

Thinking the Mediterranean Arena Today

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‘With islam a new world arose on the shores of the Mediterranean. A rupture occurred that has lasted till today.’

Henri Pirenne¹

Summary

In the name of a historical realism that implies a philosophy of history yet to be validated, should we assume that any attempt to explore or reactivate the question of meaning, which is so alive in the Mediterranean arena, is doomed to capsizе among spiritualist imaginings, idealistic speculation, nostalgic reminiscences? Or, despite the triumphant march of a globalization bereft of a humanistic project, can we identify, in the Mediterranean history of thought and culture, stances of reason, objectives from the mind, works of creative imagination, the words of civilizing prophets, saints, thinkers, artists, heroes that might fertilize, illuminate, inspire, provide some additional soul for the new struggles to emancipate the human condition, such as they are borne in urgently on all the citizens of a world that is chained to the same destiny?

Genesis of a strategy for intervention

I have been trying for a long time to answer this basic question by examining the history of the systems of thought and the representations, not merely the ideas, that have shaped the religious beliefs, the knowledge and the cultures of what I call the Mediterranean arena. The more the people of the area, and the communities living cheek by jowl in the same social and political spaces, engage in implacable wars and perpetuate mutual exclusions, the more historians, geographers, anthropologists,

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politicians and religious leaders insist on preaching in favour of an inter-faith, inter-cultural, inter-state state that never manages to get off the ground in a lasting and productive fashion.

Meanwhile, geopolitical strategies to control an oil-rich region have continued to give rise to and sustain powerful movements aiming to contain forces hostile to the higher interests of western economies. This is what the USA called the policy of containment until the cataclysm of 9/11/2001.

Potentially that event allowed for two possible responses: either immediate imposition, under UN aegis, of peace between Palestine and Israel guaranteed by a unanimously recognized international force, or else disciplining of all 'dangerous' states by means of a 'just war' unilaterally decided and conducted by the only power able to declare war through its president's mouth: 'The United States will not wait for anyone's permission to ensure the defence of its interests.' As we enter the 21st century, latent conflicts on the geopolitical map, drawn up since the 19th century by rival European powers, are flaring up in a Mediterranean arena that has been ravaged since 1945 by wars fought between shockingly unequal protagonists.

I have spoken at length about the aftermath of 9/11/2001 in my conversation with Joseph Maïla, *De Manhattan à Bagdad: Au-delà du Bien et du Mal*.² Here I am going to focus on a precise task: to examine the conditions for a possible intellectual, spiritual, ethical and cultural reconstitution of the Mediterranean area beyond the fractures, the theological systems of reciprocal exclusion of communities, the conquests and drawing of political boundaries by colonial Europe, including the former USSR and today's Russia, and the strategies for appropriating oil wealth, especially since 1945. I assess the stumbling blocks, the obstacles of all kinds, the irreversible events, the desire for power, the conservative tendencies, the devastating hatreds, the irreducible violence of resentments and the lust for revenge that have built up over 50 years in collective memories without number. Maybe fatigue, realism, self-criticism and even the moral force of general forgiveness will help to make somewhat easier the intellectual task I am here imposing on myself. Whatever the truth of the matter, I believe in the need for and the humanistic fertility of this task: it is part of my fight for humanism in European and islamic³ contexts since the Algerian War.

I have never set one shore against the other, as many too easily do, not politically and even less from a religious and cultural standpoint. I grew up in Kabylia, where as a young schoolboy I read Latin authors under an olive tree, fig tree or oak beneath that pure blue sky that makes everyone feel uplifted and forget themselves. The aesthetic emotions I have preserved from those moments have again taken hold of me in the same way on Mykonos, Rhodes and Xilocastron, on Crete, at Tipasa, Bougie, Tabarka, in Alexandria, Ceuta, Antalya and many of the Mediterranean's other significant spots. For me sensitivity to climate, flora, odours, colours, music, dances, gestures and body language, gatherings in the open, soft clear summer nights, architecture, field layout, spontaneous communication . . . always precedes and assuages conflicts, which are nonetheless common in the name of religious, racial, national, village or simply family allegiance. I have always distinguished between the legitimacy of the fight against a certain Europe's colonial, racist, fascist domination and my intellectual solidarity with the progress made by humanistic culture, whether in islamic or Christian or European secular contexts. It is crucial to

remind ourselves often of the existence of historical figures who think and act with this historic aim of reuniting the destinies of both shores, which have effectively been rivals, separated, torn apart, turned upside down by disputes and resentments since Islam and Arabic-speaking civilization for a while (8th–13th centuries, then with the Ottomans 16th–17th centuries) replaced with their hegemonic presence the Greco-Roman civilization carried on by Christianity, then by modern Europe, which itself is now being increasingly marginalized by the USA, as I have indicated.

The text you are about to read is the result of successive revisions and rewritings following each lecture given in various prominent centres of culture and history in Europe and the Arab/Turkish/Iranian world. I have made several amendments and added ideas after reading something significant or taking part in lively discussions at many conferences. For example, the one in Bonn in June 2001. Two recently established research institutes suggested an exchange of views on the topic 'Does culture matter? Politics and governance in the Mediterranean region'. The line of attack in the discussions was not culture in general but the conditioning of individual and collective thoughts and behaviour by cultural matrices peculiar to each ethno-cultural group, community, people or nation moulded by the same language, the same religious heritage, the same path through history. The book *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* was edited by Lawrence E. Harrison,⁴ a colleague of Huntington, who wanted to test the relevance of his famous theory about the clash of civilizations. Several specialists raised questions about the cause/effect relationship between forms and levels of culture and development of civilization. We are still in the area of the problems relating to the clash of civilizations but with a more intense focus on cultures as a factor speeding up, slowing down or causing to fail the processes of development of cultures and civilizations. The question thus posed is a sensitive one: a word, a phrase could make the argument tip over into culturalism, mentalism and even racism. Apart from that risk, I will make two preliminary remarks on the subject 'Does culture matter?'.

Coming from American researchers it might be a cause for rejoicing that culture should be promoted to the front rank of intellectual and academic concerns in a country where throwaway thinking, cultural objects confused with the most banal products thrown up and exploited by the market, are irresistibly spreading worldwide. Old Europe, full of irreplaceable historical experience, no longer has more than a few oases of resistance to this commodification. As for the marginalized cultures of the Mediterranean world, they have collapsed more swiftly than peasant, mountain, urban cultures in Europe, because they have suffered the devastating effects of internal factors favouring stagnation, or even regression, and of external aggression from a modernity that has for some considerable time been mediatized by colonial ideology. However, the ravages inflicted on these cultures by the policies of the post-colonial states, and the impact of a victorious liberalism, are more radical and irreversible than those of classic modernity. I shall return to this point.

The second remark, which was made quite clear at the Bonn conference, is the total lack of interest in (western) non-European cultures in initiating genuinely fresh research on a typology of traditions of thought and culture, where European cultures would be one example among others and not the *obligatory reference* for judging and classifying the others. The clash theory is as explicit as the Eurocentric ethnographic

vision of the colonial 19th and 20th centuries: there are 'western values' to which all peoples on earth owe the progress achieved since the 18th–20th centuries and the reactionary forces that have arisen in the rest of the world since the disappearance of the communist peril. But in the 1950s and 1960s post-colonial ideology continued the ethnographic approach and the 19th-century politics of domination via the new division of the world into 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' countries. We shall return to this significant remark when we talk about the *unthinkables* and *unthought* cumulated in the division 'West versus Islam', ignoring all the evidence of the history experienced from 1453 (the seizure of Constantinople by the Ottomans) to 1945. That history is still waiting to be written along the lines that Daniel Rivet has recently traced for North Africa.⁵ At the Bonn conference, as at so many international seminars and lectures about the Mediterranean world, no questions were raised as to the cognitive context in which the thinking, conceptualization and approach of all the participants, whether Euro-western, Jewish/Muslim/Christian or Arab/Iranian/Turkish, are still operating. I hope the cognitive scope of my terminology will be noted; it unpacks the linguistic, religious, national/nationalist, historical and geopolitical referents of all protagonists who have been constantly in conflict since the epistemic, theological, cultural, legal and political break created by what I call the *islamic phenomenon* in the Mediterranean arena. My terminology departs as radically as possible from the two ideological monsters 'Islam'⁶ and 'West' constructed first on the north and south shores of the Mediterranean, then in the whole geopolitical area known as the 'West' under US leadership since 1945. I am not going to repeat here what I have just written in *Penser le 11/9/2001* on the catch-all words 'Islam' and 'West'. Despite my denials, reiterated in Bonn and elsewhere, the thinking and the analyses remain bogged down in the problematic of the clash of civilizations; we know to what extent the battle against the 'Axis of Evil' is confining people's minds within a dogmatic corral as rigid as those created over centuries by medieval communal theologies. We are forced to ask the following question:

From what part of the planet could a thinking arise, duly freed from the weighty mytho-historical legacies and the burden of contemporary mytho-ideologies, to *subvert* both the foundations of the 'West's' *Machtpolitik* and the discourse of victimization of the post-colonial ideologies, which are still covering up the failures and tragedies planned this time by the so-called national elites since the 1950s?

Thinking the Mediterranean Arena, after so many misfortunes inflicted on so many peoples, on their respective cultures, on their legitimate hopes that have been constantly shattered, is to take responsibility, without any concession to false sanctification or dangerous communal and/or nationalist consciousness, for all the tasks involved in deconstructing and refounding suggested in the question above. I think of the failures of nerve, the omissions, the travesties, the mytho-historical constructions of the enemy with a view to waging a war labelled *holy* by theologies and *just* by secular ideologies, the deliberate or implicit rejections which strategies of expansion, domination and exploitation have always imposed in the Mediterranean region, no matter how far back you look into the history of empires, caliphates, sultanates, emirates, monarchies, nation states and, last but not least, today's

American hyperpower. It cannot be said that significant fundamental changes affecting the *systemic rigidity* of representations of self and other have appeared since meetings between Euro-Mediterranean states were inaugurated in Barcelona in 1995. In March 2002 an international conference on *intercultural dialogue* organized by the European Commission took place in Brussels. One might have expected that voices of authority would open horizons of sense and hope matching up to the indignation, anguish and despair generated by 9/11. It was above all soothing litanies that were heard about a fantasy 'humanist' islam, 'moderate' Muslims disdained by the West and no less trivial calls for a politics of cultural and political opening from that same West.

The task of self-criticism is not on the agenda on either side. I am not attacking either the moral guilt – which is still never recognized as a specific object of history – or the political crimes planned everywhere, which no law has hitherto been able to judge; this is about opening all the files concealed from historians' research because the writing of communalist and nationalist historiographies itself is still determining demarcation of periods, territories, themes, and objects worthy of critical historical investigation. It goes without saying that taboo subjects, forbidden areas, periods and truths sacred to islam are more numerous, more decisive for Muslims, and to a hardly lesser extent for Jews, than for Euro-westerners. The younger generations on both shores are still being taught history that perpetuates the stigmatism, ideological definitions, highly institutionalized and even sanctified ignorance in the three monotheistic traditions continued by unifying nation states in the midst of the modern 'Enlightenment'! There is still hagiography in many history textbooks in use in several countries in the Mediterranean world. This is due to the recurrence of armed conflict, the persistence of theologico-political contexts of perception and categorization of the other as 'infidel', 'impure', 'immoral', 'uncivilized', 'dominant', 'hostile', 'xenophobic', 'fanatical', etc.

Necessary shifts and transcendence

To avoid repeating myself I have chosen here to develop a historical theme that takes in the history of thought, *the general history of societies and the functions of religion in the Mediterranean area*. Despite the pluridisciplinary direction of the new history, everywhere the history of thought is fragmented into several subdisciplines: the history of philosophy, theology, law, religions, literature, the arts, etc. These divisions can be found in the Arab-Turkish-Iranian-islamic field, all of which is categorized as part of 'orientalism'. A general view of knowledge and a practice of cognitive activity peculiar to classical islam are forced into divisions and periodization that reflect Europe's historical journey since the 16th century. In his *Penser au Moyen-Age* Alain de Libéra⁷ greatly helped to reveal how arbitrary was this view of a space for thought, covering what I call the Mediterranean arena, that was in fact continuous. These corrections should have consequences not only for the borders drawn within European history between High and Low Middle Ages, Reformation and Renaissance, modern and contemporary times, but also for the revival of a thinking interested in links and interactions between philosophy, theology, law, re-reading of

founding religious texts, mytho-historical and historico-critical study, the social institution of the mind, society's imaginative production, etc. In other words the pluralist, multidisciplinary view, from the perspective opened up by people like Jacques Le Goff, Georges Duby, Erik Gilson, David Goitein . . . on to a Middle Ages made whole again, will give our modernity far more to think about than those who continue to fragment logospheres, peoples, religions and cultures out of ignorance of the anthropological basis common to the two great monotheistic and Greco-Roman axes. From this there would flow a different status and different functions for culture, other paths and horizons of creativity for the mind.

I do not know of any work on the sociology of the failure of philosophy in the Muslim area after the death of Ibn Rushd in 1198 and its success in Christian Europe at the same period. More generally, what correlations can be established between the development of the intellectual, religious and political fields on both shores during the long confrontation between Europe in the ascendant and the Ottoman empire, which became 'the sick man' from the 18th century? This approach would mean going beyond representations that still structure the respective imaginaries of those powerful mytho-ideological entities we have long labelled 'West' and 'East', with the current variant 'West' v. 'Islam' or the political analyst's metonymy *Jihad v. McWorld*.⁸ The deconstruction of these two polarizations of ideological essence and fantasmatic fabrication is especially urgent since they continue to inspire the political analysis that has the most influence on public opinion, particularly when they shelter under the themes of interfaith or intercultural dialogue, or search for identity, or, as in Bonn, an interrogation with a reflexive aim on the role of culture in the production of societies' history. The fact that culture is a decisive factor is obvious to everyone; but the positive or negative signs that affect the values and concrete effects of each culture depend on the links forged between the various fields of cognitive activity in order to grasp reality in its complexity. The example of Arab culture demonstrates the dangers in separating literary and particularly poetic culture, which is intended to transform a tough existence into aesthetic emotions, from the critical intellectual culture that opens up horizons of meaning and reveals the varying modes of transforming lived reality.

Freed from market constraints culture can only contribute fully and continuously to the emancipation of the human condition if it is supported in all its creative activities by a critical relationship which I would define using three verbs in the infinitive: *to transgress, to shift, to transcend*. Neither the theory of the clash of civilizations, nor the book on culture that tries to give it a more defensible epistemological basis, nor the problems raised at the Bonn conference and many others, take on board the radicalizing concerns of the *programmatically epistemology* set out in those three verbs. This epistemology articulates its critical interrogations as a research programme gradually develops; it forces us to examine the use of every concept, not only on the level of each textual unit throughout the writing, but in the even more crucial area of the system of implicit assumptions that govern the 'meaning effects' and eventual interpretation of the object of study. Regarding the historian's discourse of my teacher Claude Cahen, I have shown how, without the most vigilant author being aware, a representation of the past is constructed that leans towards mytho-history or mytho-ideology when epistemological interrogation is not present

at every moment of the writing, in the knowledge that, like all oral discourse, it is a process of programming either plausible truths or else a new mythology superimposed on inherited mythologies in each tradition of thought and culture. As we can see, programmatic epistemology is not content with taking responsibility for the uses of the concept and the systems of thinking in texts that have already been written or speeches delivered; it is applied to the very process of articulating meaning in order to integrate in advance the interrogations appropriate to the *critique of reception*.

This compulsory return to the concept's use in order to check its operational appropriateness in both the spoken word (a lecture that is not read) and the process of writing of necessity slows down and complicates the development of thinking. Readers who are not aware of the intellectual fertility of this control of the interaction between language and thought talk of laborious style and inflated expression. However, it is through this ascetic control of every form of expression that thought can make its way towards its effective integration into the universal. The act of thinking through a complex field of reality like religious versus lay authority, the historical Mediterranean arena versus the geopolitical space of the Greater Middle East, or the construction of legal norms as divine law or human law, is necessarily programmatic in the regressive sense for the past and the progressive sense for the future. That is why, as it develops, it illustrates the demands of historical and prospective epistemology. But for me this exercise⁹ is inseparable from the writing done by any researcher in the human and social sciences; it is what I mean when I say *researcher and thinker*, not *thinker and researcher*, which would apply rather to the theologian or the traditional speculative philosopher.

The practice of a programmatic epistemology thus defined was not borne in on me by the speculative epistemology of traditional philosophy or that spontaneous critical relationship we set up with regard to any truth proposition. It was the linguistic and semiotic analysis of discourse that helped me uncover the psychosocio-linguistic truth that *every articulation of meaning is an act of historical solidarity*. In every utterance I unwittingly express an implicit lived experience that is beyond any critical influence on it of my reason, as long as I am unaware of the techniques of deconstruction of deep mechanisms and normative processes (grammar, rhetoric, stylistics . . .) of articulation of what we inaccurately call meaning, whereas after analysis we can talk instead of *meaning effects* not only on the various audiences but on myself who have not yet become the object of my own analysis. I am not a psychoanalyst and I have never undergone an analysis apart from the one I have learnt to carry out on texts and especially important texts like the Bible, the Gospels and the Koran. I have published an autobiographical fragment in which I explain the origin of a discourse and writing in a situation lived in a coded social hierarchy, crudely expressed in current sociology in the dominant/dominated relationship. To put it extremely simply, I shall say that my view of the Mediterranean arena and the writing that flows from it are those of a French Algerian born in Taourirt-Mimoun (Greater Kabylia, a region marked by the geo-history of the Mediterranean), socialized in colonial Algeria, then in French society, subjected to the educational tensions imposed by the continual practice of three cultures in their respective languages: Kabyle (or people increasingly say *amazigh*) oral culture, and the two literary cul-

tures Arabic and French, to which was later added Anglo-American culture. The idea of a programmatic epistemology grew up in the compulsory transition from the pre-modern oral register of thought to the modern or even metamodern register of critical scholarship which refuses to abandon to residual usage two languages of the Mediterranean space that are historically separated but still alive.

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This theoretical digression allows us to move the question 'Does culture matter?' away from its political concerns and functionalist objective based on Harvard University's high authority and towards anthropology as a *critique of cultures*, all cultures, and first of all that which claims the right to ask questions about the cognitive status and necessary or merely instrumental and utilitarian functions of culture. I cannot pursue any further here these methodological and epistemological questions. But I will point out, as an illuminating example, that anthropology as a critique of cultures forces itself to reject all kinds of discourse of victimization of the dominated by the dominant in order not to ideologize the critical analysis: in this way it achieves the necessary authority to subject the dominant culture to questions of programmatic epistemology which are most often contemptuously rejected by the academic establishment that hands out intellectual, scientific and cultural approval to all the products of the mind. Thus it would be easy to show how a certain historiographic and political production post-Cold War, which is widespread in the 'western' media, constructs Enemy Figures, personifications of the satanic agent of history, deviant and threatening, to fill the vacuum left by the communist threat in the mytho-ideological functioning necessary to any collective imaginary. The worldwide success of a simple article by Huntington in 1993 demonstrates the anthropological effect of a practice of cultures, even in a situation of hegemony, to create apologetic foils or negative heroes who act as targets for all forms of 'just war'. This phrase, which goes back to St Augustine and was developed by the Koran under the label of *jihad*, was used spontaneously, without prior consultation, by George Bush and François Mitterrand to legitimize the Gulf War. For his part Saddam Hussein mobilized his troops' imagination by talking about the 'mother of battles' in the name of a just cause, which is another way of talking of *jihad* in Muslim culture. Here we put our finger on the deep *semantic and semiotic wellspring* of the imaginary common to all the Mediterranean cultures, rooted by the three medieval monotheistic theologies in a great common founding Narrative. Far from having abolished this Narrative by a radically different semiotic practice, the new founding Narrative introduced by modern reason has merely altered the methodological and technological tools of academic research. Eschatological confidence in eternal Salvation has been replaced by the imaginary of scientific progress, with the fragile but technologically justified hope of an increase in life expectancy.

Returning to the Mediterranean arena, we shall start by identifying the many obstacles we need to remove in order to give research new contributions to programmatic epistemology, offer educational systems more challenging critical questions and introductions that are more open to the practice of *interculturality* and *intercreativity*, create the irreversible conditions for a reversal of the relationship

between the de facto *priority* given to technological culture inseparable from the desire for power and the rightful *primacy* of a humanistic culture devoted to the construction of a human subject capable of carrying out all the responsibilities – which remain to be defined by the culture – involved in governing on a worldwide scale.

Identifying the obstacles

Poetico-cultural nostalgia, politico-religious themes, romantic daydreams of lost Andalusias (*pax romana*, the Greek miracle, the Muslim Al-Andalus), well-off tourists' *joie de vivre*, hungry for sea, sun and smells not to be found in the North's rich but misty regions, political strategies of domination of the 'Greater Middle East' after the Near East, contrasting with the obstinate quests for a meaning and ever revisited values: the Mediterranean space continues to feed all that. And yet it is inexorably downgraded, marginalized, enslaved, as a compulsory historical referent for all the populations, all the nation states that make up Europe and its extensions into the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, white South Africa and other groups in enclaves in the enslaved societies. It is true that many collective memories have been constructed within the global space called Europe or the West; but today people claim the right to talk of a western 'Community' based on the shared values of democracy and human rights. Several peoples in the Mediterranean region have remained outside this recent historical journey experienced in Europe/the West as a salutary, irreversible break with the sources and sites of memory which Judeo-Christianity, itself constructed in the wake of modernity, continues to situate in that East labelled Near, even though, in present political imaginations, it is as far away as China or Indonesia. Even the Greek miracle and Roman law, which have so long and proudly been invoked to build the European identity, are being eclipsed in the new culture where European identity is being diluted in a 'West' that is increasingly shaped by the *McWorld* culture.

Centuries of intellectual and cultural history of the Mediterranean world are being rendered obsolete not only by the powerful technological civilization but by the crisis in the very status of the human person and its dignity. Mired in the present world chaos, the wisest analysts cannot say whether this is a crisis of regression and disintegration or one of transformation towards a higher level of emancipation. American liberal philosophy's speculations about the idea of justice (I think of the well-known example of John Rawls) or the cultures of so-called pluralist societies, John Paul II's calls for the re-Christianization of the world, the attempts at intellectual mediation on behalf of an interactive rather than a fragmented practice in philosophical, theological and scientific research, seem derisory faced with the historical dynamic which the Europe/West alliance claims to be steering responsibly. More than ever the discourse of the dual criterion dominates the exercise of responsibilities on a global level: the struggle against tyrannies and the universal protection of human rights are invoked in order to cover up aims that cannot be admitted but decide the *Machtspolitik*. The process has always been true in all periods and all cultures: there is no point in arguing about the superiority of one model over another. It is impossible to see any consciousness-raising programme or effective

political will that can take on this clear historical fact: the religious and/or philosophical purposes that have hitherto been charged with the historical development of human beings and societies in the different Mediterranean contexts are now opposed by a globalization experienced as a fate with no purpose that is clearly defined, marked out and duly accepted by everyone. The evident facts thus set out require clarification.

The so-called revealed religions, then modernity, have helped direct the eyes and cultures of the world to the historical Mediterranean arena. Millions of pilgrims from all around converge on Mecca, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho; Athens and Rome are more prominent in the school memories of Asia and Africa than Confucius and Buddha are in those of the Mediterranean area. Ideas of the divine creation and eternity of the world, the revealed Word of God and the agent Intelligence illuminating reason in its discursive activities, have for centuries dominated what philosophers and sociologists today call the social-historical institution of the human mind itself.¹⁰ We know this 'materialist' – but not at all in the Marxist sense – reading of the mind is far from being shared in what I shall call the contemporary *western logosphere*. We have only to look at the politico-religious uses believers of all stripes make, in their teachings and traditional normative codes, of the revival of the religious, rather than religions. As culture and unbelief gain ground throughout the world we are witnessing the proliferation of 'sects' in the most 'rationalized' societies, the reactivation by 'à la carte religions' of the problems of faith and reason, spiritual values and atheistic materialism, rituals that are restrictive for body and mind, etc. Though the Mediterranean arena cannot claim any monopoly of either the invention or the management of the purposes assigned to human destiny, we have to acknowledge that contexts and modes of thought introduced by modernity bring us back in two ways to Mediterranean sources of the quest for meaning and intelligibility. On one hand classical modernity is still using the binary oppositions common to the monotheistic religions and classical metaphysics (reason/faith, good/evil, true/false, divine/human, [Platonic] City of God/profane human city, transcendent/immanent, eternity/the finite . . .); on the other hand the culture of unbelief is working to effect the historic exit from the religious sphere without achieving anything radical, convincing and irreversible. This tension causes either divisions followed by loss of direction or else instructive interactions revealing new possibilities for thought.

What role do present-day islam and Judaism play in this management of the destiny of the human condition, which is monopolized by a western logosphere that reduces the Mediterranean space to issues of geopolitical positioning, dismissing all the intellectual, spiritual and artistic legacies? The worst aspect of this reduction of those legacies to mere historical curiosities for scholars is the attitude of Europeans themselves, who have for centuries been vigilant heirs and are at loggerheads over the heritage to be included in the recent charter of fundamental rights. In their capacity as forces of historic revolt in the Mediterranean region, islam and Judaism have a pre-eminent position which I do not need to describe here. I shall restrict myself to the following details.

Despite its chronologically prior position in the conceptualization of the founding theme common to the three monotheistic religions (one living God, the actor in the story of the salvation of humans beings, his creatures; the mediating function of

prophets and prophetic discourse, which articulates the revealed word of God; divine law establishing the ethical, spiritual and legal norms and directions that orient the earthly journey towards eternal life), despite all this, which is indisputable, Judaism remained under a regime of 'protection' (*ahl al-dhimma*) in Islamic contexts until the state of Israel was created; it was only freed from the political and theological control of Christianity after the modern revolutions. It did not experience either the conquering movements of expansion across the world, or the tension between state forms and the authoritative religious body that influenced Islam's and Christianity's development and geocultural expansion. The historical, sociological and doctrinal uniqueness of Judaism as a religion – I mean one path among others for 'the human experience of the divine'¹¹ – went through some significant changes after the creation of the state of Israel. Jewish thinkers have felt that break and tried to think about its consequences: the loss of the religious authority's valued autonomy vis-à-vis the political sphere, or the need to instrumentalize religion to win a political sovereignty over a territory reconquered by force, without regard for its unique status as the cradle of all the founding narratives, all the religious symbolisms, all the collective memories inseparable from this common anthropological wellspring for the Mediterranean space

I must mention another example full of lessons for analysis of Judaism's acknowledged uniqueness in this common arena: this is the Ishmaelite community, reactivated in the 19th century under the British protectorate in India with an Imamate. Today there is an Ishmaelite diaspora that is as widespread as the Jewish; its beliefs and ritual practices do not contain any reference to a promised land capable of being claimed as the territorial basis of an independent state. The tightly knit community around a living spiritual authority (Imam Karim Aga Khan) is transcending its sectarian peculiarities and, with its unique historical trajectory and extremely diversified ethnic, social and cultural base, integrating not only into Islam, as a religion shared by so many peoples on earth, but into the modern world with its challenges, its hesitant advance and its progress in the freeing of the human condition. It might be said that the Ishmaelite community is taking over, on a more modest scale, the historical baton of uniqueness lost by Judaism, which is now inseparable from a secular state founded in political conditions that are hard to take on board for a spiritual consciousness honouring its special historical journey.

This is clearly not the case for majority Islam in its two versions, Sunni and Shi'ite. In order to situate this Islam with regard to the central and recurrent problems of the whole history of theological/philosophical/political systems in the Mediterranean region, I have often used this heuristic definition: *Islam is theologically Protestant and politically Catholic*. I threw up that definition, which, I repeat, is heuristic and not closed, in order to test the fertility of a comparative knowledge of the monotheistic religions. Protestantism is distinguished from Catholicism by the introduction of free scrutiny of the Scriptures for every believer, whereas Catholicism retains the vertical operation of the higher authority. From the outset Islam recognized the equality of all the faithful in interpreting Scripture; but that equality was limited or in practice abolished by the vertical power of the state. So very early – from the advent of the Omeyyad state in 661 – there was state takeover of religious authority, which in principle was opened to free debate among believers by the political authorities. And

theological/legal thought distinguishes clearly, like Jewish and Christian thought, *auctoritas* and *potestas* (*al-Hukm* and *sulta*). This comparison leads on to the following observations:

(1) The academic rigidity of the whole of classical islamology, followed since the 1970s by the great proliferation of books by political commentators on islam, has for a long while imposed the erroneous idea that islam confuses the political and the religious, the spiritual and the temporal. People forget to specify that the confusion is the result of state takeover, not a theological choice. This illuminates the difference between the reading of the same important event by a researcher and thinker and by a scholar who is indifferent to the reflexive and educational effect of the information offered. I know that scholarship, even if it is a magpie scholarship indifferent to any form of intelligibility, is indispensable in order to develop and enhance the contributions of critical thought. In islam's case the lack of such thought is so general, so constant and even imposed by Muslims themselves, that we end up with the intellectual field turned into a desert. This does not fail to complicate to an extreme degree the political situation starting in 1945, which has been raised to an intolerable tragic intensity after 9/11/2001.

(2) Comparative critical reading allows us to end the old ideological polarization of 'Islam' versus 'the West' by *shifting* the whole question of 'islam' and its so-called orthodox theological/political context towards a comparative history of the monotheistic theological/legal systems, itself used as a necessary introduction to an anthropology of relations in all cultures – including the modern one – between several anthropological triangles like *religion, society, politics; violence, the sacred, truth; language, history, thought; Revelation, History, Truth, etc.*

With regard to the doctrinal differences between Sunni islam, Shi'ite islam, Khârijite islam, Mu'tazilite islam, mystical islam and legalistic ritualistic islam, I refer readers for the moment to an old study, which I am in the process of expanding, on 'Le remembrement de la conscience islamique' (Piecing together the islamic consciousness) in *Critique de la raison islamique*. My intention is to show how scientific research into the traditions of thought and culture in the Mediterranean region itself consolidates and even adds epistemological obstacles to the creative communication between cultures. Instead of combining in the same scientific text descriptive balance and explanatory balance, the study of islam as religion and thought continues to ignore the need to *shift* old questions towards wider and better signposted interpretative spaces in order to make possible the necessary *transcendence* from which Christianity and liberal Judaism have ended by benefiting to different degrees.¹² Because the work of freeing minds and radicalizing the critique of inherited traditions of thought has to start from within each tradition. Traditional islamologists, like today's political analysts, shelter behind the duty of intellectual discretion in an area of beliefs they do not share. The argument is acceptable if the researcher steps outside the rules of intellectual analysis by making value judgements; but if we restrict ourselves to the evaluation of intellectual operations applied to the intelligibility of a system of beliefs and non-beliefs, the duty of discretion turns into a desertion of the universal requirements of any critical relationship of the thinker confronted with the opaqueness and complexity of reality.¹³

Here I am touching upon one of the keys that is available yet ignored and that

would mean, if not putting an end to 'just' wars in the Mediterranean region, at least rendering intellectually and culturally obsolete the recurring arguments of what I shall call *founding reason* (*ta'sil* in Arabic), which is carefully distinguished from fundamentalist ramblings (*shatahât usûlawiyya*). Founding reason deploys all the intellectual resources of the critique of foundations to verify their practical effect, not only in the closed domain of a system of orthodox beliefs but from the standpoint of a knowledge or values that can be universalized to the human condition. This definition clearly distinguishes the founding activity of metamodern reason from those of traditional theological or philosophical reason. Thus we can say that *founding* reason becomes *fundamentalist* reason as soon as it ceases to extend the critical examination of the foundation invoked to the cognitive system in which it operates. Fundamentalist thinking tries to exclude from any open discussion the assumptions that let it construct and put into operation, for a group, community or nation, a closed system of norms, beliefs and discursive processes. This descriptive definition covers both religious authorities and secular, positivist, historicist, sociologist authorities that tend to generalize arbitrarily theoretical constructions based on contingent foundations. Constructions of what the monotheistic religions call divine law, various metaphysical systems developed by philosophers, and recent theories about the clash of civilizations¹⁴ provide indisputable illustrations of the intellectual failure of so-called scientific readings of islam, compared with the more empathetic, liberating and responsible ones applied to Christianity and Judaism.¹⁵

The whole work of writers such as Paul Ricœur or Emmanuel Lévinas bears witness to the effort at philosophical integration made by a founding critique in the search for horizons of meaning where the contributions of religious thought and the intellectual and scientific constraints of modern thought intertwine. This kind of mediation between a religious reason, faithful to the axioms and postulates of traditional theological reason, and a 'pure' philosophical reason, to which the very concept of religious reason is unacceptable, is more attractive to the 'spiritualist' wing of contemporary philosophy. Opponents are many and virulent, such as the Englishman John Gray in his book *Straw Dogs*.¹⁶ It is true that the archaeological work on consciousness formed in belief culture and founding thought must be extended to the various forms of culture and thought around unbelief. Indeed it is clear that many people are still thinking along fundamentalist lines while claiming to be part of the 'modern' culture of unbelief, militant atheism or 'secular' agnosticism. This explains the outright condemnation of a fundamentalist islam that, for its part, has fenced itself into an obsolete 'religious' vocabulary and categorizations. I keep using quotation marks to indicate the need to subject to archeological criticism a vocabulary that is heavily loaded with postulates and definitions claiming to be modern compared with a religion that exasperates because of the arrogance of its ostentatious beliefs, but harking back in fact to a fundamentalist register. Such confusions have recurred since the positivist 19th century in the stereotypical denunciation of holy war, polygamy, fanaticism, credulity, conservatism, regressive behaviour . . . , whereas a cursory socio-anthropology of the various levels of culture in western contexts uncovers identical features to those that are being stigmatized in others, foreigners, the potential enemy. We only have to think of the 'just war' waged by the labouring proletariat against all forms of the victorious liberal bourgeoisie and

the latter's response with legal repression; or the war fought by the colonized against the colonizers, who had no words harsh and condescending enough to denounce the ungrateful attitude of these peoples towards their benefactors. With *Jihad v. McWorld* we have entered into the globalization of the dialectic of the civilized powers and what is left of barbarism.

The intellectual failings and omissions in interpreting religions and cultures perniciously help to feed conflicts and false legitimacies between islam and the west. In May 2002 Bernard Lewis, a historian of islam and an adviser who was listened to by the Bush administrations (father and son), published one of those bestsellers that give scientific endorsement to the western imaginary vis-à-vis islam and Arab/Turkish/Iranian societies. The book's title – *What Went Wrong?*,¹⁷ pedestrianly translated into French as *Que s'est-il passé?* (What happened?) – explicitly proclaims the author's promise to provide all the keys to the historical origins of 9/11/2001. Readers alive to the methods of discourse analysis will easily discover the ideological manipulations of history at a time of major crisis by a scholar so famous that his many books are immediately translated into all European languages. This practice of western scholarship with regard to islam also betrays the near-absence of Muslim researchers and thinkers able to fill yawning gaps in every field.

Politics, culture and governance in the Mediterranean arena by 2010

If we return to the current story, the future of the Mediterranean region is influenced by four great forces:

1. *Europe/the west* represented by the G7 powers, enlarged a short while ago to G8;
2. *the European Union*, which can either strengthen hegemonic Eurocentrism by adding or juxtaposing geopolitical strategies characteristic of the nation states that form it, or else proclaim a transnational or even metanational mission that would allow it to direct globalization towards new solidarities between peoples who everywhere accept de jure states;
3. recurring *national-totalitarianism* in the style of the former Yugoslavia; and finally
4. the claimed *islamic alternative*, labelled political islamism or islamic fundamentalism by the two foremost players under the US banner.

I shall not look at these forces one by one, because they are intertwined one with another. There is permanent interaction between geopolitical spheres, bilateral relations (France–Algeria, Tunisia–Morocco; USA–Israel, Egypt, Arabia . . . ; European Union–Near East, etc.). Instead I shall deal with issues common to all the forces, that is to say the policies of the old (Euro-American) and new (post-colonial) nation states, the absence of a politics of cultures and in particular the religious aspect that has become a dominant ideological factor in the Mediterranean area since 1945, the absence of a culture and philosophy of governance capable of anticipating responses to peoples' expectations for 2010–20.

Politics and governance

The G8 could help to harmonize the rich countries' policies with regard to the poor countries, not so much by periodically wiping out debts or launching humanitarian programmes to relieve misfortunes associated with tragedies that have been politically designed, but by drawing up a new map of regional geopolitical spheres that would have the job of carrying through the experience of democratization and economic development in harmony with each sphere's historical and cultural specificities. In this way the G8 would help gradually to do away with the national borders handed down by colonial systems, and to assist wider identities to emerge that are more firmly based in common historical paths and geographical and ecological imperatives favourable to sustainable developments which are better integrated into globalization trends. These visions would also give the USA and the European Union an opportunity to transcend their rivalries, which recall those that for a long time set European nation states against one another. But NATO's much discussed intervention in Kosovo, and especially the failure of successive meetings such as Genoa, Durham, Johannesburg and many others, have shown the limits to 'governance' by the rich countries which is violently contested by opposition and protest movements. But it remains to be seen whether these movements themselves have a geopolitical and geohistorical vision that includes the problems mentioned above under the fundamental question: Does culture matter? In order to gauge how completely this question is ignored we only have to check how many historians, anthropologists or critical philosophers are invited as *deliberating voices* to all the great international meetings charged with studying issues of so-called sustainable development, material poverty and cultural disaster in the world, caused by liberalism following the socialist revolutions post-1945.

It is pointless to discuss, as has been done, the true motives that decided NATO's involvement in Bosnia and Kosovo. Officially it was to defend Euroland values against the spread of neo-fascism from the Balkans; in actual fact issues of *Macht-politik* are never far away for either the European Union or the USA. We can see the strategy of the double standard that is more obviously prevalent since 9/11. I am recalling these details in order to relaunch the question of opportunities, deferred till the utopia of an eventual (re)integration of the 'Muslim' Mediterranean into the European Union's geopolitical and geohistorical sphere. The EU unhesitatingly welcomed Greece with its Christian Orthodox culture and religion while Turkey and Morocco, which are knocking insistently on the same door, are still being considered.

Certainly *Culture does matter* in the construction of every human subject and in the historical work of the self on the self through which each group, each nation produces its identity. The problem raised in all societies for 2010–20 is to initiate a politics of the culture of transition capable of ensuring the shift from closed cultural identities, fostered and nourished over centuries by religious systems of dogmatic belief and non-belief, then by secular nationalist ideologies of expansion for some and liberation for others. Postmodern or metamodern practices of interculturality and intercreativity already existing in the *maisons des cultures du monde* (world cultural centres) in Paris and Berlin for instance are only just beginning to demonstrate their fertility. It is intercreativity, dynamized by an increasing number of inter-

national festivals, that will make possible the emergence of set-ups for governance in the world and first in the highly promising environment of the Euro-Mediterranean geohistorical sphere. I would temper this optimistic vision, which is nonetheless within our grasp, with a pessimistic note: those who have initiated Euro-Mediterranean meetings since Barcelona are more concerned with the problems posed by immigration and the islamist ideology spread by militants worldwide than with the prospects of an audacious policy of interculturality, which in addition has the advantage of providing a fundamental answer to the general crisis in *civic culture* in all contemporary societies. I have noticed that, in all the member countries of the European Union, governments simply damp down Muslim immigrants' demands by offering them mosques and the opportunity to obtain halal meat or plots set aside in cemeteries. In this way lip-service is being paid to constitutional provisions on freedom of worship, but no questions are asked about the content of sermons and more generally the social discourse circulating in the supposedly 'holy' space of the mosque, or prisons where Muslim detainees are sadly all too numerous, or hospitals and even state schools. The faithful attending mosques in Europe, as in the whole Muslim world, have a vital need for modern information not only on their religion but on the religions that exist in pluralist European and American societies. For years I have been raising my voice everywhere to say that this information, which is of great *civic* and strictly scientific import, is not available in forms and spaces for communication accessible to immigrant socio-cultural groups. Based on my continuous contacts throughout Europe I can report that the crucial issue of *intellectual and scientific expression of contemporary islamic thought* is not perceived as an urgent political response and even less as one of the most decisive contributions to a civic culture worldwide.¹⁸

The religious phenomenon as philosophical and anthropological object

I think I can say that the role of critical knowledge of the religious phenomenon in the construction of a new civic consciousness in today's democratic pluralist societies also remains an unthought element widely shared in the political thought and action of all contemporary regimes, including of course the most modern and secularized among them. I had the opportunity to attend two conferences (2000 in Bologna, 2002 in Nice) of the important *Association des sociétés de philosophie de langue française*, and asked a question about the need to promote the *religious phenomenon* in its past achievements and present manifestations to the dignity of a major *philosophical theme*, after two centuries of near-indifference and decided hostility from Enlightenment reason, which was more concerned to extend its intellectual and political sovereignty than to subject to a similar critical examination all the competing regimes of truth in existence in societies. The theme of the Nice conference, *Avenir de la raison, Devenir des rationalités* (Future of reason, evolution of rationalities), demands in particular an in-depth comparison between the theological regimes of reason and rationalities and those characteristic of philosophy. But we know that the comparative critical history of systems of theological thought in the three versions of monotheism is a vast field of knowledge that has been left fallow by two disciplines

– theology and philosophy – which, apart from a few rare but fertile exceptions, have ceased to communicate since the first skirmishes – and they were extremely necessary and liberating – fought in the 16th–17th centuries in Europe against Catholic clericalism. History is doing more than philosophy to limit the damage inflicted by what is called ‘the return to religion’ in the shape of the fundamentalisms. I am thinking of a recent book on the Bible: *La Bible dévoilée*.¹⁹ I am emphasizing this important detail in the history of ideas and systems of thought because the democratic states have given up on their obligation to make sure reason has the best possible future, while the obscurantist and predatory post-colonial states have distorted for their own advantage the psycho-socio-cultural functions of religion inherited from the pre-modern period. In doing this since the 1950s the national political and even intellectual so-called elites have gradually perverted all levels and places where critical reason is exercised. Islam has suffered considerably from a systematic state takeover of all religion’s mobilizing resources in order to legitimate battles which are destructive of all the ethico-legal and cultural codes that have for centuries ensured relative but lasting socio-cultural cohesion.

Thinking along these lines, and with this reflexive objective, about the phenomenon of religion, the failings previously noted of the literature of political analysis have even more deleterious effects since they feed into the vocabulary and define the interpretative context of the media, which in their turn construct the political and social imaginary beyond any critical control. When Gilles Kepel points out in a recent book²⁰ that the ‘threats’ from the supposed islamic alternative do not fit with any doctrinal reality, he does not spend any time spelling out the historical processes that have led to that break and especially the cognitive and educational implications of *populist islam*, promoted to the status of a model of the historical production of societies to counter the ‘western’ model. He leaves that task to a historian of thought, or to thinkers, of whom there is a serious shortage. And so the way is clear for islamist rantings and manipulations, which call forth denunciation and virtuous indignation from neo-Voltaireans without the literary talent, or the culture, or the philosophical relevance of the great Voltaire. When a major catastrophe occurs (I am thinking of 9/11/2001) a warlike fervour, a determination to punish, eradicate the violence of those barbarians, the uncouthness of those rogues revelling in a ‘religion de cons’ in Michel Houellebecq’s words, are unleashed as if they were patriotic duties and humanistic virtues. And so any fresh policy of managing the religious phenomenon through appropriate scientific research and a completely rethought educational system is pushed back until later, after the victorious struggle against an Evil whose origins we refuse to study in the highly lucid and determined manner of *Human, all too human, Beyond Good and Evil, The Gay Science . . .*, the lesson from Nietzsche, who was already fighting for the New Enlightenment; a lesson that has been forgotten in the West except by philosophy teachers, unknown and totally unthought and for the moment *unthinkable* in islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, which go back again and again over cloud-cuckooland spiritualisms and revive ritual behaviour of uniting and mobilizing to confront ubiquitous threats from the unintegratable ‘other’. It might be added that many of the usages of secularism and victorious 19th- and 20th-century modernity have completely ignored Nietzsche’s salutary struggle to deliver so-called Enlightenment reason from its compromises

with the reason of *Machtpolitik*, with its false promises of a speculative humanism that brings back into a secular discourse the historico-transcendental themes of traditional metaphysics.

Anthropological structures of imaginaries

Confessional, nationalist and identity irredentisms have become more numerous and widespread in the Mediterranean area in line with collective memories that are both very ancient and ever alive in the *millet*, the communal confessional organizations bequeathed by the Ottoman administration, or the communal movements that are trying to break through today by exploiting democratic freedoms. Where democracy is in short supply we have seen the growth of politico-financial mafias. In Syria there is a separate community of ancient groups that have closed in on their local identities: the village of *Ma'lûla* still speaks Aramaic, which had already been abandoned by the writers of the gospels, who preferred Greek to transcribe Jesus of Nazareth's message and so confirmed the first semantic and cultural break between a 'Semitic' cultural tradition with Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac and Arabic, and a 'western' tradition with Greek and Latin. The Second World War considerably aggravated the social and political dialectic between the *powers* and the *periphery* throughout the world, but even more dramatically in the Mediterranean arena, where several empires followed one another. The powers are the religious, ethnolinguistic and cultural majorities whose rise through history can be traced from the Middle Ages: the empires, the caliphate, the monarchies, the nation states. From the 19th century there was pan-Islamism, pan-Arabism, pan-Turkism, pan-Iranism, which were variously exploited by the nationalist movements; on the European side the Allies' victory freed western Europe from the temptation of totalitarian fascism but strengthened the ideological power of soviet communism which, with the nationalist politics that was just as dangerous and harmful as that of the *millet*, arrested the internal development of several ethnolinguistic and religious groups; these then became *peripheral* to a universal revolutionary history steered by the great rival helmsmen. Thus age-old frustrations and humiliations were exacerbated: languages and cultures crushed, peoples fragmented and dispersed, like the Kurds, persecution and marginalization for beliefs and customs that did not conform to dominant religious orthodoxies or nationalist ideologies, tensions and ruptures between dominant 'elites', wealthy, 'cultivated' and entrenched in the well-to-do neighbourhoods of the cities, compared with the mass of the people, who were increasingly exposed to populism and were relegated to run-down areas and shanty-towns. Added to these internal divisions in each society were pressures associated with differences between North and South with their ideological polarizations all around the Mediterranean.

How are the irredentisms bequeathed by the past being managed, together with those still being generated by the post-colonial party states? These irredentisms are as follows: Jew/Muslim/Christian; Jew/Arab; Berber/Arab; Kurd/Turk/Arab/Iranian; Orthodox Serb/Muslim Bosnian and Albanian; Armenian/Russian/Arab/Turk; Orthodox Greek/Muslim Turk; Copt/Muslim; Basque, Corsican, Italian

islands/mother countries. We might add oppositions that are essentially ideological, but no less virulent and difficult to transcend: between the Arab nation states themselves after the great utopian aspirations for the Ba'th's and Nasser's United Arab Nation up to the great disappointment of 1967, followed by that of 1973, then the two Gulf Wars; between Greece and Turkey, with Cyprus still partitioned; Syria and Iraq; Syria and Lebanon; Iraq and Iran; Egypt and Sudan; Libya against them all; Algeria versus Morocco, etc. The political longevity of historical or dynastic leaders in the Arab countries has fostered the formation of pressure groups, politico-financial mafias, socio-economic enclaves, in societies where unemployment, marginalization, populist ideologies are all barriers to policies of emancipation and especially integration into more liberating Euro-Mediterranean groupings. I recall these dates: Hussein of Jordan, 1954–99; Hassan II, 1961–99; Kadhafi, 1969– ; Arafat, 1967–2004; Assad, 1979–2000; Saddam Hussein, 1978–2003; Tunisia, two presidents since 1956; Egypt, three since 1951. In particular we have to ask about the political weight of an arithmetical democracy manipulated by alliances based on neo-patriarchal solidarities. And there is this correlation with incalculable consequences on several levels: from 1980 the proportion under 20 exceeded the higher age-groups; at the same time as the age pyramid was turning upside down in this way at a pace unprecedented in history, the power-masters are using all means possible to cling to power for 30 or more years.

Faced with these hugely significant facts that are part of cultural, social and political anthropology, general history, economics and geopolitics, what are the researchers, thinkers, intellectuals, political leaders, important economic players, top religious bodies in each society saying and doing, where that society can organize and express itself fully as a partner with the legitimate state? Which leaders have had most influence on the manipulation of collective memories, the orientation of each people's historical destiny, by taking on board or rejecting the dimensions of a Mediterranean civilization? And how, faced with the old and new obstacles mentioned above, can we ensure today that the human person should no longer be a speculative concept used to travesty, sanctify and moralize political conduct that is profoundly anti-humanistic? I am thinking of the displays of formal democratic practices by totalitarian, predatory or conservative regimes; of no less formal, moralizing speeches from western defenders of human rights, while geopolitical control of the world map, and especially that of the *Middle East* in the American sense,²¹ has remained what it was in the 19th century.

In all the Mediterranean traditions it has been taught since the far-off time of the *Miroirs des princes*²² that intellectual responsibility in philosophical tradition and spiritual responsibility in religious traditions are prior to moral responsibility, which itself is the basis for building legal and political legitimacies. In its scholarly, didactic arguments modern thought is still discussing the conditions of legitimacy of all power according to moral and political philosophy: Kant's transcendental subject, the *City of God* according to St Augustine, the *Virtuous City* according to Fârâbî, the governance of the Just (*wilâyat al-faqîh*) in the Shi'ite tradition, which featured heavily in Khomeini's scholastic utterances, governance according to divine law (*al-siyâsa-l-shar'iyya*) as the Sunnis interpret it (Ibn Taymiyya common in the Saudi regime) are still, with the realist corrections made by Machiavelli and Ibn Khaldoun,

familiar references in the Mediterranean ethical/political imaginary. This is why even political figures can be heard resorting to the increasingly frequent assistance of 'intellectuals' who are able to enrich debates on the new links between authority and power. At the same time Mediterranean popular cultures know that in concrete history, political calculation is backed up by all sorts of tricks (*hiyal*) and manipulations of alliances so that the immediate or long-term imperatives of *Realpolitik* may prevail. Everywhere the weapon of ridicule is handled with cruel accuracy when it comes to jokes and tasty anecdotes that would fill volumes for each country where for decades states have held sway *against* peoples and civil societies. The sadly missed Egyptian sociologist Sayyid 'Uways had the happy idea, during the reign of Za'im Abd al-Nasser, of publishing the letters addressed to the tomb of Shâfi'î (d. 820) by the peasants who suffered in the collectivist revolution; by publishing graffiti collected from inside Cairo taxis he also gave a voice to another section of the Egyptian people which had been silenced.

These two sides, scholarly and popular, of Mediterranean peoples' ethical/political imaginary express the permanence of political institutions handed down from antiquity to the present day. The messianic expectation of a just governance has for centuries run in parallel with a system of social and political organization that both the religions and traditional political philosophy have transformed into *ideal symbolic images* boosting traditional believers' eschatological expectation or certainty of eventual victory for modern revolutionary struggles. Two crucial historical factors have always and everywhere been absent in the Mediterranean environments thus defined anthropologically:

(1) The continued and irresistible rise of a social class that irreversibly breaks the inherited patriarchal foundations of the economic, social and political order by imposing, via the *simultaneous subversion* of inherited intellectual, religious, political and economic domains – as the victorious bourgeoisie did in Europe – a culture of *social capital* development and economic investment, a worldwide system of production and exchange, a modern law based on human beings' need to rethink constantly the historicity of their condition. In this area private cultural foundations and international bodies like UNESCO make contributions that are significant but as yet inadequate, given the urgency and the need I have here pointed to with regard to the Mediterranean region, to which some important European Union members belong.

(2) An equally continuous historical process of establishing simultaneously a legitimate state and a civil society as interactive players, bound by a constitutional contract in which the rights and obligations of each are defined, with a view to ensuring for all citizens the protections, resources and rights necessary for the optimal development of their vocation as human subjects, collectively responsible for the emancipation of the human condition.

The formulation and decisive historical influence of these two factors remain open for full discussion, amendment and addition. I have attempted to include all I know about the general history of thought in the Mediterranean region, the developments in that thought on both the 'Islamic/eastern' shore and the 'Christian/Euro/western'²³ one.

Objections regarding the victorious bourgeoisie's colonialist, imperialist and racist excesses are not relevant in the theoretical analytical context I am trying to

define for a geohistorical entity, whose common anthropological characteristics and interactive historical forces we first need to identify – characteristics and forces that have weighed decisively on today's geopolitical, geo-cultural and geo-economic division between an ancient Mediterranean mired in very badly managed legacies and a Mediterranean bound up with intra-European rivalries up to the recent US intervention. The European Union, which is increasingly being drawn towards the South and East, seems in the first instance to be leaning towards favoured partner agreements.

The direction of my analysis is forward; it touches on past knowledge merely in order to stress how inadequate, alienating, imaginary and even inaccurate it is, and thus dangerous for a thinking that wishes to take in the impact of the future on the painful, tragic and unmanageable present of the part of the Mediterranean that is subject to regressive processes. So when I call the Algerian war of liberation (1954–62) a civil war I am bringing back a human dimension out of respect for all those who died on both sides on a common legal and historical soil between 1830 and 1962. The Algerian and French survivors bear witness to this common reference to the redemptive function of a shared history, based this time on the union of free wills. The aberrations of a cruel war followed by a brutal divorce may light the paths of a redemptive historic action similar to what has happened between France and Germany, or Nelson Mandela's South Africa and the South Africa of apartheid. This evocation of a healing history after blindly waging war may also apply to the USA in the greater Middle East.

Returning to these contrasting historical pasts in the Mediterranean arena, in the 10th century the historian Miskawayh (d. 1029) wrote some modern pages denouncing the harmful economic and social effects of the *iqtâ* system, grants to soldiers of rich lands in lower Iraq. The system weakened the political authorities, enslaved peasants to parasitic, predatory feudal landlords, impoverished production and held back the progress of agriculture until the end of the Ottoman empire. We know that the post-colonial socialist revolutions completed à la Stalin the disintegration of the mechanisms of natural solidarity and the cultural codes indissolubly linked with Mediterranean peasant civilization. Some countries, such as Turkey and Morocco, were saved in the nick of time from socialist collectivization. But everywhere the bureaucracy of centralizing party states and demographic pressures gave rise to harmful social stratifications: a parasitic wealthy class supporting the patrimonial state, which was unable to activate a culture of integrated development involving all sections of the global society; and broad swathes of the population condemned, depending on several variables, to insecure employment, operating in a black economy, joblessness, populist forms of religious and political expression, violent behaviour or clandestine emigration. Between these two social groups we can also make out an intermediate class, torn between the desire to attain to the privileges above and the threat of falling into the decline below. At all levels of social life commercial advertising carried by the media stimulates the addiction of the well-off to all the forms, all the styles, all the gadgets of material modernization; it exacerbates the frustrations of those who are excluded from both the protections of the traditional family and the rights conferred by every form of modern citizenship.

In these sociological, political and cultural conditions, access to intellectual

modernity becomes a matter of chance, fragmentary and even impossible for the most disadvantaged social groups. I am thinking especially of the situation of women in all Mediterranean environments. Even the women who are most involved in the struggle for liberation do not always give their daughters the same education they provide for the boys. In other words they themselves are not liberated from the codes of female culture they have interiorized in a society that has remained patriarchal. Camille Lacoste has described extremely well this division between female and male cultural memory in a book with the revealing title *La Mère contre les filles* (Mother versus daughters). I should emphasize that the same ethno-sociological investigation into the extent of the penetration and the modes of existence of intellectual modernity in all contemporary 'western' societies would uncover similar residues, ignorance and confusion, particularly in regions connected with what current language still labels the Mediterranean outlook, culture or traditions. We need to go back and analyse the historical discrepancies and the widening of intellectual, cultural, educational and institutional gulfs between the two spheres of the Mediterranean arena, Euro/western and Arab/Turkish/Iranian.

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Translated from the French by Jean Burrell

Translator's Note

I have maintained the distinction indicated in note 6 between Islam and islam, although it is usually capitalized in English.

Notes

1. (1992), *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, Paris: PUF Quadrige, p. 111 (Brussels, 1937).
2. This paper is a fragment of a considerably more developed text which is part of the introductory chapter to my book, published in 2005 and entitled *Humanisme et Islam. Combats et propositions*.
3. Joseph Maïla and Mohammed Arkoun (2003), *De Manhattan à Bagdad: Au-delà du Bien et du Mal*, Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer.
4. Lawrence E. Harrison (2000), *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, New York: Basic Books.
5. D. Rivet (2002), *Le Maghreb à l'épreuve de la colonisation*, Paris: Hachette.
6. I write Islam with a capital I to indicate both orthodox Islam taught and lived by believers as the only 'true religion' and the Islam ideologized and instrumentalized by militant fundamentalists; islam with a small i refers to the various historical and socio-cultural expressions of islamic belief as they are defended by the many theological/legal schools that have arisen in changing islamic environments.
7. Alain De Libéra (1991), *Penser au Moyen-Age*, Paris: Seuil.
8. The title of a book by Benjamin R. Barber (1995), New York: Times Books, which I analysed in 'L'islam actuel devant sa Tradition et la mondialisation', in M. Kilani (ed.) (1997), *Islam et changement social*, Lausanne: Payot.
9. Which I have adopted since I wrote my thesis in the 1960s on *L'Humanisme arabe au IVe-Xe siècle*.

10. See Jean De Munck (1999), *L'Institution sociale de l'esprit*, Paris: PUF.
11. Title of a book by Michel Meslin.
12. This is the whole import of my *Critique de la raison islamique*, taken further in my *The Unthought in Contemporary Thought*.
13. I deal with this aporia at greater length in my *Combats pour l'humanisme en contextes islamiques*, the chapter on teaching the facts of religion.
14. See the *Letter from America* signed in February 2002 by around 60 American intellectuals to legitimize the 'just war' against terrorism.
15. For further details on the distinction outlined here, I refer readers to my book (1999) in Arabic *Al-fikr al-Usûlî wa-stihâlat al-Ta'sîl*, Beirut. I intend to publish the French version of this book under the title *Critique de la raison juridique dans la pensée islamique*.
16. J. Gray (2002), *Straw Dogs*, London: Granta.
17. (2002), *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press. French translation by Jacqueline Carnaud (2002), *Que s'est-il passé?*, Paris: Gallimard.
18. See my *The Unthought* cited above.
19. Israël Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman (2002), *La Bible dévoilée. Les nouvelles révélations de l'archéologie*, Paris: Bayard.
20. Gilles Kepel (2000), *Jihad. Expansion et déclin de l'islamisme*, Paris: Gallimard.
21. See the alert, incisive and very subtle book by R. Stephen Humphreys (1999), *Between Memory and Desire. The Middle East in a Troubled Age*, Berkeley: University of California Press. The poetical charge and psycho-historical relevance of the title should be noted.
22. See Jocelyne Dakhliya (1998), *Le Divan des princes: Le politique et le religieux dans l'islam*, Paris: Aubier.
23. I use this unfamiliar terminology to suggest the accumulation of imaginary representations in the words islam, East, Christianity, Judeo-Christianity, Europe, West, when used separately as catch-all expressions. Each time the quotation marks point to the need to rethink so many legacies, collective memories, interpretations and imaginary representations that continue to feed mutual exclusions, reproaches, emotional rejections ending in recurring bi- or multilateral wars. I am thinking of the conflicts between Algeria/France, India/UK, Morocco/Spain and France, Greece/Turkey, Tajikistan and Chechnya/Russia, etc. There is here an ancient historical dispute whose tensions form a solid basis for the construction of historical consciousness offering redemption and solidarity for the future.