle lui fournit un modèle à suivre) et en retard (puisqu'elle prend ce

could furnish Arab ideologues with a more universal, less alienating sense of their historical relationship to the West while also calling attention to the ways in which Western thinkers lost sight of history's "demand for universality" by embracing forms of knowledge that emphasized cultural particularity.[13]

Written between 1961 and 1964, a period in which Laroui worked first as a cultural advisor at the Moroccan embassy in Cairo and then as a professor at Mohammed V University in Rabat, *IAC* was published on the eve of the Arab-Israeli War that quickly ended in a catastrophic defeat (the *naksa* or "setback"), precipitating the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands that continues to this day. This context, Laroui later claimed, led readers to interpret his book "as a criticism of the prevailing Arab ideology which led to the war," a reading he contested.[14] Arab intellectual historians have more recently argued that "the intellectual and cultural effervescence that characterized the 1960s" was amplified in the wake of 1967, as Palestinian solidarity became a political "*cause celèbre*" and "experimental schools of thought," including Laroui's own "historicist criticism," proliferated.[15] Another author points to 1967 as a turning point in

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modèle dans une forme dépassée de l'Occident). Nous dirions qu'elle est réellement en avance et objectivement en retard, dans le sens donné plus haut à ces deux termes." Ibid., 212.

[13] "Tout cet essai est un appel à la conscience critique. L'interpénétration des deux sociétés arabe et occidentale, est assez avancée, pour que les conditions soient favorables à une telle prise de conscience. Celle-ci, qui est la conscience simultanée de deux évolutions historiques, doit bannir tout particularisme, tout exclusivisme, si elle ne veut pas retomber dans l'idéologie justificative et le folklore." On the West, further on: "Après avoir tenté de s'imposer comme Homme universel, il a reculé devant la critique par les armes des autres ; il s'est saisi alors comme particulier, ce qui est positif en un certain sens. Mais quand il se met à attendre passivement d'autrui la préfiguration du futur, lorsqu'il se perd dans l'authenticité arabe ou la négritude, en vérité il s'installe dans le particularisme." For the West, too, historical consciousness provided the surest path to true universalism; but the advance of other forms of knowledge had caused it to withdraw from this path: "Le seul domaine où l'Occident semblait maintenir cette exigence d'universalité, celui de l'histoire, se laisse maintenant, lui aussi, gagné par le doute ; l'esprit historique qui dominait jusqu'à present toute la conscience occidentale, a été chassé de l'ethnologie, de la sociologie et de la littérature." Ibid., 213-14.

[14] Nancy Gallagher, "Interview — the Life and Times of Abdallah Laroui, a Moroccan Intellectual," *The Journal of North African Studies* 3, no. 1 (1998), 137.

[15] Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss, "Introduction: Arabic Intellectual History between the Postwar and the Postcolonial," in *Arabic Thought Against the Authoritarian Age*, 10-11. On Palestine and the Maghreb, see

Arab intellectual life: a "political and intellectual crisis" calling for "an urgent reflection on the liberation and decolonization movements that had failed to achieve their goals," to which intellectuals such as Laroui responded with self-critical reflections on their own political and social conditions.[16]

Like the "ideologues" he discussed, Laroui wrote with a dual purpose, at once intellectual and political. In his follow-up to *IAC, La crise des intellectuels arabes* (*The Crisis of Arab Intellectuals*, 1974), he would identify a "second *Nahda*," beginning between 1963 and 1965, which he described optimistically as "perhaps the real beginning of a truly adult thought that is wary of its own tendencies and for the first time unfolds outside tradition, in the sense that it does not regard its backwardness as a virtue."[17] Decolonization, he now claimed, had made possible the critical historical thought he advocated in *IAC*, allowing the "Arab problematic" he explored in the earlier work to be reformulated as a historical inquiry into the nature of imperialism, revolution, or underdevelopment.[18] As examples of this tendency he cited Arab Marxist thinkers, but we might equally read him as writing himself into contemporary intellectual history and propagandizing in favor of the mode of thought he advocated by opposing it to "traditionalism": "activist historicism, or the historicism of the left," as opposed to "the historicism of conservation [that] rapidly blends with tradition at a higher level of intellectual refinement." The historicism of the left would, Laroui claimed, move "beyond the internalization of objectivity" and strive "to make the leap toward liberty."[19]

Olivia C. Harrison, *Transcolonial Maghreb: Imagining Palestine in the Era of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016).

[16] Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 2.

[17] Abdallah Laroui, *La crise des intellectuels arabes: traditionalisme ou historicisme?* (Paris: François Maspero, 1974), 115; *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 91.

[18] Laroui, *La crise*, 113-14; 90-91.

[19] Ibid., 88; 111.

In keeping with the theme of a self in perpetual search both of its difference from and connection to the Other, Laroui's tone in *IAC* is more equivocal than it would be in many of his subsequent writings. In this chapter, I explore what I take to be his fundamental ambivalence in this work in order to advance my inquiry into the relationship between historical theory and decolonization, emblematized here by the postcolonial moment that served both as *IAC*'s context and one of its objects of study. How, Laroui seems to ask, can Arab intellectuals understand the failures and disappointments of anticolonial politics in order to chart a course into the future, avoiding the morass of melancholic fixation?[20] Firmly situated in the historical moment it seeks to understand, at once invested in and suspicious of anticolonial nationalism, *IAC* offers a unique lens through which to view the history of decolonization.

As I have suggested above, Laroui's ambivalence has a temporal dimension. Although one of *IAC*'s central analytic devices is a schematic historical succession of ideal-typical intellectual personalities—the cleric, liberal, and technophile, each embodied by a particular thinker (Mohammed Abduh [1849-1905], Lutfi al-Sayyid [1872-1963], and Salama Musa [1887-1958], respectively) and state form (colonial, liberal, or national)[21]—Laroui's approach presupposes historical time's malleability and precludes a purely linear account. The appearance of a new type of ideologue—the technophile—at the moment of decolonization did not imply the disappearance of the cleric or liberal, products of earlier historical moments. In fact, as we will see, postcolonial Moroccan society was rife with political conflicts seemingly attributable to

[20] For a postcolonial exploration of melancholia, seen both as a psychoanalytic concept and an affect closely linked to the colonial experience, see Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). Hosam Aboul-Ela finds "evidence of an intellectual melancholy" in Laroui's *La crise*; Aboul-Ela, "Morocco since the Liberal Age," 154.

[21] On the three personalities, Laroui, *IAC*, 19-29; on the three state forms, ibid., 8-9. He adopted the latter triad as an alternative to "les notions de société colonisée, société indépendante et société socialiste qui, trop empiriques, ne rendent aucun service dans l'analyse culturelle."

the uneasy coexistence in a single society of contradictory views of the nation's historical destiny. The historical criticism Laroui both advocated and practiced could, he argued, reveal the logical way forward. However, Laroui's historicism was also an ideology: a "theoretical construction taken from another society" and meant to be "used as a model precisely to be realized in action."[22]

I begin the chapter by placing *IAC* in the immediate contexts of Laroui's intellectual formation and Moroccan decolonization. The book was written at a time of crisis for the left wing of Morocco's nationalist movement, which Laroui sympathized with politically but criticized for its strategic blunders and tactical weaknesses.[23] While these allegiances and criticisms are visible in *IAC*, equally apparent is Laroui's familiarity, thanks to his education at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques (Sciences Po) in Paris, of postwar debates about the French state's modernization. This educational background, which he initially hoped would lead to a career in government, was crucial both to his analysis of Moroccan politics and his conception of historicism. How, I ask, are postcolonial politics implicit in Laroui's intellectual approach? I then turn to Laroui's discussions of Marxism, which he saw as continuous with the German ideological tradition Marx himself sought to overturn, and as another prominent instance of the Arab appropriation of Western ideas in the service of overcoming backwardness. (While some of his contemporaries, along with later postcolonial theorists, took aim at the notion of

[22] "La notion d'*idéologie* est utilisée dans trois acceptions différentes : reflet décalé de la réalité à cause de l'outillage mental utilisé, système qui masque la réalité parce que celle-ci est impossible ou difficile à analyser, et enfin construction théorique prise dans une autre société, qui n'est pas totalement inscrite dans le réel mais qui est en voie de le devenir ou plus exactement qui est utilisée comme modèle précisément pour que l'action la réalise. C'est surtout dans ce dernier sens que le mot idéologie est le plus fréquemment utilisé dans cet essai." Ibid., 8.

[23] For Laroui's account of his political allegiances on the eve of Moroccan independence, see Bernabé López García, "Entrevista con Abdallah Laroui a propósito de su obra 'Marruecos y Hassan II. Un testimonio,'" *Revista de Estudios Internacionales Mediterráneos*, August 2007, https://revistas.uam.es/reim/article/view/746.

the non-Western world as historically delayed, seeing this belief as an artifact of colonialism,[24] Laroui insisted on the primacy of this idea in Arab ideology itself.) Finally, I turn to a critique of Laroui's historical approach by his contemporary Abdelkébir Khatibi. Despite their intellectual and political differences, I argue, both figures were preoccupied with the ways in which historical theory could bolster or undermine the claims of anticolonial nationalism, which were crucial sources of both of hope and disappointment in the postcolonial era.

FAILURES OF THE MOROCCAN LEFT

In his conclusion to *IAC*, Laroui offered two potential explanations for the "homology between the Arab and Western ideologies" taken as axiomatic in the book: "either we consider it as the reflection of the analyst's subjective choice, and the whole essay becomes an autobiography… or we accept it as objective and its meaning is thus a new affirmation of the universal."[25] Elsewhere in the book, he claimed that the succession of historical personalities and their corresponding state forms that served as his guiding heuristic was not merely an abstraction; "we notice it everywhere, even in individual evolutions. A man passes through many stages in his life. When real autobiographies are written, this fact will become clear."[26] Although these passages could be taken together to

[24] A major aspect of this was, of course, the critique of orientalism, seen as an intellectual tradition in which their presumption of cultural superiority led Western scholars to make knowledge claims about societies whose complexities they failed to grasp. Decolonization and the critique of orientalism went hand in hand, a fact perhaps first noted by Anouar Abdel-Malek, "Orientalism in Crisis," *Diogenes* 11, no. 44 (December 1, 1963): 103–40.

[25] "L'homologie entre les idéologies arabe et occidentale, ou bien on la considère comme le reflet du choix subjectif de l'analyste, et tout l'essai devient alors une autobiographie qui garde malgré tout sa valeur, ou bien on l'accepte comme objective et sa signification alors est une nouvelle affirmation de l'universel." Laroui, *IAC*, 212.

[26] "Cette succession n'est nullement abstraite, on la remarque partout et jusque dans les évolutions individuelles. Un homme dans sa vie passe par plusieurs stades. Quand de véritables autobiographies seront publiées, ce fait deviendra évident." Ibid., 109n26.

suggest that *IAC* was "unabashedly… inspired by [Laroui's] own autobiography,"[27] a closer reading of the text and its contexts—particularly those of postcolonial Morocco and Laroui's intellectual formation—yields a more complex picture of his subjective presence in the text. Without denying this presence, I hope to suggest that the authorial voice of *IAC* is best understood not as an autobiographical protagonist or a detached empirical observer but as a historical critic contending both with the social and political challenges of postcolonial Arab societies and the methodological or epistemological problem of tempering a passionate subjective engagement with these issues with a more sober, objective one.

Laroui was born in 1933 in Azemmour, south of Casablanca, into a family with ancestral ties to Morocco's traditional state (the *Makhzen*), in what he has described as "a free and profane atmosphere."[28] Interested in history and the educated in religious schools, Laroui's father introduced him at a young age to the writings of the medieval Maghrebi philosopher of history Ibn Khaldun.[29] Laroui has claimed that as a result of the family's "declassing" in the early twentieth century, amid the chaotic rule of the young sultan Abd al-Aziz (r. 1894-1908), his father "knew that the only capital remaining for his family was of a cultural nature, hence his desire to have his children educated in what was then called 'French school.'"[30] Laroui's academic path eventually took him to Paris

[27] Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography*, 175; cf. Laroui's comments about autobiography in García, "Entrevista."

[28] "Je peux affirmer que j'ai vécu dans une atmosphère libre et profane et je n'ai jamais pu me représenter aisément l'atmosphère dévote, consacrée, que je suppose être celle de familles cléricales ou chérifiennes." Hassan Arfaoui, "Entretien avec Abdallah Laroui," *Le monde arabe dans la recherche scientifique*, no. 2 (1993), 6.

[29] On Ibn Khaldun and North African decolonization, see below, chapter 4.

[30] "Ma famille a souffert pendant la crise qui a fait suite à la mort du grand chambellan Ba Ahmad (1900) qui avait assuré l'interrègne entre les deux sultans Hassan 1er, mort en 1894, et Moulay Abd el-Aziz. Dépouillé de ses biens, elle a été en quelque sorte déclassée et vécut par la suite dans la nostalgie de son glorieux passé." Ibid., 5. "[Mon père] savait que le seul capital restant à la famille était de la nature culturelle, d'où sa volonté de faire faire des études poussées à ses enfants dans 'l'école des Français' comme on l'appelait à l'époque." Ibid., 6.

in 1953. He studied at Sciences Po and the Sorbonne with the *Annales*-affiliated social historian Charles Morazé (1913-2003) and the liberal political philosopher Raymond Aron (1905-1983). "If I later took seriously the ideas of Karl Marx," he reflected in a 1998 interview, "it was because I was taught by two people who were not Marxists. Morazé and Aron took Marx as a historian, as a brilliant journalist, as a social theoretician but not as a political leader or a prophet."[31] Diverted from his original intended career path as a civil servant—with independence "Moroccans immediately became foreigners in France," making him ineligible to compete for entry into France's École nationale d'administration (ENA)—Laroui returned to Morocco in 1958 after developing an interest in Islamic history and completing a *diplôme d'études supérieures* on medieval trade between Morocco and Europe.[32]

If his grandparents lived through what Laroui would characterize as a period of "anarchy" in the years preceding the Protectorate's founding,[33] the 1950s and '60s, when he began to establish himself as a scholar and literary author, were similarly tumultuous. Following World War II, Morocco's Istiqlal Party saw a massive swelling of its ranks and added national independence to the Plan of Reforms nationalist activists had drafted in 1934, when demands for sweeping political, legal, social, economic, and cultural change could still be hoped for within the framework of the Protectorate. As the party

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On the succession and reign of Abd al-Aziz, ultimately culminating in the fall of the *Makhzen* and the rise of the French and Spanish Protectorates, see Susan Gilson Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), chapter 3. A helpful study of educational issues in postcolonial Morocco that emphasizes the role of the French language is Frédéric Viguier, "A French Educational Meritocracy in Independent Morocco?," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 38, no. 2 (2020): 148–73.

[31] Gallagher, "Interview," 135. In fact Aron was a fierce critic of Marxism, a position expressed most clearly in his 1955 work *L'Opium des intellectuels*. See my discussion above, chapter 2.

[32] Gallagher, "Interview," 136.

[33] For Laroui's own account of early-twentieth-century "Moroccan anarchy," see Abdallah Laroui, *Les origines sociales et culturelles du nationalisme marocain: 1830-1912* (Paris: François Maspero, 1977), 337-70.

gained influence, Istiqlal leaders were persecuted and arrested, leading to mounting protest in the late 1940s and early '50s. In 1953, Sultan Muhammad V, who supported the party's call for national self-determination, went into exile following a French-backed coup attempt. Unrest continued to grow as the exiled monarch became increasingly identified with the national cause until, after difficult negotiations with the French at Aix-les-Bains, Muhammad V returned in 1955 to proclaim the country's independence.[34]

Independence brought new challenges, with tensions emerging between the monarchy and Istiqlal and within Istiqlal itself, whose left wing split off in 1959 to form the National Union of Popular Forces (UNFP). Muhammad V's son and successor Hassan II (r. 1961-1999) courted Western interests, failed to institute the democratic reforms long desired by nationalists, and received sharp and impassioned criticism from the left, particularly the UNFP leader (and the new king's former mathematics tutor) Mehdi Ben Barka (1920-1965). Ben Barka and other Moroccan leftists drew inspiration from newly independent states like Egypt and neighboring Algeria that were experimenting with land reform, the nationalization of natural resources, and attempts to accelerate industrialization. Ben Barka's energetic efforts to forge Third World solidarity alarmed the monarchy and its Western allies. In 1963, thousands of UNFP members were arrested, sending Ben Barka—now condemned to death for his alleged participation in an assassination plot against Hassan II—into exile. In 1965, Ben Barka himself was assassinated by Moroccan security forces in collaboration with French police and Israeli Mossad agents, an event long shrouded in mystery. Later that year, student and worker protests in Casablanca escalated into riots and sparked popular protest throughout the country, in response to which Hassan II dissolved the newly instituted parliament,

[34] Miller, *History of Modern Morocco*, 133, 145, 150, 153.

suspended the constitution, and declared a state of emergency that would last for five years.[35]

Laroui mentioned Ben Barka's name in one passage of *IAC*, which was written before but published after his disappearance. Acknowledging this fact in a footnote that, he would later speculate, caused the book to be banned in Morocco, Laroui wrote that "Mehdi, dead or alive, will remain one of the pure heroes of the Moroccan people."[36] As Laroui's familiar tone suggests, the two men were acquainted; Youssef Choueiri has even argued that "Ben Barka's views and wide-ranging activities form an implicit, and sometimes explicit, theme in Laroui's ideological arguments, and inform his approach to the history of Morocco and other Arab countries."[37] At the same time, his identification of Ben Barka with a particular type of Arab ideologue—the "technophile"—meant that the slain revolutionary was not exempt from Laroui's critique. Insofar as Laroui sympathized politically with Ben Barka, we can read the latter's appearance in *IAC* as an instance of the former's projection into this work of his own ideological ambivalence.

This appearance comes in the only chapter explicitly dedicated to a discussion of Morocco. Here Laroui applies his tripartite ideal-typical schema to the Moroccan nationalist movement. According to Laroui, the "fundamental vision" of the Istiqlal founder Allal al-Fasi was "identical" to the clerical one that—through the influence of the Egyptian icon of the *Nahda*, Mohammed Abduh, and his disciples[38]—was responsible for

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[35] Ibid., 162, 166-69. On Ben Barka's assassination, see Nate George, "Travelling Theorist: Mehdi Ben Barka and Morocco from Anti-Colonial Nationalism to the Tricontinental," in *The Arab Lefts: Histories and Legacies, 1950s–1970s*, ed. Laure Guirguis (Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 128.

[36] "Cette phrase a été écrite avant le 29 octobre 1965, je n'ai pas estimé devoir la changer, car Mehdi, mort ou vivant, restera un des purs héros du peuple marocain." *IAC*, 47n13. On this footnote and the book's banning, see Abdallah Laroui, *Le Maroc et Hassan II: Un témoignage* (Québec / Casablanca: Les Presses Inter Universitaires / Centre Culturel Arabe, 2005), 45n7.

[37] Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography*, 176.

[38] On Abduh and his followers, see Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, 2nd ed. (1962; repr., Cambrige: Cambridge University Press, 1983), chapters 6-7.

bringing Morocco into contact with "the nearby Other that harasses it from its eastern and northern borders."[39] At the same time, al-Fasi's critique of the West was liberal in character: evidence, in Laroui's view, that the nationalist spokesman was seized by the simultaneous consciousness of "two historical steps," one representing a historically delayed present infatuated with tradition and another directed toward a more democratic future. More than al-Fasi himself, liberal nationalists drawn to his cause would pursue the second of these paths. Laroui, however, described these figures' liberalism as superficial, ineffective, and (via the people's perception that "parliament does not represent them fully") responsible for "tragic misunderstandings" such as the Casablanca riots.[40]

As for Ben Barka *qua* "technophile," Laroui furnished arguments for seeing him equally as an exponent of the "second *Nahda*" and as a potentially dangerous extremist. On one hand, Ben Barka's efforts to unite and advance Third World liberation struggles might earn him credit for the eschewal of cultural particularity and belief in "the existence of a general evolution of humanity" that Laroui associated with progressive

[39] "Le Maroc moderne commence au XXe siècle, car s'il a déjà une connaissance confuse de l'Autre tout proche qui le harcèle sur ses frontières de l'Est et du Nord, il n'entre réellement en contact avec lui qu'à travers l'oeuvre de Mohamed Abduh et de ses disciples." Laroui, *IAC*, 43. The "Other" in question here would seem to be Europe as embodied by Morocco's two colonial occupiers, Spain (to the north) and France (or Algeria, legally coextensive with France until 1962), to the east.

[40] "Le phénomène de la double conscience est partout patent dans la pensée d'Allâl Al-Fâsi ; il appréhende sa société à travers une conscience religieuse et critique l'Occident à partir d'une conscience libérale ; il dénie pour lui un déterminisme qu'il affirme pour l'Autre et soutient une permanence islamique anhistorique qu'il refuse au Christianisme occidental…. En vérité, cette double conscience, dans l'une et l'autre société, est conscience de deux étapes historiques saisies simultanément et si la vision reste fragmentaire et ne s'unifie pas, c'est parce qu'il est impossible de revenir à l'autarcie culturelle passée, de sauter le moment du contact et de la division par une décision subjective." Ibid., 44-45. On liberal nationalists: "Des émules marocains de Bourguiba ne se sentent pas arabes et croient être ainsi en avance par rapport à l'Orient, alors qu'en réalité ils revivent la période de Lotfy Sayyid qui, lui aussi, parlait d'une nation égyptienne et inspirait les jugements bien connus de Heykal et de Taha Husseyn sur l'âme pharaonique. Ces hommes bien superficiels devraient plutôt se demander pourquoi l'Egypte se déclare maintenant si passionément arabe alors que, manifestement, elle l'est si peu. Cette adoration de la forme peut parfois aboutir à des malentendus tragiques : des hommes estiment que le parlement ne les représente pas fidèlement et descendent dans la rue pour crier leurs revendications." The footnote attached to this sentence reads: "Les émeutes de Casablanca de mars 1965." Ibid., 46.

historical consciousness. For the technophile, Laroui wrote, "Nationalization programs, agrarian reform, industrialization are simple technologies without social meaning, just as the mobilization of the masses, cultural policy [*dirigisme culturel*], the single party and the uncontested leader automatically impose themselves when you choose to live more in this world than in an anticipated beyond." On the other hand, the technophile's mentality "carries the premises of a military solution" since Morocco, in Laroui's view, lacked social institutions capable of fostering a "positive reason that unifies everything into abstract categories."[41] For the technophile's dreams to be realized, these institutions would have to be forcibly imposed. Laroui closed the chapter by lamenting that Morocco was "in the process of preparing the national state when certain of its problems are, today, already ours," thanks to the country's lateness to arrive in "the modern world." "For better or worse," he wrote, "Morocco relives in the mode of melancholy the period of the Egyptian Wafd, and it would be presumptuous to believe that this period will last forever."[42]

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[41] "La technophile… croit à l'existence d'une évolution générale de l'humanité, dont il ne met en cause ni les buts ni les antécédents, qui se mesure quantitativement et impose les moyens de sa mise en oeuvre. Tout devient une affaire de technique : l'économie, la politique, et même la vie privée…. Les programmes de nationalisation, de réforme agraire, d'industrialisation sont de simples techniques sans signification sociale, de même que la mobilisation des masses, le dirigisme culturel, le parti unique et le chef incontesté s'imposent d'eux-mêmes, dès lors que vous choisissez de vivre dans ce monde-ci plutôt que dans un au-delà anticipé…. On voit bien que cette conscience technophile hait la psychologie et la sociologie différentielles, supprime la liberté de choix et use d'une rigeur effilée. Elle porte en elle les prémices d'une solution militaire car cette raison positive qui unifie tout dans les catégories abstraites, où se trouve-t-elle dans nos sociétés ? Elle ne se trouve ni dans les mosquées, ni dans les internats, ni même dans les usines où la multiplicité des syndicats, les conflits raciaux, la nonchalance paysanne et la faible production limitent la rationalité…." Ibid., 47-48. Laroui's reference to living "in an anticipated beyond" seems related to his comparison, which I explore below, of Arab ideologues to Islamic mystics.

Ironically, it was the Moroccan crown that pursued a "military solution" to the perceived threat of neighboring Algeria, which the Moroccan army invaded in 1963. It was partly due to their friendliness to Algeria that Ben Barka and the UNFP were seen as dangerous enemies of the state and became victims of government persecution. See George, "Traveling Theorist," 139.

[42] "Les acteurs de notre drame : Raison, Liberté, Action, nous les avons aperçus jeunes en Occident, un peu fatigués en Orient arabe, nous les retrouvons dans l'ensemble, pâles et exténués, au Maroc et la pièce jouée nous rappelle dans tous ses détails de vieux souvenirs toujours présents à nos mémoires. Ce n'est pas par manque d'imagination, ni que la vérité vienne toujours de l'Orient, mais plutôt parce que l'histoire se

As Laroui seems to have sensed, the hiatus in revolutionary activity noted by Ben Barka in his 1962 pamphlet advocating a "revolutionary option" for Morocco[43] would prove to be a terminal break. If Laroui sometimes seemed to share the perspective of Arab "technophiles," he also doubted that Morocco's engaged intellectuals would achieve anything of lasting significance. A recent autobiographical account of his experience of the Hassan II years captures this ambivalence more clearly. On one hand, Laroui remembers encountering the French journalist Roger Paret at a conference in Paris held shortly after the Casablanca riots and "speaking to him of the protests with such enthusiasm that he was surprised, having usually known me to be so reserved: 'But you've become a revolutionary!'"[44] On the other, Laroui is scathingly critical of the post-independence Moroccan left, whose "blindness" to Hassan II's shrewd political maneuverings he excoriates.[45]

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renouvelle avec lenteur et que plus une nation arrive au monde moderne en retard, plus elle vit dans un paysage décoloré. En bien et en mal, le Maroc revit sur le mode de la mélancolie, la période du Wafd égyptien et il faut être présomptueux pour croire qu'elle durera toujours. Nous sommes en train de préparer l'Etat national et certains de ses problèmes sont déjà les nôtres, aujourd'hui." Laroui, *IAC,* 49. The Wafd was an Egyptian nationalist party established by Saad Zaghlul, the first prime minister of independent Egypt (and an associate of Abduh), after World War I and banned by Nasser in 1953.

[43] Mehdi Ben Barka, *Option révolutionnaire au Maroc: suivi de Écrits politiques 1960-1965* (Paris: François Maspero, 1966); *The Political Thought of Ben Barka* (Havana: Tricontinental, 1968). Along with the Algerian historian and former National Liberation Front (FLN) militant Mohamed Harbi, Laroui discussed this text with Ben Barka shortly after its composition during a visit with the latter in Geneva. George, "Traveling Theorist," 137.

[44] "Durant mon séjour, je rencontrai Roger Paret, journaliste à *L'Observateur* et assistant de Régis Blachère à l'École pratique des hautes études, et je lui parlai de la manifestation avec un tel enthousiasme qu'il s'étonna, lui qui me connaissait d'ordinaire si réservé : « Mais vous voilà devenu révolutionnaire! »." Laroui, *Le Maroc et Hassan II,* 31.

[45] The left's "poltical blindness facilitated the prince's task, allowing him to influence even the groups that had, in principle, come to resist him: students and workers": "C'est cette cécité politique qui facilita la tâche au Prince et permit à son influence de gagner même des milieux qui devaient en principe lui être réfractaires, ceux des étudiants et des ouvriers." Ibid., 13. Elsewhere he writes of "a blindness that struck the entire left, from which even men as talented and experienced as [Abderrahim] Bouabid and Ben Barka did not escape": "Il semble bien que le hasard prit en l'occurrence la forme d'un aveuglement qui frappa toute la gauche et auquel n'échappèrent pas même des hommes aussi intelligents et expérimentés que Bouabid et Ben Barka." Ibid., 28.

It is thus tempting to characterize Laroui as a disillusioned radical similar to the Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals recently studied by Fadi Bardawil.[46] Bardawil's disenchanted Marxists abandoned modes of thinking that became habitual to many Third World intellectuals in the 1950s and '60s as Lebanon, in particular, fell victim to conflicts that no longer seemed to follow the logic of class struggle. Laroui, however, identified a different problem: Arab Marxists, he argued, were frustrated in their political goals because they tended to treat Marxism as a static ideology rather than a living method. Before examining this argument in more depth, however, it will be useful to consider some of the ways in which Laroui's higher education, completed in France starting in the early 1950s, shaped his perspective in *IAC*.

FROM MYSTICISM TO DIALECTICS

If it is fair to speak of Laroui's disenchantment with revolutionary politics, we must understand this attitude in relation to an earlier disappointment. Laroui came to Paris with the hope of eventually entering France's elite school of civil service, the ENA. He studied at Sciences Po until 1956—the year of Morocco's independence, which definitively barred his path toward French officialdom.[47] In a recent autobiographical work, Laroui has written that his French education in political science also discouraged him from pursuing a political career at home: "I had learned what a modern state was or, more exactly, should be, but for this very reason I was not prepared to identify with the

[46] Fadi Bardawil, *Revolution and Disenchantment: Arab Marxism and the Binds of Emancipation*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020). Laroui's single appearance in the book is as one of the "towering contemporary Arab thinkers… who sought to subsume a very rich, contingent, and contradictory history under a few concepts." In Bardawil's account, the Lebanese thinker Waddah Charara, then in a "Maoist phase," preferred the "empirical richness" of the eighteenth-century Egyptian chronicler abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti's "historical works" to theoreticians such as Laroui (157).

[47] Gallagher, "Interview," 135; Abdallah Laroui, *Philosophie et histoire* (Casablanca: Éditions la Croisée des Chemins, 2017), 46.

Moroccan state that preceded the Protectorate or the one that would succeed it."[48] Thus he continued his education, discovering new intellectual enthusiasms.

Laroui's recent autobiographical writings on his French training illustrate vividly both how little relevance the Sciences Po curriculum had to his own experience and how it was nevertheless instrumental in forging the worldview he would express, however obliquely, in *IAC*. His teachers addressed themselves to the preoccupations of postwar French politicians, who "were all convinced that it was necessary to reestablish French power by reorganizing the state, forming a new and profoundly modernist elite."[49] One way to do this was by learning from the faults of past French governments, notably the Third Republic; another was to read economists and sociologists whose main lesson was seemingly "that the collapse of capitalism was not inevitable."[50] Unable to learn directly from French examples bearing little relation to pre- or postcolonial Morocco, however, Laroui was forced "to abstract from the particular, elevate myself to the general rule and then apply it intelligently to the problems of my country." The only theory that could "make an intelligible whole" of these francocentric teachings was, however, Marxism: a body of thought his teachers saw as incomplete and sought to supplement with more cutting-edge social-scientific knowledge.[51]

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[48] "J'avais appris ce qu'était, plus exactement ce que devait être, un état moderne, mais pour cette même raison je n'étais pas préparé à m'identifier à l'Etat marocain, celui qui préexistait au Protectorat ou celui qui allait lui succéder." Laroui, *Philosophie et histoire,* 46.

[49] "Tous étaient convaincus qu'il fallait rétablir la puissance française en réorganisant l'Etat, en formant une nouvelle élite profondément moderniste." Ibid., 32.

[50] "Il n'était pas difficile de voir que le principal souci de ces grands auteurs était de démontrer scientifiquement que la chute du capitalisme n'était pas inévitable." Ibid., 31. On learning from the mistakes of the Third Republic, ibid., 34.

[51] "Je devais alors, consciemment ou non, faire abstraction du particulier, m'élever à la règle générale pour ensuite l'appliquer intelligemment aux problèmes de mon pays…. Or, quelle était, derrière toutes ces notions particulières, la théorie qui les combinait pour en faire un ensemble intelligible ? C'était incontestablement le marxisme, tout simplifié, banalisé qu'il se présente." Ibid., 34, 31 (on Marxism as incomplete).

Alone among his Sciences Po teachers, Laroui has recently recalled, the philosophically-trained Raymond Aron "analyzed in depth [the] concepts" put forth by authors such as John Maynard Keynes, Joseph Schumpeter, or Max Weber, while "economics and history professors were content to summarize their main ideas and derive their practical consequences."[52] Laroui attended the Sorbonne lectures that would form the basis for the first volume of Aron's trilogy on "industrial society," and it seems likely that the notion of a single form of society encompassing both socialism and capitalism (as "two species of the same genus"[53]) spoke to Laroui's interest in reaching a broad understanding of the modern state. We can speculate that Aron's discussions, in these lectures, of social science methodology and the relationship of science to politics would have further sparked Laroui's interest. Laroui has expressed appreciation for Aron's attempt to contextualize, and thus relativize, Marxism,[54] though this also marks a point of contrast between the two thinkers. If Aron "refused to consider [Marxist sociology] as definitive," this was because "history by definition does not stop" and social theory must evolve along with changing social forms. "Yet," Laroui writes, "I came precisely from a frozen society. Aron's critique of Marxism was not addressed to me, any more than it was to an Egyptian, Indian, or Chinese student."[55]

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[52] "Les professeurs d'économie et d'histoire se contentaient d'en résumer les principales idées et en tiraient les conséquences pratiques. Seul Raymond Aron, de formation philosophique, analysait en profondeur leurs concepts." Ibid., 30-31.

[53] Gallagher, "Interview," 136. "Les sociétés soviétiques et les sociétés capitalistes ne sont que deux espèces d'un même genre ou deux modalités du même type social, la société industrielle progressive." Raymond Aron, *Dix-huit leçons sur la société industrielle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 50; *18 Lectures on Industrial Society*, trans. M. K. Bottomore (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1967), 42.

[54] Gallagher, "Interview," 135.

[55] "Raymond Aron ne niait nullement cette fonction de synthèse éclairante, il refusait simplement de la considérer comme définitive, puisque l'histoire par définition ne s'arrête pas. Elle peut le faire dans certaines circonstances (la société est alors figée) et dans cette hypothèse le marxisme devient un provisoire qui dure, mais ce n'est pas le cas de la France et des autres grands pays industrialisés.

"Or, moi, je venais précisément d'une société figée. La critique du marxisme telle que la développait Aron ne s'adressait pas à moi, pas plus qu'elle ne s'adressait à un étudiant égyptien, indien ou chinois." Ibid., 34.

Aron's conception of social theory's relationship to political ideology in these lectures points to a further divergence with the Laroui of *IAC*. Aron opposed not only Marxism but any synthetic (as opposed to analytical, interpretive, or critical) social theory, which he associated with pernicious ideologies. Although it was natural and even advantageous, in his view, for sociologists to take an interest in politics, Aron worried that their theoretical ambitions could become perilously consonant with their political views, leading them to commit "the major sin of the politician, and unfortunately also of the scientist": "seeing only what one wants to see."[56] In *IAC*, Laroui, too, depicted Arab ideologues as misled by worldviews whose distorting effects on historical understanding he decried. However, he added that for Arab thinkers, ideology was a step on the historical path toward a critical consciousness that, though it would undoubtedly remain ideological, would also be able to radically question ideology, thereby fostering sociopolitical and intellectual progress. Historical delay meant, however, that progress from ideology to science or critique would be incomplete and discontinuous, with *IAC*'s three intellectual types representing "successive temporal realities that exist simultaneously in social space."[57]

The ideas and arguments Laroui would develop in *IAC* were products not only of his critical engagement with the Sciences Po curriculum but a vast amount of extracurricular reading—through which he absorbed the interests and debates of the postwar Parisian intellectual milieu[58]—as well as his academic beginnings as an Arabist.

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[56] "Le sociologue devient politique, même sans le vouloir, non pas en exprimant de temps en temps un jugement de valeur—après tout vous êtes libres d'en faire autant—mais en se laissant aller au péché majeur du politicien, et hélas aussi du savant, qui est de ne voir que ce que l'on a envie de voir." Aron, *Dix-huit leçons*, 30; *18 Lectures*, 30.

[57] "Les formes de conscience décrites continuent à remplir de leurs figures notre espace culturel, mais, à cause de notre retard, elles se réfèrent à trois réalités successives dans le temps et simultanées dans l'espace social." Laroui, *IAC*, 65.

[58] On this reading see Laroui, *Philosophie et histoire*, chapter 9.

An early project that allowed him to combine these efforts was translating a text on Sufism by Ibn Khaldun; this brought to mind "certain familiar themes of the young Hegel, of which we often spoke then."[59] In the words of Henri Niel, whose book on the problem of mediation in Hegel's philosophy Laroui read at the time, the young Hegel sought "an intimate and immediate communion with the absolute" perhaps comparable, in Laroui's view, to the connection with God sought by Islamic mystics. Niel argued that Hegel attempted, further, to combine "in a single attitude" the "unity of God with man" and solidarity "between men"—a dichotomy seemingly analogous to the separation noted by Ibn Khaldun between Sufis walking a contemplative, ritualistic spiritual path and religious scholars seeking to uphold the will of God through legal study and judgments.[60] By writing a historical account of the origins of this divide and of debates among Islamic mystics about the problem of God's immanence or transcendence (in Laroui's summary, "extremist mysticism rediscovered immanence within Islam"[61]), Ibn Khaldun perhaps anticipated Hegelian dialectics.[62] Laroui, in turn, read Ibn Khaldun through Hegel in *IAC*.

[59] "Lisant le texte, je vis immédiatement qu'il récoupait certains thèmes familiers au jeune Hegel dont on parlait beaucoup alors." Ibid., 50.

[60] "En effet, dès le début de ses méditations, notre philosophe rompt avec l'idée d'un Dieu conçu comme pur au-delà des aspirations et cherche une communion intime et immédiate avec l'absolu…. Le drame de Hegel s'est noué lorsqu'il a essayé de fondre en une seule et même attitude la double volonté d'unité qui l'animait : unité de l'homme avec Dieu, unité des hommes entre eux." Henri Niel, *De la médiation dans la philosophie de Hegel* (Paris: Aubier, 1945), 22. Ibn Khaldun's text on Sufism has been published in French and English as Ibn Khaldun, *La voie et la loi ou Le maître et le juriste*, trans. René Pérez (Paris: Sindbad, 1991); Ibn Khaldun, *Remedy for the Questioner in Search of Answers*, trans. Yumna Özer (Cambridge, UK: The Islamic Texts Society, 2017).

[61] "Je me suis mis alors à penser, bien avant de lire Henri Corbin, Louis Massignon ou Miguel Asín Palacios, qu'il y a comme un paradoxe dans chacune des deux religions monothéistes, mis clairement en lumière par l'évolution historique, le protestantisme réintroduisant la transcendance dans le christianisme et le mysticisme extrémiste redécouvrant l'immanence à l'intérieur de l'Islam." Laroui, *Philosophie et histoire*, 50..

[62] In *Philosophie et histoire*, Laroui makes an even stronger connection between Hegel and Ibn Khaldun, writing that the master–slave dialectic "summarizes all of human history" ("[e]lle résume toute l'histoire humaine") and noting that Ibn Khaldun "observed that the defeated always imitates the victor" ("Ibn Khaldoun, l'historien, a constaté que le vaincu imite toujours son vainqueur"). Ibid., 111.

In a discussion of the "fortunes [*chances*] of the dialectic" in Arab thought, Laroui drew an analogy between the history of mysticism and that of Arab ideology. He traced the "first germs of dialectical thought" among Arab thinkers to "the polemics and partisan struggles that preceded and succeeded the Abbasid Revolution" (c. 747-750). According to Laroui, these struggles led to "a feverish reflection on Muslim history," as the experience of military and political strife within the Islamic world prompted renewed reflection on human nature and humanity's relationship to the divine.[63] This period also saw the emergence, and ultimate failure, of the mu'tazilite movement, which "tried to infer from the foundation of abstract Reason an Islam capable of unifying the new Empire's heterogeneous elements."[64] In Laroui's view, mysticism emerged in the wake of this failure as a purely subjective, "verbal solution" to the "real problem" of uniting Islam's disparate, conflicting elements.[65] If the true solution to the problem of Islam's disunity lay in the future, as the outcome of further historical struggle, mystic philosophers like al-Muhasibi (d. 857) sought it through introspection (or "psychological gymnastics"), as "a deeply buried point in the heart."[66] Similarly, modern Arab ideologues tended to focus on the subjective side of their dialectical relationship to the Western

[63] "Il y a eu déjà dans le passé de la culture arabe une expérience historique qui fit éclore les premiers germes d'une pensée dialectique." Further on: "A travers les luttes partisanes et les polémiques qui précédèrent la Révolution abbasside et lui succédèrent, on décèle une grande inquiétude, une réflexion fiévreuse sur l'histoire musulmane, car celle-ci devenait de plus en plus nettement l'envers d'un accomplissement." Laroui, *IAC,* 159.

[64] "Celle-ci, nous l'avons dit, tenta d'édifier sur le seul fondement de la Raison abstraite un Islam inféré, capable d'unifier les éléments hétérogènes du nouvel Empire." Ibid., 160.

[65] "La mystique fut une solution verbale à un problème réel ; elle fut une logique de l'identification progressive sur le mode de l'imagination, de la représentation, et non du concept." Ibid., 163.

[66] "La gymnastique psychologique de Muhâsibî – ce comptable de l'âme – consistait à réduire peu à peu les Moi divers à un Moi unique, seul vrai et en lequel se refléterait fidèlement le Verbe de Dieu." Ibid., 162. "Hier, il s'agissait d'unir la nouvelle conscience islamique, juste et historiquement supérieure, à la vieille conscience préislamique sensible au coeur ; il fallait donc se poser en soi, à un point profondément enfoi qui dépassât les deux consciences, en donnant certes raison à l'Islam mais non dans sa forme positive (dogme et loi). Le point profondément enfoui dans le coeur était en réalité un moment du futur : l'évolution dans le temps étant représentée par une descente au fond de soi-même." Ibid., 163.

Other by emphasizing authenticity and tradition. However, the true aim of dialectical thinking was "to conjugate lucidity and effectivity" (theory and practice, subject and object).[67]

This is one of the few passages of *IAC* where Laroui explicitly acknowledges his own place in the work's problematic. His analysis in *IAC*, he wrote, was both "inside and outside of the phenomenon for which it attempts to account." However, it was not yet "truly dialectical." Instead, Laroui sought to overcome a "socio-static" analysis with a sociohistorical one.[68] A similar goal seemingly led him, as a student in Paris, to supplement his lessons in statecraft by devouring Hegel, Marx, and Lenin at the national library, rue de Richelieu.[69]

Laroui went so far as to suggest that as a Moroccan, he was uniquely well positioned to complete the analysis he offered in *IAC* since, in Morocco, "the national state is still only a possibility." As such, Laroui was able to incorporate into his work "the results obtained in other Arab countries that are at diverse stages on the path to the national state."[70] In this claim that Morocco might be the ideal site of a synthetic realization of postcolonial hopes and fears in the form of a smoothly functioning modern state, we can perhaps detect a hint of nationalism. I will return the problem of Laroui's nationalism in this chapter's last section. Since, however, Laroui makes something called

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[67] "La lucidité sera alors au prix d'un piétinement de l'action, mais pour un temps seulement car, à cause de l'unité culturelle des pays arabes que nous avons postulée dès le début, nous finirons bien un jour par apprendre à conjuguer lucidité et efficacité." Ibid., 165.

[68] "Elle est donc à la fois à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur du phénomène dont elle essaye de rendre compte.

"Mais elle n'est pas pour autant vraiment dialectique. S'il fallait absolument la qualifier, disons qu'elle est socio-historique et qu'elle s'oppose, en cherchant à la dépasser, à l'analyse socio-statique." Ibid., 165.

[69] Laroui, *Philosophie et histoire*, 47.

[70] "Notre analyse se développe à partir de la situation du Maroc, où l'Etat national n'est encore qu'une possibilité, et au même moment elle s'intègre les résultats obtenus dans d'autres pays arabes qui sont à des stades divers dans la voie de l'Etat national." Laroui, *IAC*, 165.

"objective Marxism" the postcolonial nation-state's ideological essence, I now turn to the role of Marxism in *IAC*, and in Laroui's thought more generally.

LAROUI ON THIRD WORLD MARXISM

The title and subject matter of *IAC* suggest a comparison between Laroui and an author whose relationship to modern Arab thought and politics his work thematizes: Karl Marx, whose *The German Ideology* (coauthored with Friedrich Engels) took on the question of the relationship between thought and society from a perspective seemingly at odds with Laroui's.[71] Concluding his argument, Laroui wrote that previous authors had "always analyzed Arab ideology… in light of social structure. This essay proposes to reverse the roles and to begin with ideology, referring all the while to a social structure which, however, is not that of Arab society."[72] This could be read almost as a rejoinder to the famous closing statement of Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach," a text that dates from the same period of his work as *The German Ideology*: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."[73] In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels excoriate the "philosophers" in question—the Young Hegelians, Ludwig Feuerbach foremost among them—for confining their criticism to the

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[71] Georges Labica noted this connection in his review of *IAC*, arguing that Laroui had "stood on its head what Marx had put on its feet: the good old Hegelian dialectic" ("l'on remette sur la tête ce que Marx avait remis sur ses pieds : la chère vieille dialectique hégélienne"). Labica, "Les Arabes, M. Jourdain et la dialectique," *La Pensée*, no. 140–141 (1968), 149.

Although I refer to *The German Ideology* as a single book in this section, the now-canonical version of this work was pieced together from unpublished manuscripts after Marx's and Engels' deaths and was probably not meant to be read in this form. See Terrell Carver, "'The German Ideology' Never Took Place," *History of Political Thought* 31, no. 1 (2010): 107–27. Laroui would have had access to a French translation of the first chapter, on Feuerbach, which appeared in a nine-volume edition of Marx's philosophical works published between 1927 and 1947, and as a standalone volume first published by Éditions sociales in 1953.

[72] "…on a jusqu'ici analysé toujours l'idéologie arabe—quand on l'a fait—à la lumière de la structure sociale. Cet essai propose d'inverser les rôles et de commencer par l'idéologie, tout en se référant à une structure sociale mais qui n'est toutefois pas celle de la société arabe." Laroui, *IAC*, 211.

[73] Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2nd ed (New York: Norton, 1978), 145.

realm of religious or national "consciousness," seen by Marx and Engels as the domain of illusions. "It has not occurred to any one of these philosophers," they wrote, "to inquire into the connection of German philosophy with German reality, the relation of their criticism to their own material surroundings." Marx and Engels pursued this neglected inquiry by offering a historical sketch of German philosophy's relationship to its underlying reality in which they stressed the importance of shifting modes of production and evolving class relations.[74] This sketch unfolds as a schematic history of the emergence of a world market in which, Marx and Engels hypothesized, "universal intercourse" would develop along with the mounting exploitation of labor by capital, culminating in an apocalyptic revolution.

The parallels between Laroui's text and Marx and Engels' suggest a complicated relationship between the Arab and German ideologies. For Marx and Engels, history proceeds through the fulfillment of basic human needs and consequent development of "material life." Over time, as productive methods become more sophisticated, these needs multiply and a division of labor becomes necessary. Further, this "[d]ivision of labor only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of mental and material labor appears," after which "consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc."[75] But while, for Marx and Engels, thought was only apparently but not really autonomous from social reality (hence the skeptical quotation marks around "pure"), Laroui argued that under the historical conditions in which it flourished, Arab ideology took on a historical gravity of its own and could not be understood through a strictly materialist analysis. He clarified this point in *La crise*, writing in a footnote: "I have never stated that ideological

[74] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology: Part I," in ibid., 149.
[75] Ibid., 156, 158-59.

evolution is the foundation of social evolution; I *have* said that at a given moment (for reasons that are outside the scope of the book [i.e., *IAC*]) ideological contradictions become important, if not determinative."[76]

In *IAC*, Laroui theorized a form of Marxism that, he argued, bore particular affinities to the historical situation of postcolonial Arab ideologues: "objective Marxism."[77] As identified by Laroui, these affinities—the belief in a unified history and a universal historical destiny for humankind; the conviction that cultural particularity results from "chance, error, or accident" rather than indicating "an eternal difference" or "an ontological primacy"[78]—seem general enough to apply to any deterministic historical theory. In developing the concept of objective Marxism, Laroui argued that Arab ideologues were drawn less to the fine points of Marxist theory than the basic principle that economic modernization was the best way to safeguard independence and create freer, more just societies. He also pointed to what would seem to be a major internal contradiction of Arab Marxism by arguing that the economic reforms proposed by Arab "technophiles" were informed not only by Marxism but "Western technocracy" or modernization theory. W. W. Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (1960; French translation, 1962) had, Laroui wrote, "furnished our

[76] Laroui, *La crise*, 93n39; 72n39.
[77] Laroui defined "objective Marxism" as the "particular and fleeting situation" of "a society that, at a specific stage in its evolution… is obliged to resort, in order to understand itself and to act, to an unsystematic ensemble of ideas, notions, and theories each of which can be related by one bias or another to Marxism" (*IAC*, 10). ("…j'utilise à un certain moment la notion de *marxisme 'objectif'*, par laquelle j'essaie d'exprimer une situation, particulière et passagère ; celle d'une société qui, à un stade déterminé de son évolution, comme l'est, me semble-t-il, la société arabe contemporaine, est obligée de recourir, pour se comprendre et pour agir, à un ensemble non systematisé d'idées, de notions, de théories dont chacune peut être rattachée par un biais ou par un autre au marxisme.")
[78] After affirming the "[u]nité de l'histoire," the Arab ideologues "cherchent ensuite à justifier les particularités sans faire éclater l'unité ; les différences ne doivent signifier ni malédiction ni élection, ne doivent être rapportées ni à la religion, ni à la race, ni au climat, c'est-à-dire à aucune cause immuable qui fonderait une différence éternelle et peut-être aussi une primauté ontologique ; au contraire, il faut qu'elles naissent simplement de la chance, de l'erreur ou du hasard." Ibid., 143-44.

liberals with their first serious contact with the objective Marxism that lies at the end of their own thought."[79]

Objective Marxism is closely related to the concept of historicism as Laroui developed it in *IAC* and *La crise*. In the latter work, where his discussion is somewhat more straightforward, Marxism figures as an instance of the historicism espoused, in Laroui's view, by the Arab thinkers of the "second *Nahda*."[80] Behind these figures' questioning of the nature of imperialism, revolution, or underdevelopment, Laroui claimed, "lies a concept of history as the sole reality. Secularization, the liberation of thought, democratization, development—all these notions and the political choices that can proceed from them are lumped together in an inclusive historicism."[81] In the remainder of this section, I will explore Laroui's account of Third World Marxism, attempting to connect it both to the "objective Marxism" of *IAC* and, relatedly, the question of Laroui's own authorial standpoint in these texts. If he both identified with and distanced himself from the technophile of *IAC*, we can observe similar rhetorical strategies in his writings on Marxism. This would seem to have much to do with the unique status in Laroui's work of the problem of cultural authenticity, which he tended—albeit inconsistently—to subordinate to other values: rationality, universalism, or the unity of theory and practice. Laroui's values were sometimes at cross purposes, leading to textual ambiguities that both expressed and can help us better understand the historical flux of a newly decolonized world.

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[79] "Il est essentiel, en effet, de remarquer que la technocratie occidentale, au contact de nos pays, se tient au niveau même de l'analyse marxiste ; elle croit parfois la dépasser ou la déprécier ; à nos yeux elle la justifie à tout coup. Rien ne le montre mieux que le livre de W.W. Rostow, *Les étapes de la croissance économique*. Celui-ci a cru écrire un manifeste antimarxiste, alors qu'il fournit à nos libéraux leur premier contact sérieux avec le marxisme objectif qui est au bout de leur propre pensée." Ibid., 149.

[80] Specifically, Laroui described *IAC* as historicist when he sought to differentiate the "historicism of *L'idéologie…*" from that of cultural anthropology in his critique of Gustave von Grunebaum, discussed below. Laroui, *La crise*, 95n42; 74n42.

[81] Ibid., 91; 114-15.

In an essay on "the Third World intellectual and Marx"—first published in a 1968 special issue of UNESCO's journal *Diogène* on the legacies of Marx and later included in *La crise*—Laroui addressed the problem of the "German ideology" directly.[82] Marx had, Laroui wrote, reformulated the German idealist approach to the three historicist "a prioris" that, he argued, informed Third World thinkers' sense of historical delay. These were the identification of an advanced or "superior" stage of history (which, according to Laroui, the German ideologues saw as "Jacobinism as abstractly universalized by the Terror"); the conviction that "catching up" was possible via intellectual awareness ("*prise de conscience*"); and the idea that a specific historical agent ("the intellectual himself") would be responsible for closing the historical gap.[83] Both the German ideology, as interpreted by Laroui, and the Arab ideology examined in *IAC*—here recast as a broader Third World problematic—entailed a sense of deficiency vis-à-vis putatively more advanced historical cultures against which the Germans and Arabs, respectively, felt compelled to define themselves: "the liberal system derived from [French] Enlightenment philosophy" and characterized by "materialism, rationalist history, and positivism" (as opposed to German "idealism, historicism, and dialectic"), on one hand; and on the other, Europe or "the West" seen in broadly similar terms.[84] Laroui credited Marx with

[82] Abdallah Laroui, "L'intellectuel du Tiers Monde et Marx, ou encore une fois le problème du retard historique," *Diogène*, no. 64 (October 1968): 134–57; in *La crise*/*The Crisis* under the same title, chapter 5.
[83] "L'idéologie allemande ne posait pas clairement les trois questions principales concernant le niveau supérieur par rapport auquel se mesurait le retard allemand, la fameuse « misère » allemande, la possibilité de rattraper ce retard et l'agent de ce rattrapage ; mais elle y répondait tout de même. Le niveau supérieur était défini par le jacobinisme en tant qu'universalisation abstraite par la Terreur, la possibilité du rattrapage était illustrée par la prise de conscience et donc par l'affirmation qu'au fond il s'agissait déjà d'un fait acquis et enfin l'agent ne pouvait être que l'intellectuel lui-même." Ibid., 138-39.
[84] "L'exacerbation de la misère de l'intellectuel qui en fera à la fois une victime et un sauveur, la constante sous-estimation du retard (bien que senti et reconnu) et la surestimation corrélative des valeurs sauvegardées, enfin le refus obstiné que le monde puisse être divisé entre lieu d'histoire et lieu de la non-histoire et au contraire l'affirmation que c'est le second qui porte toutes les chances de l'universel vont donner naissance aux caractéristiques de l'idéologie allemande : idéalisme, historicisme et dialectique, qui vont s'opposer point par point aux traits du système libéral, dérivé de la philosophie des lumières : matérialisme, histoire rationaliste et positivisme." Ibid., 137-38.

recognizing that behind the German ideology—afflicted as it was by "the illusion of carrying history's weight and being able to resolve its contradictions simply by exposing them"—lay large-scale historical processes that Marx was eager to describe and analyze. "In his quest for the real," Laroui wrote, "Marx will find beyond Jacobinism, socioeconomic formation; in place of historical delay, backward productive relations; and in place of the intellectual or philosopher, the modern proletariat."[85]

Yet—Laroui continued—"Marx maintains the structure of the German problematic: it is always a question of two groups of contrasting facts and relations; what is advanced at one level is behind at the other, and dialectic and revolution are defined by the contradiction and unification of the two terms."[86] Marx's materialist revision of this problematic was not, Laroui argued, an inevitable or ineluctable theoretical step; it would be equally legitimate to reverse his course—"as Third World intellectuals typically do"—by shifting one's focus from class to what for Marx were the merely "partial totalities" of culture or nation.[87] If Third World intellectuals inevitably engaged with a Marx who seemed to espouse the German ideology he in fact sought to overcome, Laroui claimed that this was because the Arabs' historical situation was analogous in certain respects to

[85] "Marx, naturellement, démontra que cette manière de poser ou plutôt d'obscurcir le problème est elle-même la conséquence du même retard qui donne à l'intellectuel-critique l'illusion de porter le poids de l'histoire, et de pouvoir résoudre les contradictions simplement en les exposant. Dans sa quête du réel, Marx va trouver au-delà du jacobinisme la formation économico-sociale ; à la place du retard historique, il mettra le retard des relations de production, et à la place de l'intellectuel ou du philosophe il mettra le prolétariat moderne." Ibid., 139.

[86] "Fondamentalement, en n'allant pas plus loin que la formation, Marx maintient la structure de la problématique allemande : il s'agit toujours de deux groupes de faits en relations contrastées ; celui qui est avancé à un niveau est retardataire dans l'autre, la dialectique et la révolution se définissent par la contradiction et l'unification des deux." Ibid., 140.

[87] "Dans ces conditions"—i.e., "dans une économie de plus en plus dominée par la production"—"il est tout aussi normal de vouloir couper Marx de sa propre histoire que de redéfinir ses notions fondamentales, essentiellement celles d'histoire, de révolution et de dialectique. Mais quel que soit l'intérêt de ces recherches et leur développement futur, ce Marx-là, totalement coupé de sa préhistoire, n'est pas plus vrai que celui que reconstitue naturellement l'intellectuel du Tiers Monde et qui semble immergé dans l'idéologie allemande." Ibid., 141.

the one that nurtured Hegel and his followers. Laroui argued that like Lenin, Third World Marxists read Marx as a practical guide to political action, which would not proceed identically—nor, perhaps, on the same plane of struggle (economic vs. national or cultural)—on Europe's peripheries as it had done in Paris, London, or Berlin.[88] Laroui, for his part, could not "escape the impression that the fundamental difference" between the two Marxes (one close to the German ideology, another harshly critical of it in the name of a more "scientific," materialist approach)[89] "originates from the opposition of two worlds: that of advanced capitalism and that of the undeveloped world"—that is, the opposition of the First to the Third World.[90] By this logic, to prioritize the "scientific" over the "ideological" Marx was to fail to recognize that the historical conditions congenial to Marxism differed within and outside of Western Europe.

In the essay's closing section, Laroui argues that in contrast to the "cosmopolitan" Marxist whose "eclecticism" he dismisses as "purely subjective"—ostensibly detached,

[88] Lenin's conviction that social-democratic struggle in Russia should be approached with an eye to the country's specific conditions, which differed from those in Western Europe, coincides with a critique of "economism" in *What Is to Be Done?* (1902; repr., New York: International Publishers, 1929).

[89] For his famous theory of the "epistemological break" separating the young, humanist Marx from the mature, scientific one (with *The German Ideology* serving as a transitional text), see Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (1965; repr., New York: Verso, 2005). For a contrasting account of Marx's intellectual development, see Walter L. Adamson, "Marx's Four Histories: An Approach to His Intellectual Development," *History and Theory* 20, no. 4 (1981): 379–402.

[90] He described the argument that Marx should be detached from his historicist background as "l'objection faite par la « science » à l' « idéologie », par les économistes, historiens sociaux et même quelques philosophes, surtout à l'Ouest, aux idéologues en majorité du Tiers Monde. Malgré la confusion introduite par la multiplicité des adjectifs utilisés pour définir les uns et les autres, on ne peut échapper à l'impression que la différence fondamentale provient de l'opposition de deux mondes : celui du capitalisme avancé et celui du monde non développé." Laroui, "L'intellectuel du Tiers Monde et Marx," 144. Laroui began the essay by defining "Third World" in a way that called attention to this fundamental antagonism: the Third World was actually "a Second World, conscious and jealous of its difference, proud of its traditional culture and finding itself confronted with a First World… that it can neither refuse globally, nor accept in its totality" (134). ("Ce ne sera pas simplement la partie du monde que distinguent la famine, l'analphabétisme et la passivité, faits qui incontestablement caractérisent, parmi d'autres, le Tiers Monde d'aujourd'hui. Il s'agit, plus exactement d'un Second Monde, conscient et jaloux de sa différence, fier de sa culture traditionnelle et qui se trouve confronté à un Premier Monde (peu importe le nom qu'il porte), qu'il ne peut ni refuser globalement, ni accepter en totalité.")

that is, from concrete historical conditions—the Third World intellectual's sense of "political responsibility" compels him to "recreate the historicist Marx" by applying a critical historical analysis to Marx's own thought and politics. In the process, the Third World intellectual "will rethink history backwards," thereby becoming "familiar with the dialectic of relived time, the category of the future anterior."[91] This, of course, brings to mind his arguments in *IAC* about the future anterior, discussed above, in which the orientalist "overestimates the past and the present" while the Arab ideologue places himself "in a non-effective future."[92] If, by Laroui's account, the Third World intellectual or Arab ideologue relived the adventures of Western political thought, he did so while imagining—and perhaps working toward—a future that, despite having failed to materialize the West, remained possible elsewhere.

In his account of Third World Marxism, however, Laroui sometimes seems to employ a cyclical rather than a linear or teleological mode of historical analysis. "Open" or "scientific" and "closed" or "dogmatic" Marxism are, in his view, dynamically interrelated. On one hand, "as the revolution advances," dogma—described by Laroui as a "provisional Marxism" suspended between ideology and science—approaches, and dissolves into, a kind of official positivism. On the other hand, as these modes of thought merge, scientific critique is deprived of its central object (i.e., ideology as dogma) and falls into eclecticism.[93] In other words, as society is reorganized according to the premises

[91] "S'il se détache de sa situation et devient un marxiste cosmopolite," the Third World intellectual "pourra certes entrer dans toutes les polémiques, choisir et défendre le Marx qui lui plaît, mais son éclectisme gratuit, aussi ouvert, aussi chatoyant que celui de bien d'autres, en définitive n'exprimera rien et sera purement subjectif. S'il reste rivé au contraire à sa situation, et seul le sens d'une responsabilité politique pourra garantir cette fidélité, il se retrouvera dans la nécessité de recréer ce Marx historiciste, indissolublement lié à l'idéologie allemande, il repensera l'histoire à reculons, ce qui le rendra tout de suite familier avec la dialectique du temps revécu, la catégorie du futur antérieur." Ibid., 154.

[92] Laroui, *IAC*, 124.

[93] "Il ne semble pas niable que plus la révolution avance, plus le marxisme dogmatique se rapproche du marxisme « scientifique » ou positiviste : on appelle cela libéralisation, dé-dogmatisation, humanisation, dé-bureaucratisation, etc. Dans ce sens le dogmatisme qui est la codification d'un marxisme provisoire est

of Marxist ideology, Marxist critique fragments and becomes ineffective. The Third World intellectual who rediscovers historicist Marxism may be "the third or fourth to make this reverse itinerary of which he already knows the orientation and destination."[94] The implication would seem to be that instead of the Third World post-independence nation-state serving as the stage on which a Marxist utopia will be finally realized, this state will maintain its character as a volatile political landscape where ideological conflicts perpetually recur and occasionally erupt in violence.

Seeking an analogue to the Third World Marxist, Laroui looked to the Hungarian philosopher and militant Georg Lukács. According to Laroui, Lukács gave a "theoretical expression" to Third World historicism when he attributed the bourgeoisie's abdication of its historical mission—unifying humanity into a universal culture—in part to the "reduction of rationality to 'science'" whose "abstract universal" each class could recognize without, however, abandoning "its particular culture."[95] Although he did not

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une étude entre l' « idéologie » et la « science ». Mais aussi, ce marxisme « ouvert » ou « scientifique » de l'Occident, celui du *Capital* inachevé, ne se maintient probablement que grâce à l'existence de ce même marxisme dogmatique, car qui pourrait garantir que par son ouverture à toutes les données de l'expérience, il n'aurait pas été submergé par l'éclectisme généralisé que nourrit à chaque instant l'action des sub-cultures particulaires de l'Occident?" Laroui, "L'intellectuel du Tiers Monde et Marx," 153. Similarly, he saw the "consolidation" of Marxist revolution as leading to the disappearance of historicist thinking (associated with *retard historique* or a disjuncture between reality and consciousness) and the revival of the Enlightenment idea of history as linear progress: "…dès que la révolution commence à se consolider, c'est-à-dire dès que le mouvement d'embourgeoisement commence sous la direction d'un groupe restreint qui assume dans la société à révolutionner la rationalité, le problème du retard historique n'est plus à l'ordre du jour et par conséquent l'historicisme qui le sous-tendait s'évanouit ; d'un coup c'est la vision de l'histoire-progrès, celle précisément de la philosophie des lumières qui prévaut, cela signifie que la dialectique en tant qu'expérience vécue disparaît dans la mesure même où l'histoire redevient l'écoulement du temps, continu et sans profondeur." Ibid., 151.

[94] "Au même instant cependant il ne peut manquer de constater qu'il est le troisième ou le quatrième à refaire cet itinéraire inversé dont il connaît déjà l'orientation et la destination." Ibid., 154.

[95] "Une expression théorique en a été donnée une fois, pour une brève période, et c'est celle de G. Lukács qui a soutenu que la seule culture universelle fut l'oeuvre de la bourgeoisie occidentale et que toutes les autres cultures sont par rapport à elle des sub-cultures, qu'elles se rapportent à des groupes sociaux ou à des collectivités nationales mais aussi que cette culture est à jamais séparée de la classe qui historiquement lui a servi de support parce qu'elle ne l'a jamais systématisée et qu'elle ne s'y est jamais complètement immergée; qu'il revient à d'autres de l'assumer et de la sauver. Pensant toujours par référence à l'exemple allemand il décrit comment ce détachement s'est fait par réduction de la rationalité à la « science » qui par

cite a specific text, Laroui seems here to refer to Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), a French translation of which appeared in 1960.[96] The centerpiece of this collection of "essays on Marxist dialectics" is a long meditation on the concept of reification, in which Lukács claims that in advanced capitalist society, the commodity fetishism described by Marx in the first volume of *Capital*—whereby immediately manipulable, marketable *things* stand in for and obscure complex social processes of production and exchange—had come to permeate society as a whole, including the philosophical, scientific, or historical categories with which intellectuals sought to describe and understand it.[97] For Lukács, "bourgeois" science had abandoned any "attempt to achieve a unified mastery of the whole realm of the knowable."[98] This meant that history, for example, was reduced to a collection of empirical facts; historians lost sight of the "totality" that, he argued, was "the real, ultimate ground" of these facts "and hence also of their knowability even as individual facts."[99]

More so than *The German Ideology*, Lukács's account of reification resonates with Laroui's critique in *IAC*. Laroui's Arab ideologue is like Lukács's bourgeois intellectual in that these figures are blinded and demobilized by subjective perspectives

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elle-même servit d'idéologie de concorde, d'égalisation de toutes les classes dans le culte rendu à l'universel abstrait de la science, chacune sauvant cependant sa culture particulière." Ibid., 155.

[96] Georg Lukács, *Histoire et conscience de classe : essais de dialectique marxiste*, trans. Kostas Axelos and Jacqueline Bois (Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 1960). In his preface, Axelos—an editor of the journal *Arguments*, where excerpts from the book appeared in the late 1950s—stresses the book's "heretical" character, referring to it as Marxism's "*livre maudit*" and detailing the various displacements and periods of exile that marked Lukács's biography. On *History and Class Consciousness* as a moment in postwar French intellectuals' "rediscovery of Marx," see Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 42-49; on Axelos and the "*Arguments* group," ibid., chapter 6. On Lukács's career and reception see, for example, Paul Breines, "Young Lukács, Old Lukács, New Lukács," *The Journal of Modern History* 51, no. 3 (1979): 533–46.

[97] Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialects*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (1923; repr., Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 83-222.

[98] Ibid., 120.

[99] Ibid., 152.

that conceal broader historical realities. For both authors, historical consciousness could serve as the way out of the resulting political impasses; and both wrote during periods of heightened (but quickly deflated) revolutionary hopes.[100] On the other hand, while Lukács maintained a certain faith in the Marxist precept that the proletariat's historical destiny was to transform and thus redeem bourgeois society, it is difficult to identify an analogue to the Marxist proletariat in Laroui's writings. This has to do, in part, with Laroui's belief, expressed at various points in *IAC*, that Arab societies lacked genuine bourgeoisies in the Marxist sense.[101] Furthermore, however, Laroui does not seem to have attributed the same importance to the development of bourgeois society as did Marx or Lukács. To a greater degree, perhaps, than typical Marxist thinkers, Laroui emphasized the relativity of historical facts and experiences.[102] At stake in his study of Arab ideology was not the eclipse of working-class political struggle but the threat posed to modernizing social

[100] Lukács was forced into exile by the failure of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic, in which he served as a cultural minister. The essays collected in *History and Class Consciousness* were written in Vienna between 1919 and 1922. In his preface to the Spanish translation of Laroui's memoir of the Hassan II years, Bernabé López García argues that after 1967, Laroui subjected himself to two "voluntary exiles, one in the United States" where Laroui briefly taught at UCLA, "the other internal, in Morocco." Bernabé López García, "Prólogo : Abdallah Laroui, Hassan II y los dilemas de Marruecos," in Abdallah Laroui, *Marruecos y Hassan II: un testimonio*, trans. Malika Embarek (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores, S.A., 2007), xiii-xiv. For Laroui's own account of his American years see Gallagher, "Interview," 138-40.

[101] Consider, for example, his claim that the postcolonial nation-state "imposes a bourgeois, rational, universalist culture on a society that has not given birth to it through an internal development" (*IAC*, 9). ("L'Etat national impose une culture bourgeoise, rationaliste et universalisante à une société qui ne lui a pas donné naissance par un développement interne.") He similarly claimed that the Arab novel was "inauthentic" because it expressed the perspective of the upstart petite bourgeoisie instead of (as in the European realist novel) the bourgeoisie proper: "Analyse abstraite, réalisme petit-bourgeois, réalisme progressiste sont tous, à divers degrés, inauthentiques : ce sont tous des applications, dans une société donnée, des règles d'expression et de mise en forme, conçues ailleurs." Ibid., 193.

[102] In this way Laroui perhaps resembled Aron or Weber, though a better comparison might be Karl Mannheim, the founder of the sociology of knowledge and an associate of Lukács'. Laroui acknowledges the influence on his thinking of the French Marxist sociologist Lucien Goldmann, whose approach was indebted to both Mannheim and Lukács, in *Philosophie et histoire*, 42.

trends by traditionalizing ones, which he understood as the manifestation of a perilous and perhaps cyclical historical dynamic.[103]

Insofar as he often aligned himself with a conception of history as (necessary and perhaps salutary) progress toward modernity, it seems legitimate to say of Laroui, as one perceptive commentator has, that in certain of his statements in *IAC*, he "makes of his thought one that is fundamentally linked to the Enlightenment."[104] Indeed, the Enlightenment plays an important role in Laroui's account of Arab ideology: both the cleric's promotion of Islam as a religion based on reason and the liberal politician's opposition to Ottoman and then European imperialism are evidence, in Laroui's view, of the "domination" that "the century of the Enlightenment" was to "exercise on Arab intelligence."[105] If the latest, technophilic iteration of Arab ideology was redolent of the German nineteenth century rather than the French eighteenth, this observation underscored Laroui's claim that foreign domination in various forms produced a consciousness of historical delay that reflected, in turn, the "compressed" historical temporality he both discussed and, evidently, experienced. Although he wrote at the

[103] With specific reference to postwar Moroccan history, he wrote that there was "a continuous and contradictory process of abstraction and concretion"—or "flux (political agitation, protest mobilization, independence struggle…)" and "reflux (weariness of the masses, disenchantment of the leaders, political failure)"—whereby his country had alternatively "projected itself into the future" and clothed itself in the garb of "past centuries." Laroui, *IAC*, 134. ("Il existe, en effet, un processus continu et contradictoire, d'abstraction et de concrétion. Dans une période de flux (agitation politique, mobilisation revendicatrice, lutte d'indépendance…) le mouvement d'homogénéisation l'emporte ; dans une période de reflux (lassitude des masses, désenchantement des chefs, échec politique…) c'est, en revanche, le retour à l'extériorité ancienne, la résurgence des divisions historiques, un moment effacées.")

[104] Driss Mansouri, "Laroui ou l'obsession de la modernité," in *Penseurs maghrébins contemporains*, ed. Abdou Filali Ansary, Mohamed Tozy, and Hammadi Safi (Tunis: Cérès Productions, 1993), 216.

[105] "Dans la mesure même où le clerc cherchait partout des arguments polémiques contre l'Eglise, et les trouvait surtout chez les écrivains du siècle des lumières, il ouvrait par là même la voie à la domination que ce siècle va peu à peu exercer sur l'intelligence arabe." Laroui, *IAC*, 22. "Il arrive un moment où l'unité du système apparaît, et le lecteur arabe ne voit plus l'Europe comme domaine du Pape et de l'évêque seuls, il commence à remarquer aussi l'Empereur et le noble féodal, surtout s'il vient d'Egypte ou de Syrie, s'il y a enduré la tyrannie turque et s'il entend dire que ces vieilles terres de civilisation déchurent précisément à cause de l'occupation turque." Ibid., 23.

moment of decolonization, however, Laroui sought to illustrate the historical continuities linking modern Arab thought to the postcolonial temporality that many of his contemporaries tended to treat as a radical new departure.

THE THIRD WORLD AND THE WEST: A "NEW DIALECTIC"?

To better understand Laroui's simultaneous proximity to and distance from the Third World Marxism he described, it will be useful to compare his writings on this subject with the work of another latter-day *nahdawi*, the Sorbonne-trained Egyptian sociologist Anouar Abdel-Malek (1924-2012), who contributed an essay on "Marxism and the sociology of civilizations" to the special issue of *Diogène* in which Laroui's piece on Third World Marxism appeared. Like Laroui, Abdel-Malek argued that from a Third World perspective, Marxism was "a theory… that represents the most advanced critical synthesis of the culture and civilizations of the West, and more particularly the Europe of the century of Enlightenment and of great political, social, and economic revolutions." Seen in this way, Marxism was a method of "civilizational" analysis, equally applicable to the West or "the non-European, non-Western world."[106] If Laroui's analyses distanced him somewhat from Third World Marxism, however, Abdel-Malek saw a Marxist approach to historical sociology as indispensable both to understanding the structure and development of non-Western societies and fomenting revolution on the global

[106] "Vu de la « périphérie », de ces Trois Continents où vivent aujourd'hui plus des trois quarts de l'humanité, le marxisme est perçu comme une *Weltanschauung*, une théorie — tout à la fois philosophie, idéologie, méthodologie — qui représente la synthèse critique la plus avancée de la civilisation et des cultures d'Occident, et plus particulièrement de l'Europe du Siècle des lumières et des grandes révolutions politiques, sociales et économiques. Cette vision du marxisme — qui fut, très précisément, celle de Marx, Engels et Lénine — le situe en termes de civilisation, c'est-à-dire qu'elle permet de rendre compte de ses caractéristiques et de ses rapports avec l'ensemble des problèmes conceptuels et pratiques qui sont ceux du monde non-européen, non-occidental." Anouar Abdel-Malek, "Marxisme et sociologie des civilisations," *Diogène*, no. 64 (October 1968), 106.

periphery.[107] Along these lines, Abdel-Malek praised Third World revolutionary movements as continuing the "armed critique" begun by the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolution;[108] unfavorably compared cultural anthropology to Marxism as methods of studying civilizational difference;[109] and derided as "stillborn" Rostow's modernization theory,[110] which Laroui had seen as basically compatible with "objective Marxism."

If he tended to dismiss theories of history he found to be idealist or Eurocentric, Abdel-Malek nevertheless placed the recognition of different nations' historical specificity at the center of his vision of Marxist sociology. Drawing on the work of the American sociologist C. Wright Mills, he argued that it was essential to recognize a plurality of global civilizations, each with its own distinct historical path, and to adjust one's historical sociology accordingly. The dynamics of "slow moving" societies apparently stuck in long cycles of "poverty and tradition" would, for example, require a "historical analysis that dives very deep" in order to explain "the mechanism of the entire cycle." In-depth analyses of this sort could overcome "historical provincialism" while revealing mechanisms of radical social change.[111] At the same time, it was necessary "to

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[107] The "spirit that animates Marxism" was, he wrote in the essay's closing passage, "the essential factor that makes revolutions the privileged instrument in the renaissance of civilizations": "que les thèses et l'esprit qui animent le marxisme puissent être, cent cinquante ans après, le facteur essentiel qui fait des révolutions l'instrument privilégié dans la renaissance des civilisations, voilà qui témoigne, peut-être plus que toute autre chose, de la vérité théorique et efficace d'une oeuvre qui commence à peine son cours historique universel." Ibid., 132-33.

[108] "La « rationalité » même du système qui se voulait rationaliste — et humaniste — était contestée, par les peuples même de l'Occident, au moyen de cette « critique par les armes » qui se déploie, aujourd'hui, d'un bout à l'autre des Trois Continents." Ibid., 107.

[109] Ibid.

[110] "Rien, peut-être, n'illustre mieux la faillite de l'approche pseudo-universaliste des phénomènes de civilisation — en réalité, cosmopolite et hégémonique — que l'effritement de la « théorie » mort-née de W. W. Rostow sur les soidisant « étapes du développement »." Ibid., 121.

[111] "Il est, bien entendu, tout à fait clair que la compréhension d'une société à mouvement lent, coincée depuis des siècles dans un cycle de pauvreté et de tradition, de maladie et d'ignorance, requiert que le terrain historique soit étudié, ainsi que les mécanismes historiques persistants du coincage terrible [de cette société] dans sa propre histoire. L'explication de ce cycle, et du mécanisme de chacune de ses phases, exige

pay much more attention than we have thus far agreed to do… to superstructural factors" and to what Abdel-Malek described as "a new dialectic" within Marxism's "traditional couple" of economic base and cultural or political superstructure, whose "synthesis" was the "'principle of historical specificity.'"[112]

Abdel-Malek's discussion of the sociology of civilizations was not concerned with the methodology of an academic discipline so much as the historical dialectics—grasped empirically and theoretically by Abdel-Malek and his interlocutors—of the emerging postcolonial world. Particularly significant in this regard was the "nationalist [*nationalitaire*] phenomenon" whose "historical objective," Abdel-Malek argued, was "to make it possible for nations and national-cultural ensembles—civilizations—to enter into dialectical interaction with 'the' hegemonic civilization," an interaction to which newly independent nation-states would "bring their specific contributions."[113] The method Abdel-Malek advocated would, he implied, serve as the intellectual component of this

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une analyse historique qui plonge très profondément." Ibid., 128, quoting C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 155. "« Les tendances à long terme sont habituellement nécessaires, ne serait-ce que pour surmonter le provincialisme historique, la postulation que le présent est en quelque sorte une création autonome. »" Ibid., 130, quoting Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, 151..

[112] "À l'intérieur de cette dialectique sociale et historique de caractère général — et que je retiendrai comme constituant le noyau central du matérialisme historique —, il y a lieu de prêter une attention *bien plus grande* qu'on n'a consenti à le faire, jusqu'à présent — en raison même du cadre de civilisation où le marxisme est né, et s'est développé, jusqu'en 1930-1949 —, aux facteurs superstructurels, d'une part, à la nouvelle dialectique qui s'instaure au sein même du couple traditionnel, et qui conduit à la synthèse dite « principe de spécificité historique », d'autre part." Ibid., 130.

Abdel-Malek's invocation of a "new dialectic" existing alongside the "traditional [Marxist] couple" of proletariat and bourgeoisie brings to mind Mao Tse-tung's discussion, in "On Contradiction" (1937), of the contradiction between colonizer and colonized as potentially equally or even more significant than the contradiction between capitalists and workers, depending on the historical conjuncture. For a discussion of this text in the context of French Maoism, see Julian Bourg, "Principally Contradiction: The Flourishing of French Maoism," in *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History*, ed. Alexander C. Cook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 225–44, esp. 233-34.

[113] "Par-delà les indépendances reconquises, on voit bien que l'objectif historique du phénomène nationalitaire consiste à rendre possible aux nations, et aux ensembles nationaux-culturels — les civilisations —, d'entrer en interaction dialectique avec « la » civilisation hégémonique, d'apporter leur contribution spécifique." Ibid., 122.

dialectical confrontation, allowing radical critics to "'study history in order to abolish it'—that is to say, to modify rationally, voluntarily, and patiently the arrangement of specific factors, and hence their long-term objective dialectic—but always within the general framework of this historical specificity itself." Abdel-Malek referred to the case of his native Egypt in this passage, suggesting that the sort of analysis he advocated could somehow "break the vise" of the country's "centralizing curse," which took the form of "static and reactionary bureaucratism."[114]

For Abdel-Malek, national liberation would coincide not with formal independence but the resolution, undoubtedly through a slow and painful process, of Third World nations' dialectical tensions with hegemonic Western civilization.[115] Central to this process would be the simultaneous recognition of these nations' historical specificity—the uniqueness, that is, of their cultural and political traditions—and their situatedness in a broader, universal or global history. Laroui, too, broached the subject of Arab society's "process of universalization" in *IAC* while noting, however, that in his work this process took place "within the framework of ideology." "And if it is true," he continued, "that where we are concerned one must invert the relationship between

[114] "Dès lors, il devient possible d' « étudier l'histoire afin de s'en débarrasser » — c'est-à-dire de modifier rationnellement, volontairement, patiemment, l'agencement des facteurs spécifiques, et, partant, leur dialectique objective à long terme — mais toujours dans le cadre général de cette spécificité historique elle-même. Dans le cas égyptien, par exemple, en dialectisant sélectivement l'idéologique, puis le politique, par un pluralisme concerté, dans le but de sommer le facteur de transformation le plus radical et encore inemployé, à savoir l'action massive — au sens littéral du terme — du peuple des campagnes et des villes, avec tout l'éventail (pluraliste) idéologique et politique existant et potentiel, seul capable de briser l'étau de la malédiction centralisatrice qui prend les couleurs du bureaucratisme statique et réactionnaire." Ibid., 131.

[115] Interestingly, he saw this as having already happened in China, which he called "the greatest country in the tricontinental ensemble" and praised for having "shattered the essence of traditional imperialist hegemony" and for "victoriously challenging American neo-imperialism." (Of the publication dates of the works he cited as examples of the "sociology of civilization" he noted that "toutes se situent après 1950, c'est-à-dire après le triomphe de la révolution socialiste en Chine — le plus grand pays dans l'ensemble tricontinental, et plus spécifiquement, dans l' « Orient » —, dans la foulée des puissants mouvements de libération nationale, des révolutions nationales et sociales qui ont brisé l'essentiel de l'hégémonie des impérialismes traditionnels, et qui, aujourd'hui, défient victorieusement le néo-impérialisme américain.") Ibid., 120.

ideology and society, the proof of the universal is thus really this slow and difficult reconciliation of Arab consciousness with new humanity."[116] Abdel-Malek acknowledged, in his own way, the primacy of ideology—or what he might have instead characterized as national consciousness—in Third World societies, in his discussion of different civilizations' historical specificity. But if, for Abdel-Malek, the recognition of historical specificity could take the form of a praxis leading toward revolution, Laroui's own conception of the same[117] historical situation—central to which was his insistence on the Arab world's historical delay—was more ambiguous.

The referent for Laroui's "new humanity" is somewhat obscure, but in light of his argument in *IAC*, we can hypothesize that this would have been a thoroughly modern Arab self, no longer defined in opposition to the West and thus no longer shackled to tradition—or perhaps, on the other hand, a humanity that would be truly universal, freeing this term from its Eurocentric connotations. In contrast, Abdel-Malek's text on Third World Marxism features a figure of "new humanity" that seems identical, on the theoretical level, to the authentic humanity, liberated from alienation, imagined by the young Marx and by Western Marxists like Lukács.[118] If, unlike Abdel-Malek, Laroui failed to give the concept of new humanity a positive definition, it was perhaps in order

[116] "Et en effet on ne peut nier que le processus d'universalisation, décrit dans ces pages, reste uniquement dans le cadre de l'idéologie." Laroui, *IAC*, 168. "Et s'il est vrai que l'on doive inverser, en ce qui nous concerne, le rapport entre idéologie et société, la preuve de l'universel est alors vraiment cette lente et difficule réconciliation de la conscience arabe avec l'humanité nouvelle." Ibid., 169.

[117] Of course, Abdel-Malek's emphasis on historical specificity and Laroui's specific interest in Morocco suggest that for these authors, decolonization was as much a local as a global event, its effects and dynamics differing in different national contexts.

[118] For the discovery of Marx's early unpublished works as a decisive moment in the development of Western Marxism, see Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: Verso, 1987), chapter 3, esp. 50-52. The generation of Marxists who drew particular inspiration from these works were, in Anderson's account, university-based and somewhat remote from political struggle. In their move from mass agitation to academic philosophy, Anderson argues, these thinkers "inverted the trajectory of Marx's own development" (52): an interesting claim to consider alongside Laroui's contention that Third World intellectuals relived history backwards by rediscovering the historicist Marx.

to suggest that the postcolonial Arab ideologue, newly able to think this concept, would only be able to define it after a prolonged, arduous struggle. By refusing or failing to answer—or even explicitly pose—the question of what postcolonial humanity would be, Laroui made himself vulnerable to the criticism that he had failed to rise to the challenge of his own historical moment. It is to a critique along these lines that I now turn.

NATIONALISM AND THE "QUESTION OF THE ARABS"

Writing in a 1977 special issue of *Les Temps modernes* on the Maghreb, the Moroccan sociologist, poet, and novelist Abdelkébir Khatibi—one of the issue's coeditors—identified "three transformations" characteristic of Moroccan thought that, he noted, Laroui had recognized with his cleric–liberal–technophile schema: traditionalism ("*metaphysics become theology*"), salafism ("*metaphysics become doctrine*"), and rationalism ("*metaphysics become technology*"). Soon after enumerating this trio and invoking Laroui, however, Khatibi doubted that what he called Laroui's "psycho-ideological" approach could shed much light on "the question of the Arab world." At stake in this question was not "the empiricist portrait of a 'certain Arab ideology' called contemporary, but the *historial* destiny of the Arabs, their retreat and their decline toward the West, as this destiny, this retreat, this decline have, since the dawn of Islam, always been present [*là*]."[119] Condensed into this statement were a set of theoretical questions that, in Khatibi's view, "our ideologues, so preoccupied with the political problems of the

[119] "La métaphysique devenue théologie, doctrine, technique : ces trois transformations peuvent être approchées par l'histoire et la sociologie. Ainsi, chez un idéologue marocain (A. Laroui), la distinction entre le clerc, le libéral, et le technophile. De telles distinctions sont certes utiles à l'analyse psycho-idéologique, mais elles ne touchent que de loin la question du monde arabe…. [C]e qui est mis en jeu aujourd'hui et depuis toujours, ce n'est pas simplement le portrait empiriste d'une « certaine idéologie arabe » dite contemporaine, mais bien le destin historial des Arabes, leur retrait et leur déclin vers l'Occident, en tant que ce destin, ce retrait, ce déclin sont, depuis l'aube de l'Islam, toujours là." Abdelkébir Khatibi, "Le Maghreb comme horizon de pensée," *Les Temps modernes*, no. 375 bis (October 1977), 12-13.

day," had failed to see; in short, "the question of the Arabs" remained "hidden."[120] Khatibi went on to reproach Laroui for advocating a "general historicism," which the former saw as tantamount to reducing history to "a metaphysical totality, fenced off by continuity, rationality, a taste for system and will, as if the 'subject of history' were an absolute reason, capable of mastering destiny."[121] He challenged Laroui's understanding of Marxism as historicism by pointing to "one of [Marxism's] most rigorous forms," developed by Louis Althusser, who sought to move beyond the twin historicisms—one "transcendental," "defined by absolutes (God, Prophecy, Destiny)," the other "liberal (eighteenth-century Europe)"—between which Khatibi claimed Laroui was "suspended."[122]

For Khatibi, Laroui's thinking could be situated in the history of Western metaphysics that, following Martin Heidegger, he sought to bring to account for its tendency to obscure what he saw as a more urgent ontological question. In Khatibi's work this question took on a decidedly postcolonial valence, not only insofar as Heidegger's "question of Being" became Khatibi's "question of the Arabs," but also because he counterposed what he described as the Hegelian treatment of "the question of

[120] "L'historique n'est pas l'historial, l'idéologique est fondé dans la métaphysique, le contemporain est tourné vers le retour du Même : la question des Arabes est encore occultée par nos idéologues si préoccupés par les problèmes politiques du jour." Ibid., 13.

[121] "Laroui réduit l'histoire à une totalité métaphysique, clôturée par la continuité, la rationalité, le goût du système et de la volonté, comme si le « sujet de l'histoire » était une raison absolue, capable de maîtriser le destin." Ibid., 14.

[122] "[D]ans une de ses formes le plus rigoreuses, le marxisme répudie :

"— l'historicisme transcendental (celui de la société féodale) défini par des absolus (Dieu, Prophétie, Fatalité…);

"— l'historicisme de la pensée libérale (XVIIIe siècle d'Europe), qui a remplacé les absolus de la transcendance par des subsitituts, cette fois laïcisés et qui sont la Raison, l'Individu, la Liberté… Le sol métaphysique demeure le même, mais il y a déplacement idéologique.

"Nous ne sommes pas tenus de faire le même cheminement, de parcourir à nouveau les étapes franchies par l'Occident. D'emblée, il faut partir de ce qui *est,* de ce qui est ici comme question. Althusser, par exemple, revendique l'histoire, la lutte des classes comme procès sans sujet ni finalité ; il fait changer du coup la position théorique du marxisme, en dépassant les deux historicismes ici visés. Le travail de Laroui, précisément, reste suspendu entre les deux." Ibid., 14-15.

mastery (colonization, imperialism, domination)" to what he saw as a more pertinent issue: "the globalization of technology (cf. Heidegger)."[123] He associated the former, ostensibly less sophisticated approach to the problem of hegemonic Western modernity with the avowal of a radical difference between the West and the non-West: a "false rupture that projects the other as an absolute outside."[124] Guilty of adopting this approach, according to Khatibi, were both Fanon—whose call to his comrades-in-arms to abandon "the European game" in the final pages of *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) Khatibi cited—and Laroui, the central questions of whose Arab problematic—who is the self? who is the Other?—Khatibi saw as symptomatic of a naive approach to the question of Being. "Thus," he wrote, "Laroui confuses *l'Autre* with *autrui* and *les autres*, cultural anthropology with the thinking of difference, the historic with the *historial*."[125]

At stake in Khatibi's critique of Laroui was a problematic linking questions of cultural identity to theories of time and history. Both thinkers made this problematic, albeit somewhat differently formulated in each case, central to their work. To understand Khatibi's critique of Laroui, it will be necessary to reconstruct and compare their differing understandings of the postcolonial moment's challenges and opportunities. In order to grasp their intellectual differences as products of this context, it will also be useful to return to the evolving political situation of 1970s Morocco, particularly the

[123] "[L]'Occident est en marche (depuis des siècles, depuis des millénaires) vers une hégémonie universelle. Cette marche, Hegel l'a élevée dans l'empire du Savoir Absolu. On peut dire que la pensée de Hegel parcourt le monde de son regard perçant, comme un aigle fabuleux.

"Cette métaphore signifie, par exemple, que la question de la maîtrise (colonisation, impérialisme, domination…) est posée à partir du regard hégélien, dans lequel est encore retenu le marxisme. Libérer les esclaves, telle est en effet la devise du marxisme. Cependant, comme tel, l'Occident incarne un destin métaphysique et historique qui se déploie selon une volonté de puissance inédite : la mondialisation de la technique (cf. Heidegger)." Ibid., 9.

[124] "Appelons « différence sauvage » la fausse rupture qui projette l'autre en un dehors absolu." Ibid., 8.

[125] "Ce qui ruine cet historicisme de Laroui c'est sa fidélité à l'identité sauvage, c'est-à-dire à une naïve « question » de l'être. C'est ainsi que Laroui confond « l'Autre » avec « autrui » et « les autres », l'anthropologie culturelle avec la pensée de la différence, l'historique avec l'historial." Ibid., 15.

kingdom's irredentist claim on the western Sahara. In this closing section, I will address these questions sequentially, attempting in the process to draw conclusions relevant to my reading of *IAC*.

Khatibi's distinction between the historical and the *historial* is derived from Heidegger's discussion, in *Being and Time*, of the difference between temporality as the medium in which Being reveals (and conceals) itself and history as the experience or scientific study of temporal duration. Heidegger's first French translator, the philosopher and religious scholar Henry Corbin (1903-1978), drew attention to this distinction in his preface to an edition of Heidegger's writings that appeared in 1938.[126] He noted that Heidegger's discussions of history contained another distinction, between what Corbin called *réalité-historique* (*Geschichte* in Heidegger's German) and *science-historique* (*Historie*). The *historial*—Corbin's translation for *Geschehen* (happening or occurring)—fell into the former domain; Corbin described it as a "structure absolutely proper to Dasein [*réalité-humaine*] which, as transcendent and revelatory reality, makes a world's historicity possible."[127] In its *historial* occurrence, Dasein—Heidegger's term for finite

[126] Martin Heidegger, *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique ? Suivi d'extraits sur l'être et le temps et d'une conférence sur Hölderlin*, ed. and trans. Henry Corbin (Paris: Gallimard, 1938). On the French reception of Heidegger see, among others, Stefanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism That Is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010); Ethan Kleinberg, *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France, 1927-1961* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Samuel Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[127] "Le *Geschehen* n'équivaut pas à un devenir, à une évolution naturelle ou à un élan vital ; il marque la structure absolument propre de la réalité-humaine qui, réalité transcendante et réalité révélante, rend possible l'historicité d'un monde." Henry Corbin, "Avant-propos," in Heidegger, *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique ?*, 16. In a 1964 course on "Heidegger: The Question of Being and History" at the École normale supérieure, Jacques Derrida found both Corbin's use of *historial* and his alternate translation (adopted more consistently by Heidegger's subsequent French translators Rudolf Boehm and Alphonse de Waelhens) *accomplissement* to be "equally unsatisfactory." Derrida instead neglected to translate "the *Geschehen*," which he described as "historicity as the constitution of the being of *Da-sein*" and as "the originary movement, the emergence of what is subsequently called *history*, *Geschichte*." Jacques Derrida, *Heidegger: The Question of Being and History*, ed. Thomas Dutoit and Marguerite Derrida, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 96.

existential being, whose vicissitudes he studied phenomenologically in *Being and Time*—was both a product of its past and, through its attempts to interpret and learn from this past, determined by its destiny or future.[128] Through historical study, Dasein sought to uncover its authentic historicity; but for Heidegger, the success of this endeavor depended not so much on the values or methods of professional history as Dasein's willingness and capacity to question its own being.[129]

Why did Khatibi prioritize the *historial*, and why did he chastise Laroui for employing a scientific rather than an ontological approach to history? One answer is that while Laroui was preoccupied with Arab intellectuals' tendency to define themselves in opposition to the West and invent what he saw as regressive, politically sterile traditionalisms blind to the insights available to properly historical consciousness, Khatibi was interested in recovering aspects of Islamic tradition that both resulted from and were occluded by its historical encounter with Western civilization (or in Khatibi's Heidegger-inspired analysis, Western—that is, Greek—metaphysics). On one hand, that is, the Islamic "metaphysics of a hidden God" was, Khatibi wrote, "Greek in its essence," the product of Islamic theologians' engagements with Aristotelian philosophy. On the

[128] "Dasein 'is' its past in the manner of *its* being which, roughly expressed, on each occasion 'occurs' out of its future. In its manner of existing at any given time, and thus also the understanding of being that belongs to it, Dasein grows into a customary interpretation of itself and grows up on that interpretation. It understands itself initially in terms of this interpretation and, within a certain range, constantly does so. This understanding discloses the possibilities of its being and regulates them. Its own past—and that always means that of its 'generation'—does not *follow after* Dasein but rather always already goes ahead of it." Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (1927; repr., Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 19.

[129] For Heidegger, "the discipline of history… is possible only as the kind of being belonging to inquiring Dasein, because Dasein is determined by historicity in the ground of its being. If historicity remains concealed from Dasein, and so long as it does so, the possibility of historical inquiry and discovery of history is denied it. If the discipline of history is lacking, that is no evidence *against* the historicity of Dasein; rather it is evidence for this constitution of being in a deficient mode. Only because it is 'historic' in the first place can an age lack the discipline of history." He goes on to claim that "if Dasein has seized upon its inherent possibility not only of making its existence transparent, but also of inquiring into the meaning of existentiality itself… and if insight into the essential historicity of Dasein has opened up in such inquiry, then it is inevitable that inquiry into being… is itself characterized by historicity." Ibid., 20.

other, in its "encounter [*face à face*] with the Greeks," Islam had lost sight of its identity. For Khatibi, however, this loss also provided an opportunity to "return to the light of thought," specifically "themes (now repressed) of traditional Arab thinking" such as "the thinking of being and of the desert, mystical passion and androgyny."[130] By standing outside of itself (i.e., in Heideggerian jargon, through the ecstasy or *ek-stasis* in which temporal flux became observable),[131] Islamic thought would be better equipped to combat Laroui's and Khatibi's shared critical targets: Islamic traditionalism and Western orientalism.[132]

For both thinkers, reimagining the Maghreb's history would be a crucial step in the region's postcolonial liberation. Further, both Laroui and Khatibi saw a close relationship between this potential liberation and the temporal register of the future anterior. In their preface to the Maghreb issue of *Les Temps modernes*, coeditors Khatibi, Algerian political economist Noureddine Abdi, and Tunisian writer Abdelwahab Meddeb wrote that the issue "will have taken place—despite everything," before pointing to

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[130] "Il s'agit d'un face à face inouï : face à face de la métaphysique occidentale (grecque au fond) et de la métaphysique islamique, comme deux pensées radicales de l'Etre." Khatibi, "Le Maghreb," 10. Islam, "qui est la métaphysique d'un Dieu caché (l'Islam voile *aussi* le visage des femmes, les houris ne pouvant être visibles ici-bas que dans le paradis mystique, n'est-ce pas ?), l'Islam, dans son face à face avec les Grecs, a perdu le regard." Further on, he responded to an imaginary interlocutor's question—were "les Arabes… en train de changer de visage ?"—with: "Dans la mesure où le visage de la pensée, en retrait, se met à regarder l'Autre en lui-même éloigné : la pensée de l'être et du désert, de la passion mystique et de l'androgyne." Ibid., 11.

[131] "*Temporality is the primordial 'outside of itself' in and for itself.* Thus we call the phenomena of future, having-been, and present the *ecstasies* of temporality. Temporality is not, prior to this, a being that first emerges from *itself*; rather, its essence is temporalizing in the unity of the *ecstasies*." Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 314.

[132] These were the targets of the "double critique" Khatibi called for, more explicitly in an expanded version of the *Les Temps modernes* essay published as "Pensée–autre," in *Maghreb pluriel* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1983), 11-39, and in other essays collected in the same volume. Along similar lines, Laroui wrote in *IAC* that "in order to henceforth be an effective guide," Arab ideology "must be doubly advanced, in comparison with the Arab society that it must help transform and with the Western society that serves as its reference": "Pour être dorénavant un guide efficace, elle doit être doublement en avance, par rapport à la Société arabe qu'elle doit aider à transformer et par rapport à la société occidentale qui lui sert de référence" (213).

political difficulties that had pushed their home region "to the limits of a veritable decomposition." The purpose of the issue, they wrote, was to return "the radical Maghreb"—radical in "the dual sense of the word: roots and rupture"—to intellectual and political salience.[133] To the extent that this could be accomplished, collecting the critical reflections of authors from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia on pressing social and political issues with complicated histories at a moment of political turmoil[134] could prove analogous to what Khatibi described as Islamic thought's capacity for *ek-static* self-interrogation.[135]

Khatibi's ontological approach could be seen as symptomatic of political ambivalence. In their preface, Khatibi, Abdi, and Meddeb stressed the significance of the attempt being made by the assembled authors to "reclaim [their shared] history despite the emergence of sometimes bloody contradictions, products of nationalisms that certain interests inflame. Everyone knows," they continued, "that in the western Sahara, we are fighting each other." They evoked the ongoing conflict between Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania over the western Sahara not in order to take any particular position on this issue but to explain the absence of such position-taking from the issue's pages.

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[133] "Ce numéro aura eu lieu – en dépit de tout.

"Au moment où le Maghreb – en tant qu'entité politique – est aux limites d'une véritable décomposition, des intellectuels algériens, marocains et tunisiens prennent ici la parole." The passage continues: "Nous avons jugé nécessaire d'ouvrir le débat sur le Maghreb, en dehors des alliances que suscite ou suggère telle parole institutionnelle, afin de marquer une rupture critique et entamer une réflexion qui marcherait vers le Maghreb en tant que tel. Le Maghreb radical demeure impensé. Radical dans le double sens du mot : racines et rupture." Abdelkébir Khatibi, Noureddine Abdi, and Abdelwahab Meddeb, "Présentation," *Les Temps modernes,* no. 375 bis (October 1977), 5.

[134] For more on this special issue of *Les Temps modernes,* including the political context in which it appeared, see Idriss Jebari, "Rethinking the Maghreb and the Post-Colonial Intellectual in Khatibi's *Les Temps Modernes* Issue in 1977," *The Journal of North African Studies* 23, no. 1–2 (March 15, 2018): 53–70.

[135] As we saw above, Laroui saw mysticism as a response to the same problem of "progressively uniting the self (tradition) and the non-self (West)" that he saw as central to contemporary Arab thought. However, he was more circumspect than Khatibi about a reimagined mysticism's potential effectiveness, calling it a merely "verbal solution to a real problem" (*IAC,* 163).

Postponing debate on the matter was necessary, they wrote, in order to bring together the wide variety of opinions represented by the issue's authors without "nullifying" or "repressing" any one of them.[136]

Examining Khatibi's and Laroui's perspectives on the western Sahara conflict will help us more clearly discern the substantive stakes of their theoretical differences. The territory in question had been under Spanish control since the late nineteenth century; it composed part of the "Greater Morocco"—stretching from the Mediterranean to Senegal and from the Atlantic to Timbuktu—imagined by the nationalist leader al-Fasi.[137] Upon gaining independence, the monarchy adopted the nationalist demand that the Spanish Sahara be returned to Moroccan sovereignty. This led to armed conflicts in Ifni—the southern portion of Spain's Moroccan protectorate—and Mauritania, then still controlled by the French. Though Morocco successfully reclaimed the territory around Ifni, Spain redoubled its claims on its Saharan colony.[138] Algerian and Mauritanian independence—gained in 1962 and 1960, respectively—led to further conflicts, notably the Sand War of 1963 resulting from a border dispute between Algeria and Morocco, which set the stage for the prolonged crisis that began to unfold in 1975. After both Spain and Mauritania had withdrawn from the western Sahara, seemingly paving the way for

[136] "Chacun sait qu'à l'Occident du Sahara, l'on se bat. L'oublierait-on que l'actualité nous le rappelle. Si nous n'évoquons pas cette question qui divise, ce n'est point par méconnaissance ou par neutralité servile. Tel silence est fonctionnel : il préserve les positions des uns et des autres et reporte forcément le débat. Sans l'annuler. Ni le refouler." Khatibi, Abdi, and Meddeb, "Présentation," 6.

[137] Alicia Campos-Serrano and José Antonio Rodríguez-Esteban, "Imagined Territories and Histories in Conflict during the Struggles for Western Sahara, 1956–1979," *Journal of Historical Geography* 55 (2017), 45-7. Hassan Benaddi has described the geographical aspect of al-Fasi's historical vision of the Maghreb—formulated in direct counterpoint, he argues, to the "colonial vision"—thus: "The Maghreb is the country of the Berbers or *Imazighen* (meaning free men). These are the members of the same African family that brings together in one unity all of the elements living between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, extending as far as Nigeria and Senegal." Hassan Benaddi, "Mohamed Allal Al-Fassi: Le Penseur et le Combattant," in *Penseurs maghrébins contemporains*, ed. Filali Ansari, Tozy, and Safi, 25.

[138] Campos-Serrano and Rodríguez-Esteban, "Imagined Territories," 47, 49. Interestingly, Campos-Serrano and Rodríguez-Esteban argue that in the context of postwar decolonization, Spain was forced to adopt "the language of nationalism" in order to sustain and legitimate its continued claims on African territory.

Moroccan control, an Algerian-supported Sahrawi nationalist group calling itself the Polisario Front declared war on the kingdom.[139] Although the two parties reached a UN-mediated cease-fire agreement in 1991, the western Sahara remains disputed territory.

A particularly fervent display of the patriotic sentiment underlying Morocco's claim on the western Sahara was the "Green March" of November 6, 1975, when 350,000 demonstrators bearing Qur'ans and Moroccan flags crossed the contested border en masse.[140] The march was, in part, a response to a ruling by the International Court of Justice that sovereignty over the western Sahara should fall to its indigenous inhabitants. Laroui was in attendance and later produced a journalistic report in which he claimed that "an incommensurable distance" separated Moroccans' experience of the march and the foreign press's coverage of it. Instead of trying to reconcile these incompatible views, he focused on the event's "internal aspect." His purpose in covering the march was not, he wrote, "arriving at a historical judgment" but rather, "capturing a psychological reality."[141]

Laroui's account of this "psychological reality"—"the event's popular and national meaning"[142]—portrayed the march as a symbolic assertion of Moroccan

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[139] Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, 166, 181. On the formation of the Polisario Front and the origins of the idea of a "Sahrawi nation," see Campos-Serrano and Rodríguez-Esteban, "Imagined Territories," 53.
[140] Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, 181.
[141] After citing the analysis, included in a BBC report, of a British political scientist for whom the Green March was (in Laroui's summary) "a reverse terrorist technique" in which Morocco tempted its opponent either to "kill innocent victims" or retreat ("une technique terroriste inversée où, au lieu de prendre des otages à l'adversaire, on le lui en fournit à son corps défendant, le mettant ainsi dans l'obligation soit de se démettre soit de tuer des victimes innocentes"), Laroui wrote: "Cet exemple, parmi d'autres, non seulement montre que l'analyse apparemment brillante d'un spécialiste peut être simplement inconsistante, mais dévoile la distance incommensurable qui a séparé les deux manières dont a été vécue la Marche verte à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur du Maroc. Il ne nous appartient pas de dire quelle est celle qui se rapproche le plus de la vérité objective. D'autres parleront de la Marche verte d'un point de vue non-marocain ; nous fixerons notre attention, quant à nous, sur l'aspect intérieur. Nous rappelerons de temps en temps les réactions de l'étranger, mais pour souligner combien elles sont restées précisément **étrangères** à la signification nationale de l'évènement. Nous ne nous proposons pas d'arriver à un jugement historique mais de capter une réalité psychologique." Abdallah Laroui, "Marche verte et conscience historique," in *Esquisses historiques* (Casablanca: Centre culturel arabe, 1993), 147. Emphasis in the original.
[142] "Pour oblitérer la signification populaire et nationale de l'évenèment, ils" (i.e., the press) "étaient prêts à reconnaître aux responsables de l'administration marocaine une capacité d'organisation surhumaine, même

sovereignty. By calling for the march, Laroui argued, Hassan II tapped into a collective memory in which Morocco was the perpetual victim of foreign aggression: "It was not difficult to see that we were living through a situation comparable to many of the others Morocco has known in its centuries-long struggle against the Iberian invaders."[143] In calling on the people to demonstrate peacefully, the king had skillfully avoided the difficult choice between passivity or armed intervention, thereby forcing this decision on his Spanish and Algerian adversaries.[144] He did so not as "the son of Muhammad son of Yusûf, occupant of the Moroccan throne," but as "the symbol of the state and of tradition." In this capacity, he offered the people a way to foil the plans of "our enemies."[145]

To better understand Laroui's intervention, it will be helpful to turn briefly to his doctoral thesis on the history of Moroccan nationalism, completed at the height of the western Sahara crisis. Laroui defined nationalism as "a structure of collective behavior determined by a country's past," arising in response to a "new situation"—whether "military defeat, commercial domination, or colonization"—seeming to threaten the national community's survival. Nationalism responded by reviving old values rooted in the history of "the society whose continuity it expresses" and opposing these values systematically to a new set of values imposed by the invader or aggressor. Laroui described nationalism as sociocultural self-preservation or "conservation," one of whose

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s'ils s'empressaient d'ajouter que l'esprit grégaire encore vivace dans le pays rendait l'opération relativement aisée." Ibid., 149.

[143] "Il n'était pas difficile de voir que nous vivons une situation comparable à beaucoup d'autres qu'a connues le Maroc dans sa lutte pluriséculaire contre les envahisseurs ibériques." Ibid., 150.

[144] Ibid., 156.

[145] "Le message peut être reconstitué en quelques mots : Aujourd'hui ce n'est pas le fils de Muhammad fils de Yusûf, occupant le trône du Maroc, qui vous parle, c'est le symbole de l'Etat et de la tradition, le contractant de la bay'a…. J'ai fait mon choix ; à toi, cher peuple, de faire le tien ; je t'en donne le moyen et le calcul de nos ennemis sera déjoué." Ibid., 157.

most powerful instruments was the national language.[146] This brings to mind his discussion in *IAC* of the ways in which the Arabs' search for authenticity tended to rely on "hypostatized" historical visions, including that of "the Self [*Moi*] identified with a language," namely Arabic.[147] Yet the critical stance Laroui adopted in the earlier essay is less pronounced in the thesis, in which he claims simply that according to his definition, "nationalism… consolidates the predominance of the past over the present." As the application of a consistent logic to shifting historical conditions, nationalism was "essentially an aspect of historicism."[148]

Laroui's psychological portrait of the Green March seems to further demonstrate the close connection between his analysis in *IAC* and a fleeting moment in postcolonial Moroccan history. On one hand, that is, his thesis begins with a consideration of the structure of traditional Moroccan society, which he relied on in his subsequent analysis of the nationalist response to the Spanish and French protectorates. In light of this, Khatibi's criticism that Laroui insisted "on the meaning of historical continuity and the importance

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[146] "Une situation nouvelle, mettant en question la survie d'une communauté, est exprimée par les membres de celle-ci à travers les données de la culture héritée. Par là, un système de valeurs s'oppose, point par point, à un autre qui vise à le remplacer à la faveur d'une défaite militaire, d'une domination commerciale ou d'une colonisation." He went on to claim that nationalism expressed a society's complex character and could not be rationalized or reduced to a single factor like religion: "parler d'un nationalisme religieux, culturel, ethnique, c'est prononcer une tautologie puisque c'est la survie de la race, de la culture ou de la religion qui s'exprime de toute manière dans le nationalisme ; qualifier un nationalisme de « positif », c'est le nier puisqu'il se réduirait alors à la prise de conscience par chaque groupe de ses intérêts spécifiques et des moyens de les faire valoir ; espérer l'avènement d'une nationalisme rationnel, c'est concevoir la possibilité d'une société totalement transparente à elle-même où le passé n'aurait ni mystère ni valeur particulière. Le nationalisme semble ne pouvoir être qualifié que par la spécificité de la société dont il exprime la continuité." Insofar as nationalist values implied specific political goals, they might disappear temporarily with these goals' accomplishment; but they were likely to reappear in new forms: "Simple réinterprétation d'un contenu nouveau dans les catégories d'une culture dont le moyen de conservation le plus puissant, mais non le seul est la langue." Laroui, *Les origines*, 435-36.

[147] Laroui, *IAC*, 89-93.

[148] "[L]e nationalisme, par définition, consolide la prédominance du passé sur le présent, et plus particulièrement maintient dans des circonstances changeantes les privilèges, pas seulement économiques, des groupes dominants…. [L]e nationalisme est essentiellement un aspect de l'historicisme, dont la seule antithèse concevable est l'utopie d'une « société positiviste scientifique »." Laroui, *Les origines*, 436. For a portion of the elided passage, see my previous citation from this work.

of *longue durée* periods" might seem just, even if one does not share Khatibi's conclusion that in doing so, Laroui "reduc[ed] history to a metaphysical totality."[149] On the other hand, in *IAC*, Laroui sharply criticized the traditionalist emphasis on historical continuity and associated the "national state" with the most advanced of his historical types, the technophile. His depiction of the Green Marchers' mentality corresponds to a political situation in which the forces of potential modernization within the Moroccan anticolonial movement, represented by the left wing of Istiqlal and then the UNFP, failed, leading to the return of the *Makhzen* in the form of Hassan II's regime. In contrast, the Laroui of *IAC* wrote while this process was still ongoing and did not yet have occasion to express the full-throated patriotism that would characterize his writings on the western Sahara.

Khatibi, for his part, called for a "Saharan compromise" in a 1979 editorial for *Le Monde*. The conflict in the Sahara signaled, in his view, "the crisis of a certain type of civilization": that of the nomadic desert tribes whose way of life was endangered by the "centralizing nationalism" of Morocco and Algeria, who "cannot tolerate the segmentation of their society and the autonomization of specific cultures." The compromise Khatibi called for would "guarantee each state's national security while allowing the Sahrawis to keep their culture, circulate between the different countries, and have an autonomous political existence." Avoiding war and reaching this compromise would correspond, at the theoretical level, to a heightened awareness of what Khatibi, echoing his comments in his *Les Temps modernes* essay, called "the Maghreb as a historical project."[150]

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[149] "Il insiste sur le sens de la continuité historique et sur l'importance des périodes à longue durée, afin de replacer la situation coloniale de notre « retard culturel » (expression qui lui appartient) dans un champ historique global." Khatibi, "Le Maghreb comme horizon de pensée," 14.

[150] "Ce qui se joue au Sahara est, au-delà des impératifs de stratégie et d'économie, la crise d'un certain type de civilisation.

Alternatives to unitary national sovereignty over the western Sahara were indeed proposed by Spanish, Mauritanian, and French politicians, diplomats, and lawyers in discussions that immediately preceded Spain's withdrawal.[151] Ultimately, however, international law decided that a territory coinciding roughly with the former Spanish colony should be ruled by the indigenous people who had recently begun claiming it as their national homeland. This outcome was typical of postwar decolonization movements, which tended to lead to the formation of independent nation-states[152] immediately besieged by grave social and political problems that newly anointed leaders and elites were often ill equipped to solve. In the case of the western Sahara, these problems had their origins in decolonization itself, which both ignited new hopes for self-rule and national glory and led to intractable conflicts in which these possibilities were foreclosed. Laroui's conviction that the nation-state would be the medium through which postcolonial liberation would be realized corresponded to his historicist approach and

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"Au nom de l'unité, les Etats marocain et algérien, Etats nationalistes et (plus ou moins) centralisés, ne peuvent tolérer la segmentation de leur société et l'autonomisation des cultures spécifiques."

Further on, concluding the editorial: "Si le Maghreb en tant que projet historique a encore un sens pour les deux Etats et pour les Sahraouis c'est l'occasion – plus que jamais – d'en amorcer l'esquisse, sous la forme d'un compromise à la fois politique et économique.

"Comment garantir pour chaque Etat une sécurité nationale tout en permettant aux Sahraouis de garder leur culture, de circuler entre les différents pays, et d'avoir une autonomie d'existence politique ? Les solutions concrètes sont possibles, si une telle volonté maghrébine – y compris celle des Sahraouis – se déclare contre l'immense fardeau de sous-développement." Abdelkébir Khatibi, "Pour un compromis saharien," *Le Monde*, September 3, 1979, https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1979/09/03/pour-un-compromis-saharien_2785222_1819218.html. A non-nationalist solution, that is, would require a non-historicist mode of thinking.

[151] These included an autonomous Sahara General Assembly and de facto Spanish nationality for Sahrawi nomads in the region; a "Maghrebian solution" in which the area would be administered jointly by Moroccan, Algerian, Mauritanian, and indigenous representatives; and the creation of an "International Law of the Desert" analogous to maritime law. Campos-Serrano and Rodríguez-Esteban, "Imagined Territories," 56.

[152] Cf. Gary Wilder on the postwar moment as "a world-historical opening" in which "a range of solutions to the problem of colonial emancipation were imagined and pursued," yet "the converging pressures of anticolonial nationalism, European neocolonialism, American globalism, and UN internationalism made it appear to be a foregone conclusion that the postwar world would be organized around territorial nation-states." Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 1.

nationalist politics, while Khatibi's emphasis on historicity led him to imagine alternative political forms that the postwar world could not accommodate.

CONCLUSION

The "crisis of historicism" in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German thought was, by one account, animated by a "concern… with the allegedly damaging effects of an excessive preoccupation with the methods and objects of historical research."[153] Assuming that such a condition is generalizable, we might say that decolonization prompted its own crisis of historicism: the birth of newly independent or freshly revolutionized nation-states in Africa, Asia, and Latin America guaranteed that historical narratives of national triumph in the face of oppression and adversity at the hands of foreigners or traitors would not be in short supply. Nor, as Laroui's work shows, were these narratives without their critics. In closing, I will briefly consider Laroui's role in this postcolonial conflict of historical visions and the possible relevance of his arguments in *IAC* to contemporary understandings of the history of decolonization.

The analogy between the German crisis of historicism and the intellectual history of decolonization is especially suggestive in light of my juxtaposition of Laroui with Khatibi. Arguably, Heidegger—one of Khatibi's intellectual touchstones, as we have seen—shifted the terms of the earlier German debate by replacing the question of how universal knowledge or values could be possible amid historical flux with a new one: "How are we constituted as historical and temporal beings?"[154] Similarly, Khatibi inquired

[153] Allan Megill, "Why Was There a Crisis of Historicism?," *History and Theory* 36, no. 3 (1997), 416. Megill's essay is a review of Charles Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism: History and Metaphysics in Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Neo-Kantians* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995). Another useful source is Georg Iggers, "Historicism: The History and Meaning of the Term," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56, no. 1 (1995): 129–52.

[154] Megill, "Why Was There a Crisis of Historicism?," 417. He credits Bambach with being "the first commentator to focus on Heidegger's relation" to the crisis of historicism (416), and with linking this crisis to the (also partially Heidegger-inspired) "late twentieth-century sense of a crisis within modernism" (428).

into the Maghreb's historicity by considering the specific set of geographical, religious, and linguistic realities that defined the experience of the region's inhabitants. Laroui, for his part, retained the standard historicist emphasis on the nation, focusing in particular on its defenders' tendency to respond aggressively to real or perceived challenges to tradition.

Laroui's account of the history of Arab thought revolves around interrelated dialectical tensions—between self and other, tradition and modernity, theory and practice—whose resolution lies on an indefinite temporal horizon. Yet if, for Laroui, historical (or "historicist") critique offers hope for the future, his own critique of Arab ideology tends to highlight moments of weakness and failure. As we have noted, Laroui states in *IAC*'s introduction that the book was written in response to just such a moment, in which left-wing Moroccan nationalists failed to achieve their radical goals and a "sterile" politics of traditionalism became dominant. It might, then, be tempting to describe Laroui's attitude as ironic, pessimistic, or conservative, informed by a vision of history in which congenital political weaknesses impede progress in repetitive patterns of advance and reversal.

Such a view, of course, fails to account for Laroui's subsequent theoretical contributions, some of which are present in embryo in *IAC*. He would later claim that the historicism he advocated was one that would criticize—by historicizing—itself.[155] One of this critique's strategies was to emphasize the problem of temporality, which was also central to Khatibi's Heidegger-inspired account of Maghrebi subjectivity. In his

[155] "Historicism as an object, as a fact, is when you are a slave of the past. But in trying to make a theory of historicism, what it is now, how it develops in history, you become more and more critical of your past and your present. Criticising historicism is a way of becoming scientific. But before criticising historicism, you have to be historicist to see critically your tradition." Gallagher, "Interview," 142-43.

discussion of the anthropologist of Islam Gustave von Grunebaum's[156] work, included in *La crise*, Laroui argued that like historicism, cultural anthropology was born of a reaction against "positivist factual history," which mistook "quotidian temporality" for historical time as such. This led to myriad attempts to construct systems of knowledge that could tune into "particular temporalit[ies]" such as that of an ahistorical "culture" or history as embodied by an all-encompassing institution like the nation.[157] "As modern historiography demands," however, "the evolution of economy and culture must be recognized as obeying a different rhythm than that of polity."[158] The historian must, in other words, attempt to account for and mediate between multiple temporalities.[159]

Our consideration of Khatibi alongside Laroui raises the question of whether these temporalities would necessarily be culturally specific. What, further, would constitute a legitimate definition of culture, given that Laroui found von Grunebaum's conception of Islamic culture to be arbitrary and rigid and implied that this resulted from cultural anthropology's inherent methodological weaknesses? Although the Laroui of *IAC* counterposed a hegemonic West to a perpetually delayed (and exploited, oppressed) Arab world, he saw this distinction as a historical rather than a cultural one. To the historicist critic Laroui both ventriloquized and embodied, historical progress called for an analytical approach equally unpalatable to orientalists and some anticolonial nationalists. Similarly, for Khatibi, embracing a "*minoritarian, marginal, fragmentary*

[156] On Laroui's relationship to von Grunebaum, who helped him get a teaching position at UCLA, see ibid., 138-39, 147. "Cultural Anthropology: Notes on the Method of Gustave von Grunebaum" is chapter three of *La crise*.
[157] Laroui, *La crise*, 90-91; 70-71.
[158] Ibid., 94; 74.
[159] On Laroui's conception of historical temporality see Nils Riecken, "Periodization and the Political: Abdallah Laroui's Analysis of Temporalities in a Postcolonial Context," ZMO Working Papers (Berlin: Zentrum Moderner Orient, 2012); Nils Riecken, "History, Time, and Temporality in a Global Frame: Abdallah Laroui's Historical Epistemology of History," *History and Theory* 54, no. 4 (2015): 5–26.

and unfinished" form of thinking befitting a marginal position on "the planetary scene"[160] would be a crucial resource in the deconstruction[161] of Islam's relationship to the West.

The language and concepts Laroui used to express the political disappointment that fueled his analysis in *IAC*—the Moroccan state's sterility; the Arabs' historical delay—sometimes echoed those of Ibn Khaldun, who sought to describe and account for the rise and decline of great dynasties. In a brief passage in *IAC,* Laroui addressed Ibn Khaldun's thought directly, writing that the latter's philosophy could facilitate "all reconciliations with the real, even the most disappointing." It was thanks, in part, to Ibn Khaldun's suggestion that an inevitably fleeting tribal "group feeling" (*asabiya*) was responsible for royal authority that "defeated national pride" could be restored in the face of colonial domination.[162] At the same time, Laroui highlighted the folly of identifying national glory with a past that had come to seem synonymous with economic, political, and cultural stagnation.

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[160] "Sur la scène planétaire, nous sommes plus ou moins marginaux, minoritaires et dominés. Sous-développés, disent-ils. C'est cela même notre chance, l'exigence d'une transgression à déclarer, à soutenir continuellement contre n'importe quelle autosuffisance. Bien plus, une pensée qui ne s'inspire pas de sa pauvreté est toujours élaborée pour dominer et humilier ; une pensée qui ne soit pas *minoritaire, marginale, fragmentaire et inachievée*, est toujours une pensée de l'ethnocide." Khatibi, *Maghreb pluriel*, 17-18.

[161] In his essay "Double critique," Khatibi called for "a decolonization that would at the same time be a deconstruction of the discourses participating, in various and more or less dissimulated ways, in imperial domination, whose power extends equally to the word": "Du point de vue de ce qu'one appelle encore le Tiers Monde, nous ne pouvons prétendre que la décolonisation a pu promouvoir une pensée radicalement critique vis-à-vis de la machine idéologique de l'imperialisme et de l'ethnocentrisme, une décolonisation qui serait en même temps une déconstruction des discours qui participent, de manières variées et plus ou moins dissimulées, à la domination impériale, qui est entendue ici également dans son pouvoir de parole." Ibid., 47-48. Khatibi noted that he had borrowed this term—which, he observed, emerged at the historical moment of decolonization—from Derrida. On the personal and intellectual relationship between Derrida and Khatibi see, for example, Tina Dransfeldt Christensen, "Towards an Ethics of Bilingualism: An Intertextual Dialogue Between Khatibi and Derrida," *Interventions* 19, no. 4 (2017): 447–66. On Khatibi's "double critique" as an appropriation of Derridean deconstruction, see below, chapter 4.

[162] "L'idée d'une force tribale—Asabiyya—qui s'épuise quoi qu'on fasse après trois générations, permet, en vérité, toutes les réconciliations avec le réel, même le plus décevant. Est-il nécessaire de dire que cette vision réaliste et sage, teintée d'un scepticisme aristocratique, aussi éloignée que possible d'un esprit tragique, a toujours été celle des hommes de loi et de la Khâssa ? C'est elle qui domine encore les esprits au début de l'ère coloniale et, à l'occasion, sert à restaurer l'orgeuil national abbatu." Laroui, *IAC,* 76.

For other anticolonial thinkers, Ibn Khaldun could rival Marx as a precocious diagnostician of what many saw as the newly independent Third World's central predicament: underdevelopment. To engaged intellectuals in France, the Maghreb, and beyond working to rethink North African history and sociology in the era of decolonization, the fourteenth-century historian and philosopher offered uniquely penetrating insights. Though many of these authors sought to debunk the orientalist precept that the Maghreb was frozen in time in the centuries leading up to the French conquest, their appropriation of Ibn Khaldun put them in close proximity to the orientalist or colonial–sociological traditions Laroui and Khatibi criticized: traditions for which decolonization came as a kind of reckoning. This problematic is the subject of my next chapter.

Chapter 4: From Sociology to History: Ibn Khaldun and North African Decolonization

> The accidents involved in every manifestation of nature and intellect deserve study. Any topic that is understandable and real requires its own special science. In this connection, scholars seem to have been interested (mainly) in the results (of the individual sciences). As far as the subject under discussion [i.e., history] is concerned, the result, as we have seen, is just historical information. Although the problems it raises are important, both essentially and specifically, (exclusive concern for it) leads to one result only: the mere verification of historical information. This is not much. Therefore, scholars might have avoided the subject. – Ibn Khaldun[1]

> It seems to us that we must abandon any notion of sociological typology, behind which hides a totalizing metaphysics. – Abdelkébir Khatibi[2]

Though he lived long before the era of European imperial domination and could not have envisioned the postcolonial world of nation-states, the North African philosopher of history Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) would become a cultural icon of decolonization in his native region. For evidence of this, we can look to the remarks of Brahimi Mohamed el-Mili—then president of the culture and education commission of Algeria's ruling party, the National Liberation Front (FLN)—at a 1979 conference held in Algiers to mark the six-hundredth anniversary of Ibn Khaldun's voluminous introduction to universal history, the *Muqaddimah*. It was no accident, el-Mili said, that Ibn Khaldun's thought "was forged and matured in this region which since the dawn of history has been a zone of civilizing influence." He went on to claim that a renewed scholarly interest in Ibn Khaldun—and, more broadly, in Arab and Mediterranean civilizations—would be instrumental in "putting a definitive end to certain erroneous

[1] Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah : An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, vol. 1, 3 vols. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), 79; hereafter cited as *Muqaddimah* followed by volume and page number. The words and phrases in parentheses are the translator's interpolations.
[2] "Il nous semble qu'il nous faut abandonner toute idée de typologie en sociologie, parce qu'elle cache une métaphysique de la totalité." Abdelkébir Khatibi, "Sociologie du monde arabe : positions," *Bulletin économique et social du Maroc*, no. 126 (1975), 2.

conceptions arising from racism, the spirit of superiority and of paternalism."[3] In a more recent work written to mark the six-hundredth anniversary of Ibn Khaldun's death, the former Algerian commerce minister Smaïl Goumeziane hails him as a "Maghrebi genius" and dedicates a closing chapter to what he calls the "implicit heritage" owed to the medieval thinker by modern Western intellectuals ranging from the *encyclopédistes* Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert to Goumeziane's own colleagues in the field of development economics.[4] Focusing on the moment, centuries before the European Enlightenment, when Ibn Khaldun applied his penetrating intellect to the "sciences of reason or of wisdom"[5] thus becomes a way of affirming the Maghreb's cultural vitality and denying Europe's monopoly on great ideas or works.

Ibn Khaldun's thought and example were equally inspiring to anticolonial French intellectuals. In his remarks at the 1979 Algiers conference, the philosopher Georges Labica (1930-2009)—a member of France's Communist Party (PCF) and supporter of the wartime FLN—claimed that Ibn Khaldun, in whom he and his fellow militants "found a Master," had supplied the Algerian independence struggle with "supplementary weapons."[6] Labica's early writings on Ibn Khaldun were of a piece, he claimed, with his

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[3] "Ce ne fut également pas un simple concours de circonstances que la pensée khaldounienne s'est forgée et a mûri dans cette région qui a été, depuis l'aube de l'histoire, une zone d'influence civilisatrice." "Discours de M. BRAHIMI Mohamed El-Mili, Président de la Commission « Culture et Formation »," in *Actes du colloque international sur Ibn Khaldoun : Alger, 21-26 juin 1979*, ed. Centre national d'études historiques (Alger: Société national d'édition et de diffusion, 1982), 8. "C'est pourquoi nous sommes convaincus que les études entreprises dans le domaine si vaste et si riche des civilisations méditerranéennes contribuera certainement à créer les conditions favorables à un dialogue réel et fructueux entre les peuples, tout en mettant définitivement un terme à certaines conceptions erronées découlant du racisme, de l'esprit de supériorité et du paternalisme." Ibid., 9

[4] Smaïl Goumeziane, "Ibn Khaldoun et le siècle des lumières," in *Ibn Khaldoun (1332-1406) : Un génie maghrébin* (Alger: EDIF, 2006), 169-86.

[5] This is Ibn Khaldun's own description of the field to which his work belonged, quoted in Abdesselam Cheddadi, "Ibn Khaldūn, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE* (Brill, 2018), http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_30943.

[6] "Nous trouvâmes un Maître. Et qui nous donna des armes supplémentaires, internes en queuque sorte à la situation, pour lutter contre l'injustice." Georges Labica, "Retour à Ibn Khaldoun," in *Actes du colloque*, 75-76. For evidence of Ibn Khaldun's relevance to the Algerian independence struggle we can look to the

political work and his teaching at the University of Algiers, where he sought to make "Arab culture" central to the philosophy curriculum.[7] In *Politique et religion chez Ibn Khaldoun* (Politics and religion in Ibn Khaldun, 1968), Labica read the *Muqaddimah* as a political sociology of early Islamic civilization whose relevance extended to the postcolonial moment: "Is not our time that of a repeated interrogation of the destinies, future as well as past, of social formations that did not know the 'Western' mode of development?"[8]

These anti- or postcolonial readings of Ibn Khaldun reproduce a more general tendency in the literature to lavish extravagant praise on the North African thinker[9] and depict his intellectual achievement as somehow anticipating modern history or social science. Critical scholars of Ibn Khaldun and his modern reception have argued that this phenomenon must be understood in relation to nineteenth-century orientalists' appropriation and distortion of his work through translation. Reading Ibn Khaldun in French, often in decontextualized fragments, allowed orientalists to imagine him as an Enlightenment thinker (the "Montesquieu of the Arabs," in one formulation[10]) addressing distinctly modern concerns such as the relationship of barbarism to civilization or of

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letters of Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi, an FLN militant (and later government minister under Houari Boumédiène and Chadli Benjedid) who read Ibn Khaldun in prison during the Algerian War: Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi, *Lettres de prison : 1957-1961* (Alger: SNED, 1966), 59-60, 98-99. See my discussion above, introduction.

[7] "Il fallait donner au sein du programme des études de philosophie, auquel je collaborais, toute sa place à la culture arabe." Labica, "Retour à Ibn Khaldoun," 76.

[8] "Notre temps n'est-il pas celui d'une interrogation réitérée sur le destin, tant à venir que passé des formations sociales qui ne conurent pas le mode « occidental » de développement ?" Georges Labica, *Politique et religion chez Ibn Khaldoun : essai sur l'idéologie musulmane* (Alger: SNED, 1968), 10.

[9] The best example of this might be Arnold Toynbee's claim, which Franz Rosenthal repeats in his translator's introduction to the *Muqaddimah*, that the book is "undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time or place." Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 2nd ed. (London, 1935), III, 322; quoted in *Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, cxv.

[10] Ahmed Abdesselem, *Ibn Khaldun et ses lecteurs* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1983), 42.

religion to science.[11] Further, Abdelmajid Hannoum has argued that William McGuckin de Slane's translation into French of the portion of the *Kitab al-'Ibar*[12] dealing with the history of the Berbers was particularly influential in forging what Hannoum calls the French colonial imaginary, central to which was a racial hierarchy opposing Berbers to Arabs. The idea, attributed by de Slane to Ibn Khaldun, of an ancient rivalry between these two populations "suggests," Hannoum writes, "a specific colonial policy, namely, divide and conquer."[13]

If a certain discourse on Ibn Khaldun became instrumental to colonial rule starting in the nineteenth century, how could a new approach his work contribute to a politics of postcolonial liberation? As an exemplar of the inherent rationalism of Islamic science and philosophy, Ibn Khaldun took on a special significance for the reformist religious scholars (*ulama*) who would play leading roles in North African nationalist movements. Two such figures, Bashir Sfar and Muhammad Lasram, founded the Khalduniyya educational society in 1896 to offer free courses on secular topics to Arabic-speaking students in colonial Tunisia. Although there is an element of poetic justice in the organization's choice of name—Tunis was Ibn Khaldun's birthplace—we can also see it as indicative of Ibn Khaldun's symbolic status as a mediator between tradition and modernity.[14]

The question of Ibn Khaldun's relevance to anticolonial politics was central to the work of the Moroccan sociologist Abdelkébir Khatibi (1938-2009) and the French

[11] Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldūn in Modern Scholarship: A Study in Orientalism* (London: Third World Centre for Research and Publishing, 1981), 44, 50-51.
[12] This is the "book of lessons" to which the *Muqaddimah* serves both as the introduction and the first volume. The first complete Arabic edition was published by Bulaq in 1867.
[13] Abdelmajid Hannoum, "Translation and the Colonial Imaginary: Ibn Khaldûn Orientalist," *History and Theory* 42, no. 1 (2003), 71.
[14] On the Khalduniyya, see Arnold H. Green, *The Tunisian Ulama 1873-1915: Social Structure and Response to Ideological Currents* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 167-68; Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 71.

geographer Yves Lacoste (b. 1929), both of whom attempted to overcome the political and intellectual legacies of colonial sociology by rethinking North African history. In different ways, both authors made a reappraisal of Ibn Khaldun's thought central to their work. Lacoste argued that Ibn Khaldun had anticipated an analysis of the structural causes of the Maghreb's socioeconomic underdevelopment that would be crucial to reshaping the region's future. Skeptical of developmentalist discourse,[15] Khatibi staged a critical reading of Ibn Khaldun alongside European sociologists of the Maghreb as part of a broader inquiry into the historical and intellectual encounter between the Arab world and the West.

In this chapter, then, I argue that new readings of Ibn Khaldun were central to an emerging critique of orientalist understandings of North African history and sociology. To a greater extent than more recent postcolonial critics, however, Lacoste and Khatibi were informed by and to some extent sought to reinvigorate Marxist politics and critical methods. Like Marx, Ibn Khaldun could be mobilized both to subject questionable conceptual categories to vigorous historical criticism and to wed strategic conceptual reformulations to emancipatory political aims. More so than Lacoste, however, Khatibi called for a historically grounded critique of Eurocentric social theories, including Marx's.

I begin with a brief look at colonial social scientists' use of Ibn Khaldun, as discussed by Khatibi in an early work in which he which he assessed the state of the field

[15] In his contribution to a 1968 conference on recent sociological "mutations," Khatibi called the "sociology of development" mythological, arguing that rather than addressing problems of underdevelopment, its purpose was to create "international elites": "Pour justifier par exemple la circulation des élites internationales, on a inventé pour les pays dominés une discipline – et une mythologie – du développement. On connaît maintenant la pauvreté des théories du développement, on sait que peu des pays intéressés sont sortis de leur sous-développement. La sociologie du développement ne développe surtout que les élites internationales…." Abdelkabir Khatibi, "Image idéelle de la stratification sociale et dynamique des groupes moteurs," in Association internationale des sociologues de langue française, *Sociologie des mutations*, ed. Yvonne Roux (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1970), 417n11.

of Moroccan sociology. In his attempt to revitalize an intellectual tradition once put to nefarious political uses, Khatibi resembled the French Marxists I focus on in the second section, who asked whether the "Asiatic mode of production"—a somewhat murky notion in Marx's writings that came to be associated with precapitalist authoritarian states organized around elaborate infrastructural works—was a concept worth salvaging. Many saw the concept's recuperation, which took place in the context of what was sometimes called a "return to Marx" following the death of Stalin, as crucial to an understanding of erstwhile "primitive" societies struggling, as newly independent nations, to modernize. This was Lacoste's approach in *Ibn Khaldoun : naissance de l'histoire, passé du tiers monde* (*Ibn Khaldun: The Birth of History and the Past of the Third World*, 1966). Cited by virtually every work on Ibn Khaldun that succeeded it, Lacoste's book combines an account of Ibn Khaldun's life and thought with a meditation on Third World underdevelopment and a Marxist rereading of North African history. After discussing Lacoste's work, I consider essays in which Khatibi outlined a project of "double critique" of Western and Arab thought, including Ibn Khaldun.

A few words may be in order about what readers will not find in this chapter. I do not provide a comprehensive summary or interpretation of Ibn Khaldun's historical theories, though my discussion and references may be of some use to readers seeking to better understand them. Nor have I been able to discuss every work on Ibn Khaldun written in France and the Maghreb in the 1960s and 1970s, though I have tried to acknowledge many of these works in footnotes. Finally, some of the texts I discuss below were products of historical debates—particularly about medieval North African history—that I am unequipped to adjudicate, and I have made no attempt to do so. I hope, rather, that the reader will share my interest in the broader stakes of these debates, beyond what Ibn Khaldun himself disparaged as "the mere verification of historical information."

IBN KHALDUN AND THE CRITIQUE OF COLONIAL SOCIOLOGY

In an appendix to his memoir of the Hassan II years in which he reflects on various "Moroccan particularities," Abdallah Laroui highlights the closure of Mohammed V University's Institut de sociologie as an example of the predominance of "the unsaid" in Moroccan politics and society. Founded in the early 1960s with help from UNESCO, the institute "was quickly closed when certain officials were persuaded that it formed 'evil spirits'"—an apparent reference to student activism. In the wake of this closure, the social sciences were absorbed by law, philosophy, and ultimately, theology. Laroui associates this process with a resurgence, rooted in ignorance, of traditional cultural and political attitudes: the ruling class, consisting largely of lawyers and engineers, lacked the intellectual tools necessary to discover the origins, histories, or meanings of the traditions these leaders would reflexively defend, notwithstanding "the formal benefits [*acquêts*] of modernization."[16]

In a 1967 work in which he considered the past and future of Moroccan sociology, the Institut's then-director, Abdelkébir Khatibi, offered an assessment of the

[16] The unsaid ("non-dit") was, Laroui suggested, a more general phenomenon particular to Morocco only in its "broad extent" and "the desire in official circles to safeguard it at any cost": "Le non-dit de la politique marocaine n'est donc particulier que par sa large extension et la volonté des cercles officiels de le sauvegarder à tout prix."

And, further on: "La classe dirigeante marocaine est composée en majorité de juristes et d'ingénieurs, d'hommes qui se piquent de réalisme et d'esprit positif et qui, par cela même, acceptent les pires clichés sur tout ce qui ne touche pas leur domaine de spécialisation, notamment sur la religion, la société, l'histoire et la psychologie. On se plie aux valeurs traditionnelles, non parce qu'on les vénère, mais parce qu'on en ignore l'origine, le développement, le sens exact….

"Un institut de sociologie, fondé au début des années soixante sur le conseil et avec l'aide de l'Unesco, fut rapidement fermé lorsque certains responsables se persuadèrent qu'il formait de « mauvais esprits ». Les sciences sociales furent intégrées au droit et à la philosophie traditionnelle, puis on fit celle-ci pencher, malgré elle, vers la théologie lorsqu'on créa, à ses côtés, un puissant département d'études islamiques….

"Dans ces conditions, et en dépit des acquêts formels de la modernisation, le non-dit est devenu très vite le non-conçu." Abdallah Laroui, *Le Maroc et Hassan II: Un témoignage* (Québec / Casablanca: Les Presses Inter Universitaires / Centre Culturel Arabe, 2005), 229.

On the Institut's history see, further, Idriss Jebari, "The Other Khatibi: Envisaging Arab Intellectuals after the End of Grand Narratives," *Middle East Critique* 30, no. 2 (2021), 158-59.

organization's progress and fortunes. Due to the government's emphasis on "the formation of teaching staff [*cadres*] and scientists," the institute's graduates were largely motivated, he wrote, by the promise of "social promotion." In Khatibi's view, this outcome, while "legitimate," "falsifies the vocation of of an Institute of teaching and research."[17] More than merely ensuring its own continuity—a doubtful prospect, perhaps, even at the time—the institute's "vocation," as Khatibi saw it in his conclusion, was to foster the "passage from an apologetic… to a critical attitude" and ultimately, "the development of an objective and positive sociology."[18] Although he warned against "making sociology into an instrument of political combat more than a scientific weapon,"[19] the scientific vocation he described was linked to a political one. He called, in particular, for collaboration between sociologists throughout the Maghreb and the Third World (since "scientific non-dependence on the Metropole" would be crucial to "the decolonization of sociology"); and for "a critical scientific politics based on the comparative analysis of under-analyzed or, rather, badly analyzed countries."[20]

Khatibi's sketch of the history of Moroccan sociology shows just how daunting this task would be given the centrality of French colonialism to this history: his periodization begins with the 1912 establishment of the French protectorate and ends at

[17] "Sur le plan national, la priorité donnée à la formation des cadres enseignants et des scientifiques (entendez par là même ceux des sciences de la nature), empêche serieusement le développement de la sociologie. L'Institut de Sociologie joue tout de même une fonction un peu particulière, c'est-à-dire que les licenciés de cet organisme cherchent dans la plupart des cas une augmentation d'indice et une certain promotion sociale, ce qui est tout à fait légitime, mais cette situation fausse la vocation d'un Institut et d'enseignement et de recherche." Abdelkébir Khatibi, *Bilan de la sociologie au Maroc* (Rabat: Publications de l'Association pour la Recherche en Sciences Humaines, 1967), 27.

[18] "Le passage d'une attitude proprement apologétique à une attitude critique nous paraît la condition principale pour le développement d'une sociologie objective et positive." Ibid., 28.

[19] "La tendance à « idéologiser » toute démarche scientifique risque de faire de la sociologie un instrument de combat politique plus qu'une arme scientifique." Ibid.

[20] "Les chercheurs tunisiens, algériens et marocains ont senti ce besoin intense de se connaître, de travailler en commun. Une décolonisation de la sociologie suppose une non-dépendance scientifique de la Métropole et une politique scientifique critique basée sur l'analyse comparative des pays sous-analysés ou plutôt mal analysés." Ibid.

the time of his writing. He did not explicitly suggest that independence marked a definitive break in the tradition of colonial sociology;[21] his concluding remarks about the discipline's potential "decolonization" seem to refer to a moment in the indefinite future. In Khatibi's account, "Moroccan sociology" is a tradition to be built on and criticized in equal measure. Briefly examining Ibn Khaldun's significance to this tradition will give us a better sense of the postcolonial critique's contours and allow us to begin to consider the medieval thinker's role in postcolonial discussions of historical and sociological methods or theories.

From the perspective of later critics, social-scientific studies of the Maghreb conducted during the colonial period were informed by several interrelated misapprehensions attributable in part to biased readings of Ibn Khaldun. The latter famously formulated a cyclical theory of history: austere, warlike desert tribes united by group feeling (*asabiya*) establish royal dynasties in which the luxurious habits of settled culture come to predominate, leaving these dynasties vulnerable to internal tensions and external attack, the combined force of which inevitably proves fatal. Ibn Khaldun argued that dynasties have a natural life span. Each of them, he wrote, "grows up and passes into an age of stagnation and thence into retrogression."[22] This claim resonated with the basic intuition of scholars invested in France's colonial presence in the Maghreb that the region congenitally lacked political stability and was impervious to historical progress.

The most notorious exponent of this position was perhaps the geographer Émile-Félix Gautier (1864-1940), the author of an influential book, first published in 1927,

[21] He did, however, identify a "clear break" between "precolonial [Moroccan] social thought" and subsequent work: "Il y a une coupure nette entre la pensée sociale antécoloniale et l'importation de nouvelles techniques et méthodes d'investigation." Ibid., 9.
[22] *Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, 346.

whose title refers to the Islamization of North Africa as a series of "dark centuries."[23] This work was an effort to explain the putative fact, which later authors would contest, that no "master" had successfully held the Maghreb for an extended period. Equally central to Gautier's account was an opposition between the region's Arab and Berber (or nomadic and sedentary) populations.[24] This dichotomy bore a superficial affinity with Ibn Khaldun's distinction between desert or Bedouin (*badawa*) and settled or urban (*hadara*) forms of civilization, but was ultimately based on the Islamophobic "Kabyle myth" on which many French intellectuals relied to conceptualize North Africa's racial composition. In addition to reading Ibn Khaldun's work through the prejudicial lens of this myth, Gautier claimed that because he "had an oriental brain which does not function like ours," his work needed "to be interpreted, transposed" in order to be useful.[25] Later scholars of Ibn Khaldun were at pains to clarify the *badawa*/*hadara* dichotomy, which lacked an intrinsic ethnic or racial connotation. In the words of Franz Rosenthal, whose 1958 translation into English of the *Muqaddimah* is still considered definitive, this was "no more than a quantitative distinction as to the size and density of human settlements."[26]

Another Khaldunian concept that lent itself to contentious interpretations was *asabiya*, the force of tribal cohesion that, according to Ibn Khaldun, led tight-knit groups imbued with desert culture to seize royal authority. In his synthetic *History of the Maghrib* (1970), Laroui wrote that Gautier's theory of a "general and lasting anarchy"

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[23] Émile-Félix Gautier, *L'Islamisation de l'Afrique du Nord. Les Siècles obscurs du Maghreb…* (Paris: Payot, 1927).
[24] Abdesselem, *Ibn Khaldun et ses lecteurs*, 48-49.
[25] On the Kabyle myth, see Patricia Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria* (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1995). According to Lorcin, the "nomad–sedentary opposition… was interpreted as a confirmation, in academic circles, of hypotheses elaborated prior to conquest by scholars and scientists whereby it was stated that nomads could not be civilized in the same way as sedentary populations or that they were at a lower stage of development" (223). The Gautier quote regarding Ibn Khaldun's "oriental brain" comes from ibid., 108.
[26] Rosenthal, translator's introduction to *Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, lxxvii.

resulting from Bedouin dominance in the wake of a failed attempt by the Almohad dynasty to consolidate its power in the mid–twelfth century "is alien to the thinking of Ibn Khaldun, which it purports to clarify. In Ibn Khaldun," Laroui continued, "*'asabiya* (group feeling) is a condition for the exercise of power and has nothing to do with nomadism; for Gautier it becomes a purely harmful force."[27] Moreover, Gautier apparently saw *asabiya* as a "harmful force" because he associated it with groups—Arabs or Bedouins—situated at the wrong end of the colonial racial hierarchy.

Similarly, the military officer and sociologist Robert Montagne (1893-1954)—whose doctoral thesis *Les Berbères et le Makhzen dans le sud du Maroc* (Berbers and Makhzen in southern Morocco, 1930) has been called "the veritable Bible of colonial administrators" in late-colonial Morocco[28]—made tribalism central to his vision of Moroccan society. The British anthropologist Ernest Gellner drew inspiration from this aspect of Montagne's work in formulating his flawed but influential segmentary theory.[29]

[27] "La troisième et dernière tentative [at 'édification étatique' in medieval North Africa, according to Gautier] fut celle des Almohades sédentaires de l'Atlas qui prirent le dessus sur Zanāta et Hilāliens alliés ; cette victoire eût pu être totale sans la faute politique que fut le transfert des Hilāliens dans les plaines atlantiques ; l'échec était alors définitif car les Bédouins, présents partout, dominèrent la scène et firent régner une anarchie généralisée. Cette théorie, il est facile de s'en rendre compte, est étrangère à la pensée d'Ibn Khaldūn, bien qu'elle prétende en être une simple version clarifiée ; ce qui était chez ce dernier une condition de l'exercice du pouvoir, la *'Aṣabiya*, nullement rattachée au nomadisme d'ailleurs, devient chez Gautier une pure capacité de nuire ; mais ce qui est plus grave, c'est qu'elle passe sous silence les faits qu'elle n'arrive pas à expliquer, tels que le succès des Almoravides, Ṣanhāja selon la classification admise comme les Kutāma et pourtant nomades, ou l'acquis civilisateur des Marīnides." Abdallah Laroui, *L'histoire du Maghreb : un essai de synthèse* (Paris: François Maspero, 1970), 203-4; *The History of the Maghrib: An Interpretive Essay* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 220.

[28] Kmar Bendana, "Montagne lecteur d'Ibn Khaldun," in *La sociologie musulmane de Robert Montagne : actes du colloque EHESS & Collège de France, Paris, 5-7 juin 1997* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2000), 42. Bendana attributes the remark to the historian Charles-André Julien. On Moroccan colonial ethnology more generally, see Edmund Burke, *The Ethnographic State : France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2014).

[29] On Gellner's segmentary theory see, for example, Hammoudi, "Segmentarity, Social Stratification, Political Power and Sainthood: Reflections on Gellner's Theses," *Economy and Society* 9, no. 3 (1980): 279–303; Mohammed Masbah, "Anglo-Saxon Anthropology in Morocco: Evaluating Gellner's Segmentary Theory," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 6, no. 2 (2013): 260–76; Hugh Roberts, "De la segmentarité à l'opacité. À propos de Gellner et Bourdieu et des approches théoriques quant à l'analyse du champ politique algérien," *Insaniyat / إنسانيات. Revue algérienne d'anthropologie et de sciences sociales*, no. 19–20 (2003): 65–95.

In Gellner's summary, Montagne studied "an important and widely diffused *type* of society, one which… one could call the Muslim or the Ibn-Khaldunian type: the kind of society in which a weak state coexists with strong tribes, in which the tribes have what might be called a 'segmentary' structure, in which the lack of political cohesion is accompanied by a striking degree of cultural discontinuity and economic interaction."[30] Montagne also subscribed to a cyclical view of the history of "Muslim empires," whose "regular oscillation," he wrote, "fills the Maghreb's whole history with a tireless monotony."[31] Equally informed by French orientalist scholarship and fieldwork among Berber tribes, Montagne's work was indispensable to the Lyautey regime's project of indirect administration: an approach to colonial governance relying, in Khatibi's words, on a "meticulous analysis of Moroccan society."[32]

To the extent that Montagne's work remains influential in some quarters,[33] this is perhaps due in part to the fact that, as Alain Roussillon has argued, he helped reorient colonial sociology around "a new object," namely the impact of France's colonial

[30] Ernest Gellner, "The Sociology of Robert Montagne (1893-1954)," *Daedalus* 105, no. 1 (1976), 138.
[31] "C'est ainsi que le cycle d'évolution des tribus du Sous, qui a son origine dans l'anarchie organisée pour arriver au despotisme ruineux du Makhzen et ne tarde pas à revenir à son point de départ, grâce au désordre des sibas, ne sera plus pour nous que l'aspect le plus humble, la forme élémentaire d'un autre rythme : celui de la naissance du développement et de la ruine des empires musulmans, dont le balancement régulier suffit à remplir tout l'histoire du Maghreb avec une inlassable monotonie." Robert Montagne, *Les Berbères et le Makhzen dans le sud du Maroc* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1930), 146; quoted in Bendana, "Montagne lecteur d'Ibn Khaldun," 47-8.
[32] "On connaît l'idéologie de Lyautey, son horreur de l'administration directe, son respect des institutions traditionnelles. Pas d'assimilation, donc respect de l'Islam, du Makhzen, des confréries et zaouïas. Cette attitude avait son corollaire sur le plan scientifique, l'analyse minutieuse de la société marocaine." Khatibi, *Bilan*, 11. On the intellectual and material sources for Montagne's *Berbères et Makhzen*, which he dedicated to Lyautey, see Bendana, "Montagne lecteur d'Ibn Khaldun," 43-44. On the Institut des Hautes Études Marocains established by Lyautey in 1920, where Montagne taught, see Susan Gilson Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 101-2.
[33] For an argument for his work's relevance dating from 1997, see François Pouillon and Daniel Rivet, "Présentation : La sociologie musulmane de Robert Montagne," in *La sociologie musulmane de Robert Montagne*, 9-18.

presence on Moroccan society.[34] A similar claim could be made about the orientalist Jacques Berque (1910-1995), whose works spanned the late-colonial and postcolonial periods and included meditations on the sociology and anthropology of decolonization;[35] a critical analysis of the concept of "tribe" in historical or social-scientific studies of the Maghreb;[36] and a historical sketch of "Maghrebi sociology" (in which he observed that Gautier and Montagne shared a belief in North African society's "original alternation between oppressive power and balanced anarchy," which seemed to "invigorate Ibn Khaldun's account").[37] For Khatibi, Montagne's firmly colonialist "ideological orientation" was "discredited" but his late work on "the mass emigration of peasants toward cities"—motivated, Khatibi noted, by "a political concern for the integration of the 'dangerous classes'"—was colonial Moroccan sociology's "consecration" and "greatest study."[38] Of Berque, whose work he described as "neo-orientalist" and whose

[34] Alain Roussillon, "Sociologie et identité en Égypte et au Maroc : le travail de deuil de la colonisation," *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines* no 7, no. 2 (2002), 199.

[35] One such article appeared in the journal of the Moroccan Institut de sociologie: Jacques Berque, "Quelques perspectives d'une sociologie de la décolonisation," *Les Cahiers de Sociologie* no. 1 (1965), 5-12. Berque was listed in the journal's front matter as one of the people whose "haut patronage" facilitated its production.

[36] Jacques Berque, "Qu'est-ce qu'une tribu nord-africaine ?," in *Éventail de l'histoire vivante : Hommage à Lucien Febvre, offert par l'amitié d'historiens, linguistes, géographes, économistes, sociologues, ethnologues*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Paris: A. Colin, 1953), 261–71.

[37] Jacques Berque, "Cent vingt-cinq ans de sociologie maghrébine," *Annales* 11, no. 3 (1956), 310.

[38] "Ce sociologue activiste a laissé une oeuvre intéressante sur plusieurs points, même si son orientation idéologique nous paraît maintenant trop discréditée."

On Montagne's later work, completed in the context of significant social and political turmoil in the French protectorate (including, in Khatibi's summary, mounting "contradictions de l'exploitation d'une société par une autre, la prolétarisation des masses rurales émigrées, le développement de l'arabisme et du nationalisme… [and] le phénomène d'une revendication continentale de libération"): "Montagne conçut à sa manière cette transformation du Protectorat par des réformes partielles en faveur des nationaux et par l'intégration des « classes dangereuses », en l'occurrence celles des prolétaires et des sous-prolétaires dont le nombre croissant inquiétait vivement la Résidence.

"A partir de la vaste enquête collective menée de 1948 à 50… et qu'il dirigea en collaboration avec des chercheurs, des fonctionnaires et des autorités officielles [*Naissance du Prolétariat marocain* (Paris, 1951)], Montagne fit la synthèse de 80 monographies consacrées à l'émigration des masses paysannes vers les villes.

"Cette enquête fut, à coup sûr, la consécration de la sociologie au Maroc ; elle fut la grande enquête de cette discipline en période coloniale…." Khatibi, *Bilan*, 16-17.

writings on decolonization he would later sharply criticize, Khatibi wrote that his doctoral thesis, a study of a particular Berber tribe (*Structures sociales du Haut-Atlas* [1955]), was "certainly the best sociological monograph dedicated to Morocco."[39]

In these remarks, Khatibi was assessing his intellectual predecessors' contributions in order to set a new scientific agenda with a significant political or ideological component. This agenda would also be theoretical and methodological: to be critical and scientific, postcolonial sociologists would have to abandon the harmful biases of their colonial predecessors while also reconceptualizing their methods. In this context, the interpretation of Ibn Khaldun—whose misuse by orientalists meant, Khatibi lamented, that he had "long been foreign to his own civilization"—would be a crucial area of debate.[40]

The historians and social scientists involved in postcolonial discussions of the meaning and legacy of Ibn Khaldun's work shared with the latter at least two major theoretical concerns: the problem of how states formed and degenerated, and the related question of whether historical progress was possible in the Maghreb and if so, what it might look like. The colonial vision of the region as historically stagnant implied, and relied on, a conception of Ibn Khaldun as the pessimistic theorist of an eternal present beset by inevitable, destructive conflicts between irreconcilable cultures. Postcolonial readers of Ibn Khaldun, on the other hand, were eager to nuance or debunk the

[39] "Cette thèse pour le Doctorat d'Etat est certainement la meilleure monographie sociologique consacrée au Maroc." Ibid., 21. Khatibi's later critique of Berque is Abdelkébir Khatibi, "Jacques Berque ou La saveur Orientale : A propos de son livre *Langages arabes du présent*, Gallimard, 1974," *Les Temps Modernes,* June 1976, 2159–81.

[40] "L'introduction d'une science qui se développa dans des sociétés en pleine industrialisation et dans des pays en expansion impérialiste créa évidemment un certain dépaysement de la science sociale en situation coloniale. C'est ainsi qu'Ibn Khaldoun vit longtemps étranger dans sa propre civilisation." Khatibi, *Bilan,* 9.

association of "Arabs" with civilizational decline[41] and to reevaluate or contextualize Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of history, with some proposing that it either combined or surpassed the cyclical and linear models.[42]

The question of historical progress was particularly urgent in the postwar period in relation to the much discussed issue of the Maghreb's—and the wider Third World's—socioeconomic underdevelopment. For Lacoste, Ibn Khaldun's writings revealed and explained what he claimed were underdevelopment's long-term causes. Before examining this argument, it will be useful to consider another of Lacoste's theoretical

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[41] Germain Ayache, "Ibn Khaldoun et les Arabes," in *Ibn Khaldoun : Colloque, Mai 1962*, ed. Université Mohammed V Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humains (Casablanca: Dar el Kitab, 1962), 19-32.

[42] In his *History of the Maghrib*, Laroui argued that Ibn Khaldun was "both the consciousness and the victim of his time," having developed a theory of history characterized both by acute sociological observation and his personal sense that "he was living at the end of a world." "Like Machiavelli," wrote Laroui, Ibn Khaldun's work "reflects a profound crisis, but explains nothing and offers no solutions": "Le milieu du XIVe siècle (fin du VIIe S.H.) est une date-charnière, avons-nous dit ; cela est vrai surtout parce qu'un homme, Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406), vécut à cette époque, reprit l'histoire antérieure depuis le VIIe siècle et le rationalisa ; de cette étude, il tira à la fois une théorie explicative (sociologie) et un jugement de valeur (philosophie pessimiste de l'histoire) ; il fut donc à la fois conscience et victime de son époque. Il eut l'impression qu'il vivait la fin d'un monde ; l'ayant sentie et décrite avec une intensité poignante, personne après lui ne fut capable d'échapper à cette atmosphère crépusculaire…. Ibn Khaldūn semble penser que la race arabe étant depuis longtemps épuisée, l'affaiblissement de la race berbère signifie donc la fin de toute civilisation, de toute histoire au Maghreb, et qu'aucune possibilité de renouvellement interne n'est à la limite possible. En ce sens, on ne peut prendre l'oeuvre d'Ibn Khaldoun pour une histoire raisonnée ; elle est plutôt une vision de l'histoire qui naît d'une mise en forme abstraite d'une séquence historique : au lieu d'être la raison de l'histoire maghrébine, c'est au contraire celle-ci qui en est la raison ; elle doit par conséquent être utilisée de la même manière qu'on utilise Machiavel : en tant qu'indice d'une crise générale ; elle ne doit être ni présentée comme explication ni proposée comme solution." Laroui, *L'histoire du Maghreb*, 202-3; *History of the Maghrib*, 218-19. This conclusion, though it promotes an image of Ibn Khaldun as pessimistic and his philosophy as a offering "no perspective of the future" ("ne s'ouvre nullement sur l'avenir"; ibid.), is based on a contextual analysis of the histories he both described and lived through.

In an introductory essay on Ibn Khaldun included in a book of excerpts from his work, the Moroccan philosopher Mohamed Aziz Lahbabi (1922-1993) suggested that by dedicating himself simultaneously to the precise description of historical events (focusing, in particular, on the rise and fall of political dynasties) and the derivation of general sociological rules, Ibn Khaldun had released himself from "two archetypal forms of the philosophy of history: one cyclical, the other progressive." ("Ibn Khaldûn semble dégager deux formes archétypales de la philosophie de l'histoire : l'une cyclique, l'autre progressive.") Mohamed Aziz Lahbabi, *Ibn Khaldûn* (Paris: Seghers, 1968), 69. The apparently cyclical patterns he discovered were not based on a belief in "time's circularity, nor its eternal return," but on close observation of historical facts that revealed, in turn, significant differences. ("Ibn Khaldûn ne croit ni à la circularité du temps, ni à son éternel retour : le changement est une réalité, et la tâche de l'historien est d'enregistrer les changements après les avoir détectés…") Ibid., 73.

premises, derived not from Ibn Khaldun but Marx, Engels, Lenin, and their mid–twentieth century French interpreters: whether a specifically "Asiatic" mode of production was partly responsible for the failure of non-Western societies to develop European- or American-style industrial capitalism—and whether these societies could hope to further evolve toward socialism or communism.

PLURILINEAR PROGRESS: FRENCH MARXISTS AND THE "ASIATIC MODE OF PRODUCTION"

In his 1953 interrogation of the concept of the North African tribe, Berque lamented what he described as the tendency of some orientalist scholars of the region's medieval history, including Gautier, to categorize Berber groups in a way that "accounts too well for a history that we know so poorly. Everything is arranged" in such accounts, he continued, "as if in a relay race in which the decadent group passes the torch to the ascendant group. Melancholic philosophy of history, and above all, convenient!" This view relied, further, on the authority of Ibn Khaldun, who was often read as having seen "the history of the Muslim Middle Ages" as a "division into great races." Berque suggested, however, that what seemed to some to be an "original division" might instead be seen as a mythic explanation for "phenomena that remain to be discovered."[43] Reading different sources might reveal, in place of the linear succession of dominant tribes offered by Ibn Khaldun and his European readers, "an undulating structure that would explain its [i.e., North African history's] aptitude for great embraces and vast propagations, but also

[43] "Leur [i.e., the orientalists': Berque mentioned Gautier, Georges Marçais, and Henri Terrasse] classification rend trop bien compte d'une histoire que nous connaissons si mal. Tout s'ordonne comme dans une course au flambeau où la race décadente passe la flamme à la race montante. Philosophie d'histoire mélancolique, et, par-dessus tout, commode !" On Ibn Khaldun: "Qu'il voie toute l'histoire du moyen âge musulman s'ordonner en fonction de ce partage par grandes races, c'est une véritable règle d'or. Mais rien ne permet d'affirmer qu'elle se fonde sur une division originelle, et n'est pas un mythe explicatif. Explicatif de phénomènes qui resteraient à découvrir, ou tout au moins à reconstituer." Berque, "Qu'est-ce qu'une tribu," 266-67.

its always latent force of rupture."[44] For Berque, the conceptual ambiguities of the North African tribe were suggestive of the underlying history's referential instability, which previous historians had ignored or tried to simplify.

Like Berque's consideration of "tribe," French Marxist discussions of the "Asiatic mode of production" tended to reject a stage-based theory of history; and like Berque, these authors wrote at a time when struggles against colonialism were throwing established historical interpretations into doubt. In fact, it was partly their recognition that Marx and Engels' analyses of "Asiatic" societies were based on fragmentary and outdated empirical material that led a group of social scientists associated with the PCF-linked Centre d'Études et de Recherches marxistes (CERM) and its journal, *La Pensée*, to undertake a series of studies on the Asiatic mode starting in the early 1960s. Introducing the second edition of the resulting volume, Jean Suret-Canale gave a somewhat minimal definition of the Asiatic mode as one in which "class exploitation does not *essentially* manifest itself at the level of individual to individual relations, as with ancient slavery or various forms of feudal dependency (serfdom, etc.), but at the level of relations between communities." This was a form of society in which the state used its superior coercive power to demand tributes from "inferior communities," examples of which could be found throughout the world. Suret-Canale suggested that "tributary" would be a more fitting label than "Asiatic."[45]

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[44] "Tout cet espace est, si j'ose dire, régi par une structure ondulatoire qui expliquerait son aptitude aux grands embrassements, aux vastes propagations, en même temps que sa force toujours latent de rupture." Ibid., 268.

[45] "Ce mode de production, à la différence du « communisme primitif », se caractérise par l'existence de classes antagonistes, sous une forme suffisamment généralisée pour avoir entraîné l'apparition de l'*Etat* ; toutefois il ne supprime pas mais intègre les formes d'organisation sociale (notamment communautés patriarcales ou tribales et communautés rurales à base territoriale) qui étaient celles de l'époque antérieure. L'exploitation de classe s'y manifeste *essentiellement* non pas au niveau des relations d'individu à individu, comme c'est le cas pour l'esclavage antique ou les diverses formes de dépendance féodale (servage, etc.) mais au niveau des relations de communautès à communautés, la communauté supérieure fût-elle

In his preface to the first edition of the CERM volume on the Asiatic mode, the philosopher Roger Garaudy, then the center's director, wrote that these studies called "the very meaning of Marxism" into question by breaking with the "dogmatic spirit" of Stalinism. The former Soviet leader's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (1938; French translation, 1945) proposed a five-stage sequence of historical evolution from primitive to modern communism by way of slave society, feudalism, capitalism, and socialism. Garaudy described this theory as a "perversion" of Marxism that transformed "historical materialism into a philosophy of history," stripping humanity of historical agency and reducing Marx's materialist dialectic to "a catalogue of laws, categories or 'traits.'" Recovering the concept of the Asiatic mode of production implied a break with Stalin's rigid schema, in addition to facilitating the integration into Marxist theory of "rich materials that the contemporary discoveries of ethnology, archaeology, history and the national struggles of formerly [*jusqu'ici*] colonized peoples have brought to the study of the evolution of societies and their revolutions."[46]

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personifiée dans un monarque divin, correspondant aux couches exploiteuses, prélevant un tribut sur les communautés inférieures, villageoises ou patriarcales.

"L'Inde antique, l'Egypte antique, les sociétés les plus évoluées de l'Afrique tropicale précoloniale, les Empires aztèque et inca de l'Amérique précolombienne, présentent de ce point de vue des traits communs qui autorisent à considérer comme acquise l'existence d'un mode de production qui pourrait être appellée « tributaire » (dans la mesure où le tribut collectif, en travail ou en nature, y apparaît comme la forme d'exploitation prépondérante) plutôt qu'« asiatique », avec ce que cette caractérisation géographique présente aujourd'hui de discutable." Jean Suret-Canale, preface to Centre d'Études et de Recherches marxistes, ed., *Sur le « mode de production asiatique »*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1974), 7-8.

[46] "Présenter ces cinq stades comme universellement identifiables dans toute société quelle qu'elle soit, et comme se suivant dans un ordre absolument nécessaire, c'était transformer le matérialisme historique en une philosophie de l'histoire. Et, comme conséquence de cette première perversion, c'était revenir à une conception pré-marxiste du matérialisme en appelant histoire scientifique une histoire correspondant à ce schema, c'est-à-dire une histoire où l'avenir est déjà écrit et dont l'homme, par conséquent, est absent. C'est également revenir à une conception pré-marxiste de la dialectique en considérant celle-ci comme un catalogue de lois, de catégories ou de « traits », se déployant selon un ordre immuable faisant finalement de l'histoire humaine un cas particulier d'une dialectique de la nature dogmatiquement conçue.

"Tel est l'enjeu de cette discussion : la signification même du marxisme est en cause." Roger Garaudy, preface to Centre d'Études et de Recherches marxistes, ed., *Sur le « mode de production asiatique »* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1969), 8. More than two decades earlier, Garaudy included a section

Equally at stake, then, in debates concerning the Asiatic mode were the futures of a Marxist left struggling to dissociate itself from Stalin and, relatedly, of the newly independent Third World. A source of inspiration on both counts was the memory of Lenin, whose internationalism and anti-imperialism could be invoked as an example for the contemporary left to follow and who had once proposed a theory of, in Garaudy's words, the "passage of precapitalist economic and social formations directly to socialism 'avoiding the capitalist stage.'"[47] Conversely, the German-American author Karl Wittfogel—whose *Oriental Despotism* (1957) was both a monumental appraisal of the nature of "Asiatic" societies (including examples as far afield as the Inca Empire) and distinctly marked by the Cold War context—was often identified as an adversary.[48] An émigré and former member of the German Communist Party whose work was funded in part by the Rockefeller Foundation, Wittfogel described "oriental despotism" or "hydraulic civilization" ("one that involves large-scale and government-managed works of irrigation and flood control") as "the harshest form of total power." The Soviet

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on Ibn Khaldun lauding him for the usual reasons—he was, Garaudy wrote, the "precursor" to "three centuries of humanism"—in a pamphlet praising more broadly the contributions of "Arab civilization" to the progress of world history: "En lisant les « Prolégomènes » d'Ibn Khaldoun, un occidental trouve, en plein XIVe siècle, le précurseur de Machiavel, de Descartes et de Montesquieu, de trois siècles d'humanisme." Roger Garaudy, *La contribution historique de la civilisation arabe* (Alger: Éditions Liberté, 1946), 26.

[47] "Non seulement ses notes marginales sur la correspondance entre Marx et Engels prouvent avec quelle attention il étudiait les traits caractéristiques du « mode de production asiatique », mais, avec une grande audace théorique il posait, au IIe Congrès de l'Internationale communiste [1920] un problème fondamental, celui du passage de formations économiques et sociales précapitalistes directement au socialisme « en évitant le stade capitaliste »." Garaudy, preface to *Sur le « mode de production asiatique »*, 9.

[48] Garaudy named Wittfogel as the "most significant example" of the "traitors" serving "the war machine against socialism" who had discredited the concept of the Asiatic mode. ("Le concept de « mode de production asiatique » fut d'autant plus discrédité qu'il servit à des transfuges de machine de guerre contre le socialisme. L'exemple le plus significatif de ce genre d'entreprise fut celui de Karl Wittfogel…"). Ibid. In his preface to another CERM-sponsored study, to be discussed further below, Maurice Godelier referred to Wittfogel as a "renegade." ("Et pour accroître l'étrangeté de son [i.e., the concept of the Asiatic mode] destin, cette notion expulsée ['au cours des célèbres discussions de Tiflis et de Léningrad des années 1930-1931'] fut alors recueillie et retournée contre le marxisme par K. Wittfogel, un renégat.") Maurice Godelier, preface to Centre d'Études et de Recherches marxistes, ed., *Sur les sociétés précapitalistes : textes choisis de Marx, Engels, Lénine* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1970), 17.

Union's bureaucratic totalitarianism was, Wittfogel argued, an analogous modern form.[49] Like French Marxists writing on the Asiatic mode, Wittfogel framed his work as a return to the insights of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, which Soviet intellectuals had betrayed by officially renouncing the concept at the beginning of the 1930s.[50]

If Wittfogel sought, in Pierre Vidal-Naquet's words, to "build on the debris of [Marxist] unilinearism a concept of two historical paths,"[51] his French rivals proposed historical and social-scientific explanations that, while equally opposed to "unilinearism," were subtler and more complex than the "oriental despotism" model. "Seeking to break the association, which the anthropologist Maurice Godelier accused Wittfogel of promoting (and of which echoes can indeed be found in Marx),[52] of "Asiatic" societies with historical stagnation, authors like Godelier and the orientalist Maxime Rodinson drew on the Marxist corpus to imagine "plurilinear" historical pathways.[53] For Godelier, Rodinson, and others, it was important to show that both Marxism and the recently

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[49] Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism, a Comparative Study of Total Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 1-3. On his funding, see the book's acknowledgements.

[50] Ibid., 6.

[51] Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "Histoire et idéologie : Karl Wittfogel et le concept de 'Mode de production asiatique,'" *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 19, no. 3 (1964), 546.

[52] In a footnote on Wittfogel paraphrasing and contesting the latter's arguments, Godelier wrote: "Despite possibilities for evolution, Asiatic societies remain essentially the same for millennia." ("Enfin malgré des possibilités d'évolution, les sociétés asiatiques restent essentiellement les mêmes pendant des millénaires.") Maurice Godelier, "La Notion de mode de production asiatique," *Les Temps Modernes* 228, no. 20 (1965), 2018n57.

In his text on "Forms which precede capitalist production," to be discussed further below, Marx wrote: "The Asiatic form necessarily hangs on most tenaciously and for the longest time. This is due to its presupposition that the individual does not become independent vis-a-vis the commune; that there is a self-sustaining circle of production, unity of agriculture and manufactures, etc." Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (1973; repr., London: Penguin, 1993), 486.

[53] For example, Godelier lamented the "numerous and dramatic" consequences of rejecting the "plurilinear evolutionism" he claimed was evident in Engels' *Origin of the Family* ("Les conséquences du rejet d'un évolutionnisme plurilinéaire furent nombreuses et dramatiques"). Godelier, "La Notion," 2020. In his preface to the 1970 volume *Sur les sociétés précapitalistes*, he repeatedly advocated what he variously called a notion of "different and unequal evolution" or a "multilinear schema of social evolution"; see below for discussion and citations.

liberated Third World were capable of evolving, a task that required breaking new theoretical and empirical ground.

In addition to directly informing Lacoste's work on Ibn Khaldun, then, French Marxist debates about the Asiatic mode of production responded to concerns similar to those animating the Ibn Khaldun revival. Both discourses mobilized a productive tension between the history and anthropology of precapitalist societies and the conceptual vocabularies used to understand them in order to contest the notion that these societies were congenitally stagnant or backward. The moment of decolonization was congenial to this sort of analysis, which tended to reject rigid schemata of historical development in favor of more open-ended visions of the future.

A few years before the CERM's working group on the Asiatic mode of production was formed, *La Pensée* published a special issue on Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), which Rodinson found to be an indispensable guide to the study of "primitive" societies lacking a fully developed class structure. In a text predating his break with the PCF (and which he later described, perhaps jokingly, as "Stalinist"), he distinguished Engels' work from that of various "bourgeois" anthropologists and sociologists in whose thought he detected a "process of mystification" whereby "precise categories [such as] private property, monogamy, and state are assimilated to larger, more vague categories (individual property, couple, political structures) that are really universal."[54] To universalize these categories was, by

[54] "Le processus de la mystification est le suivant : les catégories précises, propriété privée, monogamie, Etat, sont assimilées à des catégories plus vagues, plus larges (propriété individuelle, couple, structures politiques) qui sont vraiment universelles." Maxime Rodinson, "L'étude des sociétés « primitives » à la lumière de l'ouvrage d'Engels," *La Pensée : revue du rationalisme moderne*, no. 66 (1956), 11.

In a footnote to the section of *Islam et capitalisme* discussed below in which he explained Marx's distinction between "property (*Eigentum*) and possession (*Besitzung*)," the latter of which he used to describe land ownership in "primitive" communities, Rodinson noted that "I insisted on these distinctions in my 'Stalinist' article on Engels' *Origin of the Family*" ("J'ai insisté sur ces distinctions dans mon article « stalinien » sur l'*Origine de la famille* d'Engels"). Maxime Rodinson, *Islam et capitalisme* (Paris: Éditions

this argument, to rule out any historicization of social institutions like private property or the state, which from a Marxist perspective were of relatively recent historical vintage and destined, ultimately, to disappear. Rodinson accused "bourgeois" social scientists of methodological errors, including cultural relativism and Claude Lévi-Strauss's view that culture became distinct from nature through "the regulation of sexual relations" and not "social practice."[55] Instead of an overreliance on static social-scientific categories or concepts, Rodinson argued, the study of primitive societies called for "a *history* of social institutions before the appearance of classes" that would parallel "the history of the development of productive forces."[56]

In a brief but dense passage of *Islam and Capitalism* (1966), a work situated at the intersection of debates in French Marxism and orientalism, Rodinson specifically considered the Asiatic mode.[57] Noting that the capitalist mode of production was tied to a

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du Seuil, 1966), 270-71n86. Rodinson's critical attitude toward the Soviet system and the PCF following the death of Stalin would lead to his exclusion from the party in 1958. For his account of these events see Maxime Rodinson, *Entre Islam et Occident : entretiens avec Gérard D. Khoury* (Paris: les Belles lettres, 1998), 159-62.

[55] "Dans l'étude de la société primitive (c'est ainsi que j'appellerai la société antérieure à la formation des classes), il nous faut d'abord déblayer le terrain encombré par les conceptions méthodologiques erronées des savants bourgeois, y compris des savants honnêtes qui croient de bonne foi, en adoptant des thèses générales dégagées par les spécialistes de domaines voisins (dont la philosophie), suivre les « derniers résultats de la science »." The second of these that Rodinson listed was "L'idée d'une hétérogenéité et d'une relativité absolues des sociétés : aucune comparaison ne serait possible entre elles, toutes ont leur valeur, certaines sont à la vérité meilleures, plus avancées sur certains points, d'autres le sont sur d'autres points." Rodinson, "L'étude des sociétés « primitives »," 8-9. Later in the article, he contrasted the historical approach he advocated to that of "M. Lévi-Strauss qui voit dans la réglementation des relations sexuelles la règle fondamentale, seule universelle, qui distingue la culture de la nature, l'humanité de l'animalité." On the contrary: "Ce qui distingue l'humanité et l'animalité, c'est la pratique sociale, les tâches sociales, le travail collectif avec des outils indépendants du corps" (21).

[56] "Il faut donc une *histoire* des institutions de la société avant l'apparition des classes et la faire en la liant toujours à l'histoire du développement des forces productives, le seul fil sérieux que nous possédons pour nous guider dans cette histoire." Ibid., 12.

[57] The orientalist debate in which the book intervened concerned the question of whether Islamic countries had blocked or facilitated the development of capitalism; see the acts of a conference on this topic, *L'Evolution économique, sociale et culturelle des pays d'Islam s'est-elle montrée défavorable à la formation d'un capitalisme de type occidental ?* (Paris: Institut d'Etudes Islamiques, 1960). In *Islam et capitalisme*, Rodinson argued that the medieval Islamic world had indeed been the site of a robust "capitalist sector" ("Le secteur capitalistique a été indubitablement développé sous divers aspects"). His evidence for this claim included citations from Ibn Khaldun's writings on commerce, which Rodinson

particular "socioeconomic formation," he argued that the same could not be said of the precapitalist societies—including those of the medieval Islamic world—that Marxist orthodoxy tended to lump together as "feudal." In "the only text… in which Marx tried to closely study and define precapitalist formations," Rodinson wrote, Marx "does not speak of feudalism and barely uses the term." This text was a section of the *Grundrisse* titled "Forms which precede capitalist production," in which Marx described both the "presuppositions of capitalism" (i.e., primitive accumulation and the existence of a "free" labor force) and their historical preparation via the gradual dissolution of "diverse forms of primitive communities" through commerce and war. Regarding feudalism, Rodinson argued, "It is not a question of a stage specifically dominated by servitude succeeding a stage specifically dominated by slavery, but of a multiform evolution of already multiple types."[58] Similarly, the Asiatic mode of production should not be understood as "a universal or quasi-universal stage of human evolution," nor as specifically "Asiatic."[59] Rather, this was "undoubtedly the most primitive form of production," one that "exists at

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argued conformed to a certain (Weberian rather than Marxist) definition of capitalism (or "capitalist activity"): "Les marchands se conforment bien aux critères weberiens de l'activité capitalistique…. Mille attestations pourraient en être données. On peut contenter de lire la définition que donne du commerce le grand sociologue et historien Ibn Khaldoûn au XIVe siècle." Rodinson, *Islam et capitalisme,* 45, 47. (For this definition, which Rodinson cites, see *Muqaddimah,* vol. 2, 336.) In the book's preface, he explained the precise sense in which he considered the work methodologically Marxist: Rodinson's was neither "institutional," "pragmatic," nor "philosophical," but rather "socio-historical" and in a certain sense, "ideological" Marxism. Ibid., 12-16.

[58] "Il est pourtant significatif que, dans le seul texte (un brouillon rédigé pour lui-même) où Marx s'est efforcé d'étudier de près et de définir les formations précapitalistes, il ne parle pas du féodalisme et prononce à peine le mot. Les présuppositions du capitalisme sont pour lui un ensemble de conditions dont il explique assez mal la formation, mais qui se trouvent réunies à la suite d'une évolution prenant son départ dans diverses formes de communautés primitives. Ces formes se dissolvent peu à peu, surtout celles où la propriété privée du sol existe à côté de la propriété commune, même restreinte par le fait qu'on n'est propriétaire qu'en tant que membre de la communauté…. Il n'est pas question d'un stade où domine spécialement le servage succédant à un stade où domine spécialement l'esclavage, mais d'une évolution multiforme à partir de types déjà multiples." Ibid., 74-75.

[59] He attributed to Godelier this claim about the Asiatic mode's universality: "M. Godelier s'est efforcé de promouvoir cette formation (il ne distingue, pas plus que Marx ne le faisait *dans sa terminologie* entre mode de production stricto sensu et formation économico-sociale) au rang de stade universel ou quasi universel de l'évolution humaine." Ibid., 77.

a global scale" and could be called, more generically, the "primitive communal mode of production." Unlike capitalism, this mode of production did not necessarily correspond to a particular socioeconomic model. A society practicing "primitive communal" production would not, in other words, necessarily conform to Marx's conception of oriental despotism (whereby, in Rodinson's summary, the state "intervenes in the conditions of production through the organization of large-scale infrastructural works [*grands travaux*] useful or indispensable to this production").[60]

In his long preface to a collection of writings by Marx, Engels, and Lenin on "precapitalist societies"—part of the same publishing project as the volume on the Asiatic mode[61]—Godelier also stressed the importance of Marx's "Forms" and highlighted the broader centrality of the *Grundrisse* to what he described as a post-Stalinist "return to Marx."[62] Reconstructing the history of Marxist reflections on the historical passage from

[60] "Le mode de production défini par Marx comme communauté autarcique existe bien à une échelle mondiale et on ne peut douter que ce soit la forme la plus primitive de la production (précédée par des formes analogues, communautaires, de « collection » au stade de la cueillette, de la chasse et de la pêche), imposée par un bas niveau technique et l'autonomie primitive des groupes humaines. On pourrait appeler ce mode de production par exemple « mode de production communautaire primitif »." Describing the "socio-economic formation" Marx tended, wrongly in Rodinson's view, to associate with the Asiatic mode of production: "L'essence de cette formation serait le prélèvement d'une partie du surplus de production de ces communautés pour une « communauté supérieure », un Etat qui, en échange, intervient dans les conditions de production par l'organisation de grands travaux utiles ou indispensables à cette production." Ibid.

[61] For background on the project, see the unsigned "Avertissement" to *Sur les sociétés précapitalistes*, 7.

[62] Godelier wrote that the discovery of the *Grundrisse* had "helped both to defeat dogmatism and to reinstall Marxism at the heart of one of the liveliest discussions of contemporary historical, archaeological and ethnological sciences." ("Or, paradoxalement, un manuscrit de Marx, longtemps inconnu, allait, par sa richesse même, à la fois aider à se défaire du dogmatisme et réinstaller le marxisme au coeur d'une des discussions les plus vives des sciences historiques, archéologiques et ethnologiques contemporaines.") Arguing for the "decisive importance" of the "Forms" section in particular—a French translation of which appeared in the volume he introduced ("Formes qui précèdent la production capitaliste," in ibid., 180-226)—he wrote that it provided a "multilinear schema" of historical evolution that was radically opposed to any "simplifying dogma": "Pourquoi cette importance décisive des *Formen*?

"Avant tout parce qu'on y trouve la tentative de Marx la plus *systématique* pour repérer des moments et définir des problèmes critiques de l'évolution historique et que cette histoire se présente comme celle de *multiples* formes de communautés primitives évoluant de façons diverses vers des formes *distinctes* d'État et de sociétés de classes. Ce schéma multilinéaire se situait donc à l'antipode d'un dogmatisme simplificateur." Godelier, preface to ibid, 16.

classless to class societies, Godelier displayed a structuralist bent. The discovery, evident in *The German Ideology*, of the fundamental idea that social being determines consciousness (and abandonment of an earlier philosophical "pretension" to access humankind's "'true essence'") marked, he wrote, "the radical refoundation of the form of consciousness of Marx and Engels and the birth of historical materialism."[63] In his discussion of the *Grundrisse*, Godelier argued that for Marx, "scientific knowledge of the specific structure of capitalist relations of production permits and necessarily imposes the confrontation of capitalist forms of property and production with all precapitalist forms in order to make their reciprocal specificities and incompatibilities appear."[64] Crucial to such an investigation was another confrontation, between theory—specifically, political-economic theory and its associated categories: property, value, etc.—and empirical history. Godelier described these as "two moments in the circular process of rational knowledge."[65] Although the relationship of Marx's critique of political economy to his

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In his contribution to *Sur le « mode de production asiatique »*, Godelier was careful to note that he himself was not advocating a "return to Marx" but instead, the further development or elaboration of basic Marxist concepts. In the case of the Asiatic mode, he argued, this would entail bringing new historical and social-scientific knowledge to bear on Marx and Engels' original analyses and discarding aspects of the latter that now appeared outdated or erroneous. Maurice Godelier, "La notion de « mode de production asiatique » et les schémas marxistes d'évolution des sociétés," in *Sur le « mode de production asiatique »*, 51-54. Some of his remarks here would reappear in the closing passages of his 1970 preface.

[63] "C'est cette prétention imaginaire du philosophe à accéder de façon privilégiée au domain de la « véritable essence » de l'homme," evident in Marx's early writings, "que Marx allait devoir sacrifier pour devenir marxiste. Ce sacrifice, qui constituait non pas une simple soustraction mais la refonte radicale de la forme de conscience de Marx et d'Engels et l'acte de naissance du matérialisme historique, fut accompli pour l'essentiel en 1845-46, années pendant lesquelles ils rédigèrent les deux « solides in octavo » de *L'idéologie allemande* qui furent « abandonnés à la critique rongeuse des souris » après avoir atteint le but que leurs auteurs se proposaient." Ibid., 20. The idea of *The German Ideology* as a transitional text between a humanist early Marx and a properly scientific late Marx was, of course, famously proposed by Louis Althusser in the early 1960s; see his *Pour Marx* (Paris: François Maspero, 1964). Althusser had apparently planned to publish with Maspero an edition of Marx's "Forms," with a preface by Godelier, before learning of the CERM project. "Avertissement" to *Sur les sociétés précapitalistes*, 7.

[64] "Ainsi, la connaissance scientifique de la structure spécifique des rapports capitalistes de production permet et impose nécessairement la confrontation des formes capitalistes de propriété et de production avec toutes les formes précapitalistes de sorte que puissent apparaître leurs spécificités et leurs incompatibilités réciproques." Godelier, preface to ibid., 47.

[65] Despite their "internal solidarity," however, economic history and economic theory remained distinct methods: "Cependant malgré leur solidarité interne qui en fait deux moments du procès circulaire de la

historical reflections on precapitalist social forms could be seen as paradoxical or anachronistic, Godelier defended Marx's effort to deduce a conceptual picture of these forms from an analysis of "the structural background of the capitalist mode of production." This method, Godelier argued, enabled Marx to discern "the *general form*" of a "historical movement" leading to the capitalist epoch.[66]

For Godelier, a rigorous reappraisal of the concept of the Asiatic mode of production—one that would "mobilize… the most modern knowledge" of the archaeology, history, and ethnology of precapitalist societies—would allow scholars to better understand and describe the process of "*different and unequal evolution* that leads to the formation of contemporary societies" and ultimately, to establish "a *new basis* for a *comparative science* of history and social structures." In "Forms," he claimed, Marx had already begun this work. "It is because it leads, in a non-dogmatic fashion, *through and beyond* the notion of the Asiatic mode of production toward fundamental questions *currently* posed by archaeology, history, anthropology, etc." that, Godelier argued, this text should be read and discussed by intellectuals hoping to return Marxism to its status as a "positive and critical avant-garde."[67] Toward the end of his preface, he returned to

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connaissance rationnelle, la théorie économique reste distincte dans son objet et ses méthodes de l'histoire économique." Ibid., 48n2.

[66] "La connaissance scientifique de l'arrière-fond structural du mode de production capitaliste lui a permis de déduire la *forme générale* du mouvement historique qui l'a engendré." Ibid., 51.

[67] "En définitive, l'importance exceptionnelle des textes des *Formen* et des fragments qu'il rassemble et éclaire, vient de ce que, *à travers* leur contenu et *par delà* la notion de mode de production asiatique, ils *obligent* à reposer de *façon non dogmatique* la question fondamentale des *conditions et des formes des passage des sociétés sans classes aux sociétés des classes* et de l'*évolution différente et inégale* qui aboutit à la formation des sociétés contemporaines.

"C'est donc toute l'histoire qui se trouve interrogée, et pour répondre il faut mobiliser de façon critique les connaissances les plus modernes de l'archéologie de l'ancien et du nouveau mondes, de l'histoire antique et médiévale des peuples orientaux et occidentaux et enfin de l'ethnologie des sociétés sans classes qui subsistaient aux premiers temps de la formation des empires coloniaux et du marché mondial et sont aujourd'hui en voie d'extinction rapide."

Further on: "En pratique, répondre c'est accélerer le décloisonnement et la *rencontre* de disciplines spécialisées : l'archéologie, l'anthropologie, l'histoire, l'économie, la linguistique, etc., et construire une *nouvelle base* pour une science *comparative* de l'histoire et des sciences sociales."

this point after acknowledging aspects of the "Asiatic mode" concept that deserved to be jettisoned, the most significant of which was the concept's association with "millennia-long stagnation and poverty" and an inferior level of "civilization."[68] He closed with a rousing call for the renovation of Marxist theory and politics: "To an epoch where, for the first time, the possibility exists of making humanity progress without developing new exploiting classes or keeping the old ones alive, Marxism, purified of all dogmatism, must equally take charge of scientific and social revolutions."[69]

Whatever else they may have done, the texts I have discussed in this section argued forcefully against the inevitability of historical stagnation, even for societies whose productive modes did not seem to favor progress. Although often associated with

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And: "C'est donc parce qu'il conduit, de façon non dogmatique, *à travers et au-delà* de la notion de mode de production asiatique vers des questions fondamentales *actuellement* posées par et à l'archéologie, l'histoire, l'anthropologie, etc. que le texte des *Formen* allait être « relu » et *devait* être vivement discuté par les marxistes au moment où ceux-ci entreprenaient de redonner au marxisme sur tous les plans son rôle d'avant-garde, positif et critique, dans le développement de la connaissance." Ibid., 17-18; emphasis in the original.

[68] "Mais ce paradoxe"—one related to the concept of "oriental despotism," which for Godelier was ideological rather than scientific and should be abandoned—"n'est qu'apparent car il exprime directement une autre partie morte des thèses de Marx et d'Engels, l'idée qui s'est cependant modifiée en 1881, que le mode de production asiatique signifie stagnation et misère millénaires, entrée inachevée dans la « civilisation » inachevée et, oserait-on dire, en partie ratée." Ibid., 135.

The theoretical modification in 1881 to which Godelier refers here was Marx and Engels' formulation of the concept of a "rural community" combining private and communal forms of ownership, which they described as a transitional form between classless and class-based societies and thus, the most recent form of "primitive" society. They mostly applied this insight, inspired in large part by Marx's reading of the Russian sociologist Maksim Kovalevsky, to the Russian and German cases, but Marx would also reconsider precolonial Indian society, which he previously saw as a particularly archaic form, under this new rubric. An important example of this shift, according to Godelier, is an 1881 letter from Marx to the Russian socialist activist Vera Zasulich, who had asked him to comment on "the possible destinies of our rural communities and on the theory according to which all the world's peoples are constrained by *historical necessity* to pass through *all* the phases of capitalist production." Ibid., 79-93, 13; emphasis in the original. (The full quote from Zasulich, which Godelier uses along with part of Marx's response as an epigraph to his preface, is: "Vous comprenez donc, citoyen, quel grand service vous nous rendriez si vous nous exposiez votre opinion sur les destins possibles de nos communautés rurales et sur la théorie qui veut que tous les peuples du monde soient contraints par la *nécessité historique* de parcourir *toutes* les phases de la production capitaliste.")

[69] "A une époque où, pour la première fois, la possibilité existe de faire progresser l'humanité sans développer de nouvelles classes exploiteuses ni maintenir en vie les anciennes, le marxisme, purifié de tout dogmatique, doit prendre en charge tout autant les révolutions scientifiques que les révolutions sociales." Ibid., 142.

the slowness of "primitive" societies to evolve, the concept of an Asiatic mode of production could stand in for Marx and Engels' efforts to conceptualize the transition from precapitalist to capitalist social forms, often by analyzing not only Asian or African but European historical examples. The effort to uncover the variety and dynamism of Marxist texts on this subject expressed midcentury French Marxists' dual concern for the vitality of Marxism itself and, relatedly, of societies recently released from the yoke of colonialism.

As we have seen, the fear that stagnation might take hold of the Third World drew postcolonial readers to Ibn Khaldun, whose work was rich with vivid descriptions of historical conflict and change and whose theory of inevitable sociopolitical decline or decadence could be reinterpreted and relativized through historical contextualization. Careful readers of both Marx and Ibn Khaldun could argue that what appeared at first glance to be schematic philosophies of history in these authors' works were, in fact, flexible interpretive systems that were perfectly capable of accounting for historical contingency. Properly Marxist or Khaldunian history was not necessarily either cyclical or linear, but might consist of an indefinite succession of forks in the road and hairpin turns interspersed with long blank stretches and punctuated with moments of intense conflict or frenzied activity. The two thinkers were often compared, and in the context of the Algerian War and its aftermath, adopting Ibn Khaldun alongside Marx as complementary intellectual guides became a compelling option for French and North African thinkers.

YVES LACOSTE ON IBN KHALDUN AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Although Lacoste made use, in *Ibn Khaldun*, of concepts developed by Marx and Engels in their studies of precapitalist societies, he did so not in order to illustrate the

accuracy or complexity of the Marxist analysis but rather, the depth and prescience of Ibn Khaldun's. The latter's work, Lacoste argued, was of "universal significance" because it described "one form of that structural blockage which, with the exception of Western Europe, existed throughout the world for centuries." This "blockage" resulted from a form of socioeconomic organization based on the Asiatic mode of production, whereby the absence of private ownership of "productive forces" meant that in much of the world, "internal contradictions and class struggles could not take shape and develop as clearly and strongly as they would in Europe."[70] Ibn Khaldun had surpassed his contemporaries not in his awareness of the fourteenth-century Maghreb's "decadence"[71] but in his attempt to explain this situation scientifically: "he alone looked for the causes of stagnation in the internal structures of the society in which he lived rather than in some divinely ordained plan or in external causes."[72] In his materialist understanding of historical change he could

[70] "Consacrée pour l'essentiel à l'Afrique du Nord, l'oeuvre d'Ibn Khaldoun présente, encore une fois, une signification universelle : en étudiant pourquoi dans cette contrée, une succession de péripéties historiques ne sont pas parvenues à provoquer, à très long terme, une véritable évolution historique, Ibn Khaldoun a décrit une des formes du phénomène de *blocage* structurel que, sauf l'Europe occidentale, l'ensemble du monde a connu pendant des siècles." And: "En revanche, dans la plupart des autres [i.e. non-European] pays, l'état économique et social est resté caractérisé pendant de très longues périodes par différentes formes d'organisation économique et sociale qui relèvent en gros d'un même mode de production, celui qui Marx a baptisé *« mode de production asiatique »*. Il se caractérise par l'existence d'une classe qui fut en mesure de s'approprier les surplus de la production et d'exploiter la population sans pour autant posséder privativement les forces productives qui demeurent pour l'essentiel entre les mains des communautés villageoises ou tribales." Yves Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldoun : naissance de l'histoire, passé du Tiers-Monde* (Paris: François Maspéro, 1966), 12-13; *Ibn Khaldun: The Birth of History and the Past of the Third World*, trans. David Macey (London: Verso, 1984), 5-6 (translation modified).

Lacoste acknowledged the French Marxist discussion of the Asiatic mode, citing Godelier's articles, in ibid., 16; 8.

[71] Lacoste described this not just as "decadence," however, but a "period of simultaneous turmoil and stagnation" ("toute à la fois tumultueuse et engourdie") or "of ossification punctuated by intermittent crises" ("cette période d'ankylose, traversée de crises"). Ibid., 12; 5.

[72] "Ibn Khaldoun est le seul, plusieurs siècles avant l'arrivée des Européens, à avoir aussi méthodiquement décrit cette succession de crises et à avoir cherché les causes de la stagnation non dans les vues d'une divinité, ni dans l'action de forces extérieures, mais dans les structures internes de la société où il vivait." Ibid.

perhaps be seen as a kind of proto-Marx, but Lacoste was careful throughout his work to note the ways in which Ibn Khaldun's particular historical context shaped his perspective.

Lacoste's own perspective was shaped in part by his status as, in his words, "a sort of colonial anticolonialist." He was born in Morocco, where his family lived before returning to France in 1939. His father, a geologist, approved of the Lyautey regime's strategy of modernizing Morocco's traditional political institutions and instilled in him a sense of the country's "great history" and geopolitical importance. Morocco's eventual independence appeared to Lacoste, he would later claim, as the logical outcome of colonial modernization. Further, "I felt that this independence and that of other colonized countries were ineluctable and positive phenomena in the direction of History." Freshly *agrégé* and seeking to return to the Maghreb, but unable to go to Morocco because of "troubles provoked by the sultan's flight,"[73] he took a teaching post at a *lycée* in Algiers, where he lived in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Algerian War. He found colonial Algerian society to be "completely opposite to what Lyautey had done in Morocco" insofar as it entailed the destruction of the country's national or political unity. He joined the Algerian Communist Party (PCA), and would leave the PCF in 1956 in protest of the party's support for the newly appointed Resident Minister Robert Lacoste's successful bid for "special powers" in Algeria.[74]

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[73] After pledging his support for the nationalist cause, Mohammed V (r. 1927-1953, 1955-1961) was forced into exile following a French-led coup in 1953.

[74] Marie Poinsot and Terence Carbin, "La situation paradoxale de l'immigration algérienne : Entretien avec Yves Lacoste," *Hommes & migrations. Revue française de référence sur les dynamiques migratoires*, no. 1295 (2012), 27-30. On the special powers vote and French anticolonialists' responses to it, see Martin Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 154-55, 279. On intra-PCF conflict over this issue, including the formation of a group opposed to the special powers vote within the Sorbonne–Lettres cell whose members included Lacoste and Rodinson, see Alain Ruscio, *Les communistes et l'Algérie : des origines à la Guerre d'indépendance, 1920-1962* (Paris: la Découverte, 2019), 359-60.

In Lacoste's first published writing on Ibn Khaldun, an article that appeared in *La Pensée* in 1956, his anticolonialism is very much in evidence, as is an analysis of medieval North African society that he would revise in later work. "It does not seem to me," he wrote, that the terms "primitive community" or "military democracy" properly described "the social and economic conditions in which the Maghreb found itself in this epoch." These were rather "those of feudalism, which succeeded the regime based on slavery that predominated in the Roman and Byzantine periods."[75] He interpreted Ibn Khaldun's *badawa*/*hadara* pair as "a class opposition between feudal lords and urban merchants and 'bourgeois.'" Ibn Khaldun's own "feudal ambitions," he argued, were in contradiction with his fundamental rationalism; this contradiction was "the basis of his originality."[76]

By 1966, Lacoste had abandoned his view of medieval North African society as feudal, instead using the concepts of the Asiatic mode and "military democracy" to argue that categories like tribal society, slave society, or feudal society did not apply to the

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[75] "Peut-on dire que le rapport de production caractérisant les nomades, dans l'Afrique du Nord au XIVe siècle, soit celui de la « communauté primitive », ou mieux de la « démocratie militaire » ? Il ne me semble pas. En effet les conditions économiques et sociales dans lesquelles se trouvait le Maghreb à cette époque étaient celles de la féodalité, qui avait succédé au régime basé sur l'esclavage prédominant aux époques romaine et byzantine." Yves Lacoste, "La grand oeuvre d'Ibn Khaldoun," *La Pensée : revue du rationalisme moderne*, no. 69 (1956), 22. For a CERM-sponsored debate among historians on the question of whether some form of feudalism existed in the precolonial Maghreb, see René Gallissot and Lucette Valensi, "Le Maghreb précolonial : mode de production archaique ou mode de production féodal ? Un débat du Centre d'études et de recherches marxistes," *La Pensée*, no. 142 (1968): 57–93.

[76] "Sous une formulation qui, à première vue, paraît fort éloignée de la notion de rapport de production, générateur de classes sociales, Ibn Khaldoun semble avoir pressenti la véritable nature, à son époque, de l'opposition du nomade et du citadin ; une opposition de classe entre les féodaux et les marchands et « bourgeois » des villes, s'étant libérés ou ayant fixé les liens du servage." Ibid., 23.

After quoting passages from the *Muqaddimah* in which Ibn Khaldun expressed disdain for "townspeople [*citadins*]" (a theme he would return to in *Ibn Khaldun*), Lacoste wrote: "Il faut voir dans ce passage, non le reflet de convictions religieuses, mais la manifesation de l'orgueil et des ambitions féodales." Citing Taha Hussein's claim, presumably in his 1918 thesis on Ibn Khaldun, that "according to the Qur'an, all men are God's lieutenants on earth" ("tous les hommes d'après le texte du Coran sont les lieutenants de Dieu sur la terre"), Lacoste continued: "Après de tels passages, où s'étale l'orgueil du noble, on mesure mieux l'importance de cette contradiction interne, base de l'originalité, de la personnalité d'Ibn Khaldoun, à la fois grand seigneur condottiere et grand savant, rationaliste." Ibid., 25.

Maghreb of Ibn Khaldun.[77] "The survival of tribal cohesion in the Maghreb," he wrote, "prevented the *iqta'* system [i.e., the temporary power to levy taxes on a town or tribe, conferred on 'powerful individual[s]' by medieval sultans] from evolving into a seigneurial system."[78] The "privileged minority" that dominated this society was neither a "nobility in the strictly feudal sense" (because the right to bear arms was not limited on a hereditary basis) nor a bourgeoisie (because there was no private ownership of the means of production) but a "merchant aristocracy."[79] A constant, looming danger of tribal violence, however, kept this group from becoming too powerful. For similar reasons, the embryonic state was too weak to "subjugate or mobilize the population"; this was not a "hydraulic society" *à la* Wittfogel.[80] To categorize this form of society, Lacoste thus settled on a term he had previously rejected: "military democracy or pseudo-democracy,"

[77] On the Asiatic mode: Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldoun*, 37; 26. On "military democracy," see below.

[78] "Le maintien de la cohésion tribale au Maghreb y empêche l'évolution du système iqta vers un système plus ou moins seignurial." Ibid., 31; 21. His source in his discussion of the *iqta* system was an article by the historian Claude Cahen, who began by noting that the topic had attracted interest because of the potential comparison it suggested between medieval Islam and the European feudal system. Cahen also noted that the evidentiary basis for a historical discussion of *iqta'* was flimsy: the available sources "come from jurists who later sought to make institutions born in imprecision enter into precise schemas" ("émanent des juristes postérieurs qui cherchent à faire entrer dans des schémas précis des institutions nées dans l'imprecision"). Claude Cahen, "L'évolution de l'iqtå du IXe au XIIIe siècle : contribution à une histoire comparée des sociétés médiévales," *Annales* 8, no. 1 (1953), 25.

[79] "Cette minorité privilégiée est particulièrement complexe et difficile à définir : les marchands en dépit de leur nombre et de leur puissance, ne constituent pas une bourgeoisie. D'une part, ils ne cherchent guère à posséder les moyens de production : ils n'en ont pas tellement le souci (le commerce rapporte plus à court terme) ni la possibilité (les terres sont pour l'essentiel royales et occupés par les tribus). D'autre part, à la différence de la vraie bourgeoisie européenne qui malgré sa richesse est une classe subordonnée à la noblesse, en pays musulmans, les marchands, très liés au pouvoir royal, font partie de l'aristocratie. Ils forment non une bourgeoisie, mais une aristocratie marchande, dont les liens sont souvent assez étroits avec l'aristocratie tribale ou militaire."

Moreover: "En Afrique du Nord, le port d'arme étant un fait quasi général, une telle caste [i.e., a nobility wielding power through force] ne peut se constituer et il n'y existe pas à proprement parler de noblesse au sens de la féodalité occidentale." Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldoun*, 34-35; 24.

[80] "Mais, cause majeure [for the absence in medieval North Africa of large hydraulic projects], la solidité des structures tribales a sans aucun doute diminué les pouvoirs des souverains et rendu impossible l'asservissement de la population et de sa mobilisation." Ibid., 38; 27.

a concept borrowed from the American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan's work on "ancient society," a major source for Engels' *Origin of the Family*.[81]

Lacoste's excursions into the fine points of Marxist theory should be read in the context of his efforts, in *Ibn Khaldun* and earlier works, to rethink the history of the Maghreb and conceptualize Third World underdevelopment. In his 1956 article, he began to pursue the former project by criticizing the "colonialist use" of Ibn Khaldun's work, particularly by Gautier.[82] In his contribution to the 1960 volume *L'Algérie, passé et présent* (Algeria, past and present), he presented a historical narrative seemingly designed to debunk what he had earlier described as the colonialist assumptions that the Maghreb knew no historical evolution, tended toward despotism and political instability, and lacked indigenous political institutions, as well as the notion of a racial division between Europeans and "Orientals."[83] This account of "the historical steps of Algeria's establishment [*constitution*]," perhaps methodologically indebted to Ibn Khaldun, described a succession of political formations in the central Maghreb starting with the Numidian kingdom (c. 202-46 BC), whose "unity" Lacoste called "the ancestor of that of the Algerian people."[84] After recounting the struggles of Berber masses first against the Romans and then the Islamic Arabs—each of these revolts associated with a religious heresy: Donatism and Kharijism, respectively[85]—he described a period of "independence"

[81] "Il est possible d'utiliser le concept de démocratie ou de pseudo-démocratie militaire pour désigner ce très complexe rapport de production." Ibid., 43; 31 (translation modified).
[82] Lacoste, "La grand oeuvre d'Ibn Khaldoun," 27-32.
[83] "A la base des théories colonialistes se trouve le postulat raciste de la fondamentale et éternelle opposition entre un « esprit occidental » et un « esprit oriental » dont Ibn Khaldoun est considéré comme le représentant." Ibid., 28.
[84] "Faut-il s'étonner de l'existence au IIIe siècle de cette unité numide, ancêtre de celle du peuple algérien ? Divers historiens et parmi eux Camille Jullian soulignent l'existence d'une unité gauloise dès le VIIe siècle ! L'unité numide n'a donc rien d'extraordinaire." Yves Lacoste, "La Numidie antérieurement au premier siècle avant J.-C.," in Lacoste, André Nouschi, and André Prenant, *L'Algérie, passé et présent; le cadre et les étapes de la constitution de l'Algérie actuelle* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1960), 74.
[85] Lacoste, "L'Afrique du Nord centrale du Ier siècle avant J.-C. au VIIIe siècle," in ibid., 100.

punctuated by political crises but also characterized by an economic abundance attributable, in Lacoste's view, to the Maghreb's role in trans-Saharan trade routes that brought Sudanese gold to the region.[86]

The fourteenth-century Maghreb, Lacoste argued, saw a "general crisis" resulting from the declining importance of trade hubs like Sijilmassa, in present-day Morocco, as the Sudanese routes were redirected through West Africa. Lacoste dedicated a chapter of *Ibn Khaldun* to this crisis, arguing that while Ibn Khaldun had vividly described its political consequences, he had mistakenly attributed the mounting taxes and resulting civic unrest that characterized this moment to "increased expenditures rather than… a decrease in revenue."[87] Although Ibn Khaldun had recognized the extensive, "general" character of this crisis, his tendency to ignore "the particular in favor of the general" led him to lose sight of "important transformation[s]" such as the dissolution of the gold trade and the spread of Islamic orthodoxy. The latter phenomenon, Lacoste argued, corresponded to a decline of the competing heterodoxies that had once "enabled the states [of the Maghreb] to impose a common superstructure upon a heterogeneous group of

[86] The source of Lacoste's claims about the importance of Sudanese gold to the medieval North African economy, which would be central to his arguments in *Ibn Khaldun*, was Maurice Lombard, "Les bases monétaires d'une suprématie économique: L'or musulman du VIIe au XIe siècle," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 2, no. 2 (1947): 143–60.

[87] "En effet pour Ibn Khaldoun les difficultés financières des Etats ne résultent pas tant d'une réduction de leurs ressources budgétaires que d'une augmentation de leurs dépenses." Lacoste went on to point out that this argument contradicted Ibn Khaldun's own claim that "spending was higher when the kingdoms were at their height"—i.e., Lacoste argues at the beginning of the chapter, during the eleventh- and twelfth-century reigns of the Almoravid and Almohad empires—"than during the period of decadence": "Cependant, aux dires mêmes d'Ibn Khaldoun, les dépenses effectuées lorsque les royaumes sont à leur apogée sont supérieures à celles qu'ils font à l'époque de décadence et ces fortes dépenses sont couvertes sans qu'il faille opprimer et rançonner la population : « le sultan et ses officiers ne vivent dans l'opulence qu'à l'époque où l'empire est dans la période intermédiaire de son existence »." Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldoun*, 116; 86. The quotation from Ibn Khaldun that Lacoste gives here (from the French de Slane translation) is a section heading from the third chapter of *Muqaddimah*, vol. 2, 97 ("The ruler and his entourage are wealthy only in the middle (period) of the dynasty").

tribes."[88] Elsewhere in the book Lacoste argues that Ibn Khaldun himself was taken in by this "religious reaction," which accounted in part for the apparent duality—at once religious and rationalist—of his perspective in some passages of the *Muqaddimah*.[89]

Lacoste's argument in *Ibn Khaldun* occasionally shades into orientalist condescension: misled by religious ideology and his own class interests, Ibn Khaldun could not accurately perceive the decisive historical forces that shaped his era. Similar judgments informed Lacoste's praise of Ibn Khaldun for exposing the long-term, "internal causes" of the Maghreb's underdevelopment: namely, the persistence of a rigid, tribal social structure, which made "any private appropriation of the means of production" impossible and prevented the "privileged minority" from becoming a proper ruling class.[90] The central Khaldunian concept in this regard was *asabiya*, which Lacoste described as "a form of military democracy which appears when a de facto aristocracy

[88] "Son désir d'écarter le particulier pour établir la généralité l'a conduit à faire abstraction d'une autre transformation importante : La plupart des dynasties qui se sont succédées en Afrique du Nord du IXe siècle au XIVe, le royaume de Tahert, comme celui des Idrissides, l'empire des Fatimides, celui des Almoravides comme celui des Almohades, ont, chacun, été formés, certes par l'action conquérante d'une tribu ou d'un groupe de tribus, mais aussi grâce au ciment qui découlait d'une spécificité religieuse, en regard de l'orthodoxie ou d'une autre tendance heterodoxe. Dans des temps où la religion exerçait une influence primordiale, le particularisme idéologique fournissait à chacun de ces Etats le moyen d'imposer une superstructure commune à un agrégat de tribus." Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldoun*, 120; 89.

As evidence that Ibn Khaldun "may have sensed, however vaguely, that a major change was taking place" ("Ibn Khaldoun cependant a peut-être eu vaguement le pressentiment d'un changement grave" [ibid., 119; 88]), Lacoste cites a passage in which Ibn Khaldun explains his reasons for writing a universal history: "When there is a general change of conditions, it is as if the entire creation had changed and the whole world had been altered, as if it were a new and repeated creation, a world brought into existence anew. Therefore, there is need at this time that someone should systematically set down the situation of the world among all regions and races, as well as the customs and sectarian beliefs that have changed for their adherents, doing for this age what al-Mas'ûdî did for his." *Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, 65.

[89] Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldoun*, 241-57; 181-93.

[90] "L'analyse qu'a réalisée Ibn Khaldoun permet de comprendre que l'essor économique et social du Maghreb a été paralysé non par des facteurs extérieurs ou fortuits mais par des causes internes ; il s'agit d'un blocage structurel qui tient, pour ce qui est de l'Afrique du Nord, au maintien de la prépondérance des structures tribales et à ses deux corollaires : l'impossibilité d'une appropriation privative des moyens de production et l'incapacité des privilégiés à se constituer en une classe nettement individualisée et à placer la population dans un état de dépendance durable." Ibid., 262-63; 197 (translation modified).

emerges in a tribal community."[91] *Asabiya* was an "eminently dialectical concept" that allowed Ibn Khaldun to highlight the medieval North African state's basic internal contradiction: such a state could only be established by a tribe with *asabiya*, but as the state centralized and consolidated its power, the tribe's sense of *asabiya* would be destroyed.[92] Seen in this way, *asabiya* represented "the transition from a classless to a class society…. As the power of the aristocracy grows, it becomes a class whose interests are in contradiction with those of other members of the tribe, and tribal structures begin to break up," a process which "marks the beginning of a transition towards a more progressive and more highly developed mode of production."[93] Inasmuch as this process was incomplete, however, the Maghreb remained backward and Ibn Khaldun's ideas correspondingly limited.

Lacoste wrote in his conclusion that by showing how medieval Maghrebi society failed to develop the sort of class structure that characterized modern capitalism, Ibn Khaldun had revealed the "older causes" of underdevelopment, a subject Lacoste had considered from a more general perspective in previous work.[94] In *Les pays sous-*

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[91] "L'asabiya, forme de la démocratie militaire, apparaît lorsqu'une aristocratie de fait est en mesure de se constituer au sein d'une communauté tribale." Ibid., 151; 112.

[92] "L'apparition de l'Etat, grâce à la victoire d'une tribu conquérante, implique la dislocation de la structure tribale. C'est cette contradiction interne qui provoque la faiblesse congénitale des Etats nord-africains. Le concept d'asabiya est donc éminemment dialectique." Ibid., 155-56; 116.

[93] "L'asabiya est la structure socio-politique qui marque le passage de la société sans classe à la société de classe : l'aristocratie tribale n'a de pouvoir que dans la mesure où elle est encore intégrée dans les structures égalitaires. Plus les pouvoirs de cette aristocratie se renforcent, plus elle apparaît comme une classe dont les intérêts sont en contradiction avec celui des autres membres de la tribu, et plus les structures tribales se disloquent. Cette dislocation provoque dans une certaine mesure un renforcement de la classe privilégiée : elle commence à établir son autorité sur des clients qui deviennent des vassaux, et commence à s'approprier certains moyens de production (terres, bétail). Cette décomposition des structures tribales est dans une certaine mesure progressiste puisque c'est le commencement du passage à un mode de production plus efficace et plus évolué." Ibid., 156; 116.

[94] "Elle [i.e., underdevelopment] est apparue, en gros, au XXe siècle. Mais elle résulte d'une combinaison de causes plus ou moins récentes : les unes, décisives, résultent du phénomène colonial ; les autres, beaucoup plus anciennes, doivent être recherchées dans le passé lointain des pays qui sont devenus sous-développés." Ibid., 262; 197.

développés (Underdeveloped countries, 1959), Lacoste described underdevelopment as the outcome of European countries' imposition, usually through colonialism, of modern technologies (particularly modern medicine) on countries trapped in precapitalist socioeconomic equilibria that a colonial presence reinforced by lending support to the "privileged minority" responsible for impeding further development.[95] The resulting disparity between high birth rates, relatively low mortality rates, and low productive output (the result, in turn, of the internal market's inability to absorb industrial production due to rampant poverty and unemployment) was the fundamental source, he argued, of the Third World's woes.

Lacoste's work on Ibn Khaldun thus encourages the reader to draw parallels between the fourteenth-century crisis the great historian described but could not (according to Lacoste) fully understand and the crisis of underdevelopment in what had recently become known as the Third World. By this logic, Lacoste and other Western social scientists would be better equipped than Ibn Khaldun before them to diagnose (and thus, perhaps, help solve) the problem of underdevelopment, which could only be recognized and named as such once the ideological distortions Lacoste attributed to Ibn Khaldun were overcome. Crucially, however, Lacoste argued that it was necessary to see underdevelopment as a historical condition rather than as an unsurpassable, "eternal reality."[96] This was the core of Lacoste's argument for Ibn Khaldun's contemporary

[95] "*Le sous-développement procède fondamentalement de l'intrusion du système capitaliste au sein de sociétés ankylosées dans des structures sociales moins évoluées, au profit d'une minorité (étrangère ou autochtone) politiquement et économiquement privilégiée.*" Yves Lacoste, *Les pays sous-développés* (1959; repr., Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1966), 76; emphasis in the original.

[96] In a 1969 lecture in Algiers, Lacoste made a particularly strong case for a historical approach to underdevelopment (underdevelopment as a "historical step" "preceded by a certain evolution"), which he distinguished from the view of underdevelopment as an "eternal reality" of certain countries; or the economistic view of underdevelopment as a quantitative difference in the productive levels of rich and poor nations: "Vouloir aborder le problème en posant la question du sous-développement, en terme d'antériorité ou de postérité, c'est à dire, avant et après le sous-développement implique évidemment une hypothèse, c'est à dire que le sous-développement n'est à mon sens ni une réalité éternelle, qui remonterait des fins

relevance, which he developed further in the book's second half by positioning him as the progenitor of a scientific approach to history and, in particular, a kind of historical materialism.

Ibn Khaldun was frequently cited by subsequent authors whose interest in Ibn Khaldun stemmed, like Lacoste's, from a desire to refute colonial narratives (to which they nonetheless, perhaps, remained bound) and promote social and economic progress in newly independent North African nations. Among these authors, Abdelkébir Khatibi was perhaps unique in combining a critical examination of Ibn Khaldun's basic conceptual categories with an analysis of contemporary historical and sociological works on the Maghreb, including Lacoste's. Khatibi thus sought to critically dismantle the sociological concepts that had been used to understand the region in order to pave the way for a new social history that would be more faithful to what he called the "flexible arrangement of social structures in the Maghreb, characterized by an open process of social mobility and a non-solidification of class structures."[97] I now consider Khatibi's arguments in detail, focusing on his reading of Ibn Khaldun.

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fonds de l'histoire, ni simplement un écart quantitatif, mais une étape historique, qui a été précédée par une certaine évolution, et qui, lorsque cette étape historique se trouve franchie – nous verrons comment et pourquoi – conduit à une situation qualitativement différente. En prenant une démarche d'historien, il est possible d'avoir une conception du sous-développement qui est assez différente de celles que je vous ai en quelques mots esquissées, au risque évidemment de les caricaturer." Yves Lacoste, *Avant et après le sous-développement* (Alger: Centre francais de documentation scientifique, technique et économique, 1969), 1.

[97] The context of this statement was a critique of Lacoste's book: "Cette analyse de Lacoste – comme bien d'autres – est perplexe devant l'agencement très souple des structures sociales au Maghreb, agencement caractérisé par un processus de mobilité sociale ouverte et une non-solidification d'une structure de classe." Abdelkébir Khatibi, "Hiérarchies pré-coloniales : les théories," *Bulletin économique et social du Maroc*, no. 120–121 (1971), 46.

ABDELKÉBIR KHATIBI ON IBN KHALDUN AND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF SOCIOLOGY

In his 1967 assessment of Moroccan sociology, Khatibi lamented that Western orientalists had tended to treat Ibn Khaldun as a historian and not a social theorist.[98] Yet although he would maintain his interest in forging a new, "decolonized" sociology in the years that followed, Khatibi would increasingly stress the importance of history to this project. To some extent, then, his sentiments in his theoretical writings on sociology echoed those of Lacoste in *Ibn Khaldun*, or perhaps even those of the founders of the *Annales* school, who had begun to promote a sociohistorical method informed by the social sciences in the 1920s. Khatibi, however, tended to stress the novelty of the approach he advocated, central to which would be a "double critique" applied equally to Western and Arab knowledge and attempting to understand their connection. This, Khatibi wrote, would lead to a "restructuring of the social sciences."[99]

We might think of double critique as Khatibi's adaptation of Jacques Derrida's deconstructive critique of Western philosophy to the particular historical situation of the postcolonial Arab world.[100] Just as Derrida sought to demonstrate the priority of difference and the play of language to the singular being at the heart of Western metaphysics, Khatibi argued that Arab being was inherently plural. To "decolonize" Arab thought and culture, it was necessary to think with the differences that made Arab being unique, including both the European influence imposed through colonization and precolonial tradition. In Khatibi's view, deconstructive critique *was* decolonization insofar as it could

[98] "Certes, les orientalistes du Maghreb connaissaient l'importance de l'oeuvre khaldounienne qui était souvent citée comme une source fondamentale, mais Ibn Khaldoun était considéré avant tout comme un historien." Khatibi, *Bilan*, 9.
[99] "La double critique entraîne une restructuration des sciences sociales." Khatibi, "Sociologie du monde arabe," 8.
[100] A useful account of Khatibi's conception of double critique, which informs my discussion here, is Abdesslam Benabdelali, *Abdelkebir Khatibi: l'étranger professionnel* (Casablanca: Centre culturel du livre, 2019), 14-55.

foster the emergence of new ways of being and of understanding North African culture and history. In this section, I will focus on Khatibi's pursuit of this critical project through his writings on Ibn Khaldun.

In a 1971 article on theories of "precolonial hierarchy," Khatibi proposed to reread Ibn Khaldun in the framework of double critique.[101] The article, Khatibi wrote at the outset, was part of a research project "on social classes in Morocco, whose problematic is centered on the question: what is the *subject* of history?"[102] He approached this problem by considering how various historical theories of precolonial North African society, starting with Ibn Khaldun's, were themselves historically situated and ideologically inflected. In this way he hoped to avoid the "theoretical deficiency" he attributed to Arab thinkers whose "return to Ibn Khaldun" threatened to devolve into a "wild affirmation of identity" and to "fetishize" history rather than critically interrogating it.[103] Ibn Khaldun himself was of interest, on the other hand, because he "considered his fundamental project to be a discourse on history"—one completed, furthermore, at a particularly "decisive" historical moment, occupying "a strategic position" in histories of the Islamic Arab world.[104]

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[101] This article was reprinted Khatibi's *Maghreb pluriel* (Paris: Denoël, 1983) under the heading "Double critique," alongside an essay on the "decolonization of sociology." According to Khatibi's editorial note, the latter piece was written in 1974 and significantly revised for republication; it seems to be a version of "Sociologie du monde arabe," discussed below.

[102] "Cette étude fait partie d'une recherche sur les classes sociales au Maroc, dont la problématique est centrée sur la question de savoir quel est le *sujet* de l'histoire." Khatibi, "Hiérarchies pré-coloniales," 27. Among the "studies in course" listed in Khatibi's earlier study of Moroccan sociology was his own "principal thesis" on "Stratification et classes sociales au Maroc." Khatibi, *Bilan*, 55. This was presumably the work he referred to here.

[103] "L'on peut se demander à juste titre si ce retour à Ibn Khaldûn ne se transforme pas en un simple rituel, et si cette paternité dévoyée que les penseurs arabes revendiquent ne trahirait pas une certaine carence théorique. Les discours parasites qu'on développe sur lui ne relèveraient-ils que d'une sauvage affirmation de l'identité?

"Sans doute l'histoire, en tant que praxis et que connaissance, n'échappe pas dans nos pays à une telle fétichisation." Khatibi, "Hiérarchies pré-coloniales," 27.

[104] After claiming that "the Khaldunian system is at the heart of our debate" ("le système khaldûnien est au coeur de notre débat") in the postcolonial Arab world about the nature and status of history, Khatibi added:

Khatibi argued that the *Muqaddimah* opened itself to two interrelated readings. Ibn Khaldun's intellectual project was premised on his recognition of a world-historical crisis that led, in his words, to a "general change of conditions" in light of which a radical reconception of history became necessary.[105] Yet insofar as Ibn Khaldun saw this crisis as at once "a historical product and a warning from God," his work also called for a reading alert to its "polyphonic structure (voice of God, voice of man…)."[106] Unlike scholars who sought to make particular concepts or conceptual pairs—*asabiya* or *badawa*/*hadara*—central to a Khaldunian dialectics, Khatibi focused on the tensions and contradictions inherent to Ibn Khaldun's work, which combined "a structural method of exposition" that was purely rational or scientific and a cyclical conception of historical time that was basically theological.[107]

The result was "conceptual instability," which Khatibi highlighted with particular reference to *asabiya*. "Many definitions" of this concept could be found, "but these are

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"Justement en ceci que ce penseur considère son projet fondamental comme un discours sur l'histoire – d'où, à notre avis, son actualité." And: "Les historiens du monde arabe et musulman sont unanimes pour donner à cette époque [i.e., the fourteenth century] une position stratégique dans l'histoire de ces pays. Époque décisive donc." Ibid., 28.

[105] *Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, 65. Cf. my discussion, above, of Lacoste on the fourteenth-century "general crisis" of North African society.

[106] "Il va plus loin, déclarant que cette rupture n'est pas un fait du hasard et qu'elle est elle-même un produit historique et un avertissement de Dieu, l'un et l'autre étant liés dans la même dialectique khaldûnienne." Further on: "C'est là l'intérêt d'une deuxième lecture qui s'attacherait à dégager le système signifiant dans lequel se produit la progression du discours, sa structure polyphonique (voix de Dieu, voix de l'homme…)." Khatibi, "Hiérarchies pré-coloniales," 29.

[107] "En adoptant une méthode d'exposition structurelle, faisant précéder chaque chapitre par un titre-théorème, l'auteur introduit une méthode qui rompt avec le discours linéaire de l'histoire, il rompt avec l'historiographie généalogique et narrative." According to Khatibi, Ibn Khaldun treated the "social system" he wrote about as "a signifying ensemble": "L'ambition d'Ibn Khaldûn est d'avoir voulu construire, par la théorie du temps cyclique, un système social, comme un ensemble signifiant, mettant à jour l'interdépendance des sous-systèmes sociaux et la tension entre les différentes instances." Ibid., 30.

Despite this echo of the structuralist method, inspired by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, of approaching society, history, or humanity *tout court* as expressions of the resonances and oppositions encoded in closed symbolic systems, Khatibi explicitly denied any similarity between Ibn Khaldun and the structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, writing that the former "remains above all a theoretician of macro-history." ("Bien que la pensée khaldûnienne se prête à une certaine analyse structurelle, Ibn Khaldûn demeure après tout un théoricien de la macro-histoire." Ibid., 31n6.)

obviously only pertinent by virtue of their position in a regional textual structure (a chapter for example)."[108] *Asabiya,* that is, took on different meanings at different points in Ibn Khaldun's work. If his cyclical theory conceived of history as the "degraded repetition" of an initial, utopian model (i.e., "the message of Muhammad"), and if *asabiya* was this history's "motor," then it could only "exist in its purity in the 'wildest' tribal system (that is, the closest to the state of nature), the only one endowed with strong cohesion, strict endogamy, egalitarian balance, and values based on military violence (courage, honor, refusal to submit)."[109] But if *asabiya* stood for a kind of primordial tribal nobility, it inevitably became corrupted with the accession of desert-dwelling Bedouin tribes to urbanized royal authority. Ostensibly "pure" tribal bloodlines would then be falsified, mythified. Khatibi argued that this meant *asabiya* had to be considered "at two levels: in its literal definition" (as, in Ibn Khaldun's words, the product of a "blood relationship or something corresponding to it"[110]), "and at a systematic level through which Ibn Khaldun constructs a *model of reference*, 'because,' he writes, 'lineage is a supposition, and not a reality.'"[111] Ibn Khaldun created, and used, sociological categories

[108] "L'instabilité conceptuelle en est la preuve" of the "complex toll [*facture complexe*]" exacted by Ibn Khaldun's "decentering" of historical time. "On peut recenser par exemple plusieurs définitions de la *'açabiyya*, mais celles-ci ne sont évidemment pertinentes que dans leur position dans une structure régionale du texte (un chapitre par exemple)." Ibid., 30.

[109] "Cette théorie cyclique n'est intelligible qu'en tant que mode dégradé de l'histoire. Ibn Khaldûn se réfère sans cesse au modèle initial: le message de Muhammad." And: "En effet, la *'açabiyya* (solidarité socio-agnatique) dont Ibn Khaldûn fait le moteur de l'histoire, n'existe dans sa pureté que dans le système tribal le plus « ensauvagé » (entendez le plus proche de l'état de nature), le seul qui soit doté d'une forte cohésion, d'une endogamie stricte, d'un équilibre égalitaire, et d'un ensemble de valeurs basées sur la violence militaire (courage, honneur, refus de se soumettre)." Ibid., 32.

[110] "Group feeling results only from (blood) relationship or something corresponding to it." *Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, 264.

[111] "Il faudra la considérer à deux niveaux: dans sa définition littérale quand la *'açabiyya* prend force dans un lignage endogame, un lignage pur et une généalogie non truquée, et à un niveau systématique par lequel Ibn Khaldûn construit un *modèle de référence*, « car, écrit-il, le lignage est une supposition, et non une réalité. »" Khatibi, "Hiérarchies pré-coloniales," 35; emphasis in the original. In Rosenthal's translation, the quotation Khatibi gives here reads: "For a pedigree is something imaginary and devoid of reality." *Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, 265.

to interpret history, but also showed how the flux of history tended to erode or undermine these concepts' initial meanings.[112]

Khatibi's reading of Ibn Khaldun was both continuous with his efforts to "decolonize" Moroccan sociology and marked by a certain valorization of history. He wrote, for example, that "rethinking Maghrebi history at once outside of the Khaldunian system and against colonial historiography" could amount to a kind of "decolonization of history." Historicizing Ibn Khaldun's thought rather than taking it as a definitive explanatory model to be applied to the present would allow for a clearer understanding of "the specific movement of the Maghreb's social structures."[113] It was in this same spirit that he went on to consider the Marxist and Durkheimian approaches to North African sociology. These theories and Ibn Khaldun's "are in agreement that each society elaborates a system of classification that tends somehow to solidify the social structure," a useful claim insofar as it "renders useless any discussion of the existence or nonexistence of classes in the precolonial Maghreb."[114] Yet when these theories were

[112] Another way to put this might be that, as Khatibi's contemporary Ali Umlil argued in his Sorbonne thesis, Ibn Khaldun narrowed the gap between "history and its discourse." Ali Umlil, *L'Histoire et son discours : essai sur la méthodologie d'Ibn Khaldoun* (Rabat: Editions techniques nord-africaines, 1979).
[113] "Et l'on ne peut qu'être d'accord avec Laroui quand il appelle à repenser l'histoire maghrébine à la fois en dehors du système khaldûnien et contre l'historiographie coloniale. Cette double tâche est d'importance épistémologique : il s'agit de décoloniser l'histoire, de restituer le système khaldûnien dans l'épistémé arabe classique, afin d'analyser celui-ci comme un produit historique ; cette double tâche permettrait de dégager plus nettement le mouvement spécifique des structures sociales du Maghreb, et des articulations hiérarchiques qui s'y imbriquent." Khatibi agrees, here, with Laroui's arguments in his *History of the Maghrib* about, in Khatibi's words, the tendency of Arab historiography to become "a narrative [as opposed to critical] discourse legitimating the ruling class" during the period of "decadence": "A. Laroui a bien décrit comment l'historiographie arabe se domestique en se séparant de l'analyse critique, et comment elle devient un discours narratif et de légitimation de la classe dirigeante…" Ibid., 39-40. The original passage is in Laroui, *L'histoire du Maghreb*, 212; 227-28. Cf. my discussion in the previous chapter of Laroui's and Khatibi's intellectual and political disagreements in a different context.
[114] "Ces trois théories qui se veulent résolument objectives s'accordent pour dire que toute société élabore un système de classification qui tend à solidifier en quelque sorte la structure sociale. Décision logique d'importance, parce qu'elle rend inutile toute discussion sur l'existence (ou l'inexistence des classes) dans le Maghreb pré-colonial." Khatibi, "Hiérarchies pré-coloniales," 42. As we saw above, however—and as Khatibi would go on to acknowledge—Marxist theories of precapitalist or "primitive" societies often claimed that these societies lacked true class structures.

applied to or seen in the light of North African history, ambiguities inevitably crept in. Thus, for example: "By insisting on categories originating in capitalist economics (private property, means of production…), Marxism loses sight of the progressive-regressive movement of the tribal system."[115] As for the Durkheimian theory of Kabylia as a "segmentary" society lacking a unified power structure, Khatibi argued that it "liquidates history through its ignorance (?) of the specific evolution of the Maghreb, where centralized states existed and intervened directly in the tribal organization."[116]

Although Khatibi wrote that his critique of theories of precolonial social hierarchy was to be followed by a historical study of "the different hierarchical systems that animated precolonial Morocco," this work was apparently never completed.[117] Instead, Khatibi's next contribution to the *Bulletin économique et social du Maroc*, where the precolonial hierarchies piece was published and of which Khatibi was editor in chief, was "Sociologie du monde arabe : positions," a short article in which he again stressed the necessity of bringing critical historical analysis to bear on sociological categories. "The essential task of the sociology of the Arab world" was, he wrote, "leading a work of double critique" through the deconstruction of sociological concepts "marked by a Western predominance and an ethnocentric ideology," on one hand; and on other, "a critique of the knowledge and discourses elaborated by the different societies of the Arab world about themselves." This meant recognizing that concepts were "historical facts, structured according to a particular thought and particular events" and "inscribed in

[115] "Le marxisme, en insistant sur des catégories issues de l'économie capitaliste (propriété privée, moyens de production…) laisse échapper le mouvement progressif-régressif du système tribal." Ibid., 49. Unlike Lacoste, whose work he discussed here, Khatibi doubted that the concept of the Asiatic mode could be useful to the analysis of precolonial North African history.

[116] "Et surtout la théorie durkheimienne liquide l'histoire, par l'ignorance (?) de l'évolution spécifique du Maghreb où des Etats centralisés ont existé et sont intervenus directement dans l'organisation tribale." Ibid., 53.

[117] "On trouvera dans ce premier article la discussion théorique, et dans la deuxième partie, qui paraîtra par la suite, une analyse des différents systèmes hiérarchiques qui animent le Maroc pré-colonial." Ibid., 27.

discourses with their own logic, developed not only through borrowings from one or another science but a transformational game between history, science, and ideology."[118] As an example of a concept weaving together history, science, and ideology he invoked Ibn Khaldun's *asabiya*, noting that it was often used by "Arab sociologists and orientalists" and arguing that the "contradiction between religious and historical ontology" that the concept emblematized was "lived dramatically" in "Arab nationalist practice, politically as well as intellectually [*dans le savoir*]."[119]

Khatibi's discussion of the deconstruction of sociology through double critique raises, and complicates, the question of theory's relationship to politics. Khatibi approvingly quoted Derrida to the effect that the "problem of a discourse inheriting the concepts necessary to deconstruct this heritage" was an "economic and strategic problem."[120] "There is," Khatibi went on to write, "an economy and a strategy in every

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[118] "La tâche essentielle de la sociologie du monde arabe consiste à mener un double travail critique :

"a) une déconstruction des concepts issus du savoir et des discours sociologiques qui ont parlé à la place du monde arabe, et qui sont marqués par une prédominance occidentale et une idéologie ethnocentriste,

"b) et en même temps une critique du savoir et des discours élaborés par les différentes sociétés du monde arabe sur elles-mêmes."

Further on: "Ceux-ci [i.e., sociological concepts] sont des faits historiques, ils se structurent par rapport à une pensée particulière et des événements particuliers, dans l'espace et dans le temps; ils s'inscrivent dans des discours possédant leur propre logique, et se développant non seulement par des emprunts d'une science à une autre, mais par un jeu transformationnel entre histoire, science et idéologie." Khatibi, "Sociologie du monde arabe," 1.

[119] "Les sociologues arabes ou les orientalistes emploient souvent la notion de açabiyya (solidarité socio-agnatique) empruntée à Ibn Khaldûn…. Le débat sous-jacent [i.e., regarding the questions of whether a 'pensée dialectique' could 'intégrer des notions anti-dialectiques' and whether the concept of *asabiya* could be 'facilement transposable dans celle de la lutte des classes'] est bel et bien celui de la contradiction entre une ontologie religieuse et une ontologie historique, entre une idéologie à fondement théologique et une idéologie qui considère les classes sociales comme le sujet de l'histoire. La pratique nationaliste arabe, aussi bien dans le politique que dans le savoir, vit dramatiquement cette contradiction." Ibid., 3.

[120] "Il s'agit de poser expressément et systématiquement le problème du statut d'un discours empruntant à un héritage les ressources nécessaires à la déconstruction de cet héritage lui-même. Problème d'*économie* et de *stratégie*." Ibid. The quotation is from Jacques Derrida, "La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines," in *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Ed. Seuil, 1967), 414; *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 282 (translation modified).

sociological discourse."[121] Moreover, the postcolonial critique of sociology was, in a sense, violent: "For us, sociological discourse can only be a *violent practice*…. Violence of rupture with Western cultural domination and overcoming our entropic force."[122] Above all, however, Khatibi advocated the creation of a new scientific language based on a "hierarchy of strategic poles": privileging history over "any purely synchronic thought" (such as ethnology) and "sociohistorical discourse" over "any form of functionalism"; and creating "conceptual tools" in Arabic (while also "integrating… the difference of other linguistic codes"). On the connection between this scientific project and on-the-ground politics Khatibi was vague, affirming merely that "cultural domination is linked to political and economic domination, even though each possesses its own instances, its own movement."[123] Seemingly absent from this text, aside from scattered hints or traces,[124] was Khatibi's earlier interest in class structures.

Khatibi's effort to renovate Moroccan sociology, begun after he finished his studies in Paris and returned to Morocco in 1964, came to an abrupt end not long after the

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[121] "Il y a donc dans tout discours sociologique une économie et une stratégie." Khatibi, "Sociologie du monde arabe," 4.

[122] "Pour nous, le discours sociologique ne peut être qu'une *pratique violente*, prenant en charge l'histoire, l'idéologie et la science. Violence de rupture avec la domination culturelle occidentale, et dépassement de notre force entropique." Ibid., 5; emphasis in the original.

[123] "La double critique consiste en conséquence à opposer à l'épistémé occidentale le dehors tout en le théorisant, à radicaliser la marge, et à inscrire cet écart non seulement dans un discours linguistiquement arabe (condition cruciale pour marquer cet écart), mais à développer de proche en proche une langue scientifique spécifique, qui effacerait le simple mécanisme de traduction.

"En d'autres termes, il y a une hiérarchie de pôles stratégiques à établir:

"a) Privilégier l'histoire (définie ci-dessus) contre tout savoir purement synchronique. Ce privilège entraîne la dissolution de l'ethnologie (pour ne prendre que cet exemple)….

"b) Cela suppose aussi la primauté du discours socio-historique contre toute forme de fonctionnalisme qui, nous le savons prédomine royalement en sciences sociales.

"c) Il devient urgent et nécessaire d'instituer des appareils conceptuels conçus selon le code de la langue arabe…. Ceci ne veut pas dire la méconnaissance de langues étrangères. Au contraire, nous pensons qu'une nouvelle langue scientifique en arabe ne pourra être promue que si elle intègre dans ses discours, la différence d'autres codes linguistiques." Ibid., 8-9.

[124] For example, he cited Marx as a source of inspiration in his call to prioritize history: "Marx nous avertit: « Nous ne connaissons qu'une seule science, celle de l'histoire »." Ibid., 9.

publication of the texts examined here.[125] Frustrated with the strictures placed on political activism and university teaching by Hassan II's regime, Khatibi would turn his efforts increasingly to literature. If he thus perhaps fits the profile of the postcolonial Arab intellectual disillusioned with revolutionary politics,[126] it is far from certain that his embrace of Derrida's ideas can be attributed to this shift.[127] Khatibi's deconstructive critique of Moroccan sociology—which, as I have tried to suggest, substituted a concern with the history of the Maghreb for Derrida's investment in the history of philosophy—was anything but apolitical. It seems, rather, to express the sense of radical possibility that characterized the moment of decolonization—a context in which Ibn Khaldun ceased to be a symbol of historical decadence and became emblematic, instead, of political hope and intellectual vigor.

CONCLUSION

Khatibi's and Lacoste's differing attitudes toward the postcolonial moment shaped their understandings of Ibn Khaldun's ideas and historical significance. For Lacoste, decolonization and the modernization of the Third World were historical inevitabilities blocked, however, by underdevelopment, a condition whose historical and sociological vicissitudes Ibn Khaldun could, he argued, help contemporary readers

[125] Jebari, "The Other Khatibi," 157-58.

[126] On this phenomenon see, for example, Fadi Bardawil, *Revolution and Disenchantment: Arab Marxism and the Binds of Emancipation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), esp. chapter 5 (on the Lebanese intellectual and militant Waddah Charara's disillusionment with Marxism and subsequent embrace of Ibn Khaldun). Cf. my discussion, in the previous chapter, of Laroui's apparent disenchantment with the Moroccan left, which Khatibi evidently shared to some extent.

[127] This seems to be Jebari's argument in "The Other Khatibi," where he identifies the 1960s and '70s in Morocco as a brief "Golden Age" of "certitudes and grand narratives" shortly to be abandoned. If Khatibi's project of decolonizing sociology was fed by the utopian hopes of this moment, his turn to deconstruction—a critical posture not typically adopted by sociologists—was perhaps a mark of disappointment or failure. This analysis brings to mind Perry Anderson's argument that post-'68 French philosophy represents a retreat from socialist politics: Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (London: Verso, 1983).

understand. Khatibi's emphasis on the subjective or ontological dimensions of the colonial encounter led him, in contrast, to focus on this encounter's distorting effects on any contemporary understanding of North African society, including one inspired by Ibn Khaldun. If both thinkers imagined a future for the postcolonial Third World that did not necessarily resemble its past, Khatibi's emphasis on the simultaneous interconnection and difference of Western and Arab cultures seems to preclude any linear, progressive conception of this future.

"To overcome the colonial vision of science," Khatibi wrote in 1967, "a colossal effort [*travail*] awaits historians wishing to give national culture its true significance [*dimension*], that of a continuity concealed and broken by the colonial system."[128] In light of my discussion above, it seems fair to say that where Ibn Khaldun was concerned, this would mean recognizing and analyzing his contributions without exaggerating or monumentalizing them.[129] The valorization of Ibn Khaldun as the great precursor to modern sociology or social history could be read as an ironic consequence of "concealed and broken" historical continuity. Ibn Khaldun, that is, gratified both the colonial need for local knowledge and social-scientific insight and the anticolonial one for evidence that national culture was at once great, historically significant, and unjustly maligned. The juxtaposition of Ibn Khaldun with Montesquieu, Durkheim, Marx, or any number of others resulted both from the historical nexus between colonialism and social science

[128] "Pour dépasser la vision de la science coloniale, un travail colossal attend les historiens qui désirent donner à la culture nationale sa vraie dimension, celle d'une continuité cachée et brisée par le système colonial." Khatibi, *Bilan*, 9.

[129] Khatibi would later criticize along these lines "Arab researchers" whose work focused uncritically on their own cultural patrimony: "Nombreux, trop nombreux sont les chercheurs arabes qui travaillent à lire et à relire ce patrimoine (*tourāth*) transformant « les documents en monuments » comme le dit Michel Foucault." Khatibi, *Maghreb pluriel*, 62. Khatibi seems to refer, here, to Foucault's Nietzschean reflections on the shifting status of historical documents in his introduction to *L'archéologie du savoir* (1969).

and, relatedly, a polyvalent fantasy or myth whose underlying realities remained to be uncovered.

Another crucial task was, in the words of the Algerian historian Mohammed Arkoun, to "situate the personality of Ibn Khaldun and the *ensemble* of his work *in fourteenth-century Islamic culture and civilization*." Reviewing Vincent Monteil's 1968 translation of the *Muqaddimah*, Arkoun went on to write that "Arabists and arabophones still await the Lucien Febvre who will write *Ibn Khaldun: A Destiny* or *The Religion of Ibn Khaldun*"—references to the pioneering French historian's *Martin Luther, un destin* (1928) and *La religion de Rabelais* (1942).[130] It seems likely that both Lacoste and Khatibi would have agreed with this assessment, and their own writings arguably laid the groundwork for more thoroughgoing efforts in this direction. In addition, however, these texts allow us to ask why, in the 1960s and 1970s, it might have still been difficult or undesirable to complete the sort of work Arkoun advocated.

Khatibi wrote that "founding a new discourse" through double critique would require "infinite patience" and might turn out to be an infinite task.[131] We might nevertheless ask whether the postcolonial conversation about Ibn Khaldun, to the extent that it continued after the moment discussed here, has made progress. It seems possible, at least, to argue otherwise. For example, the introduction to a 1988 volume on *La*

[130] "Un second sujet encore plus grave de méfiance [than the lack of a critical edition of the *Muqaddimah*] réside dans l'absence, à ce jour, d'une monographie qui s'attache résolument à situer la personnalité d'Ibn Khaldûn et l'*ensemble* de son oeuvre *dans la culture et la civilisation musulmanes du XIVe siècle*…. Les arabisants et les arabophones attendent encore un Lucien Febvre qui écrirait « un destin : Ibn Khaldûn », ou « La religion d'Ibn Khaldûn » !" Mohammed Arkoun, "Ibn Khaldun, *Discours sur l'histoire universelle (al-Muqaddima)*," *Annales* 25, no. 3 (1970), 755; emphasis in the original. Monteil's was the first complete French translation of the text since de Slane's *Prolégomènes,* which appeared a century earlier.

[131] "Creuser les deux épistémé, les repenser dans leur processus hisorique et social, ne revient pas à exhumer l'épistémé arabe et tenter de réduire par ce cadavre la vitalité incontestable de l'autre; mettre en pratique ce procès, c'est fonder un nouveau discours, qui ne peut être évidemment pas donné d'emblée ni d'un seul coup, mais par une patience infinie, décentrer les enchaînements théoriques qui circulent autour et en nous. Travail infini sans doute." Khatibi, "Sociologie du monde arabe," 8.

sociologie marocaine contemporaine announced the "beginning of an attempt" to reinterpret and move beyond colonial sociology: precisely the project Khatibi initiated two decades earlier.[132] A more recent article accuses three of Ibn Khaldun's contemporary Arab interpreters, including Laroui, of depending on "Hegelian, Marxian, and Weberian epistemology at the expense of indigenous and native epistemological frameworks" in their writings on the Arab state, which thus (according to the author) suffer from grave misapprehensions.[133]

Khatibi himself criticized the Arab Marxist appropriation of Ibn Khaldun's ideas, writing that the attempt to synthesize the two thinkers introduced "continuity where there is difference."[134] Does this mean that readings of Ibn Khaldun failing to "adapt [their theories] to conform with the time and place of the region and era that is being discussed" are tainted with anachronism or Eurocentrism?[135] Although the thinkers I have discussed in this chapter would undoubtedly have plenty of thoughts to offer in response to this question, it would probably not have occurred to them to abandon any reference to Western authors in their analyses of the North African historian. In other words, while Khatibi's sociological work seems to anticipate postcolonial critiques of the orientalist appropriation of Ibn Khaldun, he maintained the hope that Arab and European thought could be put into productive dialogue. The same was true of Lacoste, whose work

[132] Mekki Bentahar, introduction to *La sociologie marocaine contemporaine : bilan et perspectives* (Rabat: Manšūrāt Kuliyaẗ al-ādāb wa-al-ʿulūm al-insāniyyaẗ bi-al-Ribāṭ, 1988), 10-11.
[133] Ahmed Abozeid, "Re-reading Ibn-Khaldun in the 21st Century: Traveling Theory and the Question of Authority, Legitimacy, and State Violence in the Modern Arab World," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (2021), 150.
[134] "Et de là, aussi, ces efforts inlassables menés avec courage par certains chercheurs arabes pour accorder la rationalité khaldūnienne à la dialectique marxienne, c'est-à-dire pour introduire une continuité là où il y a différence, discontinuité encore impensée, dehors irreductible de langue à langue." Khatibi, *Maghreb pluriel*, 55.
[135] Abozeid, "Re-reading Ibn Khaldun," 149.

nevertheless serves as a reminder of colonial myths' stubborn hold on historical understanding.

Conclusion

"The Renaissance was born of defiance, and therefore it lacked depth, width and sureness of creative instinct. It is the one and only epoch which was more consistent in theory than in performance and… in which theoretically-formulated intention preceded (often enough surpassed) the ability to perform."[1] So begins the short excerpt from Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* published in 1930 in the French art history journal *Formes*: perhaps the first French-language publication of Spengler, whose bestselling work appeared in Weimar Germany more than a decade earlier.[2] In the excerpt, Spengler discusses the ways in which, in his view, the great Renaissance masters Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo violated the spirit of this movement by imbuing their work with the "secret music" of Western culture (as opposed to the "Classical" culture the Renaissance purported to revive). The Renaissance, Spengler wrote elsewhere in *Decline*, was "a protest against the Faustian spirit of the West."[3] As "a simple *counter-movement*," it necessarily "remained dependent upon the forms of the original movement, and represented simply the effect of these upon a hesitant soul."[4] In different ways, Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo overcame this hesitation: "In them the misguided soul is finding its way back to its Faustian starting-points."[5]

It may be impossible to know why Spengler's French translator, Mohand Tazerout, chose to submit this particular excerpt for publication, but it is worth pausing to

[1] Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson, vol. 1: *Form and Actuality*, 2 vols. (New York: Knopf, 1926), 273.
[2] Oswald Spengler, "Les Lauréats de la Renaissance vainqueurs de l'Esprit Renaissant," trans. Mohand Tazerout, *Formes : revue internationale des arts plastiques*, no. 10 (1930): 7–11. Cf. my discussion above, "Publishing Spengler in France," chapter 1.
[3] Spengler, *Decline*, vol. 1, 272.
[4] Ibid., 232.
[5] Ibid., 274.

reflect on the possible meaning of this choice. For Spengler, the idea of cultural renaissance was absurd. According to his philosophy, historical cultures were irreducibly unique, spatially and temporally contingent. They were born and died, but could not be reborn. In contrast, the North African national liberation movements with which Tazerout sympathized drew inspiration from the nineteenth-century Islamic thinkers of the *Nahda* or "awakening": a concept similarly denoting cultural rebirth or renaissance. In addition to the theme of renaissance, the artists Spengler discussed shared with *Nahda* thinkers and North African nationalists this theme's ambiguities. Like the most daring works of Renaissance art, the postcolonial states that emerged in the Maghreb in the wake of decolonization were remarkable for their novelty in relation to the traditions they ostensibly worked to resurrect. What is the significance, then, of the concept of renaissance for an understanding of decolonization?

Of the thinkers discussed in this dissertation, Tazerout is by no means the only one whose work raises this question. As we saw in chapter 3, Abdallah Laroui based his critique of modern Arab thought on Arab "ideologues'" tendency to define themselves negatively in opposition to the West. In optimistic moments, Laroui could hypothesize that a postcolonial "second *Nahda*" might finally break free of Arab ideology's characteristic alienation by attaining the sort of historical consciousness Laroui displayed in his own work.[6] A corollary of this accession to historical consciousness, in his view, would be North Africans' capacity to "conjugate lucidity and effectivity," thought and action.[7] Only through history, that is, could Arab ideologues develop truly realistic analyses of their societies and thus, effective political platforms that would not serve to further widen the historical gap between the Arab world and the West. Laroui depicted

[6] Abdallah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 91. Cf. above, 139.
[7] Abdallah Laroui, *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine* (Paris: François Maspero, 1967), 165. Cf. above, 156.

this gap both as Arab intellectuals' central preoccupation and as a sociological fact whose main symptom was a disjuncture between social being and consciousness. As an example of this, he offered the case of his native Morocco, where "our consciousness floats between past determinations and the call of the future."[8]

Similarly, Spengler described the Renaissance both as a movement in which theory predominated over practice and as "only an ideal, unattainable like all ideals, that floats over the will of a period."[9] Both Spengler and Laroui treated renaissance as an analytical category allowing them to identify a contradiction between the will to forge ahead into the future and a stubborn fixation on the past, seen as an imaginary idyll rather than a space of historical conflict and tension. We can locate a similar dynamic in postcolonial readings of Ibn Khaldun that, in some ways echoing the post-1956 French "return to Marx,"[10] sought a critical historical framework through which to understand the iconic thinker and his work. This project's main aim was to debunk colonial myths about the Maghreb's sociology and history, thereby establishing a firmer basis for political action. A historical examination of the Ibn Khaldun revival reveals, however, that anticolonial politics and colonial epistemology were not mutually exclusive. The self-proclaimed anticolonial *colon* Yves Lacoste, who sought to demystify colonial history but continued to rely on the myths of Ibn Khaldun's singular genius and the Maghreb's centuries-long decadence, exemplifies this tension.

Though I do not wish to exaggerate Spengler's influence or importance, it is interesting to note that recent commentators have detected affinities between his work and post-1968 French thought. According to Jacques Bouveresse, who draws on the arguments of the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, Spengler's relativism and

[8] Ibid., 66. Cf. above, 133.
[9] Spengler, *Decline*, vol. 1, 274.
[10] Henri Lefebvre, "Retour à Marx," *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 25 (1958): 20–37.

denigration of the category of humanity link him to "a variety of Dionysian irrationalism" present in "certain branches of the most recent French philosophy."[11] Although I would not use the category of "Dionysian irrationalism" to describe this connection, the history I recount in this dissertation demonstrates that a certain "decline of the West"—the end, that is, of a global order dominated by European empires, a process that began in the early twentieth century and culminated with postwar decolonization—indeed had profound effects on French thought. One index of these effects might be the connection between the critical interrogation of basic philosophical concepts like truth and reason undertaken by figures like Michel Foucault or Jacques Derrida, on one hand; and on the other, Spengler's historical relativism, which, as we saw in chapter 1, had profound anticolonial resonances.

There are, of course, less circuitous ways of situating my dissertation in twentieth-century French intellectual history. I am thinking, in particular, of the connection, noted by Robert J. C. Young and others, between postcolonial theory and what anglophone scholars call poststructuralism. Young has suggested that "poststructuralism… could be better characterized… as Franco-Maghrebian theory," both because many prominent late-twentieth-century French intellectuals were born or spent time in the Maghreb and because their "theoretical interventions have been actively concerned with the task of undoing the ideological heritage of French colonialism."[12] The latter statement, of course, is also true of postcolonial theory, whose debts to Derrida, Foucault, Roland Barthes, and others are well known. This connection between poststructuralism and postcolonialism extends, I would argue, to the body of thought I have explored here, which is also

[11] Jacques Bouveresse, "La vengeance de Spengler," in *Essais II* (Marseille ; Montréal: Agone ; Comeau & Nadeau, 2001), 86.
[12] Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford, UK ; Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 414. The "Franco-Maghrebian" thinkers Young mentions include Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous, and Louis Althusser, all of whom were born in Algeria.

concerned with "the ideological heritage of French colonialism" and draws connections between France and the Maghreb. However, I would further argue that postcolonial theory and a certain critical philosophy of history have sought not merely to negate or "undo" colonial ideology but to engage in critical dialogue with it. Here we can think, for example, of Laroui's conception of historicism as a distinctly Western mode of thought that nevertheless points the way toward a future that would no longer be defined by Western domination.

One possible conclusion to draw from the complex relationship between colonial ideology and postcolonial theory or the critical philosophy of history is that to a significant extent, postcolonial intellectuals experienced decolonization as a defeat—a failure, that is, to break free of the colonial past. My work would thus seem to vindicate Reinhart Koselleck's observation that "the unique gains in experience imposed upon" history's "vanquished" lead to "insights of lasting duration and, consequently, of greater explanatory power" than the experiences of historical victors.[13] However, my discussion here of the concept of renaissance allows us to refine this observation. Decolonization was not simply a victory or a defeat but a rebirth. The intellectual history of decolonization allows us to reflect on the ways in which historical rebirth and defeat condition one another, creating a subjective perspective we might describe as *renaissant*: in the process of being reborn. Although this term may seem teleological, implying a moment when renaissance will have been fully realized, the experience of the *renaissant* subject, suspended between an imagined past and the indefinite future, equally casts doubt on such an outcome. This type of experience offers various interpretive possibilities. The remoteness from the present of anti- or postcolonial aspirations could

[13] Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 76.

be a license for despair, but it also means that the defeat of these aspirations is not yet an accomplished fact.

It would seem, however, that the "regime of historicity" that defines the present—to borrow François Hartog's term for the relationship to time characteristic of a given historical period—is no longer that of postwar decolonization. According to Hartog, we live in an age of "presentism," in which the past has collapsed onto the present and history has been replaced by memory.[14] Memory indeed seems to have become the dominant mode in which French politicians and intellectuals think about the legacies of French colonialism—and while this memory can and has been studied historically, such studies are inevitably mobilized to political ends, and are sometimes composed with this purpose in mind.[15] Similarly, post- or decolonial scholarship can often seem less concerned with historical understanding as such than a particular aspect of the politics of knowledge production: who is allowed to speak, and who must be silenced as a result.

By emphasizing history's relationship to theory, this dissertation offers reasons to doubt both that memory has replaced history and that historical meaning is determined primarily by historians' racial, ethnic, or national identities. Without denying the importance either of memory or of what might be called the geopolitics of historical knowledge, I would suggest that both of these approaches might be profitably analyzed through the lens of what Hayden White called "the politics of historical interpretation."[16]

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[14] François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*, trans. Saskia Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

[15] An example of this is the French-Algerian historian Benjamin Stora's report, commissioned by France's current president Emmanuel Macron, on Algerian memories of colonization and the war for independence: Benjamin Stora, *France-Algérie, les passions douloureuses* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2021). The relationship of history to memory—and to postcolonial theory—also figured prominently in the historian Henry Laurens's 2021-2022 course at the Collège de France, "Colonial/post colonial, du bon usage des concepts," recordings of which can be found at https://www.college-de-france.fr/agenda/cours/colonialpost-colonial-du-bon-usage-des-concepts-crise-orient-echec-du-nationalisme-arabe-suite.

[16] Hayden White, "The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation," *Critical Inquiry* 9, no. 1 (1982): 113–37.

Such an analysis would shift the emphasis in debates about "presentism" away from history's relationship to contemporary politics and toward the internal politics of the historical discipline. How does the historical profession conceive of theory, and how does this conception determine which methods can be said to generate legitimate historical knowledge? Along these lines, studying historical theory in the context of decolonization might serve a purpose analogous to that of intellectual histories of decolonization that mine the interwar and postwar periods for theories of political organization that challenge the dominance of the nation-state form.[17] The division of the world into nation-states—a historical process related closely to history's establishment and development as an autonomous field—strikes many as untenable in a globalized world. We might say the same for histories offering uncritical depictions of the past "as it actually was."[18] Fortunately, alternatives are ready at hand.

[17] A discussion of some of these works in relation to the problem of presentism can be found in Emma Hunter, "Dialogues between Past and Present in Intellectual Histories of Mid-Twentieth-Century Africa," *Modern Intellectual History*, June 22, 2022, 1–9.

[18] This is the standard translation of the nineteenth-century German historian Leopold von Ranke's "wie es eigentlich gewesen." Peter Novick suggests that Ranke's meaning was more subtle than it appeared to the American historians who adopted it as their credo: "For Ranke the historian's greatest task was to penetrate to 'essences,'" an ambition that "reflected a widespread romantic desire to open oneself to the flow of intuitive perception." And: "All German historians saw Ranke as the antithesis of a non-philosophical empiricism, while American historians venerated him for being precisely what he is not." Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 28.

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