Democracy: An Unfinished Project

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My first hypothesis is a counterintuitive claim. Globalization is a transformation of time, not space. It is a new time, universally shared, transforming our understanding of time itself. A temporal topography structures the empirical world, and it is shifting. Historical actors in multiple countries are politically engaged at this moment, producing new, global realities that even a short time ago could not have been imagined. The present disruption of collective imagination is a disarticulation of the time of modernity, which presumed that the trajectory of Western development would determine the world as a whole. The term *globalization* first became prevalent in public discourse in the 1990s, when it described a spatial extension, the global spread of what already existed—European modernity, secular reason, the capitalist economy, patterns of consumption, neo-imperialism, US hegemony, or, simply, the West. But these descriptions did not grasp the fact that economically, militarily, and ideologically, a temporal dialectic was in play. The spread of existing forms, far from increasing Western dominance, was in the process of undermining it.

At the time, Western vulnerability was difficult to perceive. With the

end of the Cold War, the spread of Western forms seemed unstoppable. The USSR ceased to exist, its sphere of influence disintegrated, and Communist China embraced both modernity and markets in an attempt to break decisively with the Maoist past. With the failure of old-style socialism, Western Marxism, too, lost credibility. Many governments in the developed, and not so developed, world were benefiting from economic globalization. The global consumption of fashion, food, and entertainment appeared capable of providing cultural cement across every imaginable political divide. The steadily increasing influence of the IMF and World Bank promised supranational guidance for the new economy. The European Union was an economic success, from which Turkey remained excluded (in what now appears was that country's great, good fortune). Francis Fukuyama's 1989 essay "The End of History?" had enormous resonance in the global public sphere, suggesting that the post–Cold War spread of Western liberal forms might signal the end of human historical evolution tout court.[1]

This was the heyday of neoliberalism. Economic globalization promised political consensus. The linking of free markets and free societies—capitalism and democracy—was a neoliberal article of faith despite empirical evidence to the contrary.[2] Political policies followed the mandates of the market, as states became mediators between the global economy and national populations. Self-regulating markets were deemed to be the protectors of political freedom.[3] Discovering their quasi-natural laws bestowed

1. The article's opening pages *proposed the possibility* of the end of history: "What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." It appeared in the neoconservative journal *The National Interest* (Summer 1989). A book-length version followed, *declaring* the end of history (Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* [New York: Free Press, 1992]). Fukuyama's tone was realist rather than triumphant. Arguing explicitly against Marxist hopes for a socially just and egalitarian future, he implied that neoliberal hegemony was as good as we were going to get.

2. Turkey provides a clear example. The military coup of the early 1980s brought in a regime that promoted capitalist growth, at the same time that it destroyed worker rights, executed political dissenters, and ruled the society with military discipline. Other countries with dictatorial regimes (Korea, China, Chile) implemented market reforms with the heavy hand of the state. Historically, no Western nation has succeeded in industrial development without policies to protect domestic firms against foreign competition.

3. Chicago School economics (Hayek, Friedman) discredited Keynesian principles, arguing that government intervention not only hurt the economy; it opened the door to totalitarianism. Hayek's book *The Road to Serfdom*, first published in 1944, remains a best-

the mantel of objective truth upon the discipline of economics, the model to which all social sciences aspired. Public debate followed their lead. Cost-benefit analyses and rational-choice models of citizen behavior were neoliberalism's contribution to the depoliticization of the public sphere. By the late 1990s, computer-generated knowledge—data banks of quantifiable information—became the legitimating source of public policy. A new term, *postpolitical*, described governance as a technical matter about which, it was presumed, all rational actors could agree.

Against the neoliberal embrace of these developments, critical theorists cautioned restraint, claiming that modernity in its really existing forms had not yet lived up to its concept and that history was far from over. Jürgen Habermas argued that modernity was still an "unfinished project."[4] In a much-cited speech of 1980, the Frankfurt philosopher protested against the dominance of instrumental rationality because it separated the practices of science and politics from the life-worlds of morality and aesthetics; the latter needed to be integrated into the logics of public life.

Habermas was speaking of and for Europe, and yet his very conception of the modern project implied the universality of his philosophical claims. He failed to consider the fact that modernity's global triumph was reviving other social worlds. Precisely those non-Western countries where economic and social modernization were relatively successful were discovering alternative paths forward, taking up his challenge outside of the specific modernist paradigm that Habermas described, exposing the fact that, in its presumed universality of content and objectivity of method, the modernist paradigm was culturally specific and, as a consequence, singularly inadequate. Two figures, writing in the early 1990s, were exemplary. In Latin America, Argentinian Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussel challenged the "myth of modernity" as superior over other cultures of the world and insisted on grounding ethical norms in the lived experience of the postcolonial periphery and the bodily suffering of the poor, distinctions inaccessible to Habermas's method of discursive reason.[5] In the Middle

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selling book and is used in classrooms throughout the world (*The Collected Works of F. A. Hayek*, vol. 2, *The Road to Serfdom: Text and Documents—The Definitive Edition* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007]).

4. Jürgen Habermas, "Das unvollendete Projekt der Moderne," speech delivered in September 1980, on receipt of the Theodor W. Adorno Prize awarded by the city of Frankfurt; translated as "Modernity Versus Postmodernity" in *New German Critique* 22 (Winter, 1981): 3–14.

5. Enrique Dussel, *El encubrimiento del otro: El origin del mito de la Modernidad: Conferencias de Frankfurt* (Bogotá: Ediciones Atropos, 1992).

East, Ahmet Davutoğlu, the present foreign minister of Turkey, argued, from within Western philosophical debates and by means of Western conceptual schemata, that if modernity as a project was unfinished, it needed the non-West in order to be fulfilled. Davutoğlu's argument is the inspiration for the title of this essay, which supports much of what motivates his claim but questions the effectiveness of his categories and procedures.

Davutoğlu's 1994 text engaged Habermas directly. He did so with an appeal to the Islamic paradigm of thought, or worldview (*Weltanschauung*). It was an act of political resistance against military rulers of Turkey's secular-nationalist state to argue, as he did, for the political mobilization of Islam as a means of furthering political democracy and cosmopolitan tolerance.[6] He challenged the goal of Westernization by using the rhetorical tools of the West itself. Here is the critical passage:

> The question of the objectivity and universality of the process of modernisation and secularisation persists. Is modernity a static objective to be reached or an "unfinished project" as it has been described by Jürgen Habermas? If it is an unfinished project, what will be the role of non-Western civilizations, which have been the object of this project, in the next phase? Is secularisation an irreversible part of this universal project or a culture-bound counterpart of one form of modernity specific to a particular civilisation?[7]

Like Habermas, Davutoğlu uses the conception of "lifeworld" (*Lebenswelt*) to describe the lived experience of the individual, grounding it in cultural authenticity. Given the imposition from above of secularist social forms in Turkey that did violence to the Islamic lifeworld of the nation's majority, his questioning of the necessity of secularization for the modernizing process is appropriate and, indeed, compelling. But I would question whether an individual's lifeworld translates seamlessly into a civilizational

6. The ruling regime that seized power in a military coup in 1980 considered itself the guardian of Kemalist secular-nationalist ideology, and pro-Islamist positions were suspect.
7. Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Philosophical and Institutional Dimensions of Secularization: A Comparative Analysis," in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*, ed. John L. Esposito and Azzam Tamimi (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 174. The quotation continues: "Can there be alternative reflections of this project congruent with the authentic traditions of non-Western societies, or is deconstruction of the authenticity of non-Western civilisations a natural and irresistible precondition for the completion of this project? If deconstruction is inevitable, will there remain any historicity to non-Western civilisations in the future? Without historicity what does the rhetoric of pluralism mean?" (174–75).

self-perception (*Selbstverständnis*), as the latter is a collective identification extending far away from his or her uniquely lived experience, across broad expanses of time and space. It is the concept of civilization that needs to be unpacked at this point. For although it clearly connects Davutoğlu's discourse with a dominant one in the global public sphere, there is reason to be skeptical as to its analytical (nonideological) power.

The term *civilization* places Davutoğlu's work in proximity to Samuel Huntington's thesis, first formulated in 1992 and extended as a best-selling book in 1996, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.*[8] In the context of the Bosnian War that followed the breakup of socialist Yugoslavia, Huntington took seriously the populist rhetoric of the combatants that engendered ethno-religious hatred between Catholic Croatians, Muslim Bosnians, and Christian Orthodox Slavs. He saw it as a manifestation of conflicting civilizational identities and claimed that these hatreds were anticipatory of events to come: "The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations [of which the Bosnian conflict was one] will be the battle lines of the future."[9]

Davutoğlu's use of the term *Islamic civilization* had very different political implications.[10] His fault line was within Turkey itself. At a time when secular-nationalist military rule made Islamic lifestyles illegal, and women in the university donned the hijab in defiance of the law, his affirmation of the Islamic lifeworld was a democratic act of inclusion of Turkey's religious populations against the forced modernization of the Kemalist state. Davutoğlu favored modernization by means of Islam rather than against it. His was a discourse of universality, arguing for the contribution of Muslim civilizational values of cosmopolitan tolerance to a civilizationally shared, global project.[11] Given the fact that, as late as 1997, Prime Minister Erdoğan, then

8. Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington first presented his thesis as a lecture in 1992 to the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute, which counts among its senior fellows John Bolton (George W. Bush's ambassador to the UN), Lynne Cheney (wife of Bush's vice president), and Newt Gingrich (2012 Republican candidate for US president). The lecture appeared in *Foreign Affairs* the following year with a question mark ("The Clash of Civilizations?"). It was published in book form with the title *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).
9. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs*, June 1, 1993, accessed June 18, 2013, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/48950/samuel-p-huntington /the-clash-of-civilizations.
10. He refers directly to both Fukuyama and Huntington in this context (Davutoğlu, "Philosophical and Institutional Dimensions of Secularisation," 175).
11. Perceiving that a new global civilization is emerging, he is desirous that Islam play a

mayor of Istanbul, was arrested for reading a poem that referenced Islamic cultural symbols (even though that poem was fully allowed and promoted in the early years of the Turkish republic), Davutoğlu's appeal to the cultural authenticity of Islam appeared not only counterhegemonic but courageous.

Intellectually, it is not the Islamic thematics that concerns me in Davutoğlu's approach. Rather, it is his reliance on certain Western methodologies, specifically twentieth-century German phenomenology, in which both he and I are schooled. From Wilhelm Dilthey he takes the concept of *Weltanschauung*; from Edmund Husserl he borrows aspects of phenomenological reduction; from Martin Heidegger he accepts a philosophical ontology grounded in the concept of authenticity. My own study of this tradition was mediated by the critical theory of Theodor Adorno, through whose reception I acquired a suspicion of all ontological claims, whether constituted *by* epistemology or constitutive *of* it.[12] I am referring to Davutoğlu's striking distinction between the Western philosophical tradition as based on an "epistemologically determined ontology" and the Islamic tradition as based on an "ontologically determined epistemology."[13] But to elaborate fully on this point would take us too far into philosophical detail. And although I will comment on its significance again below, for present purposes, my general criticism can be stated quite plainly: to presume any civilizational authenticity, Islamic or Western, we would have to establish that such phenomena as authentic civilizations exist, and that they provide analytic categories stable enough to do the work of differentiating the lifeworlds of individuals and groups that inhabit them.

"meaningful and legitimate role in this transformational process" (S. Parvez Manzoor, "The Sovereignty of the Political," review of Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Civilizational Transformations and the Muslim World* [Kuala Lumpur: Mahir Publications, 1994], www.algonet .se/~pmanzoor/CarlSchmitt.htm).

12. Hence, for example, I would question whether "Occidental man" or "Islamic man," used by Davutoğlu in a Weberian, sociological sense, has validity as a philosophical category. To be true to Weber's method, the positing of an ideal type forecloses the validity of the term as an ontological category. In short, the methods of Max Weber (a neo-Kantian) and Martin Heidegger are incompatible.

13. "The principal difference between Islamic and Western *Weltanshauungs* is related to the contrast between the 'ontologically determined epistemology' of Islam and the 'epistemologically determined ontology' of the Western philosophical traditions. This difference is especially significant in understanding the axiological basis of political legitimacy and the process of justification" (Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Alternative Paradigms: The Impact of Islamic and Western Weltanschauungs on Political Theory* [New York: University Press of America, 1994], 5).

The distinction between civilizations is itself a discourse of modernity, one not yet in play at the time of the European Enlightenment, when civilization was a unitary term opposed to barbarism (used with notoriously brutal consequences to describe indigenous peoples in the colonized world). But in nineteenth-century German historical thought, the conception of multiple, distinct civilizations became fruitful as a project of scholarship. The work of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was determining for this tradition. Breaking away from an exclusive focus on political events (wars, rulers, empires), he changed the course of history writing. His philosophy of history that described sequential manifestations of the world spirit (*Weltgeist*)—from Oriental to Greek, to Roman, to German and modern— understood collective life as expressed in a multiplicity of objective forms: language, custom, law, art, and, centrally, religion. Precisely these fields became the subdivisions of historical research, by which the texts and material traces of civilizations were mapped sequentially in time as distinct expressions of the human spirit.[14] Arnold Toynbee's controversial topology of twenty-odd civilizations, past and present, made their historical study a central concern.[15] But even when modernity in its globalized spread, as a kind of universal civilization, threatened to engulf the differences, civilizational distinctions remained valid as units of historical inquiry. These divisions gave birth to rich empirical research with elaborate scholarly apparatuses that, despite misleading Orientalist and Eurocentric premises, did humanity a great service by rescuing the textual and material traces of collective life from permanent oblivion.

Muslims have traditionally divided the world into Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb (the Abode of Peace and the Abode of War), a binary division that might appear to resemble the European Enlightenment conception of civilization—whereas Davutoğlu's understanding of civilizations resonates with the Western comparative model.[16] The issue, however, is more com-

14. Descriptions of great civilizations of the past implied, of course, the vulnerability of the West, as well. It took until the twentieth century for Oswald Spengler and other Western scholars to acknowledge the decline of the West as a real possibility.

15. Davutoğlu reminds us of Toynbee's judgment from the 1930s "that out of twenty-six civilizations no less than sixteen were dead and buried. . . . He concluded that the remaining ten surviving civilisations—the Christian near East, the Islamic, the Christian Russian, the Hindu, the Far Eastern Chinese, the Japanese, the Polynesian, the Eskimo and the Nomadic—were in their last agonies being under the threat of either annihilation or assimilation by Western civilisation" (Davutoğlu, "Philosophical and Institutional Dimensions of Secularisation," 175n).

16. With this difference: what Western-centric historians have viewed critically as the

plicated. The "bi-compartmentalization" (Davutoğlu) between Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb, not a part of the Qur'an, was established by Muslim jurists "in order to specify the territories, dependent on the realization of political power, within which this juridic scheme could be applied."[17] It presumes as the Islamic collective the *ummah*, the total community of believers in Islam. In contrast, civilization (*umrān*), as used prototypically in the work of the fourteenth century historian Ibn Khaldūn, refers to a sequence of state forms *within* the Muslim world.[18] And it is worth noting that Ibn Khaldūn's writing on universal history was decisive for Toynbee's own understanding of the term *civilization*. Toynbee described Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah*, or *Prolegomena* to the study of history, as "undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time or place."[19]

Davutoğlu is less concerned with these differences (or similarities) than with the "eternal norms" that remain strikingly constant in Islamic political theory, despite the empirical history of multiple state forms.[20] His argument is that precisely because of its traditions of tolerance for other cultures, religions, and ethnicities, Islamic civilization provides a model for the world today. And, in fact, when we consider one of the most politically contentious cases, Europe's treatment of Jews compared with their treatment in the Islamic world, the best of historical scholarship supports his claim. Mark R. Cohen's highly respected scholarship in the book *Under*

"Unchanging East," Davutoğlu praises as the remarkable consistency of Islamic ontology, whereby both Muslim scholars and the Muslim masses have "inherited a really very impressive, consistent, and balanced civilizational experience" (Davutoğlu, *Alternative Paradigms*, 195). It is not clear to me if, for Davutoğlu, the meanings of *Weltanschauung* and civilization are synonymous, or whether, in this context, it is the singular elements of Islam or the synthesis of its varying elements that, for him, provide the authentically Muslim civilizational experience. Davutoğlu's typology of civilizational ideal types, based on the nature of five different prototypes of "self-perception," is expressly indebted to the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung. At the same time, as with Western social sciences, the relativism of the comparative method operates here in a way not *in*compatible with a claim of superiority and bid for hegemony.

17. Davutoğlu, *Alternative Paradigms*, 186. The *ummah* is a "belief-oriented socio-political unity" not synonymous with Western "state-centered and nation-oriented life" (179).

18. See Aziz al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldūn: An Essay in Reinterpretation* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003).

19. Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, cited in the translator's introduction to Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. and intro. Franz Rosenthal, abridged and ed. N. J. Dawood (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), xxxv.

20. Davutoğlu, *Alternative Paradigms*, 126–27. He asserts that "Ibn Khaldūn, too . . . preserved this stability of the systematization of the paradigm . . ." (76).

Crescent and Cross compares with great thoroughness the actual practices in Europe and the Muslim world over multiple centuries and concludes: "Whether their persecution is measured in terms of expulsion, murder, assault on property, or forced conversion, the Jews of Islam did not experience physical violence on a scale remotely approaching Jewish suffering in Western Christendom."[21]

But is this empirical fact best explained by the concept of dichotomous civilizations, or are other factors in play? For instance, might the greater tolerance have to do with the cosmopolitan and multiethnic populations that are characteristic of trading societies (not only Islamic but, for example, Norman Christian Sicily in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries), when compared with the feudal, territorial, and more provincial societies of medieval Europe? Significantly, historians themselves have begun to question the validity of presuming separate civilizations as the most fruitful way to deal with such questions. The concept of giant civilizations, contiguous in space and continuous over time, precludes the fact that in the person-to-person exchange of ideas, it is often precisely those overlooked spaces between such imagined giants that provide the true incubators of social and cultural creativity. Indeed, civilizational spaces may be so overdetermined by surrounding cultural influences that it is an unjustifiable act of appropriation for any one civilization to claim these human creations as its own.

The framework of comparative civilizations that led to a burgeoning of the discipline of history writing continued throughout the twentieth century, not just interpreting political chronicles or sacred texts but reading culture in all of its aspects. I am myself a product of this tradition. And (to return to the earlier point) it is precisely this training in history, the changing and contingent kaleidoscope of human affairs, that makes me suspect of philosophy's ontological claims because they reify the world, presuming essences and authenticities where mixing and multiplicities exist. Fascinating in the work of contemporary historians is the fact that, even when they start out to tell the story of civilizational differences, their very investigation tends to undermine that assumption.[22] Against their intent, the facts

21. Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 169. Cohen was a student of Shelomo Dov Goitein, whose pioneering work on the Geniza documents first grounded the objective history of this politically controversial issue.

22. Already in 1962, the experts were aware of the problem. Andre Gunder Frank quotes historian of Islam Marshall Hodgson, "We must force ourselves to realize what it means

blur clear lines of demarcation. The deeper the historical knowledge, the greater the material evidence, the more the concept of discrete civilizations dissipates. Some recent examples are particularly relevant to the alleged dichotomy between Islam and the West.[23]

Aziz al-Azmeh has shown that the political institutions of the Umayyad dynasty, which became traditional within Islamic history, were a concatenation of preexisting forms already in situ when Muslims arrived, bearing traces of a (violent) mixing of Sassanid, Byzantine, Persian, and Judaic forms.[24] Such mixing, he claims, is not the exception but the norm. Institu-

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to say that the West is not the modern world, gradually assimilating backward areas to itself, but rather a catalyst, creating new conditions for other forces to work under. . . . The great modern Transmutation presupposed numerous inventions and discoveries originating in all the several cited people of the Eastern Hemisphere, discoveries of which any of the earlier basic ones were not made in Europe. . . . At least as important was the very existence of the vast world market, constituted by the Afro-Eurasian commercial network, which had cumulatively come into being, largely under Muslim auspices, by the middle of the second millennium. . . . Without the cumulative history of the whole Afro-Eurasian Oikoumene, of which the Occident had been an integral part, the Western Transmutation would be almost unthinkable . . . [for only therein] European fortunes could be made and European imaginations exercised" (excerpts from Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam and World History*, cited in Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998], 22–23).

23. It has been noted that "the West" as a concept has no material referent. It is, rather, a "universal psychological category" (Kuan-Hsing Chen [discussing the work of Ashis Nandy], in *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010], 89). Yet it is key to mapping the separate civilizations as the concept against which other civilizations position themselves. Naoki Sakai writes, "'The West' is a peculiar construct. Above all, it is a mythic construct because, in the first place, it may appear to be the name of a certain geographic place and, by extension, of the people inhabiting it. Since we accept the somewhat strained assumption that the West is a primarily geographic designation with fairly clear contours, the West could regulate our way of representing the production of knowledge, particularly in the Humanities. Yet I do not believe that the West is either a geographic territory with an affiliated population, or a unified cultural and social formation. It remains always a putative unity; its unity is preordained regardless of its inherent fragmentation and dispersal. It is in fact a mythic unity" (Naoki Sakai, "The West—A Dialogic Prescription or Proscription?," *Social Identities* 11, no. 3 [May 2005]: 180).

24. I am not speaking about the pure forms of politics under the Rightly Guided Caliphs, men who were not dynastic rulers. The very fact that they are evoked today in opposition to existing forms indicates their ideal rather than historical significance when it comes to the empirical history of Islam. "Elements derived from the slight Arab tradition of kingship, heavily impregnated by Byzantine and Iranian paradigms, were combined with the endur-

tions develop cross-culturally in diverse ways and at different rates, so that sociopolitical forms and religious forms do not have identical histories. As the historian of late antiquity, Isabella Sandwell writes, "We . . . should not make religious identity an issue on occasions when it is inappropriate to do so."[25]

Al-Azmeh considers his own sociological approach to political power not opposed to Islamic knowledge traditions but within them—as well as within those of the West: "By science (*'ilm*) is here understood in the general sense conveyed by *Wissenschaft*, an orderly procedure for the investigation and exposition of political material in terms of a broader methodological context. This . . . was one premise for the development of Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406) and of his *'ilm al-'umrān'* [science of civilization]."[26] And, indeed, if we consider the history of science, the case against separate civilizations is clear. Whereas the earlier civilizational story as told in the West depicted Islam as preserving in a static way the preexisting scientific knowledge of the ancient Greeks until its fortunate rediscovery by Europe, we now know not only that this is false (Islamic scientists continued to make fundamental discoveries throughout the period) but that if one's goal is to write a history of scientific advances, the boundaries of civilization make no sense whatsoever. George Saliba's recent book makes the strong claim that "civilizations cannot be held apart in the story of the rise of science," which has been the consequence of activities migrating across cultures.[27] He argues

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ing heritage of Semitic religion, priesthood, and kingship. Muslim forms did not arise *ex nihilo*, nor quite simply from the writ of a Book; to propose otherwise is absurd in the light of historical reason" (Aziz al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian and Pagan Politics* [London: I. B. Tauris, 2001], 63). Of this mixture, al-Azmeh writes, "Such was the concatenated universe of mirrors we call Late Antiquity which Muslim imperialism tidied up, rendered recoverable after a more orderly manner, and made its own" (87).

25. Isabella Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 281. See also G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar, eds., *Interpreting Late Antiquity: Essays on the Postclassical World* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).

26. Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, 89. He is arguing explicitly against Patricia Crone, who sees Islamic religious experience as the key to Muslim political history. From another perspective his research challenges the Caliphate's own claim to originality, described by Davutoğlu: "The Caliphate as a political institution was the child of its age, and did not look upon itself as the revival of any political institution of an earlier date" (*Alternative Paradigms*, 124).

27. George Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 22.

for a "new historiography" of the advance of science that, far from being dependent on a civilizational golden age, can progress as well in times of political decline.[28]

Foremost Western scholar of Islamic art Oleg Grabar emphasizes the hybrid character of all great artistic works when he writes, "I remain committed to the notion that no study of art (or history) is the exclusive property of those who belong to or descend from the culture that created that art."[29] Architecture historian Deborah Howard has shown us that without knowledge of Islamic cities throughout the Middle East, you cannot begin to understand Renaissance architecture in Venice.[30] And Hans Belting has investigated how the Renaissance invention of perspective, a founding moment in European history of art, would have been a scientific impossibility without Alhazen's science of optics, which was translated from the field of mathematics to that of the visual arts via the philosophical work of Biagio Pelacani, who "had precise knowledge of Alhazen" and who in turn influenced founding figures of Florentine perspective, including Filippo Brunelleschi and Lorenzo Ghiberti.[31] In short, the birth of modern Europe was itself a continuation of the past, made possible by trade, travel, and scientific, artistic, and intellectual exchange with the Islamic world(s).

Put another way, none of the presumptions behind the concept of civilization—political imperialism, religious unity, ideological hegemony, or territorial inclusion—none of these is necessary for cultural influence and intellectual exchange to take place. Cities on the crossroads of networks

28. George Saliba, *A History of Arabic Astronomy: Planetary Theories during the Golden Age of Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 1994).

29. Oleg Grabar examines Islamic styles in the small, Christian kingdom of Norman Italy, which benefited in every branch of sciences and the arts because of its open, multicultural society and tolerance of other religions, in "The Experience of Islamic Art," in *The Experience of Islamic Art on the Margins of Islam*, ed. Irene A. Bierman (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 2005), 27. Examples are multiple. Islamic art in Andalus mixed local, Byzantine, Arabic, and Coptic styles, and secular Muslim goblets became receptacles for sacred Christian purposes. The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the Great Mosque in Damascus were both in conscious architectural dialogue with surrounding traditions. See especially the work of Finbarr Barry Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus: Studies on the Making of Umayyad Visual Culture (Islamic History and Civilization)* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), and *Objects in Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

30. Deborah Howard, *Venice and the East: The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture, 1100–1500* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

31. Hans Belting, *Florenz und Bagdad: Eine westöstliche Geschichte des Blicks* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2008), 161.

have the cultural advantage. Small kingdoms such as Norman Sicily have left large artistic legacies, cross-pollinations were the rule in trading areas, intentional diasporas (of the Hadrami in the Indian Ocean, or the Armenians, who settled in three continents[32]) negotiated diplomatically between imperial power centers, and these activities were more important for the development of human civilization than the so-called separate civilizations could have been. It goes without saying that isolated, national histories are even less capable of grasping the actually lived complexities of collective, social life. Andre Gunder Frank, in his history of the multicivilizational world economy that existed for centuries before Europe became a major player, decries "not only the subjective immorality but the intellectual absurdity" of the so-called clash of civilizations, which presumes the inevitability of ethnic hatreds and political exclusions.[33]

Cross-cultural influence is not strong enough to describe a universal human characteristic—the fact that in the production of cultural life, people work creatively from within the multiplicity of lifeworlds that they experience. If the development of modern Europe without the Islamic world would have been impossible, if Islam itself is not a place, nor a polity, and if calling it a "religion" reflects the invented, nineteenth-century meaning of the word,[34] why does it make sense to write history in mutually exclusive, civilizational terms? Whatever definition you choose, the word cancels itself out: civilizations are themselves multicivilizational.

If human invention does not take place in a vacuum, its products cannot belong to any part of humanity exclusively. Across slices of time, the giant social units called civilization are spaces so ecumenically shared that they are not one collective's restricted inheritance. This suggests the viability of an approach to history that searches its archives as a shared

32. On the Hadrami network from Yemen, see Eng Seng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); and on the New Julfan Armenians, see Sebouh David Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

33. Frank, *ReOrient*, 2. Frank considers economic historians the worst offenders, as they base their stagist views on the "false universalism" of European Social Science; "My argument is that we now need an entirely differently based world history and global political economy" (28). This claim is increasingly advanced by social scientists. See Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *Civilizational Politics in World Affairs: Trilogy* (London: Routledge, 2009–12).

34. See Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

composite of our common heritage—what I have called elsewhere a communist inheritance of the past.[35] *Communist* is a provocative term, given the almost universal rejection of communist identity by present-day political actors. But its very abject status may make possible a rescue of the pre-Soviet and perhaps even pre-Marxist meaning of the word, laying the groundwork for a humanity to come. Communist, in the simple sense of shared (in French, *partagé*; in Turkish, *paylasilan*), implies a conception of property opposed to two familiar historical forms: patrimony, in the national/cultural/religious sense of property that cannot be alienated but belongs permanently and exclusively to a particular collective; and capitalist property, which is precisely what can be alienated, what must be alienated, in order for profits to be made. Capitalist ownership means the right to sell. It could be argued that the socialist model, as the public appropriation of property, is a variant of the patrimonial idea, while, as Marx noted, crude communism, the unworkable prohibition against any private possessions, is simply leveled-down and universalized envy, the naïve negation of capitalist-style privatization.[36]

But if what a person produces is judged by its social value, if this entails sharing a person's talents and skills with the largest public possible, then approaching the accomplishments of humanity as a communist inheritance of the past suggests a changed understanding of who we are today. In principle, we are all included. There is no fault line between us and them. Of course, such a shared notion of social value is just that, an idea, a thought experiment, a way to imagine otherwise—a way to deter the appall-

35. "History is layered. But the layers are not stacked neatly. The disrupting force of the present puts pressure on the past, scattering pieces of it forward into unanticipated locations. No one owns these pieces. To think so is to allow categories of private property to intrude into a commonly shared terrain wherein the laws of exclusionary inheritance do not apply. The history of humanity demands a communist mode of reception" (Buck-Morss, in Emily Jacir and Susan Buck-Morss, *100 Notes / 100 Thoughts: Notebook Nr. 4* for Documenta 13 [Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2011]).

36. See Karl Marx, "Private Property and Communism," *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/comm.htm: "This type of communism—since it negates the personality of man in every sphere—is but the logical expression of private property, which is this negation. General envy constituting itself as a power is the disguise in which greed re-establishes itself and satisfies itself, only in another way. The thought of every piece of private property as such is at least turned against wealthier private property in the form of envy and the urge to reduce things to a common level, so that this envy and urge even constitute the essence of competition. Crude communism [the manuscript has: Kommunist—Ed.] is only the culmination of this envy and of this levelling-down proceeding from the preconceived minimum."

ing scenario of ethnic hatreds, civilizational clashes, or simply a reckless profit motive from translating into lethal struggles for water, land, resources, and ecological security.

In our age of technical reproducibility, there is at least a tendency in the development of the means of production that pushes us toward a different property regime. Its image glimmers on the computer screen with every act of Internet sharing. Knowledge-based production presses inherently toward free distribution of content. International scientists have already taken major steps, beginning with the decision to post the newly mapped human genome on the Internet and make it available, free of charge, for anyone in the world to download and use. Indeed, the globalization of research that allows scholars from all over the world to work in collaboration—institutionally, educationally, archaeologically, in archives, and in laboratories—necessitates an expanded vision of humanity.

In the 1980s, the slogan "We are all interconnected" was used to describe the findings of biologists, chemists, astrophysicists, and ecologists—with a warning that no single segment of human life can separate itself from the health and safety of the whole. It is difficult to trace the exact lineage of this phrase, or by what means it migrated to the political realm. But migrate it did, for example, in the massive street demonstrations that followed the murder of the Turkish Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, who was shot by an ultranationalist teenager in 2007. The demonstrators embraced the slogan "We are all Armenians. We are all Hrant Dink." In fact, the experience of Armenians (and Kurds) in Turkey is not one of equality. It was a form of solidarity, a democratic action in the globally visible public sphere, when thousands of citizens gathered on the streets of Istanbul to protest against nationalist ethnic exclusions, setting a standard for other political actors around the world. It is within this self-consciously global topology that the events of the Arab spring emerged: "We are all Mohamed Bouazizi! We are all Khalid Said!"

Tunisian president Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali left power quickly, but in Egypt, Hosni Mubarak held on. And the longer he stayed, the stronger the people's resistance became. The courage of their nonviolent occupation of Tahrir Square captivated a world of electronic spectators, granting to the Egyptians global solidarity and enormous respect. Their massive citizen action challenged the credibility of an entire hegemonic discourse, with its claims that the Middle East was not ready for democracy, that the people needed authoritarian government, or, preposterously, that democracy needed to be imposed on the Muslim world from the outside, by force of arms.

These democratic successes happened without paternal leaders, without foreign teachers, without invading armies. It was not a case of Egyptians or Tunisians catching up with the West. Rather, they were showing the rest of the world the way. They inspired citizens elsewhere—in Libya, Yemen, Spain, Greece, the United States, Russia, China, Syria, Bahrain—to take up the banner of democracy. This breath of spring air initiated a global awareness arguably unlike any that we have seen before. If we were to talk in Hegelian terms about a world spirit, it indeed appears to be universal, not the end of history but the end of a particular kind of history, and the beginning of something truly new, because it cannot be contained within the existing world order. It connects to the idea of the *ummah*, in that it spills out over the boundaries of nation-states. It continues the spirit of *horizontalidad* launched during Argentina's protests during the economic crisis of 2001–2002. It continues the work of the World Social Forum in its call for an alternative globalization. It continues the empowerment of the Iranian people's protests during the elections of 2009 that called on the name of Allah and democracy, both at once. Merging these spatially separated actions into a genealogy in common, and breaking away from the fractiousness of identity politics in the process, it brings these initiatives into synchrony across so-called civilizational divides. The global movements now happening in the name of democracy bear witness to the fact that democracy is an unfinished project not because it has yet to spread sufficiently in the world but, rather, because democracy as conceived within Western modernity has been insufficient (indeed, deficient) from the start.[37]

The American Revolution that proclaimed all men equal omitted from that definition the unfree labor force of African slaves.[38] The French Revo-

37. Partha Chatterjee observes that in postcolonial societies, democracies were built on the organizations of civil society that represented the interests of economic and state elites, who discounted the colonial "subaltern" as "pre-political"; in India, it is these subaltern classes that are making democratic, political claims today. Chatterjee says that the future fight may be between modernity (civil society) and democracy ("Political society"). Chen responds, "These are provocative theses. Challenging and inspiring, they help us locate the driving forces underlying democratic transformation in the third world" (Chen, *Asia as Method*, 230).

38. Non-property-owning males were excluded from the vote until the late nineteenth century, women until the early twentieth, and black Americans, de facto, until the 1960s. When the West talks today of championing women's rights in Islamic countries, we should remember that Switzerland did not allow women to vote until 1971, thirty-five years after women's suffrage in Turkey, and that feminist movements existed in the twentieth century throughout the Muslim world.

lution only temporarily tolerated the liberation of their African slaves before attempting (unsuccessfully) to destroy the Haitian Revolution by force. But even when the institution of slavery was abolished, wage slavery continued.[39] The struggle against economic injustice became a leitmotif of modern society, one that political democracy has still not been able to resolve. Marx was absolutely clear in his criticism of bourgeois democracy as not only incomplete but incapable of being completed, so long as economic exploitation was intrinsic to the production process. Attempts to legislate equality on the political level were an open admission of the nonexistence of equality on the level of society. Marx becomes a central figure on several counts in our discussion. Not only did he demarcate the structural limits of democracy in its bourgeois form; he analyzed the globalizing dynamics of modern capitalism, exposing the internal logic of the system in ways that are more accurate today than ever before.

First Paradox: Between Free Markets and Free Societies

In neoliberal democracies, money rules. Finance capitalism integrates a global oligarchy that includes economic actors of every ethnicity and every religion. This system has resulted in grotesque disparities of wealth, both between nations and within them. Capitalist social relations are based on the extraction of value from labor and from nature in order for the system to thrive. The privatization and enclosure of any productive force from which profit can be obtained is encouraged. The social costs of the production process, so-called externalities, are left unpaid. Human misery is discounted. Risks to citizen health are measured in terms of the trade-off between benefits and costs. The trivialization of life for profit is a common occurrence. Deregulation rewards capitalists even when they fail. Banks survive, and citizens—entire national populations—are forced by authorities to pay the price. One does not have to accept Marx's theory of class warfare to conclude that, given extreme disparities of wealth, democracy as an expression of the general will becomes untenable.

Political Islam owes much to the Marxist critique of capital, which

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39. Lisa Lowe reveals the close connections between the gradual abolishment of African slave labor in the colonies and a project for the massive exporting of "free" Chinese wage laborers to the Caribbean, Australia, and the Americas, to take their place (Lisa Lowe, "The Intimacies of Four Continents," in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006]).

was widely discussed in the Muslim world during the Cold War era. Sayyid Qutb, in *Social Justice in Islam*, referred disparagingly to the "bloated capitalists."[40] The present leader of Tunisia, Rachid al-Ghannouchi, who has long been a strong defender of democracy, rejects the myth that free markets (unregulated capitalism) mean free—that is, democratic—societies.[41] This theme is part of the global discourse of protest from Egypt to Wisconsin to Greece. We have an anomalous situation today in which Marx's critique of the capitalist system is globally acknowledged, but Marx's revolutionary politics is globally rejected, as is indeed understandable, given the history of communism in its actually existing forms. Marx's theory of universal historical stages has been discredited along with other Eurocentric notions of civilizational progress. Whether based on a Hegelian dialectic of history as class struggle or on the structural inevitability of capital's collapse, Marx's description of a necessary historical path for all nations from feudalism to bourgeois industrialism to socialism is based, as J. M. Blaut argues, on the European colonizer's model of the world, which claims historical forces emanate from the center and move to the periphery, which, inevitably, lags behind.[42]

One important direction of recent historical research has been to show that capitalist systems existed before the rise of Western modernity, notably in the Indian Ocean, and that these early forms, while including sophisticated instruments of credit, banking, partnerships, and trade, were held in check by the moral mandates of Islam, most strikingly by means of Muslim merchant law. In recent work, I have been developing the argument that the reason why the West succeeded in launching that new form

40. Under "Legislating Matters Related to the Public Interest and the Blocking of Means," Sayyid Qutb lists as first priority, "The taking of excessive wealth out of the hands of bloated capitalists" (Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, trans. John B. Hardie, rev. and intro. Hamid Algar [Oneonta, NY: Islamic Publications International, 1953], 307).

41. Rachid al-Ghannouchi, "Secularism in the Arab Maghreb," in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*, 97–123. On democracy: "A democratic secular system of government is less evil than a despotic system of government that claims to be Islamic" (123). On economics and ethics: "While the right to private ownership is sanctified, exploitation, monopoly and the acquisition of wealth other than through lawful means are forbidden. Wealth is assigned a social mission . . ." (113). Al-Ghannouchi's supporter in the Ennahda Party, Said Ferjani, told *New York Times* reporter Anthony Shadid that having earlier rejected the Left, he now embraces Karl Marx's critique of capitalism ("Islamists' Ideas on Democracy and Faith Face Test in Tunisia," *New York Times*, February 18, 2012).

42. J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993).

of capitalism, which scholars in the tradition of Max Weber recognize as definitive, and which differed from earlier capitalist systems because of the unprecedented violence of colonial trade, is that the European merchants, quite literally, *broke the law*.

One can certainly agree with Davutoğlu when he places economics as necessarily subordinate to social morality. Adam Smith himself would not disagree, which is why he intended his book *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* to be read alongside the later, better-known volumes *The Wealth of Nations*. But it does not follow that Islamic banking provides the answer, criticized in its existing form as merely a marketing technique, or that the institution of *zakat* is a sufficient cure for the enormous disparities of wealth that make truly democratic societies impossible today. To argue directly from a religious tenet to practical life is not justified in this case, any more than to presume that the pacifist message of Christianity, with its gentle symbol of the Lamb of God, provides an adequate basis for ensuring global peace.

So, the unfinished project of democracy will have to answer the Marxist challenge, its critique of the socially unjust consequences of global capitalism, and it will have to do this without either the benefit of Marx's theory of necessary progress through universal, historical stages or the guarantee of policy success through the imposition of religious values by government decree.[43]

Second Paradox: Between Democratic Egalitarianism and Political Elitism

A second contradiction that needs to be considered in regard to the unfinished modern project is the tension between democracy in its radically egalitarian form and social hierarchies that exclude democratic participation. Davutoğlu insists that Islam teaches the absolute equality of human

43. Commenting on Davutoğlu's appeal to Islamic values, Danial Mohd Yusof notes that Islamic values are themselves contested with the consequence that "Islamic society" becomes a "floating signifier" for multiple political ends. He refers to the work of Boo Teik and Kok Wah, who criticized a similar appeal to "Asian values" that in Islamic Malaysia proved quite compatible with authoritarian ends: "An ideological and cultural essentialist response to legitimise authoritarian developmental states against the demands of liberal democracy and Malaysia's growing discourse of the individual" (Danial Mohd Yusof, "Davutoğlu's *Paradigm*, Winkel's *Epistemé*, and Political Science in Malaysia," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 35, no. 1 [March 2007]: 6–18, esp. 14).

beings.[44] Christianity, following the words of the apostle Paul, claims the same.[45] And yet, equality as an ontological assertion (here again you see my bias against ontology) has time and again proven historically compatible with political elitism, and this is true of both religious and secular societies.[46]

Such elitism can take many forms. It is in play among sectarians of the Gülen movement, which, despite its outspoken adherence to secular pluralism, holds elitist views of ethnicity, nationalism, and Islamic spirituality.[47] It is in play among Tunisian Francophones today, who, having studied in French-speaking, private schools, may be well versed in Rousseau and the Rights of Man but do not extend their democratic sympathies to the actually existing Muslim majority in Tunisia's postrevolutionary order.

44. On Muslim society as a sociopolitical unity (*ummah*), Davutoğlu writes, "This is an open society for any human being, regardless of his origin, race, or color, who accepts this responsibility which is the basis of the identification and political socialization process of a Muslim in an Islamic socio-political environment. This political identification and integration process in an Islamic society is the main difference in comparison with the state tradition in Western civilization—as nationalist, communist, or liberal-democratic—or class consciousness. The achievement of legitimacy . . . is, therefore, directly related to the question of whether the political authority in the society provides the requirements for the fulfillment of this responsibility" (Davutoğlu, *Alternative Paradigms*, 125). His argument makes a compelling case for the refusal to separate religion from the state, when religion holds the state socially responsible for ensuring equality, regardless of color or ethnicity. But the translation of this principle into political policies has proven problematic, with extreme consequences. When the Sudanese religious thinker Mahmoud Mohamed Taha interpreted the Qur'an's principle of radical equality to extend to women as well as different races, it was a Muslim ruler (Gaafar Muhammad Nimeiry) who executed him for apostasy (with the acquiescence, at the time, of the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood). This is where the epistemology of critical theory can be effective against the shortcomings of political ontology (see Susan Buck-Morss, *Thinking Past Terror: Islamism and Critical Theory on the Left* [New York: Verso, 2003], 47 and 64–65).
45. Alain Badiou, Giorgio Agamben, and Slavoj Žižek all emphasize this radical egalitarianism in their recent discussions of Paul. The problem with Paul's interpretation of Christianity is that it leaves the material world of *in*equality unchanged (see Susan Buck-Morss, "Visual Empire," *Diacritics* 37, no. 2–3 [Summer–Fall 2007]: 176).
46. In the history of *both* Islam and Christianity, the contradiction between theology's social values and their earthly implementation produces the constantly contested space of political life.
47. Gülen followers consider education "the best and direct way to shape fresh minds" (202). They support free markets and secularism; they teach in English, and only secular subjects. At the same time, there is an imposition of moral and cultural uniformity, ethno-nationalist identity, and "blood consciousness" in pan-Turanist and/or Turkish nationalist forms.

Conservative Islamic parties presume that leaders know best; the role of democracy, claims Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood leader Khairat el-Shater, is limited to the act of voting that provides electoral legitimacy for the party's unquestioned authority. But again, it is not religion that draws the dividing line between autocratic and democratic rule. Al-Ghannouchi, with reason, named the government of Habib Bourguiba "authoritarian secularism."[48] The fate of Kemalism in secularist Turkey under military rule was the same.

Here, too, the Marxist experience is instructive, this time as an example of how not to proceed. At least since Lenin, a division was justified between the radical egalitarian goal of a classless society and the dictatorial elitism of Communist Party rule, essentially preventing any truly democratic practice even when on paper, the 1936 Soviet Constitution, the USSR became the most democratic country in the world. The fate of the French Communist Party hinged on the question of elitism, as intellectuals, through their own brilliance, increased the gap between theoretical understanding of Marx and its popular embrace to the point that faith in democratic action was impossible. It was against the intellectual elitism of the French Communist philosopher Louis Althusser that his former student Jacques Rancière supported the mass of street demonstrators in Paris in May 1968, insisting on taking their practice of democracy seriously. In his brilliant 1981 essay, "The Ignorant Schoolmaster," a parable in historical form, Rancière stated the radical democratic claim in forceful terms: "*all men have equal intelligence.*"[49] This has nothing to do with scoring on IQ (intelligence quotient) tests. It is a political claim based on the premise that all men have equal capacity for democratic participation. It goes without saying—but perhaps still, today, it needs to be said loudly and clearly—"all men" in this case means all women too, especially women, as their role in the new democratic movements has been crucially important.[50]

48. Al-Ghannouchi, "The Origins of Arab Secularism," in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*, 99. Under this circumstance, society becomes a "field of action" for power of "secular elites" rather than what it should be—the place of popular will as "source of authority" and "source of legitimacy" (99–100). Bourguiba took control of the economy and seized mosques, trade unions, and political parties.

49. For the English translation of "Le Maître Ignorant," see Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, trans. and intro. Kristin Ross (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 18.

50. No issue has received more attention, and less illumination, than that of women's rights. For a corrective critique of George W. Bush's use of women's rights as a "decoy" to deter attention from his administration's illegal, imperialist wars, see Zillah Eisenstein, *Sexual Decoys: Gender, Race and War in Imperial Democracy* (London: Zed Books, 2007).

The subtitle of Ranciere's essay is "Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation." It is the strange tale of a French teacher who manages to teach what he does know. His Flemish students learn to read a French text without knowing the language and without the teacher's ability to tell them how. This situation of "mutual teaching" manifests the human capacity "*to learn something and to relate it to all the rest*," exposing the "pedagogic myth" that the world is divided "into knowing minds and ignorant ones, ripe minds and immature ones, the capable and the incapable, the intelligent and the stupid."[51] The relation of teacher and student presumes ignorance: "To explain something to someone is first of all to show him he cannot understand it by himself"; Rancière asserts, on the contrary, "Whoever teaches without emancipation stultifies."[52] Emancipation, the precondition of democracy, requires "that every common person might conceive his [and her] human dignity, take the measure of his [and her] intellectual capacity, and decide how to use it."[53] One thinks of the Muslim women in Egypt, described by the anthropologist Saba Mahmood, who met together without spousal permission, read the Qur'an without an imam, and taught themselves the practices of piety.[54] One thinks of Wael Ghonim's description of how Egyptians taught themselves to organize throughout the Arab Spring, how they used social network technologies to spread courage, share dangers, and realize the power of their own number.[55] Ghonim reports the growing sense of solidarity in Tahrir Square demonstrations, where you could easily sense "the wisdom of the crowd."[56] Training in democracy comes by

51. Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 6, 17–18 (Rancière's italics).

52. Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 18.

53. Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 17.

54. Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005). Mahmood's point is that agency must be recognized in more ways than as direct political resistance; self-teaching, in collaboration with others, counts as well as a form of empowerment. Indeed, such practices in autonomy may be the precondition for political agency. Interestingly, in terms of women's self-emancipation, the US feminist book *Our Body, Ourselves* (1970), which was translated and adapted globally, was able to cross multiple cultural boundaries (including Egyptian) despite the differences because it did not presume that some women had superior knowledge to impart to those who did not know. "It was the method of knowledge sharing—and not a shared identity as women—that appeared to have global appeal" (Kathy Davis, "The Global Localization of Feminist Knowledge: Translating *Our Bodies, Ourselves*," in *The Gender Question in Globalization: Changing Perspectives and Practices*, ed. Tine Davis and Francien van Driel [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005], 87).

55. See Wael Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People Is Greater than the People in Power: A Memoir* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012).

56. www.egyptindependent.com/node/61266.

enacting democracy. Its shared experience is a mode of embodied performance that involves treating others not as students or as learned men but as cocitizens "under the sign of equality."[57]

Emancipation as the antithesis of subordination involves trust, writes Rancière, based on "confidence in the intellectual capacity of any human being."[58] Tariq Ramadan expresses a similar sentiment when he writes, "Equality is a fragile right, and one that must be demanded constantly, at more than one level and in more than one sphere: we must have confidence in ourselves and in our rights, confidence in our ability to communicate and to be heard, and also confidence in the legitimacy of resistance, or even in the constructive nature of opposition and protest."[59] There is a struggle within Islamic parties at this moment, and it has to deal precisely with the issue of elitism, the pedagogic distance between the people and their leaders. In Egypt, against Khairat el-Shater's authoritarian leadership, Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh insists that conservatives have no monopoly on the Brotherhood or the parties of political Islam. Ramadan was recently interviewed on this split within Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood (founded by his grandfather, Hassan al-Banna, in 1928): "'Al-sama' wa'l-ta'a,' went the old Brotherhood ideal, which translates as 'hearing and obeying.' That's over. . . . The new generation is saying if it's going to be this, then we're leaving. You have a new understanding and a new energy."[60] In the name of democracy, let us hope that Ramadan is right.

Third Paradox: National Democracy and Global Exclusions

A third inadequacy in the realization of democracy in the modern era is the fact that it is structured and contained within the limits of nation-states. There is an almost constitutive intolerance of outsiders. If the formation of a general will within nations makes solidarity across differences a goal, in foreign policy, differences are precisely the point. International relations are unequal relations. National self-interest is the legitimating principle. Violation of the democratic rights of others follows according to the premise of might makes right. Double standards of morality and even blatant hypocrisy in the practice of ethical norms are part of the system under

57. Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 11.
58. Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 14.
59. Tariq Ramadan, *The Quest for Meaning: Developing a Philosophy of Pluralism* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 77.
60. Tariq Ramadan, interviewed in London by David D. Kirkpatrick, *New York Times*, March 14, 2012.

Western hegemony.[61] Again, the source of the deficiency is a historical one. The ideal of democracy as imagined within the European model in no way extended to foreign affairs, where Westphalian Treaty principles from 1618 (in the context of colonial practices) were taken as binding.[62] Anachronistically, they still are.

This state of affairs can lead to grotesque distortions, insofar as the practice of democracy *within* a nation can be diametrically opposed to the realization of democratic relations *between* them. The vague presumption that democratic nations are inherently more peaceful—and hence more reliable as possessors of nuclear weapons—is empirically unfounded.[63] There are structural reasons for this. The power to wage war is concentrated in the executive branch, so that rulers go to war with very little democratic oversight. When they do ask for popular support, appeals to the people are made in terms of protecting the homeland, whereas the protection of other civilian populations is not equally valued, and voters do not know or care sufficiently about the fate of those beyond their borders.[64] In the United

61. It is relevant here to note that Islamic legal tradition holds good faith in contractual obligations as paramount: "It follows that when signing international treaties, Muslim States are expected to ensure that all of their contractual obligations are clearly set out because contracts are considered sacred. For example, recent research shows that while Muslim States are less likely to accept the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, they will have the most durable commitments because of strong norms of contractual obligations which are carefully and meticulously crafted" (Nisrine Abiad, *Sharia, Muslim States and International Human Rights Treaty Obligations: A Comparative Study* [London: British Institute of International and Comparative Law, 2008], 102–3).

62. This is the classical view, today described as the "dualist" position and challenged in recent years by the "monists." Monist states incorporate international law into domestic law; dualists hold them separate. Among Muslim nations, the dualist appeal to the superiority of Sharia law can have opposite effects—either nullifying an international law or, in the case of a Muslim ruler who violates Sharia law, backing an international law more in accord with Sharia principles. The status in Muslim countries presently varies: "Overall, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, Iran and Tunisia automatically incorporate international human rights into domestic law based on their ratification. Bahrain, Turkey and Malaysia require domestic legislation to implement international human rights law after ratification of a treaty" (Nisrine Abiad, *Sharia, Muslim States and International Human Rights Treaty Obligations*, 107).

63. See Jessica L. Weeks, "Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve," *International Organization* 62, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 65–101.

64. Symptomatic is the fact that CNN produces different programming on the domestic and international levels, so that domestic audiences do not have access to the same global coverage. Speaking to the inequality that characterizes the global public sphere, even among intellectuals, Cemil Aydin writes, "There is a need for the global public sphere

States, the country with massive nuclear and technologically sophisticated weaponry, an individual could conceivably become president by a majority of voters, who do not know the basic facts of global politics or the history of twentieth-century world affairs.[65] It is disturbing to contemplate that if such a candidate were to be democratically elected, there would be no legal way for the rest of the world to intervene, although regime change might indeed be advisable for global security.

But even in the best of circumstances, nation-states are not held democratically accountable to the global population. A single member of the UN Security Council can veto an act, despite a majority of General Assembly support. This is particularly painful when the act being opposed is precisely the democratic founding of a nation. In fall 2011, the Palestinian bid for statehood was blocked even though it was supported by more than 120 of 193 member nations in the General Assembly. When only citizens have rights, and Palestinians are denied the statehood that would guarantee them, the contradiction between national democracy and global exclusions becomes extreme.

Increasingly troubling are ecological crises that are indifferent to national borders that make any kind of rational response impossible when the nations with the greatest global power are also the greatest polluters. And that is not all. Again, the negative effects of the economic order become manifest, this time in terms of the distribution of power between sovereign nations and global firms. In 2000, of the world's 100 largest economic entities, 51 were private corporations, and only 49 were nation-states. Because

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to overcome these unequal structures of communication and to turn mutual critiques into constructive dialogue on the legitimacy crisis of international order and the shared problems of global modernity. Despite the image of Muslim intellectuals as Occidentalist and anti-Western, in reality the Muslim part of the global public sphere is more prepared for and open to a dialogue, as Muslims know more about Western intellectual traditions than vice versa" (Cemil Aydin, "The Politics of Conceptualizing Islam and the West," *Ethics and International Affairs* 18, no. 3 [2004]: 89–96, esp. 96).

65. From the *New York Times* article by J. David Goodman, "Turkish Government Reprimands Perry" (January 18, 2012): "In Monday night's Republican debate in South Carolina, Gov. Rick Perry of Texas described the leaders of Turkey as 'Islamic terrorists,' an inaccurate characterization that drew a swift rebuke from the Turkish government. Asked whether Turkey, a predominantly Muslim democracy of nearly 79 million people and an American ally in the region, belonged in NATO [which it has since 1952], Mr. Perry said it did not. 'Obviously,' he said, 'you have a country that is being ruled by what many would perceive to be Islamic terrorists,' adding that he would take a step further and cut off all foreign aid to the country."

corporations have been declared legal persons, international law protects their rights, not those of the individuals harmed by their actions.[66]

In a global public sphere, defiance of state boundaries is practiced by diverse actors—labor immigrants and computer hackers, political refugees and al-Qaeda networks, multinational corporations and NGOs. National boundaries as the politically salient distinction become questionable, as do many of the excluding binaries of modern politics. When political space is fungible and solidarity is inscribed within complex geopolitical networks, Left and Right lose coherence as a classificatory system. In this shifting terrain, the appeal of moral absolutism, the simplifying discourse of good vs. evil, is understandable, yet these terms, *absolutism* and *morality*, prove incompatible in practice. Ramadan writes that ethical practice needs to be revived "upstream from law," and democracy depends on it.[67] But democracy is not merely an end to be achieved. When the goals are socioeconomic justice, human dignity, and global equality of rights and responsibilities, then democratic means to these goals must be respected. Democracy is a contingent, not an ontological, quality. It cannot be possessed without its practice. As a descriptive term, it passes to diverse actors who earn the name through their actions that embody the idea and make it perceptible in the world.

Is a return to authentic cultures at this point possible? Times of transition evoke a longing for the security of authenticity, but precisely this is denied us. No collective will be able to go back to the way it was in a world that did not have the global awareness and responsibility of ours today. The global public sphere is an actor now, not merely a Kantian spectator. And democracy is its responsibility. We are in an era of experimentation, when ways forward will not be entirely old or entirely new, entirely authentic or entirely imported. Our practical concerns are shared globally. They are not issues of dogma or civilization differences. Whenever and wherever the paradoxes of democracy are addressed, we will find political actors who, far from catching up with the West, surpass it. They may be religious. They

66. "International law is virtually silent with respect to corporate liability for violations of human rights" and "has neither articulated the human rights obligations of corporations nor provided mechanisms to enforce such obligations." This is according to a *Harvard Law Review* article (2001), cited in Emeka Duruigbo, "Corporate Accountability and Liability for International Human Rights Abuses: Changes and Recurring Challenges," *Northwestern Journal of International Human Rights* 6, no. 2 (Spring 2008), www.law .northwestern.edu/journals/JIHR/v6/n2/2/.
67. Ramadan, *The Quest for Meaning*, 80.

may be secular. They may be any sex or gender, any skin color or ethnic background. They will be admired for the creativity of their solutions and their capacity to share these in a democratic way.

To say that revolution is a rupture in history is not the most radical claim that one can make of historical events. Empirically, repressive reactions do occur. The true rupture is in consciousness, how the present and future are imagined. We would be using too weak a form of expression—too idealist, too Platonic—to say that democracy as a preexisting idea is actualized in the revolutionary event. The connection needs to be reversed. The very fact, the undeniable reality of collective action, gives birth to the idea. Democracy can exist as thought and can be thought again, because it happened. Yet each time it occurs, the idea expands. Democracy changes its meaning, means more, as the actions of specific collectives bring it to life in a particular form, different, yet every time recognizable as itself.

Addendum: February 2014

Two years have passed since I presented an early version of this essay as a talk in Istanbul. In June 2013, democratic resistance surfaced on the streets of the city, causing sympathetic demonstrations to reverberate throughout the nation. Protests in Istanbul's Gezi Park and violent police response in adjacent Taksim Square received global coverage. Tens of thousands of peaceful demonstrators were dispersed by tear gas and water cannons. What sparked the Gezi occupation was the government plan to destroy the public park and replace it with a reconstruction of the nineteenth-century army barracks built under the Ottoman Sultanate that was to house a huge, new shopping mall, enclosing one of the few open, green spaces in the city. (Only 1.5 percent of the land in Istanbul is public parkland, in a city of 14 million inhabitants.) This is Haussmannization—"strategic beautification"—neoliberal style. The "Gezi spirit" resonated with the Arab Spring, the Indignados movements in Europe, and the Occupy movements in the United States. In a celebration of citizen diversity, demonstrators represented a broad coalition of political beliefs and personal identities. Women's movements, anticapitalist Muslims, gay and lesbian groups, Kurds, Armenians, artists, and soccer fans stood together at Gezi. Despite promises of tolerance, Erdoğan's government sent in riot police, who responded with an iron hand, killing some demonstrators, wounding dozens, and arresting hundreds. Since that time, Erdoğan's Islamic Party

has been accused of corruption related specifically to urban development projects that have evicted residents, destroyed long-established neighborhoods, and caused a bubble of real estate investments involving promises of foreign capital that now are in doubt. Discourse among Islamic politicians is rent by mutual accusations. In this political context, which looks for all the world like so many others across the globe, reference to a coherent Islamic worldview or eternal norms of Islamic political life appears incongruous.