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**ISLAM &
POSTMODERNITY:
THE NEW ISLAMIC
DISCOURSE IN EGYPT**

**MOHAMED MOSAAD
ABDEL AZIZ**

2003

The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Science

2003/91

**ISLAM AND POSTMODERNITY:
THE NEW ISLAMIC DISCOURSE IN EGYPT**

No

A Thesis Submitted to
Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Psychology
and Egyptology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

by

Mohamed Mosaad Abdel Aziz

Under the supervision of

Dr. AbdAllah Talib Donald Cole

December 2003

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ABSTRACT

The American University in Cairo

Islam and Postmodernity: The New Islamic Discourse in Egypt

Mohamed Mosaad Abdel Aziz

Under the supervision of Dr. AbdAllah Talib Donald Cole

The question of this work is what changes Muslim Brotherhood Group MBG discourse in Egypt is experiencing? To answer this question I conducted extended interviews with forty Islamic activists who have belonged or belonged to MBG.

There is a change in the motivation behind Islamic activism/Islamism that became a recognition of the failure of MBG project, and an encounter of what Islamists perceive as new global challenges. For Islamists those two factors re-legitimized the state, which is seen more as a partner, though with peripheral and minor significance. Globalization, far from being recognized as exclusively a threatening power, is seen as offering new spaces and opportunities of action and progress. There has also been a dramatic change in the framing metanarrative of comprehensive Islam. It is now decentralized, ghettoized, and emptied from its content and refilled with new temporary mini-contents.

The new Islamic discourse is created through the display of two main concepts: openness and resistance, and more important the ongoing negotiation process between them. This discourse promotes a subjectivity that stresses the characters of openness, innovation, independence and richness. A power system composed of a dynamic and active network of business and activism supports this discourse and get reproduced through it. This network has a dramatic effect on re-engineering the 'active' structure of MBG. A commodified neoliberal discourse appealing to its consumers is produced and reproduced through the above network that is embedded in a similar global network of business and activism. Market dynamics of sale competition are practiced to promote the spread of the now monopolizing discourse adopted by political players who used to be adversaries.

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Introducing the Interviewees

Fatima	A thirty four year-old pediatrician and a freelance writer. She was active in Islamic activism in university in the late 1980s and early 1990s. She later marginalized her activism with MBG and pursued some individual initiatives of social activism.
Lotfi	A thirty seven year-old engineer in a governmental institution. He came from a lower class background and joined MBG activism both in his neighborhood and university. Recently he is reconsidering his involvement within the Group.
Mamduh	A forty two year-old veterinary who worked as a medical representative, a private teacher of mathematics in English, and a teacher of biology in an English school. He authored a medical dictionary and headed a private company for children education. He came from well-to-do middle class background. He was involved in Islamic activism in the late 1970s in his university and since the early 1980s he has been involved in MBG activism. He, however, started recently to underestimate the significance of MBG activism and shift to individual spiritual path with some social activism in his neighborhood.
Yosef	A fifty year-old university professor and an owner and a director of a multimedia company. He started his Islamic activism in the 1970. In the 1980s he pursued his activities in North America. Deepening his experience and globally extending his acquaintance. He tries recently to swiftly distance himself from MBG and focuses on his flourishing business.
Hani	A thirty six year-old nephrologist who lives and works in France. He was active in the 1980s and has ceased off his activism since he traveled to France in early 1990s.
Suzan	A thirty three year-old website editor. She comes from a high middle class

	background. She stopped gradually her MBG activism after her graduation from faculty of medicine after a very active phase from mid 1980s to early 1990s. two years ago she resumed her activism through an Islamic website to which she enthusiastically devotes most of her energy and time.
Khaled	A thirty four year-old lecturer in Cairo University. He comes from a high middle class background. He has maintained a moderate level of Islamic activism since the mid 1980s. he is recently reconsidering his involvement in MBG.
Ahmed	A thirty eight year-old physician working in Kuwait. He was one of the most famous young leaders of Islamic activism in the 1980s. he comes from a lower middle class background, something that has changed dramatically after his traveling to Kuwait. He still maintains a sort of peripheral membership in MBG distancing himself from any serious involvement and refusing to come back to Egypt.
Maged	A thirty eight year-old businessman who comes from a relatively lower middle class background. He is completely absorbed in his business and keeps a very low grade activism through MBG.
Hassan	A thirty nine year-old engineer who works now as a director of an Islamic website. He comes from a middle class background. He used to be deeply involved in MBG activism carrying many central responsibilities. Recently he decided to quit MBG and devotes his energy to the Islamic website he is directing.
Mahmud	A thirty one year-old graphic designer in a multimedia company. He comes from a high middle class background. His socioeconomic status has certainly decreased as he depends solely on himself to support his family. He was involved briefly in MBG activism but then decided to maintain his activities away from the 'authoritarian' Group as he describes it. He is trying to travel to a Gulf state to improve his life.

Adel	A thirty two year-old manager of marketing department in a software company. He comes from a lower middle class background. After dedicated and very hard work he could improve his socioeconomic status. He is developing his flourishing career and carefully reconsidering his, now peripheral, involvement in MBG.
Hatem	A thirty nine year-old orthopedist who comes from a middle class background. He has maintained a central role in MBG since the mid 1980s.
Hisham	A forty five year-old manager in an Islamic bank. His father was an active member of MBG. He comes from a middle class background and he is known to be an Islamic intellectual more than a technocrat. His involvement, like his interests, is rather 'intellectual'.
Sameh	A forty one year-old web editor. He comes from a middle class background. He graduated from faculty of medicine but then studied anthropology and worked in Islamic relief organizations. He published a few books and is expanding his activities and interests beyond MBG to which he still belongs.
Saleh	A fifty year-old engineer. He is a high middle class. He has been an Islamic activist since 1970s. in the 1980s, and after coming from Europe where he was completing his graduate studies, he furthered his social and political activism through the syndicate of engineers. In the mid 1990s he quit MBG to join Al Wasat Islamic Party that is a split in MBG.
Nagy	A thirty nine year-old political scientist and writer. He worked through many Islamic research centers and moved peripherally in MBG to preserve his 'intellectual independence'. Recently he quit MBG.
Said	A forty year-old ENT specialist and MD candidate. He comes from a middle class background. In the 1980s he was one of the most active and well-known MBG young leaders. A few weeks ago, that is after interviewing him, some newspapers wrote about his resignation from MBG.
Hamed	A thirty three year-old Ph.D. philosophy candidate and an editor in a

	<p>multimedia company. He comes from a low class background. He maintains his MBG membership and downplays his criticism to MBG in favor to improve the work of it through individual initiatives 'that would finally meet the main objectives of MBG like carrying Da'wa to large sectors of the society.' He has just finished his Ph.D. and is thinking of traveling to work in Kuwait or Emirates.</p>
Mustafa	<p>A forty seven year-old university professor. He comes from an upper class background and a wealthy family. He started his activism in the 1970s and has maintained, in fact increased, his involvement in MBG during these years.</p>
Murad	<p>A thirty three year-old typist who comes from a low class background. He is deeply involved in 'public' activism in his poor neighborhood, like teaching children Quran, distributing alms, organizing night schools to help pubis study their lessons... He is married and a father of two kids and tries to travel to Emirates to improve his economic conditions.</p>
Salem	<p>A thirty six year-old businessman who came from a low class background, but now improved his status dramatically after coming back from working in Qatar.</p>
Medhat	<p>A thirty seven year-old businessman who comes from a high middle class background. He owns a big shop of ceramics. His involvement in MBG has recently been reduced to its 'social' dimension i.e. maintaining his friendship and family relations with no serious or interest in their other aspects of activism.</p>
Ossama	<p>A thirty one year-old owner of a printing office. He comes from a middle class background and has been involved in MBG activism since early 1990s.</p>

Introduction

Postmodernity and globalization have their impact on different cultures and locales. In my work I am tracing this impact on Egyptian Muslim activists' discourse. The Egyptian Islamic activism in the last century witnessed many strands among which Muslim Brotherhood Group constituted a prominent feature that extended its influence, through its discourse, outside its strict organizational borders. The question now is what changes MBG, in an ideological and practical sense, is experiencing? I am not principally questioning the MBG as an organization; I am questioning MBG discourse, which is shared by a variety of people not every one of them is necessarily a Muslim Brotherhood member.

MBG was founded by Hassan El Banna in 1928. Since then the group has been involved in the political, social and cultural life of Egypt with a fluctuating relationship with the subsequent governments and regimes of Egypt ranging from complete tolerance to complete oppression. After crossing a time of severe oppression by Nasser's regime that started from the mid 1950s, MBG enjoyed relative tolerance by Sadat during the 1970s. This decade witnessed a remarked increase of Islamic activism that ended in the 1981 by clashing with Sadat. No doubt that one of the main reasons of this clash was Sadat's visiting to Jerusalem in 1977 that was followed by successive steps to making peace with Israel. The Group's opposition to the peace process was aired in its official magazine, *Al Da'wa*, in a voluminous material that was thoroughly studied by Ahlam Farhud.¹ After assassination of Sadat, MBG maintained its opposition to the peace process and Normalization with Israel though the issues raised and their contextualization as well has been changing echoing local, regional and global social, economic and political changes.

As soon as Mubarak released MBG leaders from the prison in the beginning of his reign the Group resumed its activities. The 1980s in fact was characterized by a differentiation process of Islamic activists, which resulted in a relative dominance of MBG over other Islamic

groups. Group candidates stood for both parliamentary and professional syndicates' elections winning many seats in the 1984 and 1987 Parliaments and a majority of the seats of the syndicates of physicians, pharmacists, dentists, veterinarians, engineers, lawyers, accountants and scientists. They also won a majority in many university professors' clubs. Most of the student unions of the Egyptian universities were almost completely dominated by MBG young members. Moreover, MBG founded its own social, economic and cultural institutions like the Islamic Medical Society, Islamic Education Society, Al Sharif Group Corp., and Safeer Publishing House. Through these institutions MBG managed to be involved in and influence the social and political life in Egypt.

The beginning of the 1990s however witnessed a gradual increase in the governmental intolerance to the flourishing MBG, which climaxed in 1995 by arresting dozens of MBG leaders and sending them to trials before military courts. Since then MBG has been downplaying its public activities to avoid further clashes with the authorities. Nevertheless, many MBG members and ex-members sought to launch individual initiatives to maintain their activities. Accordingly, a new discourse rooted in MBG ideology, or departing from it, has been propagated through private media companies, websites, magazines, charity institutions, NGOs, research centers... This discourse encounters the social, political and economic problems in a way that is different, and sometimes radically different, from the classic way of MBG discourse declared in their official statements or published in their known publications.

I conducted interviews with forty persons from both sexes who have been involved in the Islamic activism and who adopted the ideology of MBG at least in the early phase of their activism. Though MBG members and affiliates occupy an age spectrum stretching from the teenagers to people in their ninth decade of age I confined my interviews to those whose age ranges from the early thirties to the late forties. My interviewees had or have had maintained a persistent role in the Islamic activism. Some of them held a special position in MBG hierarchy, being responsible for an important part of the work, making or taking important decisions in the history of MBG... Others, however, maintained their persistent work at a lower

hierarchical level within MBG. Not everyone of the interviewees is quoted in my work. Most of those who are quoted had their names changed. Others were mentioned through their occupations or affiliations only. Most of my interviewees come from a middle class background and therefore their answers reflected the ambitions and pains of this class in Egypt. They do not reflect a sample selected carefully to reflect a specific representation. They reflected in their answers, as they used to emphasize frequently, only their personal views, which they had accepted and welcome to share with me.

Here I have to situate clearly myself in these interviews. In fact I have been myself an Islamic activist for more than twenty years. I started my Islamic activism in my high school and then furthered it profoundly during and after my college years. In these years I was acquainted with many friends (brothers and sisters) whom I am now interviewing. Though I was known to be adopting the discourse and ideology of MBG I decided to distance myself from the movement and its ideology in the last few years. It is not that I started being a critic of their discourse, but it is that my criticism, which got bitterer, made my stand within the movement a bit strange. Why do you still consider yourself as someone adopting the MBG ideology anyway? My friends asked me.

The relation between my informants/friends and I thus is not, for the better or the worse, a straightforward one. As a critic of MBG my interviewees would consider me as challenging their ideology, which they might have to defend before me. From my perspective I would also look at their answers as backward or plainly wrong, something that may affect the wording of the questions and the interpretation of the answers. As an "American" University MA student they may consider me as someone who is using them for his own benefit, or even worse, they might see me as someone who is betraying them, especially because I am a bit stigmatized as a "peace activist" and "Normalization advocate", two characters, which mean that I am "violating the national and religious consensus". This kind of mutual perception would make me show up some of my national and religious loyalty

before them and would make them show up some of their firm stand before an imagined "foreign challenge", which is me of course.

On the other hand, both they and I would think of myself as an Islamist, someone who has not completely abandoned his national and religious stand yet. They frequently talked to me as a brother, one of them, and I also sometimes crossed the imaginary border and got involved in the passion of the heated discussion. Besides, as someone who distanced himself because he thought he has a different view and perhaps because I used to be the one who gives the answers not the one who poses the questions they would like to extend the discussion by asking me over and over, "so what do you think Mohamed?" I have to say that such instigation sometimes seduced me.

The last technical problem of my involvement in Islamic activism through MBG is that I do know who is doing what. More importantly I know who would probably give me which answer. I have been not only meeting but also working with those people for long years. We have discussed different issues from Khilapha to where to put that poster. However, though meeting them is not something new for us, interviewing them is a bit different. Sometimes in the interviews they looked in my eyes smiling and saying, "You know Mohamed!" In these moments I did my best to correct the situation even by ignoring the remark and continuing my writing down of their answers. In other times, I needed to explicitly remind them that we are conducting an anthropology research not a meeting of friends. In short, I tried to estrange myself from the "field". However, the more serious problem is that I could expect how to get a specific answer from a specific interviewee. If I wanted to say something in my research I could make it be said by them. I tried, nevertheless, to do my best, as a human being and as an anthropology MA graduate, not to abuse my interviewees and I hope I succeeded as possible as it could be.

In my interviews I never used a prepared questionnaire, which the interviewees had to fill in. Most of the questions were modified according to whom I am interviewing and what his/her answers were. However, the discussion itself stemmed from four main questions. I

elaborated a sequence of questions depending on my interviewee's answers to each one of them. The four questions were always raised in sequence. Nevertheless, the going on of the discussion was a kind of "spiral". In other words, I used to start with the first question and those related to it and stemming from its answer. Then I would move to the second question and its related answers. The next step was going back to re-articulate the answers given to the first group of questions. Then I would go to the third question and those related to it. Finishing this step I would once again go back to re-pose the first two groups of questions and their revealed answers. Finally I would go to the fourth group of questions, a step, which was followed by a revision of the previous three groups of questions and answers.

I preferred to situate my questions in the Arab/Israeli conflict. This conflict has paralleled and mirrored issues directly related to both modernity and postmodernity. For instance, in the mid last century it entangled issues of nation/state project, nationalism, imperialism, cold war, colonialism, development, political and economic independence, industrial progress...etc. On the other hand, it is recently raising issues of globalization, new world order, new social movement, networking, transnational organizations, identity, cultural plurality, minorities rights, human rights, ...etc. This is why tracing this specific discourse of Arab Israeli conflict situates the encounter of Islam and postmodernity and reflects a postmodern turn echoed in issues raised, concepts constructed and frames put to found such a discourse. In this work I am "using" the Arab/Israeli conflict and the Palestinian issue to *narrate* new Islamic activism and the challenges it encounters. In other words the Arab/Israeli conflict itself is of minor importance in this work and it acts only as a mediator of the work. I would use it as a departure of the discussion and frequently as a site through which my interviewees would contextualize their answers. The following are the four main questions I used to streamline the interview.

1. What is the problem?

Here I try to reveal the problem (the Arab Israeli conflict) as my interviewees see and recognize it. I discuss with them the different dimensions of this problem whether political, economic, cultural, religious or whatever is revealed by them. I ask about the roles played by Arab governments, Arab peoples, Egypt, the United States, Europe and the Islamic World. I ask about Israel, how do they see it and the impact of its existence on Egypt, and both the Arab and the Islamic Worlds. I ask them about the causes of "our" strength or weakness. Besides, I ask them about the future of this problem exploring their understanding to Globalization, the New World Order, and the American existence in the Gulf region and its invasion to Iraq and the impact of such existence and invasion on Egypt specifically and the Arab World in general.

2. What is the solution of this problem?

My rather direct question here and the provocative questions following it usually elicit the known rhetoric of resistance, Jihad, the prophecy of the final victory at the End of Days, and the promise of Allah to be in the side of the believers. I then try to ask about the specific vision and role of MBG or the "Islamic Movement" in general to solve this problem. I challenge the interviewees if such solutions are working at all.

3. What do you think personally?

Gradually I urge the interviewee to reflect more on his/her answers. Without being provocative I try to bring in my interviewee from rhetoric, general ideas and principles and the relatively metaphysical visions to the details of the political and economic "reality" in the Middle East. I use different statistics and pieces of the news and the details of the political negotiations and the many alternative solutions adopted by different parties and encourage him/her to comment on them. I also ask the interviewee to explain to me in practical terms how his/her vision could come true. What should be done and who should do it? What are the steps to do this or that? What are the good steps that have been already taken and how to

further them? What reform should be committed, if at all, to stand properly for this challenge? And what are the chances does this reform have in reality? In this phase I try to explore the acquaintance of my interviewee to such detailed information and the way s/he articulates them when thinking of the problem and the way to solve it.

4. What do you do?

In the last phase of the interview I ask about what s/he is doing in his/her life and would regard as concerning this problem, or Islamic activism in general. As I said before some of my interviewees founded research centers, NGOs, media companies, Internet Websites, magazines, and publishing houses. By this group of questions I try to explore the socioeconomic network they are creating and the political influence it exercises in the public sphere. What are the local, regional and global relations between this newly created network and the MBG, Egyptian Government, national and transnational NGOs and corporations, other Islamic movements, political parties, media agencies...

In my work I aimed to explore and show an assumed postmodern change in Islamic discourse in Egypt. Therefore I started with featuring the point of departure, the old discourse, in terms of its motivations, or its objectives and its metanarrative or its ideology. I did that in the first two chapters to describe the new objectives and motivations rooted in the perception of global and local challenges, and to trace the old metanarrative and resituate it in its new context. In the last two chapters I analyzed the new discourse through its three axes, namely, the knowledge it carries, the subjectivity it produces and the power system it counts on and re-produce. I also elaborated on the industry and economy of this new discourse, its commodification, consumption, production and monopoly.

In chapter one, I am contesting Eric Davis' argument that the increasing contradiction between differential accumulation and decreasing legitimacy (of the state because of its failure) produces a crisis of authenticity. I am arguing that it is their failure, not the promise

they carry, that Islamists bitterly recognize now. I also argue that local problems for them are globally contextualized in a way that would re-legitimize the national government. Globalization, however, is not only recognized as a threat but also, and frequently, as an opportunity, something that moves the pendulum of Islamists from authenticity to openness.

In chapter two I am encountering the metanarrative that framed Islamists' ideology and action in the past. I noticed a shift from interest in macro-politics based in collective action to engagement in micro-politics, driven by pragmatism and individual initiatives. That move does not eradicate the metanarrative all together. It rather decentralizes, evacuates it from its content, and refills it with subsequent disposal contents that fundamentally change its nature and its function. In its ghettoized new form the metanarrative expedites, rather than obstructs, the change. Nothing, however, is guaranteed. Under certain conditions the isolated metanarrative could be stimulated and revived releasing its potential destructive power.

The new Islamic discourse is explored in chapter three through its three axes: knowledge, subjectivity and power system. Two main concepts create the knowledge of the discourse: openness and resistance. I am reflecting on the meaning of each of them, their role in creating the discourse and most important the inter-relationships and dynamism between both of them. Three possible relationships would regulate their interaction: coexistence, collaboration and compromise. I am also reflecting on the quality of subjectivity created by this discourse that urges the Islamist to be open, innovator, independent and rich as well. Finally, I will briefly write about the newly created network of business and activism that creates, sustains and furthers the new discourse.

The fourth and last chapter is devoted to the market, in which the economy of discourse is displayed. I reflect first on the commodification of this discourse, to show then its consumption. Here I am tackling the consumption of discourse through three frames: consumption as activism, postmodern culture and neoliberal consumption. I also explore the

production of this discourse through its extended network of business and activism that is embedded in a similar global network, and through its main producers. I finish this chapter by writing about the monopoly this discourse plays in the market of religion through structural and process changes and through the dynamics of diffusion and inclusion, and sale competition. At the end of the thesis I devote a brief piece to 'the marginalized' those whom the discourse dynamics push away from its favorite sites of power and authority.

Chapter I

The Challenge

Islam, Islamism and Muslims' social movements have been extensively studied in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology. Researchers, generally speaking, took two models to approach the relationship between Islamic activism and politics, the ideational and the sociological model.² The first views those movements in terms of the development of Islamic thought while the second pay more attention to the social bases and recruitment patterns. Though the sociological model has the privilege of socially contextualizing the Islamic movements, it, nevertheless, views the ideology in terms of crude materialism or in psychosocial needs.³ Besides, it fails to "provide an historical context within which to situate the growth and development of Islamic radicalism."⁴ Eric Davis suggests a structural model, which is "centred on the concepts of accumulation, legitimation and authenticity."⁵ He argues that "the increasing contradiction between differential accumulation and decreasing legitimacy produces a crisis of authenticity."⁶ Islamists have declared the bankruptcy of "Western" ideologies be they liberalism or secular socialism. This argument was also raised by Bryan S. Turner. He wrote, "With the failure of communism, Islamic fundamentalism becomes one of the few remaining political options in the Third World as a protest against secularization and consumerism."⁷ Both Turner and Davis, thus, are trying to approach the Islamic activism while holding on the two ends, the ideational and the sociological.

In this chapter I am departing from the thesis of Eric Davis that "the increasing contradiction between differential accumulation and decreasing legitimacy (of the state because of her failure) produces a crisis of authenticity."⁸ I am arguing that this thesis was subjected to fundamental changes on many levels. First, the "promise" of Islamists symbolized in their slogan "Islam is the Solution" to solve the national government crisis came to fail. This failure is deeply and bitterly recognized by Muslim Brothers Group MBG activists

and they usually refer it to a variety of manifestations. Second, local problems, like differential accumulation, are re-contextualized globally so that global actors rather than the national government are seen as responsible for these problems. Third, as a consequence of the previous argument the national government is re-legitimized as a local co-partner in the global struggle so that the Other is re-defined. Fourth, globalization, nevertheless, is also seen as providing new opportunities, new spaces for activism and global interaction. Accordingly the pendulum is moving away from "authenticity" to "openness" if we would put the both of them on a continuum. In this chapter I will elaborate on this four-part argument one by one.

1- The Failure

The defeat of 1967 War was a declaration of the failure of the national modern government of Egypt. It raised many questions about the direction and accomplishment of development.⁹ As John Esposito put it, "Socioculturally and psychologically, modernization was seen as a legacy of European colonialism perpetuated by Western-oriented elites who imposed and fostered the twin processes of Westernization and secularization."¹⁰ On the other hand, the Islamic revival adopted an ideology of "returning" to Islam to re-build successful and culturally authentic political, economic and social systems. Islam was seen as *the* solution, the way, a comprehensive Heavenly-guided system that regulates both matter and spirit and deals with the details of everyday life. It was not an alternative; it was the alternative, whether to communism, capitalism, nationalism, liberalism or secularism.¹¹ Sayyid Qutb wrote, "If it becomes evident that Islam possesses or is capable of solving our basic problems, of granting us a comprehensive social justice, of restoring for us justice in government, in economics, in opportunities and in punishment ... then without doubt it will be more capable, than any other system we may seek to borrow or imitate, to work in our nation."¹² The failure of modernization was the premise and a success based on a return to Islam, the ultimate and comprehensive solution, was the promise.

To turn that promise into a reality, however, Islamists had to **first**, understand and recognize the socio-cultural and political reality. **Second**, they had to theorize their solution in terms of intellectual body of knowledge. **Third**, they had to show up their solution in terms of social and economic institutions encountering reality and presenting their model of change. **Fourth**, they had to adopt a clear political choice of change. In fact, these are the very four dimensions of failure Islamists are complaining of now. In the following lines I will trace them.

A- Understanding Reality:

They have no real ideas. They are not realistic at all. Look at Hamas' discourse. We will propagate Intifada until we liberate Palestine from the River to the Sea. That is what Hany said to me. Hany adopted MBG ideology in the early 1980s. He had been very active during his college years until he immigrated to France to complete his postgraduate studies four years ago. For Hany MBG could not convey the global changes and therefore they are doomed to die out. He contentiously asked me, "How can you claim any solution to the problems of reality if you are completely unattached from this reality at all?" For Khaled, a lecturer in Cairo University, "MBG is living in another world." Did you suddenly discover that? I asked. He replied, "Well, in the 1980s and 1990s MBG was succeeding. I mean its image was glorious; they were getting more and more influence, seats in the Parliament, the professional syndicates and student unions. It was recruiting so many members. We looked as if we were succeeding. Now they are not." Why now they are not? I asked. Again I heard the same answer, "because they could not understand the reality and only held firm on their old ideology."

If there would be one complain that is referred to by all those whom I met, it would certainly be this complain, the failure to understand and encounter reality. MBG is failing and is most probably going to fail because it does not understand reality and it does not live in it. When I challenge them and ask, "is not the most serious problem the governmental harassment to your members?" they immediately put it the other way round. The

governmental harassment is one reason among others that are responsible for isolating the group from the reality around. Fatima, a pediatrician, said, "this stupid persecution makes them to think that they are really doing something, resisting the government. Instead of getting out to social reality they keep telling the same rhetoric of patience (*sabr*) and sacrifice (*tad' hiyya*)." Those who are more committed to the group, and especially those, whose function is to give other affiliates "the answers", will use kinder words and might try finding some excuses. Nevertheless, the complaint is the same one and it is quite clear. Hatem, an orthopedist, said, "Theoretically this problem is recognized. The Group asks everyone to be open to reality to understand it and encounter it. No one is preventing us. It is us, members of MBG, who shy away from the society and prefer the inter-relations within MBG."

Elaborating on this problem Adel, a manager of marketing department in a software company, said, "They can not define the *real* problems and analyze them. They talk about problems and solutions, which all belong to and come from the past. They just imagine things, which do not exist! No way, yes it is a good group but it has no place in the future. They still repeat the same rhetoric and carry the same slogans of the 1950s and 1960s. The world has dramatically changed!" This problem, according to Suzan, a website editor, is rooted in isolation and autism. They talk only to each other. When they talk to the others they are simply preaching them; they do not listen. And they do not listen because, like the government, they are not democratic, old fashioned, with stiff mentality. Hassan, an engineer and a director of Islamic website, gives more substance to the problem. He said, "The basic problem is in their thought. They identify themselves with Islam. They are the Islam. If the government is harming them, this is because the government is against Islam. And to preserve this Islam, which is themselves, they should take care not to assimilate in the society. Consequently they have been creating, mostly unconsciously indeed, a state within the state. They have their institutions and their communities. This isolationist position made them unattached to reality."

B- Ideology:

Islamists believed Shariah is both obligatory and eternal. The question of how could Shariah, an ancient structure, regulate the modern world was always answered in the same way. "While the *Shariah* is legislated by God, is eternal and unchanging, *fiqh* is made by man to deal with specific situations. Thus the original model of Islamic society "is not the final vision of this society ... there are visions ever new." The uniqueness of the Islamic vision is that it is fashioned by the *Shariah*, which created it, while other legal and social systems are a response to local, temporary needs."¹³ In Islamic ideology "The failures of the modern experience stood in sharp contrast to an Islamic ideal which linked the faithfulness of the Islamic community with worldly success, as witnessed by the memory of a past history in which Islam was a dominant world power and civilization."¹⁴ Islamists assumed that "Islam is not simply an ideological alternative for Muslim societies but a theological and political imperative."¹⁵

To turn the former thesis into a body of knowledge Muslim scholars spoke and wrote a volume about legal issues, family issues, economy, politics, science, ethics, history, philosophy, civilization, gender issues, social change, development, education, arts, literature, media, health, industry and sex. In short they spoke and wrote about everything. Those who inspired MBG activists emphasized two aspects of Islam, being comprehensive and "middle-of-the-road" (*Shamel and Wasaty*). Especially important are the voluminous works of Qaradawi, Said Howa, and Ghazali. In modern fashion they wrote about the "systems" of Islam, the political system, legal system, economic system, educational system... all these perfect systems are integrated together in one body, the Islam to make it comprehensive/*Shamel*.¹⁶ Qaradawi defined the concept of Wasatiya as, "Balanced approach: Adopting the middle ground of Islam, avoiding extremism or negligence, rejecting deviant or strange opinions."¹⁷

Trying to make their intellectual project more serious and critical and less propaganda some intellectuals of MBG with other affiliates (like Selim El Awwa, and Mohamed Emara) and other "independent" intellectuals (like Taha Jaber Elwani and Ahmed Kamal Abul Magd) worked within the framework of the International Institute of Islamic Thought on a global project, which they called "The Islamization of Knowledge". Mona Abaza in her work "The Islamization of Knowledge between Particularism and Globalization: Malaysia and Egypt" wrote, "The discourse of Islamization was born out of a reaction to Orientalism yet hardly transcends the problems related to Eurocentrism. The Islamizers of knowledge, similar to other contesting Third World intellectuals, might appear to raise legitimate issues such as decolonizing anthropology, nevertheless, the empirical contribution of their writings leaves much to be desired".¹⁸ She briefs the criticism directed to Islamists by writing, "These critiques of the Islamizers point to their ahistorical vision, and their quest for the authenticating of a mythological past. The critics note the danger of transcendentalism and the imposing of metaphysical interpretations resulting in an inquisition against scientists who are considered political opponents."¹⁹ Addressing their work in Egypt Mona Abaza wrote, "...in Egypt, the discourse of Islamization of knowledge takes a subtle turn in the old and renewed polarization between secular intellectuals and Islamists."²⁰

Most of those whom I met no longer read regularly the writings of MBG thinkers and writers. They prefer getting their information from TV, Internet or the regular newspapers. Most of them as well, could not analyze their problem. They only complained from its shallowness, one-sided view, and lack of information or even from being wrong. Laughingly Hany said, "It is big talk, too big, but empty." Suzan thought they raised very big issues without seriously analyzing them. Mahmud, a graphic designer, said, "You read and read and think you understand something. Then you discover you understand nothing. (laugh)" Hassan said, "They have to admit that Qutb was simply wrong. You can not pretend it is homogeneous with MBG ideology and keep twisting his words and reinterpreting them all the time." Commenting on one of the writers Khaled, a radiologist, said, "Sometimes I think the only difference between his many books is the titles! The content is almost the same."

Plurality was frequently emphasized. Sameh, a web editor, said, "We used to read "the" Islamic point of view of different issues. Our readers do not like this. And we will not represent and defend a one point of view pretending this is our view, which we think is the right thing. It is better to provide more than a view, even if they are contradictory ones. In fact our site is keen to encourage writers from different perspectives to publish their articles in our site." Suzan thought the reason of shallowness of their thinking is that they used to get one view. Had they been used to examine and debate a variety of ideas and views, their thinking would have been much deeper.

C- Practical Solutions/Social Activism:

MBG has founded many social and economic institutions to both islamize the society and present a model of the "Islamic solution". These institutions had to be both Islamically authentic and compatible with the modern life. "In contrast to Islamic modernists, the goal of the brotherhood ... was not to render Islam compatible with Western culture, but to create a more indigenously rooted, authentic Islamic state and society through a process of renewal or Islamization based upon "a return to the principles of Islam ... [and] the reconciliation of modern life with these principles, as a prelude to a final Islamization of (society)." Hassan Al Banna, "The New Renaissance," page 78."²¹ "Islamic" schools, banks, investments houses, publishing houses, medical and legal services, factories, and social welfare services proliferated throughout Egypt. Commenting on these institutions Saad Eddin Ibrahim wrote, "This strand of Islamic activism has therefore set about establishing concrete Islamic alternatives to the socio-economic institutions of the state and the capitalist sector. ... Apolitical Islamic activism has thus developed a substantial socio-economic muscle through which it has managed to baffle the state and other secular forces in Egypt."²²

Among the many social activities of MBG two were always mentioned as good examples of Islamic activism, Safeer Publishing House and the Islamic Medical Society. They

were highlighted because they were first, successful and second, useful. In other words, professionally they are providing a high quality service and socially this service reaches to broad sectors of the society. Other institutions, however, were bitterly criticized. They were criticized because, according to many accounts, they raise the slogan of Islam but then this slogan does not reflect any genuine difference than other regular institutions. Said, a physician, even accused some of them of exploiting the Islamic slogan for making more profits. Mahmud, on the other hand, said they could not balance their way between running business and carrying on the mission. Frequently they missed the both of them. Lotfy, an engineer, emphasized the failure to balance the personal relations within these institutions between business and brotherhood and considered this a failure of the educational work always celebrated in MBG. Ahmed, a physician, took the Islamic schools, which spread throughout Egypt as an example of the failure to Islamize society. He said, "It was easy to hang a sign of "Islamic" on the gate of the school, instruct the female teachers to observe Hijab, and make pupils chant Islamic songs and study by hearts chapters of Quran; but this is not the point of making a school Islamic. The point, however, was to provide a different quality of education that was supposed to raise those children as better Muslims. It never happened; and now Islamists send their children to regular schools seeking for better education." The examples of the Islamic banks, hospitals and newspapers were frequently recited to emphasize the same point, having an Islamic institution, which is Islamic by the name only while their structures and processes are regular (*A'di*).

To explain this institutional failure Hisham, a manager in an Islamic bank, said, "The problem is that we have been isolated from our civilization for a very long time. There is a time gap between the Islamic state and now. This is why we are missing a model of how an institution should look like to be really Islamic. On the one hand you need to be in power to apply this model. But on the other hand this model itself can not be created at the theoretical level only. It would be created in a long time and in reality. You start with something and then respond to the success or failure of it by modifications to reach a better state. This should happen in reality not in the cultural salons." Hassan, who recently quit the group,

alluded to another point. He said, "MBG wanted, consciously or unconsciously, to build a state within the state. And many of these institutions, especially the professional syndicates, were aimed to challenge the State by turning them into political platform to air the voice of MBG of different political issues. For once they founded a polyclinic in a district only to support a parliament candidate! This is why many of these institutions were doomed to fail."

D- Political Participation and Political Reform:

MBG is not merely a spiritual movement and its religious views involve a variety of social, economic, cultural and political issues. To make these views implemented in reality MBG, thus, had to be involved in politics and the government of Egypt. Esposito wrote, "Though the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jamaat (of Pakistan) began as sociomoral reform organizations, they both became heavily involved in politics, convinced that a more Islamic state and society ultimately required the cooperation and support of the state in implementing Islamic law."²³ Qutb clarified that by stating that Islam is aware that an ideology can not be realized in life unless it is embodied in a specific social system and is transformed into laws that govern life and organize its changing relationships.²⁴ However, unlike the militant groups such as Jihad and Jama'a Islamiya, MBG sought a peaceful political participation and a political reform through working within the ruling system and constitution. Esposito once again emphasized that, "where permitted, they work within the political system and seek change from below through a gradual process of reform."²⁵ Accordingly MBG participated in successive parliamentary and municipal elections. However, this participation fostered a confrontation with the state, which could not tolerate a flourishing and well-organized politico-religious opposition movement.

For Islamic activists, whom I met, these elections and the idea of reforming the political life in Egypt by directly engaging in it is at best a waste of time. They think the only benefit of this participation was the propaganda accompanying each campaign. Nevertheless, the harms of it, in terms of governmental persecution, are much greater. Hany said, "it was

proved that finally the state will win any confrontation. What will happen if we have ten, twenty or even fifty members of the parliament? Nothing at all! They have the majority and can do whatever they like. And you will be turned over to military courts." Yosef, a university professor, alludes to another point. He thinks MBG members, by this participation, risk all the social gains they have. You could lose your societies, your mosques, your companies and your schools. And for what? A worthless victory to get some seats in the parliament? He commented. Saleh, an engineer who occupied an important position in the syndicate of engineers some years ago, said, "you neither avoid politics and teasing the government, nor take it seriously. You go and irritate the government and when they start hitting you do not respond. You only say my interests are basically social and these elections are not important at all. If this is true, for what was the hassle then? Either take it seriously and struggle hard or keep away from the problems." Hassan posed a challenging question: how can you advise the government if you are competing with it? You are either an advisor or a competitor. You can not be the both of them in the same time. On the same point Said, a political scientist, elaborated. In his opinion "everything in the public is politics. We can not say we are quitting politics all together. Nevertheless, there are different kinds of politics and the competitive politics is only one kind of them, which we do not need to be involved in."

2- Global Challenges

Global challenges have always existed before Islamic activists in Egypt since the beginning of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, I am arguing here that those challenges are now increasingly influencing Islamists' thought, shaping out their agendas and rendering national challenges, those of the failure of the nation-state, which were raised by Davis' thesis, to be of secondary importance. Egyptian Islamists recognized globalization in terms of threatening forces; forces that could be political, economic, scientific and technological, or socio-cultural. Their activism, therefore, is supposed to be globally contextualized. Joseph A. Blum et al wrote, "We do not want to argue that globalization is "new" in and of itself. But significant economic, political and technological changes in the world in the last quarter

century have led to a shrinking world, an ever more integrated global economy, and an information and technological upheaval, whose ongoing logic continues to reshape lives and institutions."²⁶

Without mentioning the government at all Hisham referred the problems Egypt faces to internal and external reasons. By internal he meant reasons in MBG and by external he meant "the West, especially the United States, the forces that its interests conflict with ours." The hegemonic politico-military power of US was frequently mentioned as a huge challenge to Islamists and their vision of reforming Egypt. Fatima asked, "How can we aspire to *real* independence, to free will if we are threatened by the American Army?" The American Army has never threatened us since October War, I argued. No, just try to help the Palestinians, or move some troops to the East and see what will happen, she contended. She added, "You can not develop your weapons or even buy new of them from another country without their permission. Why are we accepting this if not because we are threatened by their army?" Yosef, on the other hand, traced this political challenge to the colonization. Colonization planted the reasons of weakness, like Israel, in our body, he said. After September, the eleventh, however, the West has been defying us frankly and clearly. They want the oil. But more importantly, they want to tear down our body as a one nation and stop our progression, he added.

In his paper about Islamic groups in Egypt and Normalization Nabeel Abdel Fattah wrote, "The United States tries to shape out its agendas and spread its values of liberalism, Western democracy, privatization ideology and market mechanisms, and human rights and the related concepts. ... We can see this persuasion in imposing the new agenda on the whole world under an American and European control and hegemony on both visual media and information powers."²⁷ In other words, economic, cultural and political changes are not referred to economic mechanisms of capitalism or rooted in technological advances but are ideologically rooted in a personified US that is willingly making these changes and imposing them. In fact explaining globalization changes in terms of a hegemonic power was clearly

articulated by Gilpin. He wrote, "My position is that a hegemon is necessary to the existence of a liberal international economy ... historical experience suggests, that in the absence of a dominant liberal power, international economic cooperation has been extremely difficult to attain or sustain and conflict has been the norm. ... The expansion and the success of the market in integrating modern [global] economic life could not have occurred without the favourable environment provided by the liberal hegemonic power."²⁸

In addition to the political threatening, Islamists also complain from the economic one. In this sense globalization is recognized in terms of economic forces, which are pressuring Egypt, and the Arab World and are carving their future. Global political powers are not exclusively ideologically motivated; the logic behind their movement is very economic, Islamists believe. Adel explained that by saying, "It is a puzzle! You can not solve it by fixing only one part of it. You have to separate apart its pieces so that you can reconstruct it. Power now is owned by those who have the giant economic power in the world. They then get the military power and therefore the upper hand. Economy mobilizes everything in the world. You can not solve a one problem, be it the Palestinian question or whatever, without considering all this web of economic powers that govern the world. The West would naturally sympathize with Israel, and not with the Palestinians, because it is in Israel not Palestine where they find their economic interests. On the other hand you find Germany and France hurling to advocate Iraq because they have their economic interests with Saddam's regime."

Global economic hegemony is another concept that was frequently stressed by Islamists. For them it is getting increasingly difficult to compete in the global market. Salem, a software marketer in an Islamic company, said, "we can produce technologically advanced programs that are quite comparable to the American ones in terms of quality. Moreover, we produce them in 10: 20% the American cost. The irony is that we still can not compete with them!" Why? I asked. He replied, "First, we do not have the 20% cost because it is still too much for us. Second, suppose we could find it, how can we advertise for our products against global Western corporations that have the best fame? We can not even sell them in the Arab

market. People buy the Western products because they trust them and because they are afraid ours might not be compatible with other products. They cost their products 5: times more but they sell thousands of copies. We can not even reach the breakeven." This argument, in fact, reminds us of the thesis of Wallerstein that "world-economy is conceived of as having a distinctive, unequal structural arrangement, with core, semi-peripheral and peripheral areas."²⁹ Wallerstein also argues that "the universalization and deepening of capitalism provoke resistance on a global scale in the form of anti-systemic movements (e.g. environmental, socialist, and nationalist movements)."³⁰

In addition to the political and economic global challenges Islamists also highlight the scientific and technological challenges. Fatima, who also works as a freelance writer to an Arabic science and technology website said, "It is really frustrating. All what I do is to visit the English sites of science and technology, select something and then translate it into Arabic so that readers know what is going on in this field. It symbolizes everything. They do the real work and we just consume. It is unimaginable to provide science news of Arabic labs!" Concluding her remark she added, "How then we dare to talk about liberating Palestine or founding an Islamic state?" a similar notion was given by Said. He said, "This day we had a lecture of a visiting American doctor. I was looking at him and asking is all what I want to be to only memorize what he is saying? Is that the best we can do?" Said was not doing well in his studies in the faculty of medicine. He was completely involved in Islamic activism both inside and outside the university, being one of the most famous and active young leadership of MBG. After one and a half decades from his graduation he says, "I am registered now in Ph.D. program. I am focusing almost completely on my studies and my professional work. And I feel this is the real thing, the real Islamic work, I must be doing." Said's closest friend is Ali. Like Said he was not interested in his studies consuming most of his time in Islamic political activism. Ali could indeed hardly pass his exams to graduate. Seven years after his graduation he traveled to England to promote his studies. When I met him a few months ago, in a short visit to Cairo, he told me that by now he has two Ph.D. He said, "We are doctors.

We are supposed to be good in science. The good science that we must have is in England not Egypt. We have to get it because this is the right Islamic thing we must do."

Yosef and Khaled looked at this issue from a relatively competitive point of view. Khaled, a lecturer and hepatologist, said, "I was in Europe completing my studies. It is very different. The environment is completely different. They help you to focus on your studies. If you are good you can progress. Look at what is happening in my faculty now. The professors have no time to read, leave alone write papers or promote new research. In my Ph.D. one of my colleagues and I investigated a new point. Our work is really creative and pioneer. I mean we can do that. We can compete with the West; it is not impossible. Only do the right thing. Otherwise do not talk to me about Palestine, the Islamic State, the civilization and all this stuff." Yosef, on the other hand, is trying to do the "right thing" Khaled talked about. As a professor and an owner of a software company he tries hard to combine science with business. When I argued that it is too difficult to do R&D work without the support of the government he said, "Well, so what I would do? Should I only wait for the government?" He emphasized that "We have to face the technological and scientific challenge. Not only the West, it is also Israel, which is ahead of us in terms of scientific progress. You can not develop your weapons or your economy without competing with them. It is unacceptable to talk about independence while we are importing all what our needs of technology from the West." I asked him what does he do? He answered, "I know I am not solving the problem completely but at least I am taking my part in the solution. I try to present a good model for my colleagues [university professors] of how to promote your scientific research while making profit for your living from this and not only wait for the government or whatever institution to finance your projects. I have an R&D department in my software company. Those who are working in this department are in fact master and doctorate candidates in my faculty. They register their theses with me and we choose something that would be marketable. They do their work, have me as a supervisor with them all the time, and get paid as well. On the other hand I have the best researchers who are already motivated to make their work perfect. I use their work in producing marketable software programs, which I use in my industry. And I

believe this is exactly my role in Islamic activism, not challenging the government or giving religious lectures to people, but facing the global scientific challenge."

"Globalization" is also recognized as presenting a socio-cultural challenge. It is frequently seen as a sort of Western cultural hegemony that Muslims must resist. Fatima thought that "our" values fade out before new alien ones. Every nation has its own code of ethics, values and principles, its customs and traditions, but all of this is retreating and collapsing, she said. Ahmed and Maged, a businessman, emphasized the bad effects of the new video clips on "our" culture. The TV in general is getting worse in terms of spreading foreign culture and not "defending" ours. How to change this if satellite channels are available to many people, I asked. Maged replied that Islamists should also have capacity to own TV channels so that the Islamic media alternative "*badeel*" will be available. People will choose what suits their culture; they emphasized. Ahmed, however, furthered the discussion to a new point, cultural relativism. He said, "What really bothers me is that everything is getting more relative. People ask you to say why do you think this is bad and that is good. Things which were known to be bad or good need now to be proved. You tell a girl that wearing like this is vice and indecency and she simply shrugs her shoulder and asks you why? Why is it indecency? Explain! Prove!" But it is the same all the time, I argued. No, ten years ago, you had only to tell them that Hijab is instructed by Quran. Now, it is those who wear Hijab who dance in public parties and say what is the problem in this? He commented.

3- Re-Legitimization of Government

I alluded earlier to the importance and centrality of the "state" in Islamists' vision. Nabeel Abdel Fattah wrote that "The Islamic political groups, Muslim Brothers, Jihad and Gama'a Islamiya, no matter how different they are, are, in their vision and action, opposition movements to the political system. They aim to reach the political power and dominate it as a main objective.³¹ Though MBG preferred a gradual change from below, by changing the society that would change the government³² the nature of change happening in the state is

radical. Qutb wrote that only a radical transformation, a totally new beginning, what he in one place called the new birth, the categorical destruction of the old system, can guarantee the flourishing of God's system.³³ Davis, as well, in his thesis emphasized the de-legitimization of the state and centralized this problem by making it the foundation of Islamic activism. In my work, however, I discovered that there is a dramatic shift in Islamists' thought and vision. The shift encounters the two hypotheses of Davis, legitimacy and centralization. On one hand, the state is re-legitimized and on the other hand it is de-centralized. In other words, the state is not seen as *the* problem; it is seen as a part of the solution indeed. Besides, Islamists situate the state very peripherally in their vision offering it a minor role in the change.

Writing about "The Ideological Worldview of Islamic Revivalism" Esposito wrote, "The West (Britain, France, and especially the United States) is blamed for its support of un-Islamic or unjust regimes (Egypt, Iran, Lebanon) and also for its biased support for Israel in the face of Palestinian displacement. Violence against such governments and their representatives as well as Western multinationals is legitimate self-defense."³⁴ This argument, in fact, is getting increasingly insignificant. The personified "West" conspiring with national regimes against Islamists turned into a process of "Globalization" that is, though Western, is exercising its power and hegemony transcending the role of those national regimes. Moreover, the national regime is recognized now as a shield against global political, economic, technological and cultural hegemony. This conversion of the Islamic/secular dichotomy into a national/global one with its redefinition of the Other, has greatly changed Islamists' thought and re-prioritized their agendas. Adel Hussein, the late Chief-in-Editor of Al Sha'ab Newspaper of the Labor Party and whom Raymond William Baker described as a non-violent Islamist activist and as an Islamic "centrist"³⁵, wrote that the American administration insists to pressure the Egyptian State and minimize its roles in the region. It tries hard to distort our economic structure and weakens our army. It tries to destroy the Egyptian Syrian unity and threatens the Egyptian State by putting sanctions on us on a pretext of military cooperation with North Korea. Hussein then moves to highlight the resistance maintained by the Egyptian State and its dedicated work to protect the country.³⁶ In another article he writes about a competition

between Egypt and the United States in the region and calls for supporting Mubarak.³⁷ He even writes a third article whose title is "The Government in Its External Policies Is Closer to Us than the Opposition".³⁸

What Hussein wrote above is very similar to what many Islamists believe in. Mamduh answering a question about what does he think of the Egyptian government performance in the Palestinian issue said, "Amr Musa and Mubarak are the best! Perhaps they see what would be worse had they changed their policy. Put yourself in Mubarak's shoes! Put anyone else, the best one you think of. How would he do? It is bothering! In fact the colonizers were well organized in their entry and exit. They are still manipulating everything. It is not in the hands of the rulers. It is in the hands of the great powers of the world. Peoples can do nothing. The regimes, on the other hand, understand this but can also do nothing. The government is certainly not against Islam." I challenged him by asking "Would the "best one" put tens of thousands in the prisons?" Immediately he replied, "Yes! They are compelled to do this." Hassan, on the other hand, justified the harsh treatment of the government against MBG activists by saying, "The reason of this is MBG itself. MBG works covertly and charges the members against the regime." I said, does it justify torturing them? They only torture them when they do not mention the names. If they give them the names they would never touch them, he replied. That answer made me meet two activists who were cruelly tortured. Amazingly, for me, both of them stated quite clearly that there is no problem with the government. The problem is that of U.S. and Israel. One of them, Hatem, emphasized frequently, and to my surprise, that both MBG and the government are "of course" in one ditch. He enthusiastically added, "The government is encouraging the movement in the right direction because it became with us in one ditch. Even if they are doing this because they are threatened and seeking any help, the fact is still the same one; they are with us." To prove his point he drew back on recent events. Look at the governmental cooperation in organizing the demonstration against Iraq War in the stadium or at the recent Fatwa of Shikh Al Azhar that Jihad is an Individual Obligation (Fard A'ayn) against America, which comes to humiliate the peoples, he said. They are proofs how far the government is with us. The rulers got

convinced that MBG is a very part of the society and that it is needed for the coming war against the lurking foreign enemy, Hatem added. Zsuzsa Gille et al wrote, "Indeed one way to challenge global forces that seem to float freely above the horizons of local communities ... is precisely to counterpose and appeal to local solidarities, identities, images and interests."³⁹

Nabeel Abdel Fattah wrote in 1995 that political compromise (with Israel) and regional cooperation would affect MBG and the radicals increasing the distinction between them and the government. The popular political anger, Abdel Fattah wrote, will be used and directed by Islamists to wage more hatred and rejection of the state. He also wrote that the increasing victims of the shifting to liberal economy would be used as a potential power against the Egyptian State.⁴⁰ In the same year Abdel Fattah wrote his expectations the State turned MBG activists over to military courts and since then it has been pressuring them, something that is supposedly fueling the anger against the State. Nevertheless, according to the interviews I conducted, the end result was quite the opposite. I am not saying however Islamists are happy with the State and the way it treats them with. Their problem with the State does exist. Nonetheless, it is silenced and getting lower priority. Said described it eloquently. He said, "We and the government are in one boat. And this boat is in a terrible situation threatening it of sinking down. All what we have to do, no matter what conflicts are between us, is to put our hands together to save the one boat we live in together, Egypt! When the storm is off we might discover then that our differences are quite insignificant and that we can live together in peace and cooperate with each other." This romantic picture is portrayed by someone who spent a long time in the prison, by someone who was known to be a relatively hard-liner and by someone who has been deeply involved in MBG organizational work for decades.

After the flourishing and spread of Islamic revivalism during Sadat's regime that revivalism got "institutionalized", in Esposito's words⁴¹, and differentiated through the beginning of Mubarak's regime. The process of differentiation resulted in distinctive discourses adopted by a number of Islamic groups, which adopted relatively distinctive

agendas and held clearly different views. In this process of differentiation MBG stressed not only what they are but also and sometimes more importantly what they are not. Yosef said, "MBG members could be easily distinguished among other Islamists. Anyone could say who is MBG and who is Jihad or Gama'a. There was a set of characters emphasized and stressed through education (Tarbiya) inside the Group. Certain values were stressed, obedience, order, decency, wisdom, and rationality. MBG members should be quite patient because the change might need long decades and it is very gradual. I remember Essam El Eryan once in the Syndicate of Lawyers in 1985. (Laugh) After listening to a speech given by a student he commented that the student was talking as a 70-year-old man. He said we need our students wise but wise students not wise old people. Where is the youth's enthusiasm?" I asked Lotfy, while discussing the passive role taken by the Arab armies in supporting the Palestinian cause, why do not you face the government and pressure it to move the army or to exercise its force if you believe the Palestinians alone without Arabs' support can not make it? Immediately he replied, "No! I move in the available area and do not face the government." I asked why. He said, "It would be a bad management of the conflict." Hatem answered the question by stressing the basic ideology. He said, "We have only to change the people. Then it would be to the people to change their rulers." Hisham gave the last argument of Hatem more substance by saying, "The path to change must be quite harmonious with the mission carried on. You can not call for freedom and democracy and then make it through violence. Besides, these values of freedom and democracy need to be first built on in the society. Forget about the government, these values are not yet well rooted in the society. And that needs a long time." This code of ethics, I argue, combined with an ideology calling for a gradual change from below through social and missionary work and a conscious desire to distinguish MBG from other "violent" groups, paved the way to the change in Islamists' view that re-legitimized the state.

Islamists, nevertheless, do not give the re-legitimized state a central role in the reform. It exists in their view, though peripherally. For Suzan, it is worthless to appeal to the rulers because "They are too weak to do a thing." Maged thought facing the government is

meaningless. The government is irrelevant; the people who have the knowledge and culture are those who are responsible for the change, he said. Hassan felt awkward when I asked him about making a change in the regime as a step to reform. He said, "The good people get a good ruler and a good government, and vice versa." As we were discussing the Palestinian issue Adel said, "What the Government is doing is good. It has the most powerful voice supporting this issue. It also took many courageous procedures like the withdrawal of the Ambassador from Israel and facilitating the meetings of the Palestinian factions in Cairo. More importantly, it has a clear vision of what to be done; they call for a withdrawal to 1967 borders and the recognition of a Palestinian State in West Bank and Gaza Strip. This is quite different from MBG position, which is completely ambiguous and undetermined ... Jihad to the end, what end?" Ironically Adel was recently discharged after staying in prison for some months on a background of governmental detentions of MBG activists to suppress any possible protests supporting the Palestinians in their struggle. Hisham asked me, "What do you mean by the Government?" He said, "If you mean those individuals occupying some high positions I would assure you that most of them maintain a position no different than ours. But if you mean the system they are running I would say that the global power balance is too unfair against us to leave a positive role this system can play."

The change in the position of the state in the view of Islamists has two other reasons besides that of the global challenges they recognize. First, they failed to face the state and change it and they know the horrible consequences such facing might lead them to. Ahmed for instance said, "If we face the state we will be simply exterminated!" The painful experience of Nasser's regime made it so difficult for them to try challenging the system except within certain known limits. Second, they do believe now that though the state is important, it is not the only important thing to be targeted. Yosef does not deny the importance of the state but he asks, "I am not saying it is not important to change the nature of the political regime. However, I do not have a view how to do it. And I will not keep waiting to have such a view first. There are a lot of important things to be done. Why do not I start with the one I know and the one I can do?" This awkward position that neither abandon

the state nor centralize it is based, I think, on what Rosenau calls the bifurcated world. "Rosenau has produced a highly original account of the contemporary global condition. He rejects not only the notion of a "global civilization" but also that of "capitalist world society." Instead he identifies a complete fracturing of the global system, a structural bifurcation, as the full force of post-industrialism is experienced across the globe. His argument indicates that there is no longer a single global society (or system) but rather two: a society of states, in which diplomacy and national power remain the critical variables; and a world in which multifarious organizations, groups, and individuals, each pursuing its own interests, create an ever more intricate web of transnational relations, structures and interactions, which are outside the control of any single nation-state and which constitute a kind of hyper-pluralistic transnational society."⁴² While the first system re-legitimizes the state, the second decentralizes it. In Anthony McGrew's words, "Globalization, in other words, requires us to accept the uncomfortable conclusion that the modern nation-state is "... both indispensable and inadequate" (Deutsch, 1988, p. 54)."⁴³

4- Global Opportunities

Davis' crisis of authenticity that materialized in Islamists' call to return to Islam was echoed in John J. Donohue's study: *Islam and the Search for Identity in the Arab World*. He studied a corpus of 246 articles selected from Arab periodicals and published from 1945 to 1970 to discover how the problem of Arab culture and change was presented to the general Arab reading public. He classified the material into popular, intellectual and religious and put his results on an authenticity/openness continuum. Chronologically he classified his material in three phases 1945-50, 1955-60 and 1965-70. For the popular material articles expressing attitudes of authenticity increased steadily from 50% to 75% to 80% through the three time periods. Religious material showed an increase from 67% to 83% from the first to the second phases to end in 82% in the third one. Interestingly the intellectual material showed a sharp increase from 56% to 80% and finally to 90% through the three phases.⁴⁴

In their yearning to authenticity Islamists sought a culture based on Islamic glorious civilization. Their call to "return to Islam" transcended the spiritual and moral meaning to a call to build the society, economically, politically and socially on values, principles and even social structures that were supposed to be experienced in the past and rooted in the holy text. Intellectually Islamist intelligentsia of the International Institute of Islamic Thought elaborated on a project, which they called Islamization of Knowledge. In *The Problematization of Partiality*, a five-volume book released as a part of this project Ahmed Sedqi Ad-Dajani wrote, "When two civilizations get encountered with each other there would be a conflict, a civilizational conflict or a political one. It is very obvious that every one of them would certainly try to impose its expressions to give things its own colors! We have to stand before each predominating expression, examining and cautiously investigating it, before getting slipped in its traps! We must define and coin our own expressions, to revive our old ones, to have continuity with our ancestors and a right interaction with our people. Then, we have to propose them and make them to predominate after coining them and agreeing on them."⁴⁵ This same issue of "purifying" and authenticating expressions and concepts was emphasized in the two-volume book *Construction of Concepts*. In this book, Taha Jaber Al Elwani wrote, "To re-form the Muslim's reason we should begin with the re-construction of the basic concepts on which, the Islamic epistemology would be built up! ... We should be aware of the predominating concepts. We should analyze and understand them, deconstruct them, to know the points of injury and intellectual deviations, the points of power and those of weakness."⁴⁶ Saif Eddin Abdul Fattah Ismael stressed two other important points. First, there are what he called "methodological basic concepts" that work as a reference for all human knowledge. Thus, whether this knowledge belongs to the physics or the philosophy, it should be investigated in the light of these basic concepts. Second, a concept could never be independent from a methodology to which it belongs. In other words, each methodology has its own compatible and matching concepts. A foreign concept -even if it is independently "correct"- could be fundamentally wrong when putting it within other concepts belonging to a very different methodology.⁴⁷ Ismael, in other words, prohibits the slightest contact of any foreign piece of knowledge. They might look innocent, but we should never contact them

before we first build up our pure paradigm and then, only then, look if these pieces are suitable and workable or not.

Moving to my interviewees I see the sharp contrast between what IIIT called for and what Islamists now recognize as their view of change. So clearly, and also simply, Adel said, "The problem of MBG and Islamists in general is that we embrace a bygone project." So, how would you describe to me what you want to be, I asked. So simple, just look at Western Europe and North America; that is what we want to be, countries that respect freedom, human rights and democracy, he answered. Not everyone, though, is that clear and simple. Most of the interviewees would like to refer to "Islam" and its values. However, what they produce is a kind of hybrid view that embarks on both Islamic texts and global discourses of human rights, environmentalism, democracy, social justice, etc. Yet, it is me who describe such views as hybrid. For them, the issue of what is authentically Islamic and what is originally Western is not even raised. They move forth and back between border-less areas that are distinct only in my observer-mind. Mahmud does not like the kind of multimedia CDs his company produces. He says, "Unfortunately we produce many CDs that are talking only to the observing Muslims. We compress long hours of speeches given by Muslim scholars so that users will simply sit down and listen to them. What is this? We have to rather produce CDs that make the user a good human being, Muslim or non-Muslim. Look at the CDs of children produced in Europe and US. They are fantastic. They make children think and learn while enjoying the interesting material. Ours are too instructive. And that is because we do not know what is that thing people call democracy." In another meeting he praised a web site called haridy.com and said, "That is the kind of Islamic websites we want to see. It is not like the boring classic Islamic sites. It is *reweesh* (a word used by younger generation to partly mean odd, fringe and interesting)."

I will later, in Chapter III, elaborate more on the above notion of hybridization and the local/global interaction going along with it. What I want to stress now is only the notion that the pendulum is once again moving away from authenticity to openness, something that

contradicts Davis' thesis. Moreover, Islamists recognize "globalization" as having many opportunities to their movement. Suzan, advocating globalization, said, "What is good in globalization is that it dissolves the borders. Good people all over the globe can reach each other and work for noble objectives. Take the anti-war protests as an example. Governments and politicians know that they are not left alone to decide for us. They are watched out." Iman, a journalist, said, "When I write about Genoa and the likes I realize that we have made a big mistake by putting the whole West in one basket. Their governments might be bad but look to the peoples. There is an Italian who was killed while protesting for Third World rights! That is also a part of globalization." Rosenau argues that we are witnessing an era of "post-international politics" in which nation-states have to share the global stage with international organizations, transnational corporations and transnational movements.⁴⁸ Most of my interviewees were indeed excited with this change in world, through which they can communicate with people of different cultures and discuss common interests. For instance Suzan said, "I stay for hours chatting through the Internet. You participate in so many discussions with people from different environments, different cultures, and different nationalities. I see my faults and they see theirs. We agree and disagree. But we understand our differences and disagreements. Even if you do not like the others' ideas, at least you understand them and that is so important in itself." Yosef and Adel alluded to a different point, the chance Muslims have to explain themselves and their religion to those who used to buy the nonsense of the media. Yosef said, "With silence the facts are buried. Now you have the chance to speak up and tell the truth!" Anthony McGrew, in *A Global Society?*, wrote "The complex web of transnational ties, which connects communities, households, and individuals across national boundaries, undermines the image of humanity as imprisoned within bounded national societies, and instead supports a rather different image in which humanity is pictured as being organized horizontally into multiple, overlapping, and permeable communities or systems of social interaction."⁴⁹ Hassan's comments reflect the previous picture, of globalization, which dissolves state restrictions and pierces its borders. He said, "Through the website I am directing I feel freedom and find my mission. We post our views. We get responses from all over the world. we reach Muslims and non-Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs.

We select the issues we want to highlight and we ask intellectuals and writers to reflect on them. our editors and the visitors of the site collaborate together to discuss Muslims' problems and propose different solutions. Besides, we link our site with other sites maintained by non-Arabs and non-Muslims because we think we are working for similar objectives. For instance we are orchestrating our anti-war campaign to protest the US and British invasion to Iraq with many global groups and organizations." Islam Online website, IOL, recently published many articles encountering the Iraq War. In one of these articles, The Civil Jihad, Ahmed Abd-Allah wrote, "It seems our recognition of the importance of developing the civil society in the Arab World stems from the world that we recently discovered. It is a big world we never recognized or saw, the global civil society, though it has always existed full of action. ... In this great ocean there are circulating ideas, programs, experiences, energies and resources, with which we can communicate for the benefit of our work. ... Besides the moral and experience support that communication would provide us with, the understanding of many local issues can not be done except through seeing them through a global context. However, this communication can not also be done, except through visions and cadres that can encounter the global agenda."⁵⁰

Islamists, nevertheless, do not see globalization as only a chance of communication or a way out of the state restrictions. They do embark on global discourses of human rights, environmentalism, women rights, minorities' rights, global social justice, cultural pluralism, global peacemaking and even anti-globalization. Islam Online website, for instance, wages a campaign against the American "terrorism". They frame the state harsh treatment of Islamists not as a war between Islamists and non-Islamic regimes but as a violation of human rights. They send their appeals to Amnesty International and other global human rights organizations and ask their activists to witness the trials of MBG members before military courts. Instead of rejecting "Western" discourses of feminism they encounter them and try to contribute to these discourses with their views. Clearly Salma, an Islamic feminist, said to me, "In Beijing we learnt not to say polygamy or inheritance rules in Islamic legal system is right or wrong. We learnt not to base our arguments on the truthfulness of our religion. We learnt, indeed, to

count on discourses of cultural diversity, and pluralism to build up our arguments." Back to IOL again we find two articles. In one of these articles Abdel Monem Ali writes about Ghandi framing the call to boycott the American and Israeli goods in a global movement of non-violence and anti-consumerism. More interestingly Ossama El Kaffash in his article The Victims of Freedom Advocacy in the Country of Freedom embarking on a global discourse of human rights and freedom of expressions points to many American rights activists who were either tried or killed and finishes his article by a call to all Muslims to support them.⁵¹ In Islam in Egypt, Raymond William Baker wrote, "But it is also important to recognize that the Islamic revival, in its moderate and peaceful expressions (such as the New Islamic Trend), is quite explicitly and courageously engaged in re-creating itself, rejecting a narrow and closed identity, and struggling to enlarge its consciousness to find its place in dialogue with an emerging global society-and in these ways refusing the limitations of its political environment."⁵²

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Chapter II

World of Doubts

1- MBG Metanarrative

Among the primary principles of El Banna's ideological worldview were the following:

1. Islam constitutes an all-embracing ideology for individual and corporate life, for state and society.
2. The Quran, God's revelation, and the example (Sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad are the foundations of Muslim life.
3. Islamic law (the Sharia, the path of God), based upon the Quran and the Prophet's model behavior, is the sacred blueprint for Muslim life.
4. Faithfulness to the Muslim's vocation to reestablish God's sovereignty through implementation of God's law will bring success, power and wealth to the Islamic community (Ummah) in this life as well as eternal reward in the next.
5. The weakness and subservience of Muslim societies must be due to the faithlessness of Muslims, who have strayed from God's divinely revealed path and instead followed the secular, materialistic ideologies and values of the West or of the East-Capitalism or Marxism.
6. Restoration of Muslim pride, power and rule (the past glory of Islamic empires and civilization) requires a return to Islam, the re-implementation of God's law and guidance of state and society.
7. Science and technology must be harnessed and used within an Islamically oriented and guided context in order to avoid the Westernization and secularization of Muslim society.⁵³

"Both Brotherhood and the Jamaat saw two choices, darkness or light, Satan or God, ignorance (that which un-Islamic) or Islam."⁵⁴ To examine this metanarrative, its existence and work, I will situate it in the Arab Israeli conflict. I will take the work of Ahlam Farhud, in which she made a content analysis to Al Dawa Magazine, the magazine of MBG, from November 1979, at the Sadat's visiting to Jerusalem, to September 1981 when it was banned by Sadat. In her interesting study, Farhud studied the position of MBG towards the Israeli Arab conflict, in terms of the bases, on which they rejected the reconciliation with Israel, the role played by Arab and Muslim countries, the position of the two great powers, the United States and Soviet Union, and finally their view of solving the conflict.

The reasons why MBG rejected the peace process with Israel were mentioned 299 times. The table below shows the classification of these reasons and their subsequent frequencies.⁵⁵

Main Categories	Sub-categories		Frequencies
Reasons from the religion of Islam	Image of Jews in Quran		46
	Relations of Muslims with non-Muslims		13
	Rules of war and peace in Islam		12
Total			71
Reasons related to Jews	Their creed is against peace		69
	Their behavior is against peace		74
Total			143
Recognition of conflict	Nature of conflict	Religious	9
		Fateful	1
		Civilizational	4
	Nature	Incomprehensive	13

	e of peace	Artificial/imposed	2
	Total		29
Risks of peace	Economic		24
	Cultural		32
	Total		56
			299

In her discussion to the findings Farhud commented that reasons from the religion of Islam were mentioned "only" 71 times because "The magazine considered the religious basis of rejecting peace with Israel is too conventional and clear to be discussed or debated. Consequently there was not even a need to enlist proofs and arguments as the issue was supposedly quite clear."⁵⁶ She quoted this piece to show how MBG magazine recognized the nature of the conflict: "Our issue with the Jews is not one of a Palestinian land or people. It is the issue of Quran and Talmud. This is the way we should look at it. ... The Quran guides believers to get out every bit of Islamic land and to liberate Al Aqsa Mosque from every sinful robber. The Talmud pushes the Jews to every tyranny, aggression and land robbing, greed and expansions."⁵⁷ The following table will show, on the other hand, how MBG magazine articulated the solution.

Categories	Sub-categories	Frequencies
Role of Egypt	Democracy	1
	Social and economic justice	4
	Retreat from the Accord	7
	Total	12
Role of Islamic World	Return to Islam	73
	Preparing for war	21
	Islamic solidarity	17

	Internal social reform	18
	Denying cooperation with the enemy's allies	15
	Reforming the Palestinian Liberation Organization	3
	Total	147
	Total	159

MBG, Farhud stressed, "maintained a consensus that the only alternative to this peace process is war. This alternative is the only solution to get back the lands occupied by the Jews and it is the means instructed by Allah. War for them (MBG) is not just a solution but an obligatory duty (Farida), which Muslims must carry on."⁵⁸ Commenting on MBG views of political and socioeconomic reforms she wrote, "These writings point to the shallowness of encountering the nature of the social and economic crises, which the Egyptian people suffer from and their effect on the Egyptians' giving in to reality. The magazine only talked about the export policy to get foreign currency, something that points to the confusion of the economic view of MBG. Nor did MBG define its concept of social justice. It was only keen to attack the Nasserist regime considering it the foundation of the corruption in Egypt and its policy as responsible for social injustice. The third step of providing the people with more democracy was mentioned only one time. ... It was never mentioned again in any other article of peace with Israel, though there were many calls to peoples' participation in taking decisions related to the future of Egypt and the future of the Islamic society. Nonetheless, there was no clarification of the nature of this participation. The magazine published an article of El Telmesani denying the party system and the plurality of parties, something that contradicts its call to democracy."⁵⁹

More interestingly, however, is the conspiratory framing of MBG views and ideology. Farhud highlighted this important point by writing, "The Magazine was keen to point out to the reason behind these disagreements (between Islamic countries). This disagreement is the

result of the colonizing planning committed by the trinity, the Jewish-Crusader-Communist, that aimed to destroy the Islamic entity. Its first step was to widen the gap of disagreement between the Islamic countries. What is happening in the Arab World does not reflect a free will of the Islamic countries' rulers. It comes from subordinate governments that circulate either in the Western Crusade horizon or the Eastern Communist one. Both of them (finally) in their planning and policies in the region move according to the Jewish interests. This disagreement between the Islamic countries is but a play directed by the great powers in the East and the West; the only beneficiary of it is the enemy be it the East, the West or the Zionist enemy.⁶⁰

Moreover, the position of MBG is based on a broader vision that recognizes Palestine as a part of the Islamic land and the Palestinians as a part of Ummah. In this vision the ultimate goal of MBG is recreating the Islamic State that its one territory includes all Muslims' countries and its citizenship includes all Muslims.⁶¹ In this vision "The conflict is not a conflict of borders; it is a conflict of existence, future and civilization."⁶² The specificity of the Palestinian issue is its being a conflict with "the Jews". The Jews here are ahistorical hostile nation working forever against Islam. Qutb in "Our Battle with the Jews" wrote, that the Jews have always been working with villainy and artifice to misguide the Ummah and distract it away from Quran. Expanding this point he wrote, "Whoever is distracting the Ummah from its religion and its Quran is certainly an agent of the Jews, whether he knows this or not, wants this or not. The Jews will be secure as long as the Ummah is distracted from the only one truth, from which it derives its existence, strength and dominance, the truth of faith."⁶³ Qutb then asserts another "historical fact"; the Jews have been continuously conspiring against Muslims for fourteen centuries. He wrote, "The Jews faced Muslims with animosity from the first moment the Islamic State was founded in Medina. They plotted against the Ummah from the first day it became an Ummah. The Quran included reports and hints of this animosity and this plotting that are quite enough to describe this bitter war waged by the Jews against Islam, the Prophet PBUH and the Muslim Ummah throughout its long history, that war that

never ceased off for one moment during all these fourteen centuries. It is still waged and burning in the four corners of the globe.

In MBG metanarrative, therefore, all Muslims are included in one entity, the Ummah, whose land is the Islamic land and whose political system is maintained by the Islamic State. Islam is the comprehensive solution, the salvation in both this world and the hereafter. MBG ideology and organization is the way. The eternal enemy is the Jews; and its modern revelation is the Zionist-Crusade-Communist trinity.

2- Postmodernity and the Death of Metanarratives

If there should be just one feature in the landscape of postmodernity it would have been the vanishing of all metanarratives. Postmodernist thinkers, such as Foucault and Lyotard, attack any notion that there might be a metalanguage, metanarrative or metatheory through which all things can be connected, represented, or explained⁶⁴ On the other hand, there is an emphasis on looking for "local" factors or partial explanations, such as the micro-politics of power relations in different social contexts and in relation to specific discourses, language games, or interpretative communities.⁶⁵ Lyotard wrote, "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives."⁶⁶ Truth, an Enlightenment value, is rejected by almost all postmodernists. Truth makes reference to order, rules and values; depends on logic, rationality and reason, all of which the postmodernists question.⁶⁷ Sarcastically, Baudrillard wrote, "The secret of theory is, indeed, that truth does not exist."⁶⁸ Derrida has also suggested, "There is no such thing as a truth in itself. But only a surfeit of it. Even if it should be for me, about me, truth is plural"⁶⁹ Postmodernists understand truth claims to be the product of power games, manipulated into position by those whose interests they serve. Foucault wrote, "We are subjected to the reproduction of truth through power, and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth."⁷⁰

Nevertheless, a world without theory means an absolute equality of all discourses, an end of foundational claims. One possible outcome is overload! The problem will be the co-existence of too many theories that are altogether equal. Another possibility is nihilism, as no difference between truth and error, between theory and nonsense! Rosenau, however, presented three alternative theories of reality. First, there is the constructivist theory, where postmodernists dismiss the distinction between mental states and the outside world as pure illusion. The physical world is the dream. When one awakens from the dream of the physical world, one realizes that the dreamer is the cause of the events and the relationships. Second there is the contextualist theory, where some postmodernists argue that all knowledge claims are intelligible and debatable only within their context, paradigm, or community. The more skeptical postmodernists will be more in favor of the third theory, where they see reality as but linguistic convention. If language itself is arbitrary and relative, and if language is the only reality we know, then reality is, at most, a linguistic 'habit'!⁷¹

Postmodernists say they are post-subjective. They don't mean they are objectives, Heaven forbid! They mean the point of view of the thinking subject is not to be given much weight. The subject, they contend, is fictitious, in the extreme a mere construction.⁷² They criticize the subject for seizing power, for attributing meaning, for dominating and oppressing. They consider the subject to be a fossil relic of the past, of modernity, an invention of liberal humanism, the source of the unacceptable object-subject dichotomy. They argue that personal identity of this sort if it ever existed, was only an illusion, and it is no longer possible, today, in a postmodern context. Skeptical postmodernists offer the postmodern individual as an alternative. This individual is relaxed and flexible, oriented toward feelings and emotions, interiorization and holding a "be yourself" attitude. S/he is an active human being contributing his/her social reality pursuing a personal quest for meaning but making no truth claims for what results. S/he looks for fantasy, humor, the culture of desire, and immediate gratification.⁷³ Megill characterizing the new postmodern subject that affirmative postmodernists are offering wrote, "The returning subject will not be a conscious purposeful and feeling individual. S/he will be a decentered subject, an emergent subject, unrecognizable

by the modernists, empiricists and positivists. S/he will be a postmodern subject with a new non-identity, focused not on the Great Men of history but rather, on daily life at the margins.⁷⁴

"Moving to the field", armed with these two exclusive views, the one of MBG metanarrative and the one of postmodernists' no metanarrative I expected to find Islamists either abandoning their metanarrative, as an obsolete past, or, on the other hand, to find them sticking to their ideology, defending it and facing all possible troubles that arise from such an odd position. In my interviews, however, I used to find "accommodating" activists who turned to micro-politics and pragmatism to promote their micro-agendas. I naively assumed that postmodernity won; the metanarrative is dead! Nevertheless, it was always quite bothering to me to find the metanarrative arising smoothly and "naturally" during the talk, quite healthy and absolutely in shape! I tried the "perhaps it is only some traces from the past"-approach. The proposed approach deadly failed -something that shocked me, as I am supposed to write a thesis about the postmodern turn in Islamists' discourse. Why, then, this slimy -using Sartre's metaphor- narrative does not peacefully go? I thought of "the postmodern world is fragmented and its fragments are contradictory losing every possible meaning, just an accumulation of signs searching for meanings"-approach. It did not help; and I became quite sure that I am conspiring against my interviewees, fragmenting their world to fit in my thesis. The only contradiction was in my own mind not theirs at all. The question, therefore, I concluded, should be not, which could survive, but rather, how could they coexist, dialogue and perhaps integrate? In a sense, the "field" thus did not answer my question; it changed it. Below, I will write first about Islamists' pragmatism and micro-politics, second, the role-played by metanarrative, and third the situation of the metanarrative.

3- Pragmatism and Micro-politics

Asking Fatima why Israel attacks Arab countries and occupies Palestinian lands she simply said, "because they are insecure. It is just a tiny country living in the vast Arab World.

Thus instead of waiting Arabs to attack them they do it first to defend their existence." She even used the conflicts in her work as an example to explain the Israeli motivations. There were no Jews, no conspiracy, no Zionism and no religious motivations. I asked her about the Israeli Jews so she said, "just normal people who live in the wrong place." I asked her why Arabs are failing, as she said? Once again there was neither conspiracy nor religious reasons, being away from Islam. She said, "First of all it is the lack of freedom and democracy. Then you have the corruption and its vast network of interests that governs the country for its own sake." Her idea about MBG discourse is that it is rhetoric (insha). She thinks the Egyptian government policy toward the Palestinian issue is good; "They do the possible." Fatima's opinion is indeed shared by many Islamists I met with. Her case is not unique! Hany portrayed the Palestinian problem as "two peoples who are not willing to coexist. They can not see the realistic solution. Moreover, it is the corruption of the Palestinian National Authority that makes it worse." For Hany, it is the radical religious discourse of Israeli Jews that is responsible for creating Hamas. They both feed each other and they are both harmful to the two peoples, he said. The Jewish immigration to this region, Suzan thinks, is only a bad luck. For her they did not come intentionally to fight Muslims and Arabs, as MBG believes. To solve the crisis she proposed a South African solution of a bi-national state. However, an Israeli withdrawal to 1967 Borders is also great. Hassan is not objecting the peace process at all. What he emphasizes is only how to handle it. Almost all of those whom I met believe the Islamists' proposition of Jihad to liberate the entire of Palestine is not logic at all. It might be ideal, Adel commented, but there are plenty of real solutions we should encounter. Besides, they believe Khelafa or the Islamic State and that call to "return to Islam" is "a shallow and simplifying view", in Hassan's words.

In their book "The Postmodern Turn" Steven Best and Douglas Kellner wrote, "The modern emphasis on collective struggle, solidarity and alliance politics gave way to extreme fragmentation, such that the "movement" of the 1960s splintered into various competing struggles for rights and liberties. The previous emphasis on transforming the public sphere and institutions of domination gave way to new emphases on culture, personal identity, and

everyday life, as macropolitics were replaced by the micropolitics of local transformation and subjectivity."⁷⁵ Two pages later the authors showed the gradual transformation from the 1960s movement into the "new social movements" of the 1970s and finally the fragmentation of these movements in the 1980s and 1990s into "identity politics", "the very name suggesting a turn away from general social, political, and economic issues and toward concerns with cultural and personal identity".⁷⁶ They then added, "Identity politics bears the influence of postmodern theory, which is evident in its critique of modern reductionism, abstract universalism, and essentialism, as well as in its use of multi-perspectival strategies that legitimate multiple political voices."⁷⁷ That is vibrant with Islamists' tendency towards a salvation through the individual's work, a celebration of micropolitics practiced in the everyday life and an expansion of the spectrum of activism to include a plethora of interests and issues. Below I will reflect on these tendencies.

First, there is a tendency to shift from the collective work to the individual. Yosef told me that the belief in MBG carrying out Islam's mission while leaving to us specific roles drawn and planned by the leadership is history. Everyone must determine the features of his own small role, he asserts. It does not matter if this specific role is economic, scientific or political, he adds. You choose something for yourself and just do it, he concludes. Almost all of those whom I met identify their Islamic activism with the professional work they are leading. They see Islamic activism through being "good" doctors, accountants, professors, programmers, etc. An IOL editor told me that "you can't pursue a certain issue because it is your job. It should be your personal agenda." On the other hand Lotfi bitterly criticized MBG because of its schizophrenic project. They pay their attention to the "routine" work like attending the meetings and reading the weekly chapters and forget all about your real life, he said. In stressing this point he, by no means, mean MBG should change to fix this problem. On the contrary he said, "Anyway, I think MBG must be a kind of school or university. You get graduated and then you must find out a job for yourself. You can not be there, in the school, for the rest of your life!"

Second, there is a tendency to consider issues of everyday life more than those of macro-politics. I was surprised to find them, in my estimation, having a very little knowledge about the Palestinian issue, whether in historical or political terms. Frequently they tell me that they are sorry that they can not answer my questions clearly because they are not aware of the "details". Sometimes they blame the media for its demagogic discourse and lack of good information. Sometimes they say that it does not look like being solved soon; why should they bother reading the details anyway? Hisham, who is supposed to be a "young Islamic intellectual", said, "We do not have a clear view because we thought the issue is too clear to be discussed over. We have the right in this land, all of it, and they robbed it out." He then added this excuse, "Besides, there is no such a thing like a real peace camp in the Arab World. Had it existed we would have articulated the issue more deeply to debate them." Before Iraq War I asked Manal, a physician, how would it be the case in the Middle East after an American invasion to Iraq? She said after a moment of silence, "I do not want to think about it at all."

On the other hand, Islamists show more interest in the everyday life and activities and in the minor changes. They no longer count on a comprehensive holistic view. They encounter specific issues one by one and treat them separately, even though they frequently yearn to such a holistic view. In an interview with an IOL editor he said, "We have no experience. We build up our experience and our vision through time. But we have not yet reached the state of a stable institution." Another editor, on the other hand, was contending, "We write some reactions. We do not have a vision for what to say and when to say it. We just follow the current events. It is too bad!" A third editor condemned IOL as a whole; "We are working like a secular institution that has no philosophy at all!" Explaining a part of the problem he added, "It is too difficult for it is not Islam against non Islam. We face many complicated and endless social issues and we have to rush into treating them. How could we? Sometimes we have a plan. But it never works. An urgent issue like destroying the statues of Buddha would surprise you! And you have to respond!" The first editor thought that not everyone has a clear vision of what we are and what we do. He said, "Yes a vision needs time

to be developed. But our steps are too short!" A fourth editor, however, was happy that IOL is pursuing "the daily issues". She said, "We don't necessary need to teach our audience a certain ideology. We need them to see their life differently. We want them to treat their life differently. We don't like to talk about global issues. They need to listen about their everyday life and how to see and deal with it. I like our Family Page for it speaks of our daily life in our homes with our husbands, kids and parents." In an article titled "Electronic Jihad, Farewell Passivity!" Wissam Fuad wrote, "You (the visitors of the site) should be interested in the details. Look at the thought of human rights in its liberal school. When it handles an issue like freedom it expands it to encounter issues of freedom of expression, freedom of faith, of standing for elections, of voting, of gathering, etc. Then it reflects on the idea of civil society, its foundations, which are necessary to implement these freedoms, how would it be financed and then it puts down detailed action plans and keep ramifying and expanding its subject till involving the smallest details. Now compare this with what Islamists talk about freedom to find that they are still standing by the basic concept without moving further steps. The Islamic thought today should be involved in the details of the details. Much of dedicated efforts are needed to build up these details."⁷⁸

That tendency to micro-politics is making them increasingly involved in a plethora of issues and activities. Conducting my interviews in IOL I found people very proud of writing "in everything, from politics to economics, from technology and science to sports and hobbies and from culture to art, women issues, family issues and education." Being sentimental, sexual, religious, social or whatever question you might have you can always find it in, or at least address it to, IOL! Provocatively I asked Ms. Salwa, the economic editor, "Excuse me but what do you write in your page besides Riba (interest) and Zakat (almsgiving)?" Of course we write about everything everywhere, the stocks in US, the IMF, or any economic analysis for any event in the world, she replied. The "Comprehensive content: Presenting a whole and complementary image of Islam in the information and service pages" that has been hanging in About Us Page⁷⁹ augments this state of discursiveness. They want to and can go everywhere, so wherever they go is probably good! Those who criticize the policy of the

leadership of MBG for its lack of action used to emphasize one fact; there is a lot to be done. The government is not besieging the Group; the Group is cornering itself with no obvious reason. As Mahmud put it, "Chances are always there. Go and find them and work." Those who stick to MBG and then blame it for its lack of action and complain that there is no other reasonable alternative to the Group, Hassan said, are the real problem; their question of what is the alternative is the problem.

By no means, however, I would argue that Islamists' pragmatism and their tendency to micro-politics is something new, a postmodern turn in their path. Writing about MBG in Jordan Marion Boulby argued that there are "three significant trends in the history of the Brotherhood: the evolution of its symbiotic relations with the regime, its willingness to work for reform within a parliamentary system even though its ultimate goal is the creation of a theo-democracy, and its ability to appeal to a broad sector of the population."⁸⁰ For now I stress only the pragmatic approach of MBG and will come later on his notion of "its ultimate goal". This pragmatism and tendency to micro-reform was highlighted by many scholars⁸¹ like Esposito, who wrote, "From 1970 to 1991 the Muslim Brotherhood rebuilt its organization, self-consciously espousing a policy of moderate reformism under both Anwar Sadat and his successor, Hosni Mubarak. ... The Brotherhood worked out a *modus vivendi* with the Sadat government. While still not recognized as a political party, it was once again able to function openly, preaching its message, publishing magazines, establishing social welfare and financial institutions. ... While the Brotherhood was not silent, during the early Sadat years it attenuated its criticism of the government, emphasizing cooperation ... the post-1970 Brotherhood, under its third Supreme Guide, Tilmassani, underwent an unambiguous transformation. It clearly opted for socio-political change through a policy of moderation and gradualism which accepted political pluralism and parliamentary democracy, entering into political alliances with secular political parties and organizations as well as acknowledging the rights of Coptic Christians."⁸² Pragmatism and micropolitics, therefore, are not breaking news! In fact the news is that the metanarrative that used to frame all this pragmatism and micropolitics is no more functioning. Once again, I am not saying it does not exist; it exists.

However, pragmatism and micropolitics are no longer grounded in such a metanarrative, are no longer framed within its territory. It exists, but not as an "ultimate goal" such as the one raised by Boulby.

4- The Metanarrative Survives!

The metanarrative of "Islam" struggling against a Crusader-Zionist conspiracy is quite evident. Mamduh thought the conspiracy is too perfect and too tight to be defeated. Yosef, like many other Islamists, believe in a Western conspiracy against the Islamic World. He told me that the American Christians are in favor of the Jews. It is strange; is not it? They are supposed to be the killers of their God, he wondered. He told me that Clinton used to support Israel because his priest advised him to take care of the Jews. He added that NATO forces, in their training, took a village to be attacked and called it Mecca. He thinks the hidden animosity is getting obvious after September eleventh. Finally, he rooted what is happening in a prophetic text, in which the Prophet PBUH said there would be a time, in which all peoples will come against you. It is now, he concluded. Lotfi declared that the mutual hatred between us (Muslims) and the Jews is an eternal fact, which he does not deny. He even said that it is an honor to him to keep up his deep hatred to them. Suzan mentioned, like almost all of those whom I met, the prophecy of a war at the end of world between Muslims and Jews, in which Muslims will defeat all the Jews, who in their turn will be in Jerusalem, and will kill them. Maged thinks that the global Zionist lobby is controlling everything. He said it is responsible for the immoral TV programs broadcast in the Arab World, for the nakedness of the female TV interviewers as well as for the so exciting video clips of Shakira. Hatem is no different. He only emphasizes the substantial role taken by MBG in this war.

The picture above does not point to isolationist radical activists seeking refuge from unfair society or insecure environment in their paranoid world. In fact the consequences of their view is quite different and quite unexpected –to me. The perfect conspiracy of Mamduh made him think the government is doing its best and we had to be more conciliatory and less

radical with it. The Crusader-Zionist conspiracy of Yosef is his motivation to promote his scientific research as a way to compete them. Lotfi's hatred to the Jews does not prevent him from making a realistic solution with them by having two secure states. His hatred makes him only ask for more guarantees to the Palestinians. Suzan's prophecy is convincing her that there would be no problem at all to make peace with Israel. In the end of the world we will get back the rest of our rights anyway. The mighty Zionist lobby of Maged is a given fact, from which he concluded that no real change could happen in Egypt before seventy years. Consequently we should not make any unnecessary conflict with the government. Maged is leading a prosperous business and one of his partners is a major figure in the ruling party. Hatem, on the other hand, is admiring the successful role played by MBG to encounter the global conspiracy. The socially spreading signs of observing Islamic commandments are enough proofs to this success. In all these cases the metanarrative was not a reason of isolationism. On the contrary it made them more communicative. Islamists use this narrative as a safety net or secure borders, within which they can move discursively to encounter reality and interact with it on a practical basis. The metanarrative does not stop the change; it expedites it. It makes it possible by creating an imaginary secure space within which people can change. In a world of doubt and ambiguity, weakness and defeat, this metanarrative tells people that they are clearly right and that in the end they will be the victorious. Perhaps Palestine is not ours. It does not matter; in the future it will be. Peace negotiation not Jihad is the only possible way. It does not matter; finish the details of a peace treaty and keep up your hatred to them. It is too difficult to promote R&D work through a private company because of the high costs and the global competition. The global competition is a part of a global conspiracy. The only way to defeat it is to be more committed to R&D work; profits are not important; you do this as a mission. Intifada is not working out. No problem, "they" are destined to fight till the end of the world. Then, they will defeat the enemy. Meanwhile we can, or rather we must, keep up a thriving business.

The feeling of collective persecution is a reason of the survival of the metanarrative and its paranoid thinking. "A feeling of persecution is central to the paranoid style, but

whereas the clinically paranoid person perceives a world hostile and conspiratorial against him or herself, the spokesperson for the paranoid style finds it directed against a nation, a culture, a way of life whose fate affects not himself alone but millions of others ... His sense that his political passions are unselfish and patriotic, in fact, goes far to intensify his feeling of righteousness and his moral indignation.⁸³ Nevertheless, this is not the only reason of this thinking. George Marcus wrote that the rapidity of changes is another reason of the paranoid thinking. He wrote, "In his book *Metahistory* (1973), Hayden White spoke of a similar moment in European historiography, at the end of the nineteenth century, as an ironic mode—a time of saturation of descriptions, diagnoses, and analyses of social change, either among literati or as experienced in everyday life—in which there were a number of equally comprehensive and plausible, yet apparently mutually exclusive, conceptions of the same events. Now there remains a healthy respect for facts and evidence but accompanied also by a high tolerance for speculative associations among them—an impulse to figure out systems, now of global scale, with strategic facts missing that might otherwise permit confident choices among competing conceptions."⁸⁴ This is why Yosef after telling me about the conspiring West against Islam emphasized the significance of the economic motivation and that "of course religion alone can not make the political decisions in the West." This is also why Hatem after stressing the global conspiracy and the Jihad promoted by MBG moved smoothly to assert the importance of making alliances with France, Russia, China and Germany against a dominating US. Once again there was this "of course it is not only a war against Islam. Political and economic interests are still important." In other words, the rapidity of changes makes all interpretations possible and incomplete.

This rapidity of change is accompanied by a flood of information, one of the main characters of globalization. Here the metanarrative rises once again. There are lots of information and details with many contradictions rooted in a postmodern crisis of representation, what Kathleen Stewart describes as, "events and phenomena call to us as haunting specters lodged somewhere within the endless proliferation of images and reports."⁸⁵ In this chaotic or noisy world, where the more you know the less you know only

the paranoid can tell the truth, Stewart claims. Though there is a lot of details, there is also a lot of missing details, which only paranoid thinking can cover. This conspiratory thinking is relieving. There is the pleasure of the practice itself, Stewart concludes.⁸⁶ The plotting is perhaps more important than the plot. Stewart wrote, "Think of it not as a prefabricated ideology (as if abstract, exegetical ideas were what ruled the world) but as a practice."⁸⁷ The conspiracy does not organize an un-organizable reality, on which it feeds; it only heals its headache, and lowers its tension by opening new spaces for the overload.

The plethora of information, however, has another effect. It lights the place, clears it. Everything is explorable, leave alone explored. Reality got demystified. The political thinking is getting cold. Why the US is invading Iraq? The answer could be easily calculated. Some mathematics, some statistics and a few figures make you know it all. Calculate how many barrels of oil Iraq can produce, the expenses of the war, etc. and you get a clear picture. Why France and Russia are waging an anti-war campaign? You need only to visit BBC Arabic website to know exactly how much Euros or Dollars their oil investments in Iraq are. Hassan asked me suspiciously, "Is it only economics?" I asked him what does he think? He said, "The US wants to humiliate us and show its haughtiness." Marcus reciting the study of John McClure of the novels of Don DeLillo, whose work has most evoked a contemporary atmosphere of institutions and systems sustained by powerful, invisible conspiracies, wrote, "It is true, he suggests, that capitalism has penetrated everywhere, but its globalization has not resulted in global rationalization and Weber's iron cage. It seems to have sponsored a profound reversal: the emergence of zones and forces like those that imperial expansion has erased ... So in this version of the crisis of representation the plausibility of the paranoid style is not so much in its reasonableness, but rather in its revitalization of the romantic, the ability to tell an appealing, wondrous story found in the real."⁸⁸

In addition to all of the above there is an obvious and quite strong reason; the US Army is invading Iraq; Israel is occupying the West Bank and Gaza Strip; and the Egyptian Government is turning their peaceful activists over to military courts! In a "Live Dialogue"

managed by IOL Ahmed Abd Allah was discussing the "civil Jihad", an idea, which he promotes. He talked about the global civil society and was in favor of it. Soon a visitor sent out a contending message. She wrote, "You talk about the civil Jihad and its mechanisms while we witness the whole world shaking to stop the war against Iraq with no result. How, then, could we convince ourselves and the people around with the feasibility of such a civil Jihad in a world that knows no language but that of weapons?"⁸⁹ Abd Allah said there is a duty for the armies and a duty for peoples and re-elaborated on his topic. Soon another visitor sent a very short cynical message, which Abd Allah replied with the same irony. The short comment was "Look at the picture published in your home page first and tell me for God sake what do you want to do with this civil Jihad brother." Abd Allah immediately replied, "And what do you, for God sake, want to do brother?" If conspiracy theory and metanarratives belong to the world of macropolitics, cold war policies and absolutely sovereign national-states, this world has not yet vanished. Doubts could be as much of adopting the metanarrative as they are of abandoning it.

5- Situating the Metanarrative

In his article *Electronic Jihad: Farewell Passivity*, Wissam Fuad, after writing that the nation-state power is declining, talked enthusiastically to his young visitors saying, "O Youth! You need neither Islamic organizations nor Islamic groups to move spreading the religion of Allah and champion it and recreating forms of Jihad. The relationships of colleague, friendship, and neighborhood are alternative frameworks for movement and action."⁹⁰ Fuad's simple words could be problematic. The image of Jihad recalls an army, a territorial political conflict, a political authority and leadership and an arsenal of weapons. Nonetheless, Fuad is only talking about electronic jihad, e-groups, chatting rooms, new websites, signing e-petitions and forwarding articles and graphics via e-mail. Fuad claims he needs neither a state, nor an organization. I want here to recite a piece of Zygmunt Bauman from his interesting book *In Search of Politics*. Bauman wrote, "Globalization means among other things the progressive separation of power from politics. As Manuel Castells pointed out in his

recent monumental three-volume study of the 'information society', capital, and particularly financial capital, 'flows', no longer bound by the limitations of space and distance, while politics stays as before local and territorial. The flow is increasingly beyond the reach of political institutions. We may say that power and politics reside in different spaces. Physical, geographical space remains the home of politics; while capital and information inhabit cyberspace, in which physical space is cancelled or neutralized.⁹¹ Once again Bauman emphasizes, "We are entering a largely 'post-engagement' era. Capital and knowledge have both been emancipated from their local confinement."⁹² Bauman's concept of disengagement offers us better understanding to situate the metanarrative. Bauman does not speak of a collapse of the state or a vanishing of politics. State and politics, like metanarrative, do exist, though relatively disarmed. A metanarrative of Jihad, capital J, exists, but disengaged from jihad, the electronic one with small j. MBG exists, but unnecessarily needed for action or jihad.

Ahmed Abd Allah, while conducting his online dialogue talking about the Civil Jihad, received an angry message. What will remain of Jihad when we convert it and manipulate it like this? The asking visitor has a point. Jihad, in Fiqh books, is neither Daawa, nor reforming society, forming alliances with foreign sympathizers or building a viable civil society. Jihad has a known definition settled down in the Islamic scholarship for centuries. When a metanarrative or ideology is using it, it is using it as prescribed in those books. If Abd Allah, on the other hand, wants to call for a viable global civil society he can simply call for it without naming it Jihad. The visitor's argument brings us back to the voluminous literature about the postmodernity, the consumer culture and the dissociation of the signifier from the signified, to the flowing signs that search for a meaning, in Best and Kellner's words. I will come to this later in Chapter four. Now, we need it only to better situate our metanarrative and the following quotation is perhaps enough. Mike Featherstone wrote, "Adorno, for example, speaks of how, once the dominance of exchange-value has managed to obliterate the memory of the original use-value of goods, the commodity becomes free to take up a secondary or *ersatz* use-value (Rose, 1978: 25). Commodities hence become free to take on a

wide range of cultural associations and illusions. Advertising in particular is able to exploit this and attach images of romance, exotica, desire, beauty, fulfilment, communality, scientific progress, and the good life [or Jihad in our case] to mundane consumer goods such as soap, washing machines, motor cars and alcoholic drinks [or e-mailing].⁹³ The metanarrative exists, but depleted from its original use-value, Jihad. On the other hand, an ersatz use-value of jihad is flowing freely to conquer e-mail, a non-governmental organization or a public preaching.

My assertion of the existence of the metanarrative is as problematic as Abd Allah and Fuad's articles and claims. If it really exists it should play its known role. Hassan Al Banna wrote to his fellows that the path features are determined and the steps are well known. He then charted his plan in seven determined steps, starting from the individual Muslim to the mastership of the world passing through the Islamic Khelafa. How does this fit in Civil Jihad? Bauman answers, "the age of ideology may not be yet over, its agony may yet prove not to be terminal, but most certainly its present condition has changed beyond recognition the likeness it bore since the inception of modernity. An ideology without a project – some project which by being a project and a plan for action spells out a future different from the present – is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms."⁹⁴ Islamists alike maintain a metanarrative, one, which was evacuated from its project, from its content and from any element of a future, except an apocalyptic one that requires no action in the present. Old ideologies, Bauman wrote, "were born as projects to be actively and concertedly implemented – even when they projected the future (which they envisaged) into the past (which they imagined) and portrayed the novelty as a return, and the reform as a restoration."⁹⁵ The project-less metanarrative and the everyday action independently stand or move devoid of any inter-relationship, as if they have ever been together, except a few relapses of nostalgia, which we will talk about at the end of this chapter.

Amr Khaled, the known preacher, was invited for an online interview on IOL website. Over and over he was asked what should we do and he repeated the same answer, "Be a

moving media device!"⁹⁶ The point he failed to address is what to say, or what to broadcast using his metaphor? He kept giving vague instructions like awaken up the Ummah, tell the youth to rise up, guide people back to Islam. The vagueness of these instructions comes from their emptiness; he never says what should anyone do when s/he rises or to where anyone goes if s/he wants to be back to Islam. Ragheb El Sergany is an Islamist and a lecturer of Uro-surgery in Cairo University. He produced a series of audiocassettes titled "Palestine will not be lost." In his series he lists six duties for Muslims so that Palestine will not be another Andalus. I heard about the series many times and knew it is getting very popular. It is popular because Dr. Ragheb does not only talk about the right and wrong; he gives very clear practical instructions of what to do, very practical indeed, a university student Islamist told me. The first duty El Sergany asserts is the mobilization of the issue. He does not talk about the ways of spreading the word; he stresses the content of the word. We should spread the right concepts. For him the right concepts are Palestine is an Islamic land, no small piece of it could be yielded to the Jews, the Jews are conspiring all the time against us dreaming of a Great Israel, Jihad, Intifada and suicide operations are the only way... Well, that is already known before; where are the practical steps, the project, or the action plan? You are supposed to find them in the next duties. The second duty was killing defeatism and frustration, the third donating money to the Palestinians, the fourth a call to boycott the American and Israeli goods, the fifth praying for the Palestinians and the sixth reforming the self and the society, by which he asserts a return to Islam. On the other hand, a call to change the political regime in Egypt, to mobilize the Egyptian army, to learn how to use weapons or at least to implement Sharia or call for Khelafa never mentioned. Even a call to the government to contribute in the boycotting was not mentioned. In other words the action plan to liberate Palestine from the River to the Sea is to be optimistic, donate money for Palestinian refugees, boycott Coca-Cola and McDonalds, pray and come back to Islam. The ideology and its agenda are apparently dissociated.

In my interview with Hatem I was amazed of his absolute confidence that MBG discourse and action are flourishing and that Egypt became very close to be an Islamic state.

He even proposed a 20-year interval to reach it. I asked him to give me some signs of this impending victory. Immediately he enlisted the many religious lessons conducted at homes, the increasing number of actresses who decided to quit acting, the increasing number of females wearing scarf, the many people who were fasting before Al Ad'ha, and the many people who frequent the mosques to pray the five daily prayers. Like El Sergany Hatem never mentioned a reform to the institutions of civil society, an implementation of Sharia in the legal system (something that used to be frequently stressed in 1970s and early 1980s), a reform of the political system, a flourishing of a series of Islamic banks and economic institutions... Is, for him, the Islamic State a one in which the females wear Hijab and the males go to the mosque five times a day?

The metanarrative is not only empty but also decentralized. The decentralization does not weaken the metanarrative. On the contrary, it survives it by making it useful, by filling it with some "good" content. This mini-content gives the metanarrative a new life. The mini-content is also changeable or disposable. You can fill it in and evacuate it subsequently for endless times using different contents. For Yosef and Lotfi MBG is good because it could be a school, in which one gets his or her education and training to be a good activist. Once s/he gets it s/he would better leave. Adel thinks MBG is a backward institution, which does not develop. Nevertheless, its existence is much desired. It plays a good role in stopping the moral and cultural deterioration of the society. Reflecting on his membership and how much it is worthy Khaled said that the real action is individual. Nothing real is achieved through MBG. He thinks, nonetheless, not to quit it. The weekly meeting is good in its spiritual sense. Besides, you get good friends. Both Nagy and Yosef think politics is important, though they are not personally interested in it. Some people should be interested in playing it as some political reform is desired besides the economic and social ones. In other words some people would play some politics. Besides, the politics to be played should not be of that old-fashioned competitive kind. A new way of practicing politics has to be created and thought of. Hassan thought the good thing El Wassat Party, which is a split from MBG, is that it opens the exit-door. It made MBG an alternative. Perhaps it is a good alternative for some people, but still it

is only an alternative, not "the way" as people used to think. Arbitrary useful mini-projects frequent an evacuated decentralized metanarrative for temporary residence. The metanarrative is neither deserted nor useless.

Old ideologies and metanarratives had checklists, what was done, how many, how much, how far or close we are getting from the objectives? The imperfect present must be corrected and set in order and that correction "must be done in a systematic consistent fashion."⁹⁷ New metanarratives do not ask questions. In fact, in their expediting and relieving capacities they might give warm tranquilizing answers. Bauman wrote, "The announcement of the 'end of ideology' is on the part of social commentators a declaration of intent more than it is a description of things as they are: no more criticism of the things are being done, no more judging or censoring the world through confronting its present state with an alternative of a better society. All critical theory and practice is from now on to be fragmented, deregulated, self-referential, singular and episodic as postmodern life itself."⁹⁸ Whenever I asked my interviewees how does a discourse like that of Amr Khaled, which highlights only spiritual and moral issues, help them recreating an Islamic State or economically, socially or politically reforming their societies they replied that it is "good". My question was why; their answer was why not! The modern searching for a comprehensive rationale was my problem only. For them my question was probably meaningless. I was trying to figure out a sort of economic rationalization in using energies and resources to work out a scheduled plan for a systematic change. All my presuppositions of such a plan or such a rational thinking were proved to be wrong.

There is one more status a metanarrative can take. Metanarrative can situate itself as an enclave, ghetto, relatively isolated but still viable. It works as a retreat center, or in its active state as a "pocket of resistance". Hamed said, "The most important for us to keep up our spirits of rejection of reality. We have to comply with reality. But we should keep its rejection alive in our hearts. That is what would make a difference in future." For Hisham, it is the firebrand that should never be extinguished. To keep the ember blazing AUC Islamist

students do not drink Coca-Cola while others spread long lists of Zionist-American goods to be avoided. Hisham's answer "We do not have a clear view (of how to solve the Palestinian question) because we thought the issue is too clear to be discussed over" reflects the enclaving of the question. That may also explain why Islamists whom I met had a very shallow and vague idea about what is happening in Palestine/Israel. The issue is alive, pulsating, but quarantined. Most of them are in favor of Intifada. None of them gave a political reasoning of why they would like it to continue. It should continue because its ceasing off is a declaration of a final defeat; the alive, pulsating, quarantined issue is dead. Whenever there is a meeting between the French President and a Palestinian National Authority delegate, between an American diplomat and an Egyptian minister, or between an Israeli foreign minister and his Jordanian counterpart IOL, as well as the rest of Islamic media, would rush to conclude that it is "a conspiracy to bury the Intifada alive." The majority of them encourage the suicide operations. I asked Maged how long should these operations continue? He immediately replied, "forever!" I was shocked from the answer and repeated the question, but he insisted on his answer, adding that it is the prophecy of Prophet Muhammad PBUH that says so. And what are you going to do meanwhile? I asked him. He said that there is nothing to be really done, at least for the coming seventy years. Hamed confidently told me about a meeting, in which a Hamas spokesman said that when reviewing the results of a survey conducted by Hamas in West Bank and Gaza Strip they found that many responders chose to stop the Intifada and continue the suicide operations! Hamed's point was that even if Intifada would be stopped because of the vast damage resulting in the Palestinian lands the suicide operations at least must continue. In another interview I was meeting with four Islamists. They were saying that the reason of social corruption is rooted in the immoral media. Once there would be an Islamic State a clean media will be available. I asked them a clean media like what? They said it is like Al Manar or Iqraa TV Channels. One of them said it is the Zionist lobby that is behind this corruption. They agreed that the Lebanese interviewers are seducing the youth. Ironically, however, we were watching the Lebanese LBC Channel. I wondered why did not they switch to Al Manar or Iqraa if they are that upset and why do they maintain watching LBC while condemning the Lebanese channels? In fact, what they

were talking about is enclaved, watched from a window and isolated from what is going on around.

Sometimes the quarantine is lifted and the pulsating alive is visited. However, you can visit the place, and enjoy the warmth of the flame, or the serenity of retreat, but you know that soon you must leave. It is a place to be visited, not a home to be inhabited. Adel, like many other MBG Islamists is not satisfied with the weekly meeting. His answer to my question why do you go was interesting. He said, "It gives you a sensation that you are still committed and that you are understanding your religion. You feel that you did not quit your outpost (thaghra). You feel you did your duty and that you are not lingering. We listen to some Quran and feel that our homework is done. The "piece" of Islam of this week is achieved." What you say or do in the meeting has nothing to do with the rest of the week. You make it and then go directly back to your life with no sense of guilt for an alleged lingering. The meeting itself is not important; going to the meeting is the thing. Khaled told me that it does not really matter if you go one hour late. What will happen anyway. The point is that you went and that is enough. In an article titled "Communication Is an Art: Keep the Set Awake" the editor of IOL wrote that Jihad is an individual duty, an obligation (fard). If you can carry it on in its fighting form you will be sinful unless you make it through the civil jihad that electronic jihad is one of its kinds.⁹⁹ Another editor got more wild and called people to hack the enemies' websites, destroy them, or shut their servers down in an article titled Volunteer in the Ranks of Electronic Jihad.¹⁰⁰ He elaborated in details on how to make it. The article looked like a short training course in attacking the enemies in the cyberspace. In both these cases of cyber-jihad you log on once or twice per week to perform the "piece of Islam" of this week and go back in peace to maintain your normal life.

Sometimes, however, the weekly meeting or the weekly emailing or hacking is not enough. When America invades Iraq it is certainly not enough to sign e-petitions. Some Islamists produced and have been exchanging/forwarding a three-page document called A Preparation of a Martyr. The document starts with questioning the readers to when would

they keep their "audience prayers" and sleeping comfortably thinking they did what they can do. The problem, the paper argues, is not the closure of the gate of Jihad as it is open. The problem is that we are not yet ready. Then it goes directly to put its objective, "We all need a positive Islamic project that mobilizes energies and strengthens the determination, that builds up bodies and souls and verily joins us with Allah and a project that gathers the all of us with the martyrs in the path of martyrdom." Clearly, the document states that this project is for you (the reader) not Ummah. In other words, it is an individual's project not a collective one, in terms of how it runs out. Later, the document has three subtitles, general rules, the basic activities and subsidiary activities. Briefly, the general rules are that you should first, and before anything, take care of your work, whether you are a student a worker, a doctor... Then you should know that the path is too long and that you have to patient. Then it instructs the reader to "write down your notes about your performance, your faith; carefully observe you promotion; and continue its evaluation. Put down interim objectives and increase your effort through time to reach your goals. The basic activities are reading daily a chapter of Quran, praying after midnight, observing the Dawn prayer in the mosque, observe the morning and night blessings, meditation, one-hour fast walking during the day, running during night, charity, helping people, listening to some religious lessons like those of Dr. Ragheb El Sergany, following up the news, sleeping for only six hours per day, and eating less amounts of food but with better quality. The subsidiary activities includes swimming, driving, riding horses, climbing mountains, leading teams, walking in sand, learning first aid, and practicing a fighting sport. By observing the instructions of this document, it is said, you will be in the path of martyrdom doing a positive thing in the right way not just staring to the bad news of TV. The document in this way makes the visiting much longer. Nevertheless, the visited is still isolated. There is no clear association between what is done during the visiting (running in night) and what will have been done all along the rest of the week. Your running is also dissociated from the guy running in the next street. Obviously you are not going to be a real martyr, but still you can be a pre-martyr, a potential martyr or a simulacrum of a martyr.

The significance of the document above is that it reflects a sort of potential tension and unsettling of that enclave. I argued that metanarrative is neither dead nor centralized. It is left aside to work on a part-time basis and sometimes its work is dissociated from everyday life. Nevertheless, in its enclave the metanarrative, as a defeated soldier –or sometimes a prisoner of war-, is potentially unstable. If it has the chance to fight again or, on the other hand, if it is sentenced to die, it will turn quite stronger, breaking its bars and getting outside as wild and strong as possible. The American invasion to Iraq or the raiding of West Bank by Ariel Sharon breathes new life in it, kindles its fire, to fight again. In fact the author of the document above, a husband and father of two kids, was thinking of leaving to Iraq to fight the American troops, though with the sudden end of war he changed his mind and wrote that document. The encouragement of suicide operations might be now a piece of a decentralized and isolated metanarrative. Nevertheless, it is an unsettling part, having the potential of turning its holder into a suicide bomber. The “threshold” of excitation might also be crossed by a strong defy to that metanarrative, a sentence of death as I said before. On December 20th, 1992, the Egyptian magazine *Rose Al-Yosef* published a declaration of Seif Al-Islam, the only son of Hassan Al Banna and the member of the political leadership of MBG. Seif Al-Islam Hassan Al Banna gave this declaration after meeting with Yasser Arafat. He said, “The Muslim Brotherhood support the position of the Liberation Organization in its negotiations with Israel. MBG is not against negotiations that would bring something beneficial for the Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims. In case the negotiations failed MBG will continue fighting beside the Organization in a unity that gathers all ranks and the honorable, shoulder by shoulder, arm in arm and hand in hand.”¹⁰¹ This declaration that is rooted in a political realism stirred much anger and confusion within MBG members. Three days later the “official” leadership of MBG released a statement to assert its view. Nabeel Abdel Fattah concluded this statement in four points:

1. The Palestinian issue is an issue of all Muslims, not only a one of the Palestinian people. Nor is it only an Arabic Zionist conflict. The Palestinian issue is the central issue of the Islamic World.

2. The essence of the conflict with the Zionist enemy is not on land and borders; it is a conflict of existence, civilization, and future.

3. No abandonment of the Islamic sacred or the legitimate rights of Islamic and Palestinian Ummah is allowed. Jihad is continuous till the Day of Resurrection.

4. We support Intifada.¹⁰²

As we see above Jihad to the end of world is revived and the Palestinian issue moved to be the central issue of the Islamic World. The mundane relative politics is marginalized or even annihilated for the favor of the absolute sacred rights. Once again the metanarrative proved to be, yet, immortal. To avoid a suicide position Islamists encounter the external provocation by staying relatively longer times in the ghetto of metanarrative through activities like those of Preparation of a Martyr document and encounter an internal provocation by assuring the metanarrative through statements like the one above that its safety is secured. They also try to avoid the provocation. Lotfi told me that he no longer watches the news. "I keep watching the Palestinians slaughtered and I do nothing. If I see this I should do something, but I do not. Why should I watch them anyway?" Hisham said the negotiation is necessary. When I concluded that he thinks the negotiation is *a* solution he interrupted me and said no I never said that. Therefore, I repeated my question and he said, "It is difficult to refuse. But it is difficult to say it is solved." Hisham wants to keep the sleeping dogs asleep. Nonetheless, nothing is really guaranteed. The author of the document might join eight thousand Arab volunteering fighters in Iraq. In Egypt he might protest violently the invasion of Iraq by throwing stones at the Egyptian police in demonstrations that witnessed the killing of one activist. All those who keep saying that the government is not the problem might suddenly take to the streets of Alexandria to support a female candidate of the Parliament, even though they say politics is not important, the parliament is insignificant and the government is not the enemy. Nothing is guaranteed and that what makes my own metanarrative in this chapter take its humble place.

Chapter III

The Change

1- Introduction

In this chapter I am reflecting on Islamists' "discourse". In my interviews I grounded the discussions in the Arab/Israeli conflict. Nevertheless, we moved freely to talk about MBG, the "change" they want to make in society, what kind of activism they want to pursue nowadays, what issues should be emphasized or marginalized, their personal life and what do they want to do in their private life and see as a part of their Islamic activism... Writing down my notes I was trying to imagine and handle what I think is a newly created -or rather being created- discourse. Stuart Hall defined the Foucauldian concept of discourse as "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about -i.e. a way of representing - a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. When statements about a topic are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed."¹⁰³ The discourse, thus, determines what is "possible", but equally important is its limits. Certain questions, views or practices are rendered by a certain discourse less possible, marginalized or insignificant.

Two important aspects are always stressed in the concept of discourse. First, the discourse is not a rigid formation of well-integrated and harmonious statements. In fact it is a "discursive" formation of statements, rules and practices. George Ritzer wrote, "The unity of these statements, the way that they come to form a science or a discipline, does not come from the subject, but rather from basic discursive rules and practices."¹⁰⁴ Through this discursive formation the statements still "fit together because any one statement implies a relation to all the others."¹⁰⁵ "They refer to the same object, share the same style and support

'a strategy ... a common institutional ... or political drift or pattern."¹⁰⁶ Second, knowledge and power imply and relate to each other. They could be two faces of the same coin. Foucault was "interested in techniques, the technologies that are derived from knowledge (especially scientific knowledge), and how they are used by various institutions to exert power over people."¹⁰⁷ Foucault, nevertheless, was not implying any sort of conspiracy, in terms of conscious people manipulating a discourse for the sake of their interests. "Foucault is more inclined to see structural relationships, especially between knowledge and power."¹⁰⁸

In my handling to Islamists' discourse I am not trying to say what is true or what might be false, leave alone right and wrong. I am interested in what Islamists consider as the "truth". They may think the national government is the main problem or that it is not a problem at all, globalization is the force of evil or a means of success. That does not make any difference for me. My point is how this discourse mediates and produces knowledge, power and practices. Moreover, and equally important, I am interested in the question of what other kinds of "truths" that are obliterated or covered. Foucault wrote once about the aim of the discourse of medicine as "not to state the truth, but to prevent its very emergence."¹⁰⁹

I am dividing this chapter into three parts paralleling the three axes described in Escobar's work about the discourse of development. Arturo Escobar in his book "Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World" wrote, "To sum up, I propose to speak of development as a historically singular experience, the creation of a domain of thought and action, by analyzing the characteristics and the interrelations of the three axes that define it: the forms of knowledge that refer to it and through which it comes into being and is elaborated into objects, concepts, theories and the likes; the system of power that regulates its practice; and the forms of subjectivity fostered by this discourse, those through which people come to recognize themselves as developed or underdeveloped. The ensemble of forms found along these axes constitutes development as a discursive formation, giving rise to an efficient apparatus that systematically relates forms of knowledge and techniques of

power.¹¹⁰ In my work I will trace these three axes of knowledge, system of power and subjectivity to show how they form discursively the Egyptian Islamists' new discourse.

2- Knowledge

Reading Islamists' newspapers and magazines, exploring their websites, listening to their lectures and speeches or navigating their multimedia CDs one can get many messages. These messages could arbitrarily be grouped into two main categories, *resistance* and *openness*. I am not saying a certain CD or a certain website would be clearly classified as belonging to either resistance or openness. What I am saying is that these two roots of resistance and openness nurture the whole discourse of Islamists. Describing *the Jews* as the eternal Muslims' enemies, which is the case of Al Basha'er's CD¹¹¹, calling to liberate Palestine from the River to the Sea, as in El Sergany's series of audiocassettes or writing about the Alternative Media as in the article of Magdy Said published in IOL website¹¹² belong to what I collectively group under the banner of resistance. Under the banner of openness one can find Jerusalem in the Jewish View, a long article written by an Israeli Jewish lecturer in Tel Aviv University and published through Jerusalem CD, which was produced by RDI, an Islamic Egyptian multimedia company. In the following lines I will reflect on first, the concept of openness, second the concept of resistance and finally the openness/resistance relationships.

Openness

Openness is the key word to the new Islamic discourse. In every single meeting I must hear it from my interviewees. We have to be open; openness is the solution; our success is directly related to the openness we can make. These are the statements declared over and over during the interviews. In IOL one of the editors said, "Our mission is to present an open image of Islam, not influenced by specific ideas or denominations." He added, "Yes most of the workers have their relations with specific organizations but never would we be biased. We want to be always open for all ideas and visions." In our online discussions we

hosted representatives of the entire Palestinian spectrum, for we build bridges not pursue conflicts! We once hosted the Egyptian minister of Youth. And we also hosted Youhanna Qulta, the Roman Catholic Director of the Egyptian Committee for Justice and Peace." The same editor is still explaining. A female editor told me that they hired a female secretary who does not wear the scarf. For her that is a proof how far they are open. Hatem told me that had MBG members been open enough to different sectors and views of the society Islamic activism would have been spreading from end to end in Egypt. In *The Postmodern Turn* Best and Kellner wrote, "These identities revolve around a "subject position," a key identity marker defined by one's gender, race, class, sexual preference, and so on and through which an individual is made subordinate to the dominant culture."¹¹³ I would certainly call openness that key identity marker of the new Islamism.

One interesting observation for me was that when Islamists talk about their openness they frequently mean their un-closedness. Closedness is seen as the legacy of the failing past that should be condemned, the curse that must be avoided. The organization, the ideology and the regulations are the features of that closed past. Yes they try to be open to different discourses and groups of activists, but equally important is their emphasis of being "cured" from that malicious disease, the closedness. They launch a page to cover cinema issues and many of them insist to tell me over and over that they published an article about Su'ad Hosni, the late Egyptian actress. They added, "People are usually surprised by our open positions. We once wrote an article about Marline Monroe, Sha'aban Abdel Reheem and even Anthony Kuwain!" An editor in IOL said, "We have crossed all the debatable issues of the 1970s and 1980s like those of the music and the singing. Now we are open to music, singing, cinema, and art in general!" Proudly he added, "Remember the problems of male/female relations? They no more exist here. We have such an open view! About 50% of the workers here are females. They share us the same offices and the same positions. We are also deeply concerning the women issues in our site with open views." Ironically he added, "We have not this Shikh who knows everything about everything. We invite the specialists whether Islamists or not." Another editor said, "Unlike the old closed positions of the 1970s and 1980s we got

very interested in some issues like the music! Do you know that we prepared an entire series to explain the different kinds of music and their histories?" By doing this IOL people are drawing line in the sand to distance themselves from "old" Islamists. It is not only the marker that makes them distinct but the line that separates them from the past as well.

In their call to openness Islamists try to build bridges to the world around. Besides the articles calling to communicate with the emerging global civil society and its groups, Islamists try to frame their discourse within global discourses of human rights, women rights, environmentalism... Moreover, they directly articulate issues and questions raised globally. For instance in IOL website they publish articles about genetic engineering¹¹⁴, women capacity to be responsible for high positions¹¹⁵, unionism movements¹¹⁶, feminism¹¹⁷, environmentalism¹¹⁸, interfaith dialogue¹¹⁹, civilizations dialogue¹²⁰, and the third way.¹²¹ In these articles they try either to explore these discourses or to take a further step by positioning themselves within them. This positioning might show a plurality of their views. To explore the discourse of interfaith dialogue the site published three articles, "Interfaith Dialogue: Legitimate Questions and Difficult Answers"¹²², "Interfaith Dialogue: Human Necessity or Global Conspiracy?"¹²³ and "Interfaith Dialogue: A Political Play In A Religious Robe".¹²⁴ The first article advocated interfaith dialogue and even presented a proposed agenda to be adopted by activists all over the world, the second only explored the history and the present of these movements, while the third article explicitly condemned it and questioned its hidden agenda and secret motives. This plurality of views reflected a celebrated reality of Islamists who insist to not adopt a specific agenda and to leave most of issues for continuous dialogue, something they think is reflecting their openness. Other articles, like that of the third way, made a vague end without determining a specific position. Sometimes, like the article about environmentalism, the author only gave a brief theoretical Islamic framework and stated clearly that a genuine Islamic discourse is badly needed to mesh with these global discourses. They also appeal to global discourses to advocate their issues. For instance the Israeli aggression against the Palestinians and the American war against Iraq were framed as violations to environmental rights in Environmental Violations in

the Palestinian Lands¹²⁵ and Environment: A Sacrifice on War Altar.¹²⁶ In another article published in their English site the title was Prophet Mohammed: A Pioneer of the Environment.¹²⁷

In addition to the articles published I noticed that those whom I interviewed had internalized different global discourses. Before answering my question about the peace process in the Middle East Lotfi laughed saying, "Of course I am with peace; I am not a terrorist!" Khaled posed for a moment to emphasize that it is the Zionists not the Jews who are the enemies for making the Jews our enemies would be anti-Semitism. One interesting article published by the English IOL site bitterly criticized the only North American Islamic TV channel MRN. She wrote, "Figured out what the MRN is yet? Welcome to the Muslim Rumor Network. ... Remember that a viable Muslim media outlet will never be necessary if all of us are content with the ceaseless banter that passes as news and analysis and is fueled largely with rumors, suspicions, doubts, and conspiracy theories. ... We must refrain from the incessant desire to cast blame on others for the conditions we find ourselves in. Colonialism ended some time ago. The future progress of our communities cannot be held back because of the damage inflicted by the colonialists on our collective psyche. Neither can the future direction of our communities be based upon and guided by largely unsubstantiated, unsophisticated, mostly simplistic and emotional responses to the complex nature of world events. ... We can do without it and we will be better off because we got rid of it!"¹²⁸ This article was published three and a half months after September eleventh and was criticizing the conspiratory way of covering the bloody event and called Muslims to be open to dialogue the others and criticize the self.

The last point of criticizing the self instead of blaming the others is one main feature of Islamists openness. Altaf Husain, the author of the above article wrote, "Far more than informing its listeners, the MRN has continued to distract the Muslim community from the real issues at hand. It has kept us from facing the uncomfortable reality that perhaps a portion of the Ummah is illiterate, poor, oppressed by other Muslims and has in fact been hijacked by

people who only claim to be Muslims but are far from practicing any of Islam's teachings."¹²⁹ Ahmed, Maged and Yosef told me explicitly that Islamists must adopt a politically liberal agenda. They thought democracy, human rights and "freedom" are more important than implementing Sharia. Ahmed added, "We should sacrifice ourselves for freedom, our freedom and everyone's freedom. We should have martyrs of freedom. We must know that it is an Islamic thing to die for the freedom of the Marxist or the secular, because this is what Allah wants from us."

In their yearn to openness "the Islamic revival, in its moderate and peaceful expressions (such as the New Islamic Trend), is quite explicitly and courageously engaged in re-creating itself, rejecting a narrow and closed identity, and struggling to enlarge its consciousness to find its place in dialogue with an emerging global society-and in these ways refusing the limitations of its political environment."¹³⁰ They see globalization as providing new opportunities to action. Sidney Tarrow argued that "contention is more closely related to opportunities for – and limited by constraints upon – collective action than by the persistent social or economic factors that people experience."¹³¹ I am not going that far but I want to emphasize the opportunities elicited by globalization. Internet and open market provide "opening of access to participation for new actors", something Tarrow considered as an opportunity turning the potential for mobilization into action.¹³² Besides they rely on global norms settled by global discourses to ground their arguments. Tarrow, once again wrote, "as economies globalize, cultures universalize, and institutions proliferate, "principled ideas" are increasingly adopted as international norms (Finnemore 1996) and then become socialized into domestic understandings (Price 1997; Risse and Sikkink 1997)."¹³³ Islamists learnt to not exclusively ground their discourse in Sharia and to extend its framing to new global discourses. An Islamic activist told me that the one thing she learnt through her participation in UN conference for women in Beijing is that she should not advocate polygamy in Islam in terms of right and wrong. In other words she should not try justifying it on rational basis. All what she needs to do is to stick to discourses of pluralism, cultural diversity and the likes.

Most Islamists whom I met think the way to openness starts from the exit door of politics! They frequently blame themselves for being trapped in politics for a long time to find finally that it only hinders their movement backwards. Mamduh said that he personally thinks Sufi ways are more effective in spreading Islamic values than MBG. He thinks Egypt is not in need to politicians but to a few great Sufi Shikhs who can through their spiritual and social power reform the society. An IOL editor thinks the website is great because it "speaks to all people, Muslims and non-Muslims, and in everyday life issues." She added, "Most important is that IOL is not actually speaking to people; it is speaking with them. The social dialogue it promotes is the real thing it achieves." Mahmud said, "The opportunity to action always exists. The point is how to see, recognize and use it."

Going to IOL site and examining its material I found it deeply involved in the social and economic problems. There is an interest in the problems, not to prove the failure of the National State but to try solving them. Many particular solutions are proposed to help supporting Muslims' societies. There is no more waiting for "The Solution", a word that used to mean the rising of the Islamic State and the implementation of Sharia. When dealing with a certain problem the editors don't refer its reasons to "Ibtia'ad an al Islam" alienation from Islam, but rather to reasons, which have their material basis. In the interviews conducted with them they emphasized the "contribution" in solving the social problems as one of their most important goals. "We should move from the political, as our main concern, to the social." It is a quotation from "The Vision", a paper representing their strategies and views. The pages of the site themselves are very suggestive. There are pages for Economics and Business, Eve and Adam, Culture and Arts, Science and Technology, Creative Club, Educational Consultations, Health Consultations, and Youth Problems. Besides, each page of them ramifies into more pages covering a very wide spectrum of interests. For instance, Culture and Arts Page ramifies into eleven sub-pages for music, poetry, cinema, theatre, satellites...etc. Sometimes there is more than one level for ramification. The Eve and

Adam Page ramifies into eighteen pages to cover many aspects of "family affairs" including house decoration, Women Movement, husband/wife relations and women health.

Impressively, every single one I interviewed stressed the wide variety of interests as the most important feature of IOL. "What do you find in the regular Islamic sites? ... Traditional books, audio files for Quran and the likes ... or you have the sites of "dunia"/life ... We have them both! ... A vision speaks of everything and in one site! ... We speak about sports, technology, science, art, culture, women, family, passion, social problems and even sex!" Magdy said. Karima had this notion "Yes we may write about the economical effects of Intifada on both the Israeli State and the Palestinian National Authority, but it is not everything. We also write about their social aspects that emerged after Intifada ... how do the workers manage to live in such circumstances? What does the house wife help her family economically? How could they earn or save money while staying home? What are the social informal committees that have been founded? And how do they work?"

We can, however, trace this social and cultural interest in the past. Social services were and have always been offered by many traditional religious societies and groups like Jame'ia Share'ia. On the other hand the cultural interest could also be traced to the early twentieth century. Unlike Al Afghani, his most eminent student Abdu as well as Rashid Reda concerned mainly the educational and the cultural reform. What makes IOL different is that its socio-cultural interest came as and recognized by Islamists as a "change" in the political Islamic currents. The change from the political to the cultural was clarified by Marfleet, who describing the intellectuals of the Islamization of Knowledge wrote, "Intellectual exertion alone could resolve problems of the Umma: political engagement was largely meaningless, for Muslims were not yet equipped to define their tasks. The strategy has been elaborated against a background of active political engagement among large numbers of Muslims –a continuation of over a century of struggles which have contested local power structures, including formally Islamic governments. In this context, Islamization [the intellectual project of International Institute of Islamic Thought] is a message of political restraint. The Islamizers

have all the appearances of being quietists, holding much in common with clerical establishments which have enjoyed close relations with those in power."¹³⁴ Raymond William Baker as well stretches Marfleet's notion to include whom he calls "the centrists" (the intellectuals and anti-Western young militants, many of whom were formerly on the Left, who gravitated to the newspaper al-Shaab, the Islamic activists who within the professional associations and other civil society institutions and a small, but creative and outspoken, group of religious intellectuals who name themselves The New Islamic Trend.) He wrote, "Belief in social Islam with its strong commitment to constructive social action is the distinguishing hallmark of the practical work of this intellectual school... The New Islamists call for a healthy vibrant Islamic body that, in its own activities, will help create an open environment of tolerance, understanding, and above all, dialogue that will yield a correct understanding of both Islam and the modern world, and that can guide the steps to renewal and change."¹³⁵

Shikh Qaradawi once in Al Jazeera Channel talking in his famous program Sharia and Life was asked a question by the interviewer. Qaradawi did not answer the question. He said to his interviewer, "No this point will be covered when we talk about another system." Qaradawi, like Said Hawa, Jamal Badawi, Mohamed Emara and many other Islamic modernists see Islam as composed of perfectly shaped and well-integrated systems, political, economic, social, educational... systems, which collectively work in harmony for the benefit of the individual, the society and the whole world. New Islamists, on the other hand, do not hold such a view. They move discursively between different spheres of activism according to their personal preferences or the issue raised at this or that time. Instead of talking about the Islam they deal practically with specific issues from relative Islamic perspectives. They no longer wait for the big change, the dramatic shift, which was deliberately described and asserted by Sayed Qutb. "There is a lot to be done; the point what do you personally want to pick up and set out as your project", Yosef said to me. The editors of IOL are almost completely involved in their own interests according to which page they edit. When they meet they talk about general administrative regulations, not a detailed view of the site. Arabic Media Center, an Islamic publishing house, publishes a number of magazines. None of them

is like El Dawa or Al Mukhtar Al Islami magazines, which aimed to cover a broad spectrum of Islamic interests and which were founded in the seventies. AMC publishes magazines like Al Zuhur, a women's magazine, Al Quds, a magazine related solely to the Palestinian Israeli conflict, Hasad Al Fikr, a review of recently published books, and Al Risalah, a magazine directed to the preachers.

In my work I had a pursuing question; without a holistic view –except that of ambiguous openness-, and without a specific action plan and a dramatic end –like that of Qutb and Al Banna's writings- how would Islamists evaluate a certain behavior, action or opinion as good (leave alone right) in terms of being authentically Islamic and ideologically leading to the desired change? How would they argue among each other which opinion or action is better or worse? On what standards would they measure their success or failure? What I found was that these questions are infrequently raised. When they were raised in IOL the management of the site solved the problem by appointing only one editor to observe the site as a whole and write a biannual report evaluating its content. On his door there is a sign saying, "Content Evaluation". No one asks him before or after publishing his or her material though. Two years before they assigned someone to write a paper describing their vision. Only one person in IOL knows about this paper. Moreover, it was very difficult for him to find me a copy! Zygmunt Bauman, in his book *In Search of Politics*, wrote, "Cornelius Castoriadis asserted in one of his last interviews that the trouble with our civilization is that it stopped questioning itself. Indeed, we may say that the proclamation of the demise of 'grand narratives' (or, in case of Richard Rotry, of the retreat from the 'movement politics', one that used to evaluate every step in terms of shortening the distance to an ideal state of affairs, in favour of the resolution of problems at hand, which is the principle of the one-issue-at-a-time 'campaign politics') announces the disengagement of the knowledge classes, the grand refusal of the modern intellectual vocation."¹³⁶

Two standards, however, regulate the everyday micropolitics of Islamists and make them judge their thoughts and action, usefulness and un-prohibited-ness. The first standard,

usefulness, does not imply being a step in a long way or complementary to other pieces of action or being incorporated in a long-time program for change. It only means that it gives readers some good information, which they do not know (not necessarily they need); it helps some poor in a certain neighborhood; it calls for giving some women some rights; it makes life easier for some people; it could sometimes provide some spiritual energy... The significance of this concept of usefulness is that it first, makes Islamists open to a plethora of activities without necessarily referring these activities to a holistic view. You can do whatever you like to do at anytime you want and it would be "Islamic" as long as it is useful. You are not expected to create what old Islamists called "the Islamic alternative". All what you are asked is to contribute by something useful to the reality around, right now and right here. Second, it lefts all the restraints put by ideologies. The "priorities of the Islamic movement", a once title of a Qaradawi's book, is history. When I asked Yosef about his opinion of the peace process he said, "It is a good temporary solution." Fatima was clearer. She said, "It is Islamically correct because things are Islamically correct or incorrect according o their usefulness in a specific history." Lotfi said, "It is the available solution." A similar answer was given by Hany who said, "It is the realistic solution." Even though most of Islamic media condemn day and night the peace process these were the answers given by the Islamists whom I met. In fact, with the exception of Fatima, they did not dare to say it is *the* Islamic solution. Nevertheless, they all thought it is *an* acceptable solution based on its usefulness, and equally important the un-usefulness of continuing the conflict. I would recite again the answer of Ahmed Abd-Allah to the one who criticized his civilian jihad concept, "And what do you suggest brother?" He was defying him to say I suggest fighting Israel, an obviously unrealistic, and therefore un-useful solution. More interestingly was the reply of Laila Ahmed posted on IOL site answering a question about Jihad in Iraq against the American invasion. Ahmed clearly said that any fighting in Iraq will be for the unjust Iraqi regime. Nothing of this could be regarded as Jihad for the sake of Allah. She did not base her answer on only the tyranny of the Iraq regime, but also on the worthless of the fighting as any fighting will finally end in vain; no one can defeat the Americans!¹³⁷

The second standard is the un-prohibited-ness. This standard shifts dramatically away from a view of Islam as "a way of life", as a perfect integrated system, to a relaxed mobile borders that tell what could be wrong not what is right. Old Islamists would think their life is meaningless unless every part of it is devoted to the great plan of restoring the Khelafa. New Islamists think their life is meaningful unless they cross the borders of the Haram/prohibited. Within these relaxed borders you can move freely wherever you want. Your movement is Islamic as long as you did not step out the borders. The meaning of the movement is individually selected. For something to be prohibited it must be clearly and literally prohibited, otherwise the plurality of interpretations would make it possibly un-prohibited. The prohibited might be "textually" prohibited, but the allowed, the un-prohibited, is "naturally" un-prohibited. The sexual fatwas of IOL are curiously interesting. Most of the sexual issues are not raised at the page devoted for fatwa, but rather at the page of "Problems and Solutions", which basically considers youth troubles. The visitors of IOL prefer to send their questions to this page to be answered by psychologists not to the Fatwa page to be answered by Shikhs. A mother sent a message saying that her teenager son comes close to her when they sleep and rubs himself with her body in movements she considered sexual. The consultant advised her to explain to her son that in his age there are some biological changes that happen to his body and make him have new feelings and that it is a normal thing but should only be regulated. When I read this answer I wondered if her son was really in need to someone to explain to him what he is doing. I wondered why did not the consultant simply ask the mother not to sleep with her son in the same bed. After all she is someone who has a computer and Internet and can certainly buy a second bed to sleep in! However, after reading much of the material posted there and met with the one responsible for editing the page I concluded that coming from a past, in which male/female relationship and feelings were highly restricted on religious bases, the editors took the position of "love is natural; sex is natural." The consultant was telling the mother that her son is normal; what he makes is natural. He missed her point; the boy is taking *her and her body* as a sexual object.

In a second case a wife sent a message asking about the oral sex. She said that she finds it abnormal and disgusting and knew about it only from her demanding husband. The consultant recited in his first part of the answer the fatwa of Qaradawi. Qaradawi said, "It was in America and Europe when I was asked this question for the first time in the 1970s. We are not asked such questions in our Islamic and Arabic countries. People there are used to nudity. Therefore they need an unusual excitement. ... Now in this matter if it were only kissing there would be no problem. ... But if it is for ejaculation there would be some Karaha/dislike (something less than prohibited). I can not say it is prohibited for there is no definite proof on categorical prohibition. ... There is no specific text about this. But it is something man would see as disgusting. If someone enjoys it through the mouth it would be an abnormal behavior. Nonetheless, we can not say prohibited, especially if the woman is satisfied and enjoying it." The consultant, then, started to put his own answer. He wrote, "For the legal side, as you see, there is no prohibition... Most of things are like this. Basically everything is allowed unless proved otherwise. ... Second is the psychological and sexual side... The emotions here is the most important thing and people's natures differ a lot. ... The point for each partner is how to satisfy the other. This is the natural introduction to a harmonious sex making love stronger. No one should mute his/her desire. On the other hand s/he should not mute his/her offense. The third side is the cultural one. ... We became embarrassed from our sensitive organs even though Allah created them in our bodies. Allah provided these organs with very sensitive nerves to be a way of enjoyment... Thus, manipulating these organs with the hand or the tongue is a way to excite the sexual drive and to complete the pleasure for those who like it. ... What you ask about is neither abnormal nor prohibited; it is only our cultural and educational background that makes us embarrassed from it."¹³⁸ Things in Sharia could be mandatory, preferred, allowed, disliked, or prohibited. Though Qaradawi, who is considered relatively a progressive scholar, said oral sex is disliked, as he could not find something textual to literally prohibit it, the editor of the page gently pushed this fatwa and emphasized only the un-prohibited-ness of oral sex. He stated that it is our culture that obliterated such a natural thing. Further in his answer he said the Westerns are not bad as the Shikh said; they are only culturally different. He added that this difference

makes neither we nor them better or worse. In another reply of another consultant the consultant said, "The wife must go back to the bedroom asking her husband to draw a map of excitement for her body. Then they should share together the creation of new ways to reach climax. Discovering the areas of excitement and how to excite them the wife will reach a state of enjoyment so that the husband will only need to touch the clitoris with his hand or tongue to make her reaches the climax."¹³⁹

Not everything is un-prohibited though. The consultants received so many messages from homosexuals asking about their sexual affection to persons from the same sex and frequently about their homosexual experiences and/or life. How would IOL consultants respond to these questions? First, homosexuality is prohibited. Prohibition is textually grounded. Nonetheless, homosexuality is recognized. It is not a crime. Nor is it a "perversion". Homosexuality is a disease, a natural disease that has its social and cultural reasons. The absence of the father or the mother, a sexual harassment in the early years of childhood, living in a social environment, in which homosexuality is common, or even not finding the right sex available could be the reason. Moreover, "Those youth are not responsible for this mess. They are perhaps the victim of it."¹⁴⁰ Homosexuals "need kindness, compassion and care like those of special needs, the handicapped."¹⁴¹ Responding to a message from a teenager female who was asking about her homosexual experience with her colleague the editor wrote, "It is only a sexual experience between two female teenagers in a double-standard society, like, unfortunately, most of our Arab societies. ... It might be a joke, a sexual experience or an expression of a transient phase of sexual differentiation ... in a close society that mistakenly separates between the two sexes. ... It is neither a perversion nor a deviation; it is only a transient misbehavior, giving that it will not continue."¹⁴² Besides, being rationalized and "naturalized" the IOL discourse of homosexuality is articulated with similar global discourses. The consultants would criticize some Western discourses through other Western writings and ground their arguments in science and different sociological and pedagogical discourses, not to prove homosexuality is wrong, but to say that it is curable. Reciting Bourdieu, Bauman wrote, "The neo-liberal apotheosis of the market confuses *les*

choses de la logique avec la logique des choses, while the great ideologies of modern times, with all their controversies, agreed on one point: that the logic of things as they are defies and contradicts what the logic of reason dictates. Ideology used to set reason *against nature*; the neo-liberal discourse disempowers reason through *naturalizing* it.¹⁴³ There is nevertheless a third standard, being successful or working, to which action and thought could be evaluated, but I prefer to discuss it through the next chapter of the market.

Rhetorically Bauman put this question, "When there are so many means to attend to, who would waste time in examining the ends?"¹⁴⁴ That is the case of new Islamists, where there are many ways to activism and micro-politics, though less attention is paid to a final goal or end. Bauman believes it is the flourishing of the neo-liberal discourse that is responsible for this attitude, a flourishing grounded in, he argues, a disengagement between power and politics. Power left behind politics to travel with free-floating global capital¹⁴⁵. Eloquently Bauman reflects on time and historicity by writing, "The world-view disseminated, by design or by default, through the messages coming these days from the quarters of the learned elite, is about time devoid of historical dimension – a flat time, or a roundabout, continuously recycled time, a time with a lot of to-ing and fro-ing but with not much change of position, a time of 'more of the same', a time of *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. This is not just the message that lost the sense of its own historicity: this is a message denying history to the world."¹⁴⁶ Islamists' actions are both meaningful and Islamically legal, because they are useful and un-prohibited. Nevertheless, the difference between these actions and those of the past are best portrayed by Bauman's metaphor. He wrote, "The difference between neo-liberal discourse and the classic ideologies of modernity is, one might say, the difference between the mentality of plankton and that of swimmers or sailors."¹⁴⁷

Resistance

The second mother-concept or umbrella-concept that constitutes the knowledge of Islamists' discourse is resistance. Pick up any issue of an Islamic magazine, look to the front-

page of any Islamic website, or go to attend any Islamic lesson whether in mosques or private homes and you would find this discourse of resistance, too vivid to be a remnant of other fading discourses that used to flourish in the 1970s and 1980s. In fact it is coloring the whole discourse so that without enough reflection and analysis one might take the false impression that Islamists' discourse is but the same anti-Western, anti-imperialist post-colonization discourse that prevailed through Third World intelligentsia in the second half of the last century. Tazweeb/dissolving, taghreeb/Westernization, tatwee'a/subjugation and haymana/hegemony are too common words and concepts to not be found in any article published by Islamists.

This concept of resistance is rooted in and nurtured by an environment of frustration and weakness. Arabs and Muslims have been defeated in Palestine and are now defeated in Iraq. Their political regimes are autocratic and their countries are far from being developed because of corruption and lack of freedom of expression. In deep agony Lotfi told me how much he is frustrated. I watch the TV, see the Palestinians, the Bosnians, the Albanians and the Iraqis. I watch them suffering; their dead bodies carried in coffins, and what can I do? Nothing! When you see your brother killed or hear that your sister was raped you are supposed to do something. But what is this something that could be done in this painful reality, Lotfi said. Hassan proposed something. To have a strong ruler you must have a strong Ummah; he emphasized. Immediately, however, after only a one moment of silence he said, "I know it is more a theoretical thing than a real practical solution. But honestly, I do not know an outlet from this crisis." They feel that not only the present is gloomy but also the future will be even worse. Adel said, "there no clear vision whether to MBG or to the whole country. Both are corrupted. What is killing me is that Egypt became so open to successive global waves of cultural and social changes that are decaying Egypt."

All of the above, nonetheless, is not new/post-modern. What, then, would make it any different than the past? The answer is that these challenges and the way to encounter them are contextualized differently. As I explained earlier in chapter I, Islamists now

experience their failure not their promise. They do not see the government as the problem. Nor do they see seizing it will be the solution. They recognize new global challenges, and sometimes opportunities, that are too speedily changing and developing to be understood, leave alone to be encountered. Therefore they have this deep postmodern feeling of uncertainty and insecurity. This is why Adel feels angry because of the "successive global waves of cultural and social changes that are decaying Egypt" while he has only to share Lotfi watching them! The used-to-be the enemy is no longer strong enough to be the enemy. The used-to-be the solution is failing. The neo-liberal ideology with its two standards, usefulness and un-prohibited-ness, and with its no-future-project content is sometimes working, but in some other times it only pushes them to the black-hole of uncertainty and despair. A reader of IOL, after reading an article about the civil jihad sent this angry message. "To Dr. Sahar or any human being in this stupid world: Alas! What are these stupid ideas that you support? I logged on the article of "Civil Jihad". What is this? Are you living on Earth or on Pluto? All these things do not work. Our elite (and I mean you) said the same words when Kosovo and Bosnia were occupied, also at the beginning of Intifada and when Afghanistan was occupied. You say it now! What happened? When a certain vision fails for hundreds of times that would mean only one thing; we need a complete paradigm shift. We want to deal with our real problems. Our enemy is here. The liberation of Quds starts by liberating Cairo. Did your ways help the Palestinians or the Chychyn? The answer is no. Prayers alone are not useful. Allah put certain rules to do things. Look around you to find the infidels dominating because they observe these rules that work on Earth. Why does not our elite think of real proposals? How could we really help our brothers? And for the women in IOL, are you waiting to be raped? Muslims' women are raped in several places around the world. There is no time for carelessness and recklessness. Words must be as serious as the events around us."¹⁴⁸ This message does not represent the whole Islamists' discourse. It represents only a part of it, a part, which is very troubled, boiling and anxious in the heart of the discourse. The message is a necessary scream so that the dominating openness discourse of civil jihad does not mute its twin, the resistance. The prevailing openness discourse must not claim its victory. Many questions are not answered, and more could not be registered.

The many means "to attend to", which Bauman mentioned make one free. S/he is free to choose whatever activity s/he would like to do at a certain time. As long as it is useful and un-prohibited, it will be an Islamic action as well. The other face of such a freedom is insecurity. "It is security which is sacrificed day by day on the altar of ever-expanding individual freedom."¹⁴⁹ Micropolitics provides a plethora of actions. The point is how to choose; how to decide? Moreover, in the market of Islamic activism Islamists find everyday new actions and proposals of action that they can "attend to". When this continuous decision making process of choice will end up? Bauman, once again writes, "By necessity rather than by design, ours is a society of choosers; of such choosers, moreover, as tend to be taught to make a virtue out of this necessity. Certainly our market suppliers show this tendency: they have discovered (and unlikely to forget) the awesome seductive power of diversity and the allurements of rich and variegated displays. So do the creators and distributors of all sorts of artistic goods, who raise choice to the rank of a value in its own right and see it as one aspect of reality most fit to offer both content and form to the works of art."¹⁵⁰ To show the high price of this choice freedom Bauman wrote, "Addiction is not just what I have been forced to do, it is what I have *chosen* to be forced to do; the awareness of choice, and for the responsibility for what has been chosen, is built into it and cannot be excised. Hence the constant, incurable uncertainty about the wisdom of the choice made, however tightly that choice has been embraced: the proclivity to self-indignation, self-reproach, regret, repentance – all things conspicuously absent from the obedience to tradition..."¹⁵¹ This uncertainty can not be treated or stopped. Everyday there are more means to access more information and/or action. Today's uncertainty, in Anthony Giddens's words, is manufactured! People, thus, have only to join the chorus of neo-liberals and sing the praises of freedom and openness.

Hamed, a Philosophy Ph.D. candidate, said, "The most important for us to keep up our spirits of rejection of reality. We have to comply with reality. But we should keep its rejection alive in our hearts. That is what would make a difference in future." He thinks the problem is that people are psychologically defeated. His battlefield, I think, is the psyche. We

are defeated psychologically and our weapon is the spirit of rejection blazing in our hearts. Victory and defeat, the whole war, is dragged to the private sphere (because there is no war we can fight outside.) Why do not we fight in the real life, I asked? He answered, "Because there is no one obvious enemy people can combat him. It is so confusing. Right and wrong, truth and falsehood, are not discriminated." Commenting on the massive protests following the release of Sidney Cooke, a pedophile, from prison and his return back home Decca Aitkenhead, a Guardian reporter, wrote, "If there is one thing guaranteed to get people out on the streets today, it is the whispered arrival of a paedophile. The helpfulness of such protests is increasingly being questioned. What we haven't asked, however, is whether these protests actually have anything to do with paedophiles. ... What Cooke offers, wherever he is, is a rare opportunity to really hate someone, loudly, publicly, and with absolute impunity. It is a matter of good and evil . . . and so a gesture against Cooke defines you as a decent. There are very few groups of people you can respectably hate any more. Paedophiles are the very thing."¹⁵² Bauman wrote, "Contemporary hardships and sufferings are fragmented, dispersed and scattered, and so is the dissent which they spawn. The dispersion of dissent, the difficulty of condensing it and anchoring it in a common cause and directing it against a common culprit, only makes the pain the more bitter. The contemporary world is a container full to the brim with free-floating fear and frustration desperately seeking outlets."¹⁵³

Islamists have this tension that seeks an outlet, an outlet to carry the tension and pain out from the private sphere to the public one. They need to focus their hate against a one enemy out there in public. If homosexuals deserve compassion, globalization is providing opportunities to action, the government is not the real enemy and all what they believed to be wrong could be, for the sake of openness, "naturally" justified, what in earth would be the evil, the absolute clear evil, that they must fight and hate? For Islamists, Israel, and now increasingly America, is that enemy. This enemy should insistently be brought to light, focused upon, zoomed in, so that all the blurring of life is absorbed in this focus. All dispersed tension would be cleared off by being sucked in this focus. Besides, it must be only one enemy. A second enemy will be confusing. It is a one enemy with many names. It is the

scapegoat to be blamed for all the evils in this world. Not a long time ago Israel was that enemy. America was only its long arm. After the occupation of Iraq it could be the other way round; Israel is only the American agent in the region. Globalization, in its bad sense, Israel, the unjust national government, the degradation of values in ethics, the social injustice, and the corruption are synonymous to the US. When Israel is very present in the view, it would be the Crusade-Zionist conspiracy that brings back Israel to the same focus.

There is one more reason for this resistance. It is the tension between the opportunities created or imagined in the context of globalization and the restrictive and oppressive local reality back in home. In 1995 one could see in one-scene MBG members standing before a military court, while communicating in English with activists of global human rights organizations. These organizations are setting a clear example of a new way of activism while the military court they are standing before is bringing them back to the painful local reality. Bauman based much of his arguments on a priori fact: power has disengaged from politics. This "fact" is less relevant in Egypt, where a complete shift to liberal economy, open market mechanisms and liberal politics are far from being achieved. The postmodern transformation of Islamists and their discourse, therefore, is not a smooth one at all.

Moreover, Islamists are conscious of a dramatic global change, which they are trying to keep pace with through their discourse of openness, but which they also neither trust nor control. For them, a Western neo-liberal discourse of secular democracy, reform religious movements and complete human rights including gays and lesbians rights is clashing with their Islamic dogmas. They fear this discourse and what they think are fast social and cultural dramatic changes in Egypt. They fear to be the "dirt" described by Bauman in *The Dream of Purity*. He wrote, "Since the criterion of purity is the ability to partake in the consumerist game, those left outside as a 'problem', as the 'dirt' which needs to be 'disposed of', are *flawed consumers* – people unable to respond to the enticements of the consumer market because they lack the required resources, people unable to be 'free individuals' according to the sense of 'freedom' as defined in terms of consumer choice. They are the new 'impure',

who do not fit into the new scheme of purity. Looked at from the now dominant perspective of the consumer market, they are redundant – truly 'objects out of place'.¹⁵⁴ "Writing resistance", thus, is their way, the perhaps only available way, to assert their existence, their standing for all trials of removal and washing out.

Openness/Resistance Inter-relationships

Far from being two distinctive discourses of openness and resistance the two concepts interact together to form a one coherent discourse. In fact, Islamists' discourse, in terms of knowledge, has many concepts and it was only for theoretical interest that I grouped them under these two mother-concepts. Anyway, after exploring the two of them I want now to reflect on the inter-relationships between them. Indeed, it is equally important, to understand the dynamism of the discourse, to understand these inter-relationships. Nevertheless, I have to emphasize, once more, that it is only a theoretical game to make reality simpler and more approachable. I will handle these relations under three subsequent titles, coexistence, collaboration and compromise.

Coexistence:

By coexistence I do not mean a relation of neighborhood, where the two concepts of openness and resistance would stay statically or work separately through the same discourse. I rather mean a continuous negotiation between the two of them, one that may result in accommodation or adaptation to the two negotiating concepts. Besides, Islamists are frequently conscious to this negotiation. This negotiation is praxis to be found everywhere, and every time. You find it in articles written, speeches given, in the organized demonstrations, in founding business companies and in taking the decision to stand for parliamentary elections or not. It is an ongoing process nurturing both thought and action of Islamists. Openness was and is proposed to encounter the challenges Islamists face. However, the failure of openness alone became partly the *raison d'être* of resistance. "As Bahro (1978) saw, capitalism generates needs and desires, which it ultimately cannot satisfy,

for freedom, justice, self-realization, and a good life, and a radical cultural politics will both depict how the current mode of social organization restricts, limits and deforms desire, freedom and justice and project visions of how these aspirations could be realized.¹⁵⁵ A discourse of openness may adopt a political view based on the peace process in the Middle East. This "process", however, is not succeeding at all. How can Islamists encounter the daily news of raiding the West Bank and Gaza Strip through such a view? Lotfi says, "We need military resistance to make peace." Yosef puts it the other way round. We need peace to give the Palestinians a break to build up their strong state. Then they can fight back Israel, not now, he said.

Roland Robertson, writing about Glocalization, sees localization as a very part of globalization. Perhaps, reading the following two quotations, we can see resistance as the heart of openness. Robertson wrote, "It is a manifestation of the not always implicit world view that suggests that we – the global we – once lived in and were distributed not so long ago across a multitude of ontologically secure, collective 'homes'. Now, according to this narrative – or, perhaps a metanarrative – our sense of home is rapidly being destroyed by waves of (Western?) 'globalization'. In contrast I maintain –although I can present here only part of my overall argument – that globalization has involved the reconstruction, in a sense the production, of 'home', 'community' and 'locality' (cf. J . Abu-Lughod, 1994). To that extent the local is not best seen, at least as an analytic or interpretative departure point, as a counterpoint to the global. Indeed, it can be regarded, subject to some qualifications, as *an aspect* of globalization."¹⁵⁶ A few pages later, Robertson, in an interesting argument, claims the locality is even invented. He wrote, "In this respect globalization, defined in its most general sense as the compression of the world as a whole, involves the linking of localities. But it also involves the 'invention' of locality, in the same general sense as the idea of the invention of tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983), as well as its 'imagination' (cf. Anderson, 1983). There is indeed currently something like an 'ideology of home' which has in fact come into being partly in response to the constant repetition and global diffusion of the claim that we now live in a condition of homelessness or rootlessness; as if in prior periods of

history the vast majority of people lived in 'secure' and homogenized locales."¹⁵⁷ In this respect openness and resistance are not alien concepts; they are rather twin-concepts.

What makes resistance of new Islamists "benign" is that it is, and unlike the resistance of old Islamists, not related to any future project. Resistance to globalization could peacefully coexist with openness to globalization. It is a module of resistance that can be added on the discourse without fundamentally changing its nature of openness. It speaks about now, an action of resistance that is available now for the sake of only practicing resistance now. Resistance, not the resisted, is the aim; the practicing itself is the object. Discussing boycotting Coca-Cola, an Egyptian company, as a way of resisting globalization and Americanization with Hassan I got this astonishing answer. Boycotting Coca-Cola is not about economy; it makes people feel they can do something; it gathers the will of the people against something they can achieve in their everyday life, he said. And what about America, I asked. He said, "It shows the Americans how much the people hate them; that is all." I want here to mention a software story that symbolizes this kind of openness/resistance relationship. Conducting some interviews in RDI, a leading Islamic multimedia company, I knew that in the beginning RDI programmers created a multimedia authoring-tool to produce their programs. They refused to rely on a "Western" product as they "have to have their independent Arabic and Islamic product that can compete in quality and price with Western authoring-tools produced by giant companies." They did succeed in creating that tool, which was qualitatively competitive with other products. Nonetheless, the expected customers of such a product, local and global multimedia companies, did not feel like buying it. Why should they risk buying an authoring-tool from an Egyptian company if they can have a working one that is already used all over the world? RDI had to use it for its own products, something that could not financially compensate for its production. Ultimately, RDI turned its giant authoring-tool into a number of modules that could be added on "Western" products. The valuable modules are those related to Arabic text. "Local" and "global" multimedia company do buy these modules to add them on working global authoring-tools. To reach this economically successful result RDI had to be very sure that its modules make no "conflicts" at all with alien

authoring tools. Recently the *Islamic discourse* of RDI has changed. They think of entering the e-learning field, to do this they ask: what are the "add-on" modules we can produce to benefit the local customer and be harmoniously working with giant global products? This "software story", besides its significance in showing up the cultural material relationship, can be used as a metaphor symbolizing the Islamists' discourse shift from producing a global cultural alternative (Islamization of Knowledge) to producing resistance modules (Coca-Cola boycott) for the local consumption.

The discourse, like an authoring-tool, is not a closed system. It "draws on elements in other discourses, binding them into its own network of meanings."¹⁵⁸ The discourse, nonetheless, can be more tolerant than an authoring-tool. The statements of a certain discourse need not all be the same, Stuart Hall asserts. He comments, "But the relationships and differences between them must be regular and systematic, not random. Foucault calls this a "system of dispersion": "Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever ... one can define a regularity ... [then] we will say ... that we are dealing with a *discursive formation*" (Foucault, 1972, p. 38)."¹⁵⁹ Islamists' discourse is "used" by Islamists of a variety of interests. The mosaic structure of their discourse, thus, makes it possible for all of them to use it differently. Stuart Hall, once again, reminds us of the letter sent from King Manuel of Portugal to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, in which he wrote, "the principal motive of this enterprise [da Gama's voyage to India] has been ... the service of God our Lord, and our own advantage."¹⁶⁰

Collaboration:

Resistance and openness could lead to each other. I alluded earlier to the female activist who advocated polygamy, resisting global pressures from non-Muslim feminists, by framing it into a global discourse of cultural diversity. Robertson wrote, "Speaking in reference to the local-cosmopolitan distinction, Hannerz (1990: 250) has remarked that for locals diversity 'happens to be the principle which allows all locals to stick to their respective cultures'. "¹⁶¹ Moreover, different global discourses and groups adopt frankly human issues

that directly intersect with Islamists' appeals. Jan Nederveen Pieterse wrote, "In relation to the global human condition of inequality, the hybridization perspective releases reflection and engagement from the boundaries of nation, community, ethnicity, or class. Fixities have become fragments as the kaleidoscope of collective experience is in motion. It has been in motion all along and the fixities of nation, community, ethnicity, and class have been grids superimposed upon experiences more complex and subtle than reflexivity and organization could accommodate."¹⁶² Egyptians Muslims are not the only human beings calling for global social justice, human rights or taking an anti-war position against the war in Iraq. IOL has created a page called The Anti-War Courtyard, in which it posted the URLs of websites belonging to many global groups and organizations who are taking the same political position. In San Francisco I met with Dr. Gerardo Gonzalez, a social activist from Chile who told me that he got many messages of gratitude from Arabs who knew about his campaign to boycott the American products through IOL website. Here openness is the way to resistance and resistance is the way to openness. In an article titled Say Colonization; Don't Say Crusade, El Awwa, Seleem asked the readers not to call the American war against Iraq a crusade. He wrote, "No one can deny the noble position of the peoples and governments of France, which is Catholic, Germany, which is Protestant and Russia, which is Orthodox against the tyrannical American war. Nor can we, Arabs and Muslims, forget that the strongest statement against the war was declared by the Roman Catholic Fathers and Bishops. It described Bush's motivations as unethical. Nor can we forget that the greatest demonstration ever organized against the war was in Britain. ... The Anglican Church supported the anti-war efforts, something that put the Labor British Government, and its Prime Minister in a dangerous impasse."¹⁶³ Here, like in civil jihad, anti-war courtyard, and anti-globalization campaign resistance need and lead to more openness.

In their book *The Postmodern Turn* Best and Kellner shed light on the Foucauldian resistance through micro-politics showing how such a quality is unnecessarily conflicting with a discourse of openness. They wrote, "power is everywhere, not only in the factories, but in schools, prisons, hospitals, and all other institutions. This insight is depressing, since it

acknowledges that power saturates all social spaces and relations, and exhilarating, because it allows for and demands new forms of struggle. Hence, multiple forms of resistance open up along every line of identity that is controlled or normalized."¹⁶⁴ The new forms of resistance can be searching for new styles of life as different as possible from each other (Foucault), a proliferation of language games in agonistic opposition to one another (Lyotard) or new descriptions of reality that pluralize the voices in the social conversation (Rorty). Besides, this resistance could be through celebrating the new social movements as multiple sources of radical change that can bring about radical democracy (Laclau and Mouffe).¹⁶⁵ Reaching out to new social movements' groups and discourses through a meshing discourse of openness is a strategy of resistance. Besides, searching for the power in its hideouts and attacking it in the private sphere through a discourse of openness that celebrates plurality, relativism and new styles of life is also a strategy of resistance. From this angle we can view an advocacy of the Iraqi environment or the Arab minorities in Israel. From the same angle we can still view the replies of the psychological consultants of IOL, as means to provide new ways of recognizing reality and treating it. Best and Kellner wrote, "It is culture that molds the sensibilities, and thus, a radical culture politics attempts to undo the enculturation of the dominant culture by providing new ways of seeing, feeling, thinking, talking, and being."¹⁶⁶ Resistance and struggle are not seen in a global or macro frameworks. They should be managed in all spheres of life. "With postmodern politics, every sphere of social life becomes subject to questioning and contestation, and the sites of struggle multiply. With the pluralistic approach, power is more vulnerable to attack, and hence Foucault emphasizes the contingency and frailty of power relations."¹⁶⁷

Compromise:

In this third kind of relationships the openness/resistance duality is completely obliterated so that a certain piece of knowledge or a certain action is signified as both resistance and openness in the same time, or rather as neither of them, as a new whole that compromises the two of them. Bauman warning from the backfire of neo-liberal discourse wrote, "The joint income of disparate but converging assaults on the defensive lines is the

'absolute rule of flexibility' aimed at the 'precarization', and thus disablement, of people placed at the potential bridgeheads of resistance. The deepest socio-psychological impact of flexibility consists in making precarious the position of those affected and keeping it precarious."¹⁶⁸ Far from resistance a strategy of compromise could be created not to encounter the rule of flexibility, but to neutralize its psychological impact of precarization. It is not a common strategy, but when it exists it works very successfully. I argue that the discourse of the preacher Amr Khaled is an example of this strategy. Amr is creating a whole that could be read either way. Attending his lessons or buying his CDs is both an act of resistance and an achievement of openness. Logging on IOL website is the same, an act of resistance and achievement of openness. You see Islam existing, great and glorious, whether on Satellite channels or on Internet, the two means of openness. You do not want to be open; you *are* open, reaching out to every corner on the Earth. Both logging on IOL and Amr Khaled sell you out life styles, which are a strategy of micro-resistance and a way to co-opt with openness. They count on your individuality, your own logging on, reading and/or affection, but they also create to you the community you need, a new media-based community that needs no commitment from your side –apart from frequently consuming it. There is no organization to be obeyed or disobeyed. You need only to run the CD, watch the TV or click the specific URL. Bauman wrote that "The state of precariousness, Bourdieu observes, 'renders all the future uncertain, and so forbids all rational anticipation – and in particular disallows that minimum of hope in the future which one needs to rebel, and especially to rebel collectively, against even the least tolerable present.'"¹⁶⁹ Amr Khaled, on the other hand, substitutes such a future with a prosperous promising metaphysical future that people can work for it individually right now, while flowing swiftly with all rules of flexibility. The psychological impact of an awesome rule of flexibility can be overcome by creating some fixed points, gravity centers that position your body in the right direction to balance you while you are flowing smoothly through a discourse of openness, pieces of history, stories that happened fourteen centuries ago, pieces of sacred text promising you of a better future and encouraging you to work i.e. to flow.

This compromise, once reached, is usually successful. It makes Islamists happier. Just check the thousands of attendants or the millions of hitters to know how much you are open and to be sure that the only resistance you need is to resist your self, your desires, your obsessions. You only need a spiritual jihad against your greed and your spiritual weakness. If the army of the U.S. is bombarding Iraq, Amr will talk to you from London through Iqra Satellite Channel every morning, in a program called "Until They Change Themselves". Until you change yourself, by being more pious, he will ask you to e-mail George Bush and Tony Blair, but be sure that nothing will really happen until you change yourself and come up with a pure heart. The happy compromise had a very sad side effect; there is no more resistance or openness. Commenting on Foucault, Lyotard and Rorty's micropolitics, Best and Kellner wrote, "This form of postmodern politics, consequently, is but a refurbished liberal reformism that fails to break with the logic of bourgeois individualism and subverts attempts to construct bold visions of a new reality to be shaped by a radical alliance politics."¹⁷⁰ Best and Kellner, however, are not against micropolitics per se. They only want to relate them to a clear political and economic context. They, six pages later wrote, "While today we need the expansion of localized cultural practices, they attain their real significance only within *the struggle for the transformation of a society as a whole*. Without this systemic emphasis, cultural politics and identity politics remain confined to the margins of society and are in danger of degenerating into narcissism, hedonism, aestheticism, or personal therapy, where they pose no danger and are immediately co-opted by the culture industries. In such cases, *the political is merely the personal*, and the original intentions of the 1960s goal of broadening the political field are inverted and perverted. Just as economics and political demands have their referent in subjectivity and everyday life, so these cultural and existential issues find their ultimate meaning in the demand for a new society and mode of production."¹⁷¹ This is, unfortunately, not the case with compromise, where action is perfectly concealed in a private sphere. In this compromise there is no need to reach out to global civil society, to mesh with global discourses of human rights or environmentalism, or to think of issues like social justice. There is neither openness nor resistance; you are open enough and it is yourself that would be resisted. I want to come once again to Hatem whom I mentioned

in Chapter II when I asked him to give me some signs of what he thought is an impending victory. Hatem enlisted the many religious lessons conducted at homes, the increasing number of actresses who decided to quit acting, the increasing number of females wearing scarf, the many people who were fasting before Al Ad'ha, and the many people who frequent the mosques to pray the five daily prayers. Democracy, freedom of press, getting rid of corruption, accountability, transparency, good education, successful health insurance system, or social justice was not one of his words.

3- Subjectivity

Introduction

Though there is a phenomenological element in Foucault's work he rejects the idea of an autonomous, meaning-giving subject.¹⁷² Foucault, himself, concluded his objective by saying, "The goal of my work during the last twenty years has not been to analyze the phenomenon of power, nor to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis. My objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects."¹⁷³ In *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow concluded three modes of objectification of the subject, dividing practices, scientific classification and subjectification. Through dividing practices, a process of social objectification and categorization, human beings are given both a social and a personal identity. "Essentially dividing practices are modes of manipulation that combine the mediation of a science (or pseudo-science) and the practice of exclusion."¹⁷⁴ "The second mode for turning human beings into objectified subjects is related to, but independent from, the first. ... It arises from the modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of sciences" like linguistics, economics and biology.¹⁷⁵ The third mode, subjectification, is quite different than the previous two modes. "It concerns the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject. ... Foucault looks at those processes of self-formation in which the person is active."¹⁷⁶ Subject, therefore, is made through the discourse. "Anyone deploying a discourse must position themselves *as if* they were the subject of the

discourse."¹⁷⁷ Besides, the person reconstructs his feelings, thinking and even his body through the discourse. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault wrote, "It is no longer a question simply of saying what was done – the sexual act – and how it was done; but of reconstructing, in and around the act, the thoughts that recapitulated it, the obsessions that accompanied it, the images, desires, modulations, and quality of the pleasure that animated it."¹⁷⁸ In my work I found four main attributes of the subject, through which describe (or prescribe) how an Islamist is or must be. Each one of these four attributes leads to the next one and works in harmony with the rest of them. Far from being four different attributes they are, in fact, related and integrated.

Open

This is, by far, the most frequently stressed attribute of Islamists' subjectivity. It concludes all other attributes. It is the waving flag that an Islamist carries as a sign of his approval in this time Islamism. I would, once again, recite Best and Kellner saying, "These identities revolve around a "subject position," a key identity marker defined by one's gender, race, class, sexual preference, and so on and through which an individual is made subordinate to the dominant culture."¹⁷⁹ Openness, a cultural preference, is that marker of Islamists' identity. When I asked my interviewees how would they portray this open person they frequently tended to define him/her negatively. S/he is not close, has no problems (psychological problems that obstructs his/her communications). Sometimes they assert his/her listening quality. S/he is also someone who knows many people from different walks of life. S/he has friends, many of them, from non-Islamic circles. If those friends are secular, left, non-Muslim and especially non-Arab it would be more preferred. Islamists think their *old* way of conducting Islamic activism made them isolated from the world around. An open person will help solving this problem. An open subject is someone who speaks English, or at least embeds some English words while talking. His/her language *is not* the old Islamists' language, one, which is enmeshed with traditional Islamic expressions rooted in Quran and/or Sunnah. S/he uses words rooted in different spaces, something that indicates his/her

openness. S/he uses words rooted in English language, IT, youth's slang, left's discourses and business. S/he uses texts from Quran and/or Sunnah, but s/he uses them differently. S/he does not try to take a special pose that reflects an image of someone who spent the last night reading old voluminous books to instruct people next morning. S/he does not use them as if s/he is giving a statement. It is just regular talk flowing freely and harmoniously with other texts and words. S/he moves around the world either by physical traveling or cyber navigation.

Issandr El Amrani with additional reporting by Tjitske Holtrop wrote in Cairo Times an article called "A sheikh for modern living: Could Amr Khaled's message of guiltless consumption be the secret to his popularity?" In this article they wrote, "For many of his fans, that is exactly what makes him such an appealing and persuasive figure. Instead of dealing with an often harsh, haughty and older figure, Khaled presents a kind and accommodating type of preaching that, among orthodox preachers, is virtually non-existent. Khaled does not have a prayer bruise, does not sport a beard—just a trim moustache—and does not wear the traditional clothes of popular preachers. He dresses casually in modest suits or sports jackets that make him look very much like the accountant he once was. His voice, somewhat nasal and grating, is cajoling and he rarely raises it (and when he does, his listeners joke, it screeches rather than threatens). And he speaks in the vernacular, peppered with colloquial expressions, eschewing the overly formal tones of classical Arabic."¹⁸⁰ One is open not as much by what s/he says as it by *how* does s/he say it. It is the style, not necessarily the content. moreover, one is open according to his/her style of consumption. In an Islamic company there are three employees working together in the same department and in the same office. They are in the same age and all of them graduated from the same college, Dar El Uloom, in which they studied Sharia, Arabic Language and literature and Islamic history. I have known them for long years and see them, in intellectual terms, as almost similar. Nonetheless, other employees in the company used to describe only one of them, Atef, as open, while denying this attribute to the other two. What makes Atef different is his consumption style. Atef reads poetry books, and likes Al Hayat Newspaper. He has a mobile

phone and takes care of his looking. He dresses in sport clothes and prefers Nescafe in the morning. If you want something on the Internet, you better ask Atef to find it for you. Even though it is not his specialty Atef can use Flash Program to design an animation card or to make an exciting presentation. Atef, in his consumption, can mix with many people of different attitudes, but consuming the same commodities, without being distinguished. That makes him open!

Innovator

Innovator, re-newer, and creative are attributes of the new Islamists' subjectivity. S/he should be someone with something new to show up to his/her audience every time they meet him/her. Unlike *thabat*/stability that was very much celebrated by old Islamists, change is the desired character nowadays. The *thabet*/stable is someone whom you meet over years but always find him/her the same. S/he is original, authentic, stands for all pressures and keeps up with his/her ideals and views. The innovator, on the other hand, is someone who surprises you every time you meet him/her. S/he does not only keep pace with the changing reality, but also becomes the change of it; s/he makes the change of reality. I asked Mamduh what does he work now as he has been changing his jobs continuously. He proudly answered, "You know I am not stereotyped." His friends told me that they admire his creativity. He worked as a veterinary, medical representative, a private teacher of mathematics in English, and a teacher of biology in an English school. He authored a medical dictionary and headed a private company for children education. Through this company he organized many summer activities to the students in their vacation. Yosef said, "We need more people like him. There are a lot of mean people, but Mamduh is the one we need." The innovator is usually a young person. Old persons are stigmatized as conservatives who want to keep things as they used to be. Suzan said, "All the problems come from the old generation, people like the General Guide and those around him. They live in their history, stuck to it, and do not want to move or let anyone move." Hatem thought Shikh Khaled El Gindy, Shikh Safwat and Amr Khaled

make a sign of progress because "They are all young!" they talk to people in a *new* way. For him, their being young is a proof that Islamists are successful.

In *The Making and Unmaking of Strangers* Bauman wrote, "Like everything else, the self-image splits into a collection of snapshots, each having to conjure up, carry and express its own meaning, more often than not without reference to other snapshots. Instead of constructing one's identity, gradually and patiently, as one builds a house – through the slow accretion of ceilings, floors, rooms, connecting passages – a series of 'new beginnings', experimenting with instantly assembled yet easily dismantled shapes, painted one over the other; a *palimpsest identity*. This is the kind of identity which fits the world in which the art of forgetting is an asset no less, if no more, important than the art of memorizing."¹⁸¹ The postmodern subject is, Halls writes, "conceptualized as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity."¹⁸² The structure of the subject is always open for change and modifications. Said told me rhetorically that the only thing he believes is stable is his faith in Allah. Otherwise everything is changing, exactly like himself. He said, "Now I am more conscious of this change and more tolerating to it. I think it is the "normal" thing. I am still a member of MBG. But I can quit any moment. I do not think I should ever have a lifetime commitment, except to Allah ... (laugh) and my wife of course." Late modern societies, Laclau argues, "are characterized by "difference"; they are cut through by different social divisions and social antagonisms which produce a variety of different "subject positions" – i.e. identities – for individuals. If such societies hold together at all, it is not because they are unified, but because their different elements and identities can, under certain circumstances, be articulated together. But this articulation is always partial: the structure of identities remains open. Without this, Laclau argues, there would be no history."¹⁸³ Bauman's rule of flexibility that "aimed at the 'precarization', and thus disablement, of people placed at the potential bridgeheads of resistance" is encountered by a flexible subject, someone who can resist by having the ability to change him/herself. That is not to say "old" subjects were fixed or stable. Hall wrote, "The main focus of this section is conceptual. It is concerned with *changing conceptions* of the human subject as a discursive figure, whose unified form and rational

identity, I shall argue, were presupposed by, and essential to, both the discourses of modern thought and the processes which shaped modernity."¹⁸⁴ The only difference is that people are conscious of and relatively tolerating this continuous change.

Independent

The independent is someone who, though might be a member in MBG is maintaining characters that make him/her distinct and distinguished. He is not like the others. He makes him/herself. S/he is known of his/her individual initiatives. S/he has a specific and determined role, which s/he plays as an Islamist. His/her role does not depend too much on being affiliated to a group. S/he can even change his/her affiliations according to what s/he sees at a certain moment. When s/he makes something through the group s/he makes it because s/he wants to make it and s/he always makes it differently, in his/her own way. S/he could have a private project or private business. S/he is different. His/her feelings, identity and ideas are frequently unique. The independent is someone with a style indicative to only him/herself.

When I asked Mahmud to give me a list of the attributes an Islamist should have to be successful he objected the question. "I am not accepting this idea of having a list of characters so that everyone in the group should observe. This is one of the worst things in MBG; they want everyone to fit in a one mold. I want to be myself, and if this does not fit with their views so be it!" He said. Pierre Bourdieu has recently defined the neo-liberal theories and practices as "a programme to destroy the collective structures capable of resisting the logic of the 'pure market'."¹⁸⁵ Bauman reminds us with Thatcher's declaration. "There is no such thing as society", went Margaret Thatcher's ill-famed declaration of the neo-liberal creed. There are, she said, men and women as individuals, and there are families."¹⁸⁶ Bauman, nevertheless, goes on to argue that neo-liberalism dissolves even the family.

More important for the independent is that s/he makes himself. I am what I manage to make of myself, Bauman wrote.¹⁸⁷ Hassan asserted that his personal role is the important thing. He added, "Every one according to his uniqueness finds his own special role. Everyone should have his initiative." Said was more frank. Talking about his Islamic role he said, "The most important thing for me is to get a Ph.D. Then comes my family. If there would be some time in the future it would be fine to promote some intellectual interests." Whether Hassan or Said did not mean to do what he is doing nowadays. They tried different roles and different projects. They however have always been searching for a distinct role that makes them different and independent. Bauman wrote, "Not only does the drudgery of identity-construction look limitless and never likely to end, but it must now entail, as a crucial building norm, the product's capacity for self-effacement or the builder's capacity for recycling it into something other than originally intended."¹⁸⁸ What makes the subject ceaselessly search for new positions to make him/herself independent and distinguished is the plethora of choices all around him/her. S/he has to choose among many alternatives that keep changing all the time. It is like the countless tones offered to mobile phones users. There are always a plenty of them and you keep changing your tone to keep your mobile ring/identity distinguished from anyone else. Besides, the two standards, usefulness and un-prohibited-ness made the alternatives numerous (and, unfortunately, the choice difficult.)

Rich

I hesitated to consider this attribute the first time I faced it. I thought it is only a personal thing. Nonetheless, going on in my interviews the notion became too pursuing to be neglected. Lotfi, when I asked him what are your plans for the future, said, "I want to be something, an influencing human being ... effective. When I say I made something, this something, its existence, refers to me, to my work. I want to have money, a lot of money, eye-catching, conspicuous money. ... I want to be not frustrated ... a man of favor for every one around me ... my brothers and sisters ... my colleagues ... Whenever I will have money I will have power, and especially the manifestations of power ... the apartment, the car and the

likes. A glance to this stuff should be enough to know that I am wealthy and powerful" Yosef, who has been known for his over-asceticism, said, "I want to be like Talaat Harb. He was a man who owned the wealth and the science and made them work together for the benefit of Egypt. People tell me I have to change my small humble car. They are right. I want my colleagues in the university to see that I am rich so that they get encouraged and invest their time and experience in developing software programs through the private sector." Adel relied on a more historical figure. He said, "I want to be like Othman Ibn Affan or Abdel Rahman Ibn Ouf. They were two wealthy companions (of the Prophet) to whom I do not remember any remarkable political role (Othman was the third Caliph). Their importance comes from their socio-financial role. They used the financial influence to make socio-economic reform. I want to be a big businessman with a huge financial wealth. I will influence and reform the society through this wealth, through this status." Said was not answering a question of mine; he was advising me. Said felt sorry for me that, after all these years, I still have no car, no wealth and dress modestly. I explained that I spend my money on education. I have to save money for AUC. He said, "Knowledge is good. But people should know you are powerful in your knowledge. Do you think they will listen to you because you read such and such? You should have the signs of power, your car, your looking and your credit. You must have a Ph.D. even if you will not learn something new from it. People listen only to the powerful. There is a brother who advised me that the most important thing is your job and your income. After this comes any other thing."

For an Islamist to be open, innovator or independent s/he must be rich. Only the rich can consume like open subjects, can travel, speak English, stay for long hours on Internet, frequent the malls and dress like other people to whom they will be open. You can not withstand an ever-changing reality, with its merciless rule of flexibility, unless you are wealthy "enough", if there is such thing as enough at all. Rich Islamists can move safely from one job to another, can create new work for themselves and can decide freely about what they want and what they do not want to be. Money, and more important its manifestations and signs, open all the gates wide for the Islamist who wants to be or do something. This is not funny.

Lotfi, while talking to me, wept that he can not be that rich. I have known Lotfi for long years. He is an engineer, married and having three kids. He lives in a relatively good place and works in a governmental institution. His monthly salary, unlike most of those who work in governmental institution, is fairly good. By good I mean it is enough to lead a good living and to cover the education of the kids and spend some money for buying an air-conditioner and going to Alexandria for two weeks every year. Lotfi, himself, used to be happy and satisfied with his status. He used to say that he is lucky that he is secured financially and need to work for only few hours in one job. He thought he has enough time to pursue his Islamic activities and increase his readings. He did not want to try migrating to a gulf country to work and increase his income. Lotfi's two closest friends migrated to two gulf countries. One of them, before traveling, said, "It will be only two years, just to cover my debts and perhaps buy a car. Then I will come soon." That happened ten years ago and he is still working there to have "enough" money. The other friend came back home a few years ago. After some months of exploring the Egyptian market he started up his own business and it is working. Lotfi was helping him, as a friend, to start his work. Once the new business is working Lotfi was gently pushed aside. It hurt him, though he rarely talks with me about it. The work of MBG is not satisfying him at all. He now thinks it is a waste of time and that the good Islamic work is to start his business up. He approached his brother, who worked in a gulf country for many years, to share him in business. The brother would provide the capital and Lotfi would manage the project. Lotfi's brother after thinking it over decided to retreat. Last time I met with Lotfi he has just finished renewing his place, new painting, and new ceramics... He told me that he wants his brothers and sisters and his friends when they visit him know that he is well doing. Prestige opens the doors of business and vice versa, he commented. Adel was working in an Islamic company for 1000 US Dollars a month. In Egypt this is quite enough. He, however, decided to quit his job for another one for 2000 US Dollars. The new company is not Islamic, but I need the money to be a good Islamist, he explained. Mahmud complained that he is not satisfied of his work in an Islamic company. He wants to move, to change his career, to start something new that he has not known it. He added, "But how can I do this if I do not have money enough to think of myself and risk a few months without a

job?" Jokingly he answered my question where do you want to go when you say I want to go. He said, "any place, any company, any country ... any planet!"

Those Islamists, though sharing the suffering of the economic recess with other Egyptians, are still doing well (in my estimation). They have their jobs; they have their places and they can cover the expenses (normal expenses from my view) of their families. Many of them have cars and almost all of them have mobile phones (in fact Said has two.) Nevertheless, they believe what they have is not enough. Poverty, after all, is a social construction that can be invented. Perhaps they are not *poor* but certainly they are *needy*. Islamic activism, whether as openness or resistance, needs money, especially because it is now an increasingly individual task, not something carried on by a mighty group like MBG. Their success, in a discourse of openness, counts too much on social recognition of Islamists as successful. The social standards of success, they think, is translated into signs and manifestations of consumption, the consumption of certain commodities, cars, mobile phones, tourism, Internet, as well as concepts, knowledge, language and specific life styles. All of them need money or a product of having money. Amazingly enough, to me, is that they do not speak about social justice or re-distribution as two important Islamic objectives. Their claim is that they should be rich to be good Islamists and never do they put it the other way round; good Islamists are those who work for social justice and redistribution.

4- Power System

The practice of Islamists' discourse is regulated by a system of power. While exploring this power system I am, by no means, saying explicitly or implicitly that Islamists' discourse is rationally produced and manufactured by conscious subjects who are in positions of control in this power system. This power system is composed of many institutions but it is not the "institution" that matters in terms of power. Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish* wrote, "'Discipline" may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques,

procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a "physics" or an "anatomy" of power, a technology. And it may be taken over either by "specialized" institutions ... or by institutions that use it as an essential instrument for a particular end ... or by preexisting authorities that find in it a means of reinforcing or reorganizing their internal mechanisms of power ... or by apparatuses that have made discipline their principle of internal functioning ... or finally by state apparatuses whose major, if not exclusive, function is to assure that discipline reigns over society as a whole."¹⁸⁹

The system of power, which is maintaining and regulating Islamists' discourse comprises newly created institutions as websites, multimedia companies, magazines, studies centers, NGOs, schools, banks, publishing houses and business companies, founded by individual initiatives. These institutions have gradually evolved over the last fifteen years. Active members frustrated by the movement's failure turned to their society to form their economically independent institutions. This independence, however, is achieved through time. Most of these institutions and organizations in their beginnings were counting on MBG as a human and financial resource. MBG internal relations were *invested* to create new independent business and activism. When I asked Adel if MBG would have a role to play in the future he explicitly said, "There is only the capacity to benefit from its decent and active members as good employees and workers. You could only use them as activists in social clubs, NGOs... They are not corrupted and have good ethical base so you can be more secure when making relations (business and social relations) with them. There is a common language that makes things easier. In fact I used to rely on MBG members as employees, suppliers and agents." This new trend to privatize and marketize MBG activism and relations was expressed by many of those whom I met. Lotfi, for instance, said, "Twenty years ago the Group was different. You attend activities, interact with other members and try to build effective activity around you. Now it is different. MBG did not develop. We must learn (in MBG) how to make business together, how to build good economic relations together. I thought to open a printing shop. I know many people (from MBG) belonging to all sectors of the society. I would print the books of Mohamed (someone who has a publishing house).

Salem said he would introduce me to many of his friends who own factories to print their flyers. I asked Salem, why do not we (MBG) become business? You attend the weekly meeting to learn something and pay for it! You pay for attending Amr Khaled's lessons. We should pay for those who volunteer to teach our children Quran and organize activities for them. The service will be much better and those who do it will devote more time for it." Salem, whom Lotfi mentioned, bought a building to start making business and he had to pay in installments. He could not pay the first due check. However, an Islamist who owns a school immediately paid it for him. Still Salem could not sell the flats of the building to pay the next checks. He decided to travel to a gulf country where he met with a group of "brothers" who bought all of them. After passing this experience he decided to do it once again and it was a second successful business. Finally he ended up having enough money to build a big building and make its first three floors a big shop. He became an agent to a giant factory that he sells its products in his three-floor shop.

The point I want to stress here is that these things are framed, by Islamists, as Islamic activism. Salem, Lotfi and the rest of those people are not considered as opportunists but as faithful Islamists who could carry on the mission many of MBG members are still not able to carry it, creating, through MBG, business companies and organizations that are economically independent from the Group and socio-economically successful. Salem once asked me, "Do you really think what I am doing is the right Islamic thing to be done now? I frequently feel that I am only doing business for my own sake. It is only our brothers who assure me that this is the thing to be done now. They tell me that this is what we want you to do. We want to build successful economic and social institutions in the society and that is exactly what you do." Others, however, are saved from this feeling of guilt. Yosef thinks he must be a second Talaat Harb and Adel wants to be like Othman Ibn Affan. They have no doubts at all that this is their mission to help their society and their brothers and sisters.

Far from being solitary projects and institutions they are really networked. Those activists search for each other in the market to reconnect on professional basis. The created

network itself is equally important. It is a socio-economic network of personal and professional relationships that connect Islamists' newly created institutions with individual activists, governmental institutions and persons, and other unnecessarily "Islamic" NGOs and business companies. Consciously Islamists try to make their new relations through this network professional ones. Ossama, who owns a printing office, told me that he had to file a case against a brother. He said, "He did not pay to me the due check in time. I consulted our brothers and all of them said that business is business. You treat him as a brother when you are inside the group. In the market your economic relations should be economically right." In IOL website they told me that they hired a female secretary who does not wear the scarf. She is the best one we interviewed, so we hired her; they said. On the other hand, Said complained to me that it was his non-MBG colleagues who helped him to make his presentation. His MBG colleagues did not. To explain this he said, "I guess they saw me as Said, the brother who asks them for a favor, not Said the doctor who is making a presentation." In other words, their relation had to be framed professionally so that they help him. Brotherhood relationship should exist in another sphere. Yosef, a university professor in faculty of engineering and owner of a software company, told me he could successfully develop and modify his MBG relations and his "Islamic project" to fit in this network. He said, "I made my Islamic mission, my work in the university and my company stranded in one thing. My Islamic mission is (in fact became) to develop software programs that support the Arabic text and help producing Islamic multimedia titles. Those who work in the R&D department in my company are in fact master and doctorate candidates, whose these are supervised by myself. I help them as their professor and their manager. Even in the university I teach the parts of the curriculum, which meet the same interests. The Prophet said, "My livelihood is made under my spear." I say (laugh) my livelihood is made under my pen ... or my science. My message to my professor colleagues is that they should not wait for the government. They have to move, to combine their science with business and go on. I hope I can only give them a good successful model that could be replicated." Yosef told me about a "story of success" of an Islamist colleague of him. He said, "You know Dr. Hamdy. He founded an NGO, through which he makes the youth to work with him in collecting donations

and building a hospital. It is only a one project of him. He encourages the youth to work for Egypt. But look to those armies (many MBG activists) whose work is only to campaign for a Parliament candidate!"

This network witnesses the very dynamic flow of action, money, information, activists and knowledge of Islamists' discourse. You need not to send your request upward to the central leadership so that it can, in its turn, consult a specific unit of action or sends orders to someone somewhere as in the past. People know each other and meet each other in the market. Their relations exist openly in the public. The people moving and working through this network are unnecessarily Islamists in the organizational sense. They are professionals. The end products as well are Islamic as long as they are *useful* and *un-prohibited*. If the workforce, the activists, the capital, the activities or the end products are exclusively Islamic (i.e. belonging to MBG members or orthodox discourse) that would mean Islamists have not succeeded to be *open*. If, on the other hand, their action and business were not successful that would mean Islamists could not *resist*. MBG will perhaps provide the initial workforce, the initial capital, the good business-partners, or the needed consumers. Nevertheless, as soon as possible this umbilical cord that holds the newly born institution to its mother must be severed. Gradually, then, the baby-institution should mature and be independent enough to walk alone in the path of openness. I asked Hatem what is the percentage of MBG members who frequent your clinic? He said, "In the beginning it was 100% (laugh). Now it is nearly 50% and decreasing. It decreases gradually and that is a good sign I think."

The newly created network is not exclusively national at all. It is embedded in and meshed with a global network of business and activism. IOL is raising fund and collecting donations from the Four Corners of the world. Its correspondents and the writers who send their articles to IOL office in Giza spread all over the world. Everyday the money flows from a bank in Qatar to IOL office in Egypt while the articles flow to an Islamic graphic and artwork company in Bahrain. Yosef's company, on the other hand, has agents and dealers in North America, Western Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. He started his business by a

small project financed by a small American Islamic company that wanted him to produce a multimedia CD for children. He has later contracted companies in Belgium, Canada and the US; none of them is an "Islamic" company. A Saudi businessman, who was financing a project in Yosef's company, met with the programmer responsible for this project in Egypt. Later he took that programmer to found together a software company in KSA. No offence, the new small company does its best to support Yosef's projects in KSA. Yes, business is business; but brotherhood is also brotherhood! A marketer from Yosef's company migrated to work in KSA. Once he heard his old company faces some financial problems he started to do his best to expedite some transactions in KSA for it. Jamal Badawi is a Muslim scholar working in U.S. His audiocassettes, in which he explains and teaches Islam, are produced on a one CD developed in RDI Egyptian company. Moreover, Islamic activists, through their NGOs and studies centers, attend UN conferences of population, development, habitat and women. They develop their discourses to meet global agenda objectives and also to contribute in making that agenda. Ossama El Kaffash, an Islamic activist and intellectual was the head of the drafting committee, which wrote the final non-governmental forum document of the Habitat Conference in Istanbul. Another Islamic activist is on the global board of United Religions Initiative, one of the greatest global interfaith dialogue organizations. Islamists' global motion is driven by and producing a discourse of openness and resistance. To make their movement smooth Islamists move not only as Islamists but also, and sometimes more importantly, as Egyptians and/or Third World activists.

This local/global networking process is not expediting MBG Islamic activism and discourse. It is rather re-structuring MBG and recreating its objectives and activism according to the new discourse. Islamists became less interested in domestic politics and more leaning to adopt objectives of socio-economic reform. MBG leadership is playing an increasingly less influential and more symbolic role as media representative, not action leadership. In their institutions Islamists over-emphasize their abduction to any political interest. RDI Company, after contracting Shikh Qaradawi to put his books, audiocassettes and videocassettes on CDs, decided to produce only his books of Fiqh and morals. Lotfi, when talking about his future

project to found a printing shop posed to assure me that he will never print any of the stuff of MBG, only books for known writers and flyers! IOL publishes many articles criticizing MBG and has insistently refused to change its policy. They are very careful not to be involved in MBG activities. They are also so careful to keep all their transactions clean and in public. They do their best to maintain their openness to the society and the whole world. A few businessmen, whom I met, decided clearly to lessen the number of the brothers and sisters working in their companies in favor of non-Islamist workers. They are honestly and consciously trying to avoid any clash, any possible clash, with the government, not as a short-term tactic but rather as a long-term strategy. They are not afraid to be assimilated. They feel they are coming back to their society, which they think they unnecessarily abducted for a long time. For them an old MBG does not expedite Islamic activism; it obstructs it. Imad, an Islamist who founded a research center, told me that MBG, the very idea of founding an organization to represent Islam and speaks in its name, is the very reason of the governmental animosity to Islamists. Had Islamists maintained their individual status, he thinks, a clash with the government would hardly happen. Rhetorically he concluded, "We put the government in a position to be, unfortunately for everyone, against Islam and Islamic activism." The new discourse is working through what Foucault called normalization. "By "normalization," Foucault means a system of finely gradated and measurable intervals in which individuals can be distributed around a norm—a norm which both organizes and is the result of this controlled distribution."¹⁹⁰ The *normal* action is the one you can make it in public with no fear from the government; it is the one that would be granted its recognition from society; and it is the one that would be market-regulated, in terms of its production and consumption. On the other hand, what is not normal is considered *anomaly*, in Foucault's words, to be isolated or corrected. An MBG internal committee to regulate children's activities in the summer, a committee to plan for work in professional syndicates, a weekly meeting to read one or two books, a secret night meeting to pray for half an hour and leave and an urgent meeting to discuss the problems of Muslims minorities in Europe are all considered anomalies.

One last point is that the membership of this network is not indeed *open*. Lucky persons can found their organizations or their companies. They can practice the new discourse and feel satisfied. They will be admired and praised for being what they are. They can speak happily and proudly like Yosef, or like Suzan who works in an Islamic website, Hatem who works in an Islamic private hospital, Hisham who works in an Islamic bank, Adel who works in a multimedia company or Hassan who manages an Islamic website. Those people feel financially secure (or relatively secure) and Islamically active and effective. Others, like Lotfi, who only dreams to found his printing shop and join the network of success, will have to keep dreaming and wishing. They feel, in fact they are, marginalized, looked at as excess to be trimmed, or at best as potential consumers. Those unhappy Islamists are the silent majority, or rather the muted majority. They are the losers and the failing. Like Hamed, who is finishing his Ph.D. in philosophy, they might be fired or pushed to resign to be substituted by "a media graduate who speaks English and surfs the Internet", in the words of the company owner. One day they may meet Karim to advise them. When I met Karim, who works in Qatar, he said, "I do not believe there is an economic problem in Egypt at all. During my visiting to Egypt this summer (four weeks) I met only with rich people who own lands and make wealth. All of them are our brothers. I believe the problem is in the mentality and way of thinking of the youth. They want the government to solve their problems while they are sticking to their desks in Cairo. They do not want to move and make their livelihood. Wealth is everywhere; it is the people who do not move to find it." Karim invests his savings in agribusiness. Before traveling to Qatar Karim used to stick to his desk in a governmental institution. He used to get a very small wage. He could not find anyway to increase his income so that he can marry and build his own life. Karim got finally the chance to work in Qatar through some MBG contacts.

Chapter IV

The Market

1- Commodification

Fredric Jameson thought postmodern culture logically corresponds to capitalism, though in its last stage. He rejected all the ideas about the postindustrial society and the end of class conflict. He simply stated that capitalism had three stages, market capitalism, monopoly capitalism and late capitalism. While market capitalism corresponds to the growth of industrial capital in the national market, that of monopoly capitalism refers to the age of imperialism where the European nation-states developed international markets. The latest stage of capitalism, which post-modern culture is but its result, is that of multinational corporations with global markets and mass consumption.¹⁹¹ Jameson does not see anything new regarding this postmodernity. He asks, "Does it imply any more fundamental change or break than the periodic style –and fashion- changes determined by an older high modernist imperative of stylistic innovation?"¹⁹² Moreover, using classic Marxism he also writes, "This whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death and horror."¹⁹³

Late capitalism, Jameson argues, involves a prodigious expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas. Culture itself has been commodified and consumed. Jameson here sees culture not as a veil hiding the real economic relations but a commodity in itself. He wrote, "Here, images, styles and representations are not the promotional accessories to economic products, they are the products themselves."¹⁹⁴ He also emphasized that, "What

has happened is that aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally, the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods (from clothing to airplanes), at ever greater rates of turnover, now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation.¹⁹⁵ Post modernist culture, Jameson is still arguing, being commodified, is judged in terms of what gives immediate pleasure and makes money. In fact, Jameson, strictly adhering to a Marxian analysis, thought the changes in economic structure have always been reflected in cultural changes. In this way realist culture is a reflection of market capitalism as modernist culture is a reflection of monopoly capitalism and postmodern culture of multinational capitalism.¹⁹⁶

Zygmunt Bauman has also linked postmodern culture with economy. He wrote, "I was looking for a metaphor, which could ease the way leading to a new paradigm: one that could capture precisely the restlessness, open-endedness, endemic under-determination and unpredictability of cultural labours. Having considered and rejected several possibilities, I have chosen the model of consumer co-operative."¹⁹⁷ Clarifying his idea he drew back on the original idea of Co-op. He wrote, "I go back to the ideal model akin to the one, which inspired the spiritual fathers of the Society of Equitable Pioneers when they opened in 1844 their first shop at Toad Lane in Rochdale. It is worth recalling that the shop, meant to be managed by the same people who used it, was invented as a protest (and a remedy against) the logic of overpowering and soulless regimentation, known only too well from the experience of factory life, which was the pioneers' way of earning their daily bread. That freedom, of which they had been dispossessed in their role of producers, the pioneers wished to repossess in their roles of consumers."¹⁹⁸ And to correlate culture and consumer co-operative he wrote, "Things that happen inside the ideal consumer co-operative are [like culture] neither managed nor random; uncoordinated moves meet each other and become tied up in various parts of the overall setting, only to cut themselves free again from all previously bound knots. Spontaneity here does not exclude, but, on the contrary, demands an organized and purposeful action, yet such action is not meant to tame, but to invigorate spontaneity of initiative."¹⁹⁹

Mike Featherstone in his book *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* stated that "To use the term 'consumer culture' is to emphasize that the world of goods and their principles of structuration are central to the understanding of contemporary society. This involves a dual focus: firstly, on the cultural dimension of economy, the symbolization and use of material goods as 'communicators' not just utilities; and secondly, on the economy of cultural goods, the market principles of supply, demand, capital accumulation, competition and monopolization which operate *within* the sphere of lifestyles, cultural goods and commodities."²⁰⁰ In this chapter I am using the metaphor of market, with all its mechanisms of production, consumption and competition, to dually focus on the cultural dimension of economy of certain goods that are considered "Islamic", and especially Islamic in the sense of the new discourse; how regular schools, education, books, hospitals and polyclinics, CDs, supermarkets and take-away restaurants are consumed as cultural signs of the new Islamic discourse. I will also focus on the economy of cultural goods. That includes both Islamic cultural goods, like CDs, books, TV programs and public and private lessons, and also certain concepts, knowledge and lifestyles. To do this, however, is neither to imply a reductionist classic Marxian view looking at culture as mere reflection of independent economy, nor to incline to a conspiratorial explanation of the production process of this discourse. Bauman, by using the metaphor of co-op alluded to the relative autonomy of culture. The co-op for him is an analogue explaining the internal processes of the culture. Even Jameson who was bolder in stressing the centrality of capitalism pointed to the death of the superstructure/infrastructure paradigm as economy has completely conquered the culture "to the point at which everything in our social life ... can be said to have become 'cultural'"²⁰¹

2- Consumption

Consumption as Activism

In my interview with Murad, a 33 year-old typist living with his wife, two children and the family of his brother in a small home in a slum south Cairo, he told me how does he reach October City every week to attend the religious lesson of the young preacher Amr Khaled. He said, "In *El-ezba* (a name given to some Cairene slums) we used to rent a bus to go together, all brothers and sisters. Each one pays three pounds. It is good; at least we meet at least once a week. During the way forth and back to the Mosque we chant many Islamic songs. The young boys whom I teach Quran also join us. They try to save the three pounds to have the trip with us." For Murad, it is not the content of the lesson as much as it is the trip that matters: the gathering of the brothers and sisters, the chanting and the very experience of joining the larger group at the Mosque. In his talking with me he emphasized two points; the difficulty of Islamic public work nowadays because of the governmental restrictions and the impossibility of defeating Islam. He said, "Whatever they make to obstruct *Dawa* Allah will make their doing go in vain. You see; hundreds of cars are all around the Mosque. Only look to the thousands filling the Mosque and crowding on the stairs and around the streets. They prevented him from conducting his lesson in Cairo. He went to October City, to a larger mosque and greater space to receive the attendees. His lessons spread all over the world through audiocassettes, videotapes, satellite channels and Internet."

In his book *Genealogies of Religion*, Talal Asad traced the definition of "ritual" in subsequent editions of *Encyclopedia Britannica*. He showed the shift from a definition stressing the script to ones stressing the practice. Two fundamental changes Asad emphasized: the repetitive and the symbolizing character of ritual. He wrote, "The routine, repetitive character of ritual is firmly linked in the 1910 entry to psychological and sociological functions. ... But given its essentially symbolic character, ritual is not confined to religion. The

concept presented in 1910 allows that symbolic action is an integral part of ordinary life because it is essential to any system of interlocking social roles, and therefore also to the social structure as a whole."²⁰² Murad's weekly trip forth and back to the Mosque should be seen as ritual, a rite of survival! Before globalization and its cultural homogeneity, and before the government and its political oppression, we could survive. Our survival is quite evident out there in the public sphere, both in its physical dimension, the big Mosque and the crowded streets around it, and in the media, the audiocassettes, videotapes, satellite channels and Internet.

Besides attending the weekly lessons, there is a variety of what I call "rites of survival", acts that are conducted repetitively, as a signifying not a merely practical behavior and which maintain social function. This is the way I would see frequenting daily a certain Islamic website, joining an e-mail list and checking routinely its messages and conducting its discussions, listening to Islamic songs played as .mp3 files while sitting at the personal computer or participating in a daily silent walk with a group of young Islamists as a part of a Preparing-a-Martyr-Program. These and similar activities are conducted ritually to prove, maintain or even generate the survival. The primary focus is not the content, but rather the way this content is conducted. The rites of survival still reveal a need to survive, to survive the failure I elaborated on in Chapter I. H.nabil sent a message to the Dialogue Forum of IOL titled "Confronting the Jews". In his message he wrote urging the visitors of the site to join him, "Come to start our first step of Jihad from here! Come to show to the whole world that we have something to say; that we have something to do! (Come) to prove to the Jews, before others, that we are still alive, still remembering all our victories over them; that we still know that we hate them and that they hate us; that we still have much and much to confront them!"²⁰³ His/her words that call to "peaceful Jihad", as s/he later called it, reveal the deep desire to survive and/or to prove this survival. His/her message got many replies; all of them, but two, displayed the same tone. The two exceptions were a message trying to draw a line between the Jews and the Zionists and a second message alluding to the lack of a concrete plan and proposing one to turn this enthusiasm into a change in reality.

In that exceptional message, in which the sender proposed a plan, Al Meleigy Taha, the sender, concluded his plan in four points. First, activists should be gathered in a Yahoo e-group and be recruited from Arabia2000 or Yamuslim, which are two giant Muslim e-groups. Second, activists should submit petitions against the Jews at Petition Online website. Third, activists should visit different websites and write petitions against the Jews in the Guest Books. Fourth, for a perfect organization, activists must divide responsibilities. He suggested that they would have three persons on charge of three main tasks, conducting petitions, monitoring enemy websites and supervising the e-mail.²⁰⁴ So far, they are talking about submitting petitions through Petition Online website and writing some messages in different Guest Books, things that are daily done by hundreds of thousands of Internet users. Why, then, it was taken that seriously and urgently; why was it celebrated that much? Talal Asad, once again, would propose an answer. Writing about "The Concept of Ritual" Asad emphasized "the transformation of rites from discipline to symbol, from practicing distinctive virtues (passions) to representing by means of practices"²⁰⁵. It is, again, not what they are doing, but what the way of doing that symbolizes that matters. It is not the end result, but the very method that matters. Asad draws on Worgul to show that "Christian ritual ... is essentially not instrumental but symbolic".²⁰⁶

The significance of Al Meleigy's message is not what his plan calls for, but the way he conducted his message. Al Meleigy used words like "electronic organizational work, militant (e) group, the famous electronic militant person, launching campaigns, electronic plan to attack, electronic fighting and Internet militancy". Why does he want to use such a language, such a style, to simply ask people to sign petitions online or leave some messages in different Guest books? Besides, why so many people did enthusiastically join the discussion after he and H.nabil had sent their messages? A one participant of this discussion had sent a message to another Islamic website called Hamasna that was proposed as a potential place for support. Soon someone from Hamasna joined the discussion and expressed their willing to join the war –the war to sign petitions online. How can we explain such a behavior but as a

signifying one that is "essentially not instrumental but symbolic"? These rites declare not only the survival of the existence of Islamists but also the survival of their viable organization, or at least their organizing capacity, and the survival of their activism.

In my way to Amr Khaled's lesson from Ramsis to October City I sat in the bus beside a young man. It happened that he was going to the lesson as well. All the way from Ramsis to the Mosque he was talking not about the teachings of Khaled but about Khaled himself. He told me that the Government tries to stop him but is fortunately failing because Allah defends him. He said that the CIA asked the Government to stop him but they both failed because Allah paved the way to him to spread his word through the satellite channels and Internet. He narrated some interesting stories about Amr Khaled. Once he was coming back home at night he found a group of youth making a circle, in which a young girl was dancing. Amr quietly parked his car and marched right to them. With his radiant face and kind smile he faced them and talked to them. He reminded them with Allah and how to conduct their life in a decent and religious way. The youth felt ashamed. Some of them wept and all of them were in the first lines in his lesson the next week. Once a girl attended his lesson out of curiosity but when she heard his voice and looked at his face she was so moved that she started crying out urging the women around her to find her a Hijab to put it on her head. She said she can not even live without Hijab for a couple of hours until she buys one. Stories were going on and on; all of them had a mythical sense. In fact, it is not the myth, in terms of the preacher and his unusual capabilities, the victory of Islam and the spread of the word of Allah, that makes people go regularly to the lesson, visit the website or observe the rest of rituals, but it is the rites, which create and maintain the myth. Asad quoting the 1910 entry of ritual in Encyclopedia Britannica wrote, "A valuable truth insisted on by the late W. Robertson Smith ... is that in primitive religion it is ritual that generates and sustains myth, and not the other way about."²⁰⁷ It is indeed this ritual consumption of e-mail lists, websites, songs, lessons... that creates and sustains the myth/truth of survival, activism and victory.

To further this point a one step forward I want to argue that it is not an exclusively consumption process, through which Islamists conduct their activism. Murad and his group produce the lesson, which indeed starts and ends at their neighborhood, as much as they consume it. The lesson they produce, using Toffler's word, is not exactly the one Amr produces in the Mosque; it starts much earlier and ends, if at all, much later. Fans of Amr Khaled who spread his audiocassettes and CDs "give" the lesson as much as Amr "gives" it. IOL visitors write, though infrequently, articles that are published in the site. They also generate and further the discussions in the Dialogue Forum. Their messages left in the Guest Book as well as the number of their hits on different pages and articles put down the guidelines for the editors. They launch e-lists and moderate them. Inspired by articles published at IOL about the electronic Jihad some visitors proposed the foundation of Anti-Nudity Brigades.²⁰⁸ Others furthered the idea into the foundation of Anti-Profligacy Party²⁰⁹. Soon "visitors" turned into "members" of this party. A Lebanese member whose nickname is Muqawem1/Resisting1 became the head of the party and the members started to exchange ideas and plans to implement their principles and exchange messages to check each other's resistance. When they suggested a Yahoo Group list the editor said it would be better that members found their list and assign their moderator as editors have in fact no time to do this extra job.

Islamic student activists in Alexandria University created a website called *Gama'a/University Online*²¹⁰. Through their site they encouraged visitors to dial random Iraqi telephone numbers and talk with people supporting them and transmitting a message of solidarity. In a second initiative they asked people to volunteer to be human shields against the American bombard of Iraq. 2321 volunteers signed their names and the site published the names in a few Arabic newspapers asking for donations to help them travel there. Through PalTalk website and cyber facilities of voice-chatting Islamic activists promoted many initiatives. Besides, spreading the word through serious and deep engagement in dialogues with people around the globe they made it possible for donors to directly contact Palestinian families under siege and help them by sending them money transferred through Palestinian

banks, an initiative they called Support with no Intermediary. They even founded the Popular Palestinian News Agency to spread break news about Intifada. Through this cyber news agency they interviewed many Palestinian National Authority officials and had reporters in different Palestinian cities and village who could spread news through their PCs, sometimes before the most professional news agencies. They conducted interviews with activists who became later "martyrs".

On March 27, 2003 IOL published an article "The Alternative Media: Resistance with Pen and Camera... a call for participation"²¹¹. In his article Magdy Said asked the visitors of IOL to take their cameras, and their pens to record news and comment on them and make their own independent media. He promised them that IOL, by hosting their material on Internet, will open the gates wide to their opinions and views to reach thousands and perhaps millions of people. Ten days later, on April 6, 2003, IOL published the first issue of She'ab, an editorial written by the visitors themselves²¹². She'ab is the Arabic abbreviation of Arab Network for Alternative Media. In this first issue the editorial published five articles, all of them but one, written by the visitors. The articles are Al Tahrir Intifada, Diaries of an Egyptian Protesters, Burning Sun and a Demonstration that Never Happened, In Ribat... The Million Demonstration and The Statements of the International Emergency Association. The Million-Demonstration article is in fact a collection of photos sent from Morocco about an anti American war demonstration.

In all these cases consumption and production are a one process with two aspects. I want to draw back, once again, on Bauman and his metaphor of the co-op. He wrote, "In a consumer co-operative, just as in culture, it is not easy to set apart in its emerging patterns of interaction the author from the actor. Each member is expected to author as much as to act. Authorship and actorship are two aspects of action (aspects present, though with differing intensity, in every human action) - not qualities of separate human categories."²¹³ In She'ab, like in University Online, the Anti Profligacy Party or the Popular Palestinian News

Agency, the line between the producer and the consumer, if at all, is much blurred; and the movement forth and back between them is very dynamic.

Postmodern Culture

Among other characters shallowness was especially and frequently highlighted as the stigma of postmodern culture. Relying on Jameson, George Ritzer wrote that, "postmodern society is characterized by superficiality and lack of depth. Its cultural products are satisfied with surface images and do not delve deeply into the underlying meanings."²¹⁴ In *Postmodernism and the Consumer Society* Jameson stressed that the 'liquefaction of signs and images' is also held to entail an effacement of the distinction between high and mass culture.²¹⁵

In *Al Ahram Weekly* Gihan Shahine investigating the "phenomenon" of preacher Amr Khaled interviewed a teen boy and quoted him as saying, "I've listened to many sheikhs, but there is no one like him. Amr makes you love religion, rather than fear it; he is so uncomplicated and moderate."²¹⁶ Khaled himself in another interview with *Al Ahram Weekly* said, "I think they (the large audience) are attracted mostly by the fact that the sermons are easy to understand."²¹⁷ He even emphasized the fact that he is not a scholar. He said, "I do not give fatwa (legal opinion)," he said, "only scholars with an in-depth understanding of law are allowed to do that."²¹⁸ In this article the journalist wrote, "If people understood the true status of women in Islam, society would never treat women as second-class citizens," Khaled told the *Weekly*. "Women, in my view, are even more than half the population. They represent the entire nation because they are the ones who raise the other half of the nation, i.e. the male citizens." His two-hour sermon on the 'status of women in Islam' broadcast on Orbit TV has boosted Khaled's popularity among women audiences in the Arab world. In the taped recording, Khaled explained that women were the first to adopt the Islamic religion and that the first martyr to die in jihad (struggle) was also a woman.²¹⁹

Khaled needed neither to draw on sociological approaches to carefully analyze the status of women and their serious socioeconomic, political or cultural problems nor to rely on traditional (or reform) exegesis of Quran and/or explanation of Hadith to have a deep view grounded in the Islamic scholarship. All what he needed is simply to tell women that they "represent the entire nation because they are the ones who raise the other half of the nation, i.e. the male citizens." In terms of popularity the one who could be compared with Amr Khaled in the nineteen seventies and eighties is certainly Shikh Sha'arawi. Unlike Khaled Sha'arawi was an Azhari scholar with traditional Islamic education. In his sermons Sha'arawi used to explain the Quran, verse by verse and chapter by chapter until he finished it.

I asked the manager of the marketing department of the multimedia company that produces the CDs of both Khaled and Sha'arawi about the sales of both of them and the attitudes and characters of the customers. He assured me two main points. First, the younger generation tends to buy Khaled's CDs. Second, from their market studies they discovered that customers buy Sha'arawi CDs to have a complete voice-exegesis of Quran at home, but they rarely display it. On the other hand, those who buy Amr's CDs display it in the background while working at their computers. They simply listen to him while working or surfing the Internet. Their demand from the designing department was simple and straightforward; get all these audiocassettes on a one CD, make a list of them and test the final product. The authoring department proposed classifying the material objectively, tracing the narrated Hadith and making the right reference to the recited verses, correcting the Hadith that was narrated wrongly and providing a search engine to the CD. All of their proposal was immediately denied. It would only be a waste of time and money. The customers want only to listen to him and the proposed functions will never be used.

Paradoxically the marketing department is always not satisfied with the many functions of Sha'arawi's CD. It believes they are not enough. In the CD you can read the text of Quran, listen to its recitation (*tarteel*), check the meanings of the words and the circumstances during which the verses were revealed (*asbab nozou*) and even know the

grammar of each word. The sermons were carefully divided into small pieces so that the user of the program won't need to listen to a long part before reaching his/her point of interest. Nevertheless, the marketing department is still asking for more functions. They want to add different written exegeses of Quran, for instance Ibn Kathir, Tabari and Qurtobi. They also want to add different translations of the Quran. The customer, they argue, "want to buy something complete, something they know it has everything inside." Why do you bother to produce Sha'arawi if you sell not many copies? I asked. The marketing department manager said, "Well, it is a different story. The price of Sha'arawi is very high and there are people who want to have a valuable collection and pay much money for this. They want to have it all in their homes. I don't imagine they sit at their computers to listen to these long sermons, but they want to be sure they have everything home and they own this valuable collection!"

In Cairo Times Issandr El Amrani and Tjitske Holtrop wrote, "At the peak of his career, Amr Khaled gave over 20 lessons per week in the homes of educated, upper middle class women for whom the gatherings—which the staunchly secular weekly *Rose Al Youssef* pejoratively dubbed "Islamic salons"—provided access to a form of religious education that was a lot less intimidating than listening to older sheikhs. The latter, such as the late Sheikh Shaarawi, were not likely to appeal to this audience—their discourse tended to be either arcane discussions of the finer points of Islamic theology or fire-and-brimstone harangues about public morality."²²⁰ What Amrani and Holtrop wrote is right in terms of tracing the production of Khaled's discourse and the taste of the upper middle class. However, in this specific paragraph, and unlike most of the article, they characterize his sermons not as elite discourse, in which "the poor don't even exist ... making the rich feel good about being rich" but rather as mass culture. If Sha'arawi does not appeal to this class it does not appeal to the rest of classes as well. This democratization of culture, however, was objected by some Azharite scholars. Amrani and Holtrop wrote, "On the other hand, professor Muhammad Aboul Ela, head of the English-language section of the Islamic Studies department, was more forthright and flatly stated that Khaled was not qualified to be a preacher. ... "It's not for nothing that you study a significant number of years at Al Azhar University in order to become

a preacher", Aboul Ela complained. "You have to memorize the Quran, you have to know about the hadiths of the Prophet, about Islamic law, science and history."²²¹

Gihan Shahin, draining in the same vein wrote, "Furthermore, orthodox preachers oppose the entry of what they dub "non-specialists" in the field of da'wa. "Preaching is a profession like any other; only those specialising in da'wa should engage in it as a profession," Al-Awqaf's Mohamed Zidan told the Weekly. He conceded, however, that he "never heard Khaled giving 'incorrect information'".²²² This last point is the one I used to hear every time I challenge my interviewees that Khaled's preaching is not well-grounded in Islamic scholarship. He never gives incorrect information; they always emphasize. Nevertheless, the positive point they stress is not how knowledgeable Khaled is but rather how effective he is in terms of both the experience he creates and the results he reached. I asked Fikri who was leaving to attend Khaled's lesson in October City why Khaled? He said, "what he says is new". I resumed, "what is new in what he says?" "Well, perhaps it is not what he says but the way itself is new", he answered. He gives a lesson; it is the most traditional way in preaching, I commented. "Perhaps you must come and see yourself"; he finished the interview!

Fikri was right. I had to go and experience it myself. It is the experience that matters the most in Khaled's lessons. Shahin wrote, "'Oh God," sobbed a woman, trying in vain to hide her tears from her young daughter. Many started to weep silently and others looked up to the sky, as if asking God's forgiveness; the mood was intensely pious."²²³ This "intense" experience is what prayers behind Mohamed Gebril find attractive, the voice, the sobbing of Gebril and other prayers, the magnificent and ancient mosque and the mass observance of the prayer. Mike Featherstone wrote, "What would appear to be different with the emergence of the postmodern is the extent and proliferation of these sensibilities: the carnivalesque in the Middle Ages was a relatively circumscribed liminal enclave of short duration. Today the numbers of symbolic specialists and potential audiences both via artistic and consumer culture markets is much larger."²²⁴ The passionate speech, as well as the passionate shared listening

of this speech, make the intense experience. "Khaled's delivery is evangelical and emotional, but the message is morally conservative and legitimizes wealth", writes Gretel C. Kovach to Christian Science Monitor.²²⁵

Mike Featherstone, among others, wrote about the dissociation between commodities and their attributed cultural signs. Drawing on Adorno he wrote, "Adorno, for example, speaks of how, once the dominance of exchange-value has managed to obliterate the memory of the original use-value of goods, the commodity becomes free to take up a secondary or *ersatz* use-value."²²⁶ Featherstone drew also on Baudrillard writing, "The major tradition to Baudrillard's theory is to draw on semiology to argue that consumption entails the active manipulation of signs. This becomes central to late capitalist society where sign and commodity have come together to produce the 'commodity-sign'. The autonomy of the signifier, through, for example, the manipulation of the signs in the media and advertising, means that signs are able to float free from objects and are available for use in a multiplicity of associative relations."²²⁷ This overproduction of floating signs, however, results in "a loss of stable meaning, and an aestheticization of reality in which the masses become fascinated by the endless flow of bizarre juxtapositions which takes the viewer beyond stable sense."²²⁸

A visitor of IOL, who introduced himself as Salem, the Resisting, sent a message to be a member in the Anti-Profligacy Party. In his message he wrote, "I declare that I will be the first martyr in this Party. I will fight to death all seductive things that come in my way. God Willing there is no space to retreating or inattention." A second member wrote, "I take this chance to invite all young people who are under attack from seductive things to carry weapon and start the resistance under the leadership of the Resisting Brother from Lebanon. He seems to be the first victorious in this war. I remind our brothers (and sisters) that the resistance will transcend the TV and Internet to reach the (other) enemies in streets, and to bombard them with *ghad al-basar*/looking-aversion bombs until victory!" In a third message the sender, whose nickname is The Militant Doctor, used words such like military maneuvers,

negotiations, militants and martyrs. As the Anti-Profligacy Party is calling for resisting the obsession to masturbate the aforementioned used military language looks strange.

The same language was excessively used by the editors of IOL. They wrote articles about the civil jihad, electronic Jihad, and the different brigades of civil jihad. To make the readers more optimistic an editor of IOL wrote, "We have civil armies of millions and millions of young men and women in the Four Corners of the globe. With them we can wage a cultural street-war from house to house, from university to university and from country to country." It was not, nevertheless, always resistance that is meant by these articles. Openness, the second key concept of the new Islamic discourse, is also highlighted. In an article titled "The Communication is an Art" the writer wrote about the inevitability of Jihad as an essential Islamic commandment. Then he wrote, "All the nation is committing a sin unless it is observing Jihad. Only two sectors are exempted, those who do Jihad and those who do civil jihad that electronic Jihad is one of its types." The writer in this article, as indicated by the title he chose for it, was writing about communication and openness with the Other.

The aforementioned messages and articles call for resisting masturbation, social reform and enhancing global dialogues. The cultural signs attributed to them, however, are those of Jihad, martyrdom and militancy. The resulted commodity-sign/discourse-sign complex could have meanings belonging to either resistance or openness. Here the exciting meanings are attached to mundane discourses/commodities, sometimes with enthusiastic direct advertisement calling for either resistance or openness and promising the consumers of these discourses to be resisting and open. Featherstone wrote, "Consumption, then, must not be understood as the consumption of use-values, a material utility, but primarily as the consumption of signs. ... Mundane and everyday consumer goods become associated with luxury, exotica, beauty and romance with their original or functional 'use' increasingly difficult to decipher."²²⁹

In fact it is the consumer him/herself through the process of consumption who gives the signs their meanings. Amr Khaled's lessons, whether those about Iraq, ethics, or rituals, could be a sign of liberalism, conservatism, openness, resistance... It all depends on that who is attending the lesson, listening to his audiocassettes or watching him in the satellite channels. It is the same thing for joining up the brigades of civil jihad. It could mean resisting the West and it could equally mean opening to that West. It could mean belonging to an organized work and it could equally mean getting rid of the strict organizations and working independently and individually. Reflecting on this reverse relationship between the sign and its meaning Zygmunt Bauman wrote, "Of culture as of the market it is useful to think as a playing field, a site of the offer and demand game. The site is traveled by signs-in-search-of-meanings and sign-searching-meanings. If for its 'normal functioning' the market requires a certain excess of offer over the existing demand and if only in the moment of purchase the commodity potential of market goods is fulfilled –so in culture one can observe a continuous excess of signs, which only in the activity of their use/consumption stand a chance of fulfilling their signifying potential, i.e. turn into cultural symbols. Meanings are selected for signs, rather than the other way round."²³⁰

Those cultural signs of Jihad, martyrdom, *Da'wa*/missionary work, Umma, Caliphate, and the likes belong to the old metanarrative. They are, in fact, dispersed pieces of a shredded metanarrative. They satisfy the nostalgic customers/activists by providing them of a plethora of simulacra leaving them free to select whatever meaning they might like at the moment. Here the pieces of metanarrative decorate the new discourse to expedite the change. If Murad, the typist, is organizing the weekly trip to Amr Khaled's lesson to emphasize the collective identity of Islamists in his neighborhood and make MBG organization more consistent, the very activity will only lead to the opposite. His individual initiative, the way he openly organizes a trip to October City, the new way of communications outside the strict MBG hierarchy, the new conditions of membership (paying three pounds) and of course the content of Khaled's message will go in a very different direction. Similarly joining up the brigades of civil jihad makes one in need to dialogue the others and be open to change.

There seems to be a movement from an angry stand of destruction, to a one of communication, dialogue and fragmentation of the Other, and finally to a one of pragmatism and engagement in reality with its details.

On May 12, 2001 IOL published an article called "When the Civil Obedience is Electronic". The writer of the article wrote openly about spamming, denial of service attack DoS, hacktivism, automated e-mail bombs and e-Guerillas. Below his article the editor listed five other articles that a user need only to click any of them to reach its page. These five articles have the following titles: breaking through websites and systems, the Interfada a new weapon against Israel, a campaign against the governmental websites in the world, the Internet a weapon against globalization and advocate your cause by political viruses. Later IOL published a message and a reply from the Editor titled Internet jihad. In this page the writer wrote, "the action on Internet requires a knowledge of the others' cultures. It also requires an open mentality and a capacity for dialogue. It must be known that our premises are not the others' premises and that the rational, logical and quiet dialogue is the way to talk with the others and introduce them to Islam and our issues, especially that of Palestine."

In a second article titled the electronic jihad the writer urged the readers to move from "the negative work (hacking) to the positive work." By "positive work" he meant two points, first dialoging the global Other, and second, moving from the general principles to the practical details. He wrote, "The point is that this electronic jihad must be constructive not destructive. ... It should ramify into detailed discussions and not stop at the headlines." To clarify his point he compared the Western thought of human rights with Islamists' thought and said that while there is much elaboration on this issue in the West, the Islamic writings are merely stressing the principle without delving into the details. The articles enlisted below this page this time were: the invasion of the Jewish sites or the good marketing of your stuff, Da'wa Internet groups... a good suggestion, Da'wa by launching websites, and Da'wa through e-mails.

The new discourse, however, is not flowing smoothly all the time. Baudrillard wrote, "A simulation is different from a fiction or lie in that it not only presents an absence as a presence, the imaginary as the real, it also undermines any contrast to the real, absorbing the real within itself. Instead of a "real" economy of commodities that is somehow bypassed by an "unreal" myriad of advertising images, Baudrillard now discerns only a hyperreality, a world of self-referential signs. He has moved from the TV ad which, however, never completely erases the commodity it solicits, to the TV newscast which creates the news if only to be able to narrate it, or the soap opera whose daily events are both referent and reality for many viewers."²³¹ That is not the case for Islamists and electronic jihad is neither a complete referent nor an absolute reality for many readers. A visitor of IOL missing a coherent, holistic and clear vision sent this message: "Dear Brothers in "Problems and Solutions" page, I have read almost all of your previous replies to this page, especially those concerning the general Muslims' issues like that of Palestine and the recent events in Afghanistan. I want to ask you a one question –after all this huge amount of messages I read- what is exactly required from us as youth, in a clear and determined way please?" To answer him, the editor tried two approaches, first emphasizing the significance of small initiatives, and second, laying a relaxed framework of a pseudo-narrative that gathers all these initiatives together by simply classifying the whole world into two parties, the reformers' party and the spoilers' party. Each of these parties has Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The same editor made an online interview after publishing his article of civil jihad to answer all the questions of interested visitors. Besides a one message of support and a couple of messages asking about the interfaith dialogue (in a sense of denunciation) the rest of messages were objecting his article and showing a very suspicious stand before it. A visitor asked, "How can we talk about peace, and be peace callers, while there are all those wars and destruction around the world?" A second visitor asked, "how far we will keep silent to what is happening to Muslims? We, youth, got depressed because of what our rulers do of surrender, and humiliation." A third visitor asked directly about the civil jihad saying, "You talk about civil jihad and its mechanisms and we saw the whole world shaking to stop the war

with no result; how then can we convince ourselves with the significance of civil jihad in a world that knows but the language of weapons?" The next visitor challenged the editor to define "Jihad". He said, "What Dr. Ahmed would remain of Jihad concept when you eat it up piece by piece everyday and marginalize it?" Another visitor was bolder to put her argument. She said, "Praying, boycotting and demonstrations have proved to be insignificant. May you please show us a means to Jihad so that our repressed energy and our deep feeling of oppression find a way out? Another visitor preferred not to ask. Ironically he said, "I have no question, but would you please see the picture posted right now on your website and tell me how could there be civil jihad in such an environment?"

The loss of narrative, with its rational, sequential and historical nature, the leaning to simultaneity and montage and the fragmentation of time into perpetual presents, in Jameson's words, could not be completely tolerated by Islamists. In their consumption/activism they post messages of dialogue as if they are in dialogue; they join electronic brigades as if they are in Jihad; and they continuously change the fashions of their discourse as if they are creating an open society of plurality and diversity. Nevertheless, the political, and possibly the economic, question, in its local, regional and global sense, brings them back to a reality with no simulacra, liberal ambitions or dialogue. It brings them back to an ugly reality of defeat, political and military defeat, a reality painted in Palestinian and Iraqi blood, Israeli and American tanks, Egyptian prisons, military courts and emergency laws and in deep economic crises rooted in corruption and autocracy that makes their liberal dreams go in vain. In this reality civil jihad, as a one fashion of the new Islamic discourse, loses its promise because it neither has a clear project for the future nor does it encounter the present properly. In these moments of tension and despair, when computers are shut down, videocassettes are not played and the satellite news channels are bringing with the monotonous voice of their reporters the bad news of Palestine, in these moments of doubt and skepticism, the old metanarrative gathers its dispersed pieces, fuse them together to get back its life and go creeping and breathing and announcing its return! Perhaps its arrival is

not fully recognized, but it always leaves its traces, an article, a message, an angry question or a deep and obsessive desire to commit a suicide operation.

Neo-liberal Consumption

Amr Khaled, though frequently featured by the media as the "Star of Preachers", is not quite unique. There are always a variety of preachers at disposal. In contrast to Khaled, who used to dress in Western suit and not infrequently in T-shirts, there is Al Habib Al Jafri, who is a bearded Shikh dressing in a loose white garment and speaking in high classic Arabic with a Yemenite accent. The list of the so-called *the new preachers* includes names like Khaled Al Guindi, an Azharite Shikh in a Western suit, Safwat Hegazi, a bearded preacher with secular background who received his traditional theological knowledge while working in KSA, and Ragheb Al Sirgani a teacher of urosurgery in Cairo University. An Islamist would have the freedom to choose the preacher s/he likes, whether Azharite, Salafist, or modern. Khaled himself changed his "outlook", in terms of his dressing, the topic he covers (ethics, socialization, light politics...) and the framework of his lecture (a lesson in the mosque, a private meeting, a semi-private big meeting in a five stars hotel or a talk-show TV program) many times.

In the market of Islamic multimedia CDs one finds the same phenomenon, a plethora of products reflecting different tastes to satisfy the customer. Sometimes, the same company would produce different types of the same title. IOL is certainly not different. Articles calling for hacktivism are posted beside articles condemning it. It is not infrequent to find a question sent to different pages, for instance Fatwa and Problems and Solutions pages, replied quite differently. The Economic page published so many articles urging people to boycott American and Israeli commodities. I asked the Editor of the page to write an article against this boycotting and he did publish it. The Editor of Contemporary Issues page told me that he is going to publish four articles two for and two against the concept of civil jihad. During second

Iraq War the site published views for and against volunteering to fight the American troops in Iraq.

The aforementioned plurality is evident and obvious, but how different could it be from that plurality in Islamic discourses of the 1970s? The "preaching stars" at the time were people like Al Ghazali, Al Qaradawi, Al Sha'arawi, Hafez Salama, Ossama Abdel Azim, Abdel Haleem Mahmoud and Ibrahim Ezzat. Why would we think of the contemporary preachers as something different? The answer I am proposing is that the 1970s preachers advocated clearly different agendas. Al Ghazali and Al Qaradawi furthered a modern version of Islam that would tackle politics more seriously; Al Sha'arawi offered an Azhari traditional version of Islam that would appeal to the public; Hafez Salama preached Jihad; Ossama Abdel Azim emphasized a Salafist agenda; Mahmoud was a Sufi Shikh leaning to mysticism; and Ibrahim Ezzat called for marginalizing the politics and getting seriously engaged in spiritual missionary work. An Islamist had usually the duty to explore these discourses consciously to select the one s/he will adopt and devote his/her life to carry on. The heated debates and dialogues between Islamists in the second half of 1970s ended up in a differentiation process within the Islamic movement that was concluded in the formation of separate and well-demarcated Islamic groups with obviously different, and not infrequently conflicting, agendas.

What make the case different now are two points. First, the nowadays plurality is, like postmodern culture, shallow. It is a plurality of "appearance" in Baudrillard's words, not in referent essence. It is a plurality of fashions not of agendas. It is like the plethora of fried potato chips in the market, a one hundred kinds with a one hundred cultural signs but for the same potato fruit. In their article Amrani and Holtrop interviewed Patrick Haenni, a Swiss sociologist who studied the discourse of Amr Khaled, and wrote, "For Haenni, Khaled is "a modernizer without a project of modernity;" he does not want to modernize Islam or establish a new social order based on Islam, like the Islamists. But at the same time, in his TV show *Kalam Min Al Qalb* (Words From the Heart), he is an innovator because of the way he addresses his audience. "It is the type of religious experience that is novel," argues Haenni.

"When he speaks of repentance, he builds an entire new religious experience around it. Amr Khaled works because his immediate public is not after religious knowledge like what Shaarawi gave through tafsir. They are seeking emotion. They are not interested in what he says, but how he says it and the atmosphere he creates."²³²

Civil jihad, electronic brigades, anti-profligacy party... are successive waves of fashions. Khaled and the rest of today preachers, for their consumers, are a variety of fashions. Amrani and Holtrop wrote, "That his fans seem to be more mesmerized by his image than what he actually says is no coincidence. To a large extent, with Khaled the medium is the message."²³³ Featherstone wrote, The aestheticization of reality foreground the importance of style, which is also encouraged by the modernist market dynamic with its constant search for new fashions, new styles, new sensations and experiences."²³⁴ If the angry messages were the first problem to the editor of civil jihad article the second problem would be the lack of supporting messages. It is not that his readers did not like the idea. The wide participation in the electronic jihad campaigns and the hits on pages calling for civil jihad would reflect a majority in favor of the article. This majority, however, when it came to discussing seriously what they like they found nothing to say. They like the style, the fashion, and the word jihad beside the word civil. The content, nevertheless, is less important (less attractive and less fashionable no matter what content it might have).

The second point making nowadays plurality different than that of the 1970s is that while Islamists had to carefully examine and compare different discourses and agendas to select the one they will adopt and further, they now only enjoy the availability of different choices without aiming to select a one of them. Freedom of choice and the display of differences not choice itself is the point. Quoting Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen's *Channels of Desire*, Featherstone wrote, "Today there is no fashion: there are only fashions. No rules, only Choices. Everyone can be anyone."²³⁵ New Islamists want to move freely between a rainbow of alternatives; they want to know everything is at their disposal. Here openness and resistance, not as projects but as cultural signs, work to stretch the range of choice. Bauman

wrote, "Mobility is the name of the game: one must be able to move when the needs push or the dreams call."²³⁶

To satisfy this emergent need a plethora of opportunities that have never been experienced and squeezed should be being created continuously. The easily bored consumers urge the producers to continuously help them keep moving from hacktivism to dialogue, from volunteering to fight in Iraq to civil jihad (or peaceful war as a one message left in IOL called it), and from condemning terrorism to reasoning it. Drawing on his metaphor of the cooperative Bauman wrote, "The *choice* is the attribute of the consumer, and the cooperative nature of consumer community means *freedom* of choice."²³⁷ An interesting notion is that it is hardly that a dialogue happens in IOL between articles holding apparently paradoxical views. The article against boycotting, as provocative as it was, never stimulated a dialogue or incited visitors to send objecting messages. Different opinions in the Legal and Problems and Solutions pages, or inside the Legal page itself, are left in peace.

That lack of dialogue and thoughtful debates renders the freedom of choice meaningless. Two words with two completely different biographies like civil and jihad are brought together to surprise the consumer and launch a new fashion, but what dialogue would this vicinity create? What is the point of this freedom of choice if no choice is made up eventually? Bauman wrote, "Freedom of choice rests on the multiplicity of possibilities; yet it would be an empty freedom which denied the right to put one possibility above the others – to reduce the multiplicity of chances, to close and reject the unwanted possibilities – in other words, to trim or to cancel choice altogether."²³⁸ The next question, however, could be do we really need to (or can) choose among alternatives, which are but "fashions"?

Here I want to draw back on the concept of "cultural capital" developed by Pierre Bourdieu and others.²³⁹ Mike Featherstone wrote, "The concept points to the way in which parallel to economic capital which is immediately calculable, exchangeable and realizable, there also exist modes of power and processes of accumulation based upon culture in which

the value of the latter, the fact that culture can be capital, is often hidden and misrecognized. Bourdieu points to three forms of cultural capital: it can exist in the *embodied* state (style of presentation, mode of speech, beauty, etc.), *objectified* state (cultural goods like pictures, books, machines, buildings, etc.), and in the *institutionalized* state (such as educational qualifications).²⁴⁰ The pursuing and consuming of the new Islamic discourse with all its fashions and cultural signs is in fact a way to increasing this cultural capital. Amr Khaled in this sense is an embodiment of this cultural capital, that could be objectified through Islamic websites and CDs and institutionalized through the belonging to e-mail lists or attending certain lessons. Here we can see Islamism as "lifestyle".

Articulating the term "lifestyle" Featherstone wrote, "within contemporary consumer culture it connotes individuality, self expression, and a stylistic self-consciousness. One's body, clothes, speech, leisure pastimes, eating and drinking preferences, home, car, choice of holidays, etc. are to be regarded as indicators of the individuality of taste and sense of style of the owner/consumer."²⁴¹ Reflecting back on Khaled I would quote Amrani and Holtrop in their interesting article. They wrote, "Youth is a central theme in Amr Khaled's lectures—although he almost exclusively refers to a certain type of "gilded youth" lifestyle that is typical among the upper class. When, for instance, Khaled lectures on *Al Shebab wa Al Seif* (Youth and the Summer), he extols the virtues of modest behavior when the moneyed youth migrate to the Mediterranean resorts of Agami or elsewhere on the North Coast for the summer. The message is essentially that it's ok to go off and have (expensive) fun during the summer, but that fun must be moderated by religion."²⁴² This "gilded youth lifestyle" is consumed not only through Khaled's message but also through his very image, the way he speaks, laughs, dresses and consumes his leisure time.

Lifestyle brings us back to the notion of class, once determined according to our position in the production process. Unlike all these voices announcing the end of the class, and perhaps the social as well, Halbwachs stresses that "our use of time in consumption practices conforms to our class habitus and therefore conveys an accurate idea of our class

status."²⁴³ Hebdige as well showed how consumer identities and lifestyles constitute social types and categories that could be used in a more positive way by sociologists so as to develop "sociology of aspiration".²⁴⁴ Here Hebdige declares that "marketing has provided the dominant and most pervasive classifications of "social types" in 1980s."²⁴⁵ Class, thus, is connoted with consumption, both its volume and its quality. Nevertheless, this consumption does not exclusively depend on how much money one has, but also, and perhaps more importantly, how much information about consumption one might have.

That information is gained by investing time in consumption and accumulating cultural and symbolic capital; Islamic symbols and lifestyles are not spared. An Islamist has to follow up all waves of fashions and styles and be always updated to approve his status. Whatever "new" should be acquired and experienced. In my interview with Fikri that I mentioned earlier he said he likes Khaled because what he says is new. When I objected the answer he said that the way he delivers his preaching is new. Fikri here was fascinated with the "newness" of Khaled; and it is the style, its newness, that is attracting him the most. Joining e-lists, logging on IOL website daily to know as early as possible what new fashions have just been created to the market, buying Islamic multimedia CDs and exploring and testing them, and also experiencing new preachers who are gaining fame are ways to fulfil neo-liberal aspirations and climb the class system. Bauman wrote, "Lavish consumption, they are told and shown, is the sign of success and a highway leading straight to public applause and fame. They also learn that possessing and consuming certain objects and practising certain lifestyles is the necessary condition of happiness; perhaps even of human dignity."²⁴⁶

That is the special promise of the new Islamic discourse; you will be on the run to your social status. Islamists who do not know about Khaled, do not explore RDI CDs, do not know what is the last campaign launched by IOL or do not receive emails from Yamuslim e-list are surpassed, left behind and almost excluded. Sadly Bauman wrote, "Since the criterion of purity is the ability to partake in the consumerist game, those left outside as a 'problem', as the 'dirt' which needs to be 'disposed of', are *flawed consumers* – people unable to respond to

the enticements of the consumer market because they lack the required resources, people unable to be 'free individuals' according to the sense of 'freedom' as defined in terms of consumer choice. They are the new 'impure', who do not fit into the new scheme of purity. Looked at from the now dominant perspective of the consumer market, they are redundant – truly 'objects out of place'.²⁴⁷

Hebdige took the notion of social stratification based on consumption a one step further by writing about the communities of affect (rather than communities of interest).²⁴⁸ These communities are created with the very act of consumption. Hebdige wrote, "One of the things ignored in the more "fatal" versions of new times is the binding power of the new transnational media systems: the power they have to move people not just to buy the products of the cultural industries but to buy *into* networks that offers forms of community and alliance which can transcend the confines of class, race, gender, regional and national culture."²⁴⁹ "Taste classifies and classifies the classifier", the Bourdieu's rule, reminds us with the significance of joining such new communities and investing such long time in learning about new tastes.

This democratization of culture in terms of availability of cultural products to wider sectors of society and the effacement of boundaries between high and low culture is not welcome by higher classes, those who have not only the cultural capital but the economic capital as well. Producers of Islamic cultural products immediately comply with the new orders. In an Islamic cultural salon the organizer sometimes invites non-Arab speakers who speak only in English. At the end of list enumerating what an Islamist could do to dialogue the West, which was posted in IOL, there was the notion of "traveling" to Europe and US to meet face to face the Other. Besides, Khaled delivers his lessons not only in October City Mosque, where any one can attend them, but also in bourgeois social clubs available to the private members only, in talk shows programs available to those who can receive satellite signals, in five-stars hotel Ramadan tent, where the minimum charge is usually very high and in Gulf royal palaces where the invitation is extended to a handful of persons.

Moreover, I once attended a meeting of marketing department in a one Islamic software company, where the introduction of a new device to the market was discussed. The device is supposed to help people to memorize Quran. It is a very small set put in the pocket, with an earpiece to help the user retrieving any piece of Quran and listening to its recitation. When the technical points were over and it came to determining the price I was surprised that they chose to push it in the market with the highest price possible. It was clear that with a cheaper price they would still make the same profit by selling more pieces. Their point, however, was that there is a sector of customers that needs to obtain a product that no one can get it easily. After satisfying the need of this sector, the marketing department argued, they will lower its price to 20% and will make more profits, because the rest of potential customers will hurry to buy it. What about the first sector, I asked. They said they would add new functions to the set and introduce a new version with the same high price. At any time there would always be two products a new expensive set and an old cheap one.

Pierre Bourdieu suggested that it is the new petite bourgeoisie that is concerned to expand and legitimate its own particular dispositions and lifestyles with the production and dissemination of consumer culture imagery and information.²⁵⁰ In *Distinction* Bourdieu wrote that this sector is numerically on the increase and therefore has a progressive view of the world. He defined the petit bourgeois as a proletarian who makes himself small to become a bourgeois.²⁵¹ The new petite bourgeoisie is different in "its attraction for the most naïve aristocratic qualities (style, distinction, refinement) in the pursuit of the expressive and liberated lifestyles."²⁵² Bourdieu developed the concept of "habitus". "By habitus Bourdieu is referring to the unconscious dispositions, the classificatory schemes, taken-for-granted preferences which are evident in the individual's sense of the appropriateness and validity of his taste for cultural goods and practices – art, food, holidays, hobbies, etc."²⁵³

The petit bourgeois, however, is a pretender because s/he claims what s/he does not have. In Al Jazeera interview Amr Khaled reflected on a movie to metaphor his message. I

asked Ramadan how did his interviews to be hired in IOL go? Laughingly he said, "I had so many interviews, but guess what? There is a question that everyone was asking. Do you see cinema movies? Of course I do, the same question and the same answer!" Besides, in an article posted at a website launched by an Islamist psychiatrist Ahmed Abdullah wrote an article titled *Generations Sailing and the Succession of Constructive Waves*. The main idea of the article is that an alliance should erect between two generations the 40s and the 20s to make the social and political reform. To introduce his idea Abdullah started his article by writing, "I am indebted very much to the good cinema to developing my ideas, and opening the horizons of knowledge of the world and myself. It becomes certain day after day, especially after the Cairo International Cinema Festival, which I have been attending its shows regularly since ten years. It was in this year Festival that this idea erupted in my mind."²⁵⁴ Interestingly when I conducted many interviews in IOL two years ago almost everyone asked me, "Did you see the article posted about the late actress Su'ad Hosni?" Their point that was frequently expressed and that could shed light on this cinema-interest is that "we are open!" We do watch cinema movies; we have the taste to classify and analyze them; and we are not old-fashioned Islamists with beards and loose white garments who think cinema is prohibited.

"Openness" here is symbolized by watching cinema movies and recognized as a bourgeoisie character... a liberal style. If it is "natural" to them to watch cinema movies why do they insistently and obsessively need to emphasize it that frequently? Why do IOL people need to ask a movie director to give them a training course in watching and analyzing cinema movies? Why do they celebrate that much the "good Islamic Iranian cinema" that harvests prizes in recognized festivals and consider this as a sign of unusual success, success to a new liberal Islamism? "Openness" is seen as the soul and essence of a bourgeois character, the way to be a real bourgeois. Thus, it is consciously stressed and hammered out. We have a secretary who does not put the scarf and we hired a News Editor who is neither an Arab nor a Muslim; she is even a smoker, IOL editors frequently tell me. Featherstone wrote, "The new petit bourgeois is a pretender, aspiring to more than he is, who adopts an investment

orientation to life; he possesses little economic or cultural capital and therefore must acquire it. The new petit bourgeois therefore adopts a learning mode to life; he is consciously educating himself in the field of taste, style, lifestyle."²⁵⁵

Now, drawing back on the voluminous articles urging, celebrating and emphasizing openness I would observe a paradoxical and interesting finding. All these calls to openness have not been yet translated into openness in reality. In the Dialogue Forum the moderator commenting on an exchange of messages between the visitors and a supposedly Christian visitor said that the discussion had to be short. We would explain Islam to her and then either she takes it or leaves it; that is it. Why did we need to have such a long debate? The Moderator said. Despite all these calls to support and enrich the civil society there was no serious engagement with this endeavor in terms of covering its activities, analyzing its weakness and strengths, or proposing new and creative practical initiatives. There was no contact with global NGOs even though there were many articles calling to this objective and left in every corner in IOL. Any different view to Intifada and/or the Arab Israeli conflict in general was strictly avoided, even though the Editor of the political page held a completely different perspective than the ones aired in his page. In fact he had finally to resign his job and write a sort of outrageous long article condemning all what he used to publish before. The non-Arab non-Muslim news editor was not tolerated and had finally to resign as well.

Bourdieu shifts our attention to another interesting point: the new petite bourgeoisie as the new intellectuals. He wrote, "in the name of the fight against taboos and the liquidation of complexes they adopt the most external and easily borrowed aspects of the intellectual lifestyles..."²⁵⁶ Once someone sent an article to IOL analyzing and criticizing the page of Problems and Solutions and relying on both religious writings and sociological theoretical works. His article raged extreme anger in the respective page. They took the fighting to the Dialogue Forum to express their views. Their main arguments were: the Fiqh should be renewed and changed; we do not need Western sociology, which certainly does not fit in our reality; and we are pioneers in exploring social sexual problems and how to

encounter them. A counselor of this page wrote, "who is this Foucault that is mentioned in his article? He writes about Western people whom no one knows." An editor who writes extensively about dialogue, openness and stretching Islamic activism globally to reach transnational movements wrote, "do we really need these transnational global concepts to analyze "our" reality?" A third counselor wrote that this page is the first endeavor to encounter sexual problems and to teach people about sex. She said that before their work no one had known about real sex unless s/he can read English and read the "discoveries" that have been published in the West since twenty years ago. It is not infrequent that one finds the notion that they are the founders of a new science of Islamic psychiatry relying on Western science, Islamic writings and sociological knowledge and that they are the first Islamic pioneers to breakthrough the taboo of sex. In maganin.com website the claim made was that it is a website for Islamic psychiatry. The articles posted there are a sort of popular culture and demagogic writings about the validity of Islamic medieval writings nowadays and the mistake we committed when we shifted to an alien culture.

In the aforementioned examples Islamists are swinging between two "styles", an old and ancient style and a new and modern one. To take the new preachers as an example the two styles would be represented by Amr Khaled and Al Habib Al Jafri, the shaved preacher in Western dress and the bearded preacher in loose, short and white garment with a turban on his head. Islamic psychiatry is no different. It is also the same for, once again, civil jihad. They provide the market with two desired styles and sometimes they create a new style by mixing them up together. "Here it is not a question of the new petite bourgeoisie promoting a particular style, but rather catering for and promoting a general interest in style itself, the nostalgia for past styles, the interest in latest style, which in an age which itself lacks a distinctive style what Simmel referred to as the peculiar styleless quality of modern life- have a fascination, and are subjected to constant interpretation and reinterpretation."²⁵⁷

Hedonism and expressive consumption is a one more character of the new petite bourgeoisie. At maganin.com there is an article, in which the writer advised his readers how

to deal with everyday tension. He wrote, "We call you to get rid of all restrictions, and pressures and be a member in our entertaining syndicate (the syndicate of crazy people). First, you should be rehabilitated to get rid of all causes of frustration and leave yourself as natural as it could be biding yourself with nothing at all. The most important rule for rehabilitation is to put all people opinions at the bottom of the list of your interests. Now you are a crazy under training. To deserve this title here we offer you our strict regulations that enforce you to save a space for craziness in your life."²⁵⁸

The writer asked his readers to "go and run in the street as if they own it and play the role of a small bird in a children play." He commented, "some people may think you are crazy; that is not important. The important thing is your feeling of change and freedom. People will not like you whether you are reasonable or insane, but you will feel comfortable and happy." The writer asked his, supposedly Islamist, readers to dance. He wrote, "In times of deep thinking when you do not feel quite well the solution is to dance on a song you love or some loud music. Shut the door of your room, play the music and leave your body moving freely with the music and let your emotions get out your body in any way you might like and are not used to." Then he asked his readers to laugh "for at least a one hour daily. Laugh only for laughing, with no other reasons. Just make yourself happy. Even if you do not feel like to laugh do it, so loudly and wholeheartedly." Finally the writer advised his readers to scream "so that they overcome their pressures, just like when they were kids." This way of relieving is certainly different than old Islamists' technique who would prefer not running in the street, dancing, laughing and screaming but simply to read Quran, visit a brother/sister or rush to praying. This hedonism makes new Islamists more involved in consumerism. Featherstone wrote, "The new narcissism where individuals seek to maximize and experience the range of sensations available, the search for expression and self-expression, the fascination with identity, presentation and appearance makes the new petit bourgeois a 'natural' consumer."²⁵⁹

3- Production

Production Network

On October 17, 2002, Hamdi El Hussein reported to Islam Online about an ambitious project to produce a one million multimedia CD in seven different languages to advocate the cause of the Palestinians²⁶⁰. The story, according to El Hussein, started by Abu El Ela Madi, the Director of the International Center for Studies and the proxy of the founders of Al Wasat Party, reading in the newspaper a letter-to-the-editor sent from Germany. The letter was urging Arabs and Muslims to produce a media product that can reach the masses in the West who do not know enough about the right picture of what is happening in Palestine. Soon Madi called Safeer Media Company and persuaded its Director Mohamed Abdel-Latif to adopt the project. They both approached Abdel Mon'em Abu El Fotouh, the member of the High Council of the Syndicate of Physicians seeking his help in distributing the final product. Later many civil organizations and societies got involved and the Unions of Arab Physicians and Arab Lawyers declared their support to the project. Abu El Fotouh asked the doctors to distribute the CD while attending scientific conferences outside Egypt. Muslims and Arabs, especially those living in the West, were urged to contact individually people in the West to send them the CDs.

I chose this paradigmatic piece to show up the kind of network underpinning the production of new Islamic discourse. The three key persons above, Madi, Abu El Foutouh and Abdel Latif, are either members or ex-members of MBG. The relation between the three of them right now has nothing to do with MBG structure and organization. They are approaching each other through a newly created network of a research center, a syndicate and a publishing house. They talk to each other and conduct their project as representative of their respective institutions. Abu El Foutouh is a member of the Guidance Office of MBG, the highest hierarchal unit, and the one that ousted Madi and Abdel Latif a few years ago from

their positions and stripped them off of their membership and all their authorities in the Group. However, this MBG background has nothing, in fact must not have anything, to do with their new relation. Interestingly Abu El Foutouh is a member of the Administrative Council of the International Center for Studies that Madi is heading. Abdel Latif, as well, is a member of the same Council. The new network, therefore, transcends all the hierarchy of MBG and offers not only three "public" forums for them to work together, but an intersection to meet regularly as well. The same network is offering them a media unit, IOL, to cover and publicize their project and make it reach the public all over the Arab and Islamic Worlds.

The above "professionalism" is highly stressed in new Islamists' discourse. If the project is intellectually unworthy to the director of ICS, economically not profitable to the owner of Safer, or not meeting the political agenda of the Syndicate of Physicians in Egypt or the interests of IOL as a media agency, the project will hardly have a chance to materialize. Yousef Nada, a supposedly MBG member and a famous billionaire, was interviewed by Ahmed Mansour in Al Jazeera Channel. He told some stories about his substantial contribution in the global leadership of MBG. Immediately IOL asked one of its editors who used to work in Al Ahali Newspaper, the extreme Leftist newspaper, before being hired in IOL, to interview Abdel Mon'ém Abu El Foutouh, the member of the Guidance Office of MBG. Abu El Foutouh simply said that it is the first time he hears about a Global Leadership of MBG that he served on its highest board. MBG then Deputy General Guide, Al Houdaibi, faxed IOL to deny the authenticity of Abu El Foutouh statement and asked IOL to publish his fax. Inside the MBG the struggle between Al Houdaibi and Abu El Foutouh reached a dramatic end when the former threatens the latter that unless he denies his earlier statement he would be simply fired. IOL position in this inflamed situation that was widely aired in the Egyptian media was a bit unexpected. To get more "hits" and visitors IOL decided to broadcast the audio files of the interview making them available for everyone and to cut the way before the de facto General Guide. For IOL editors and directors that behavior was "the only expected behavior from a media agency towards its customers."

The above case, which is continuously repeated in different forms, does not mean the fraternal relationships are broken from those of business. It only means the fraternal relationships are "bracketed" while professional relationships are displayed in the newly created network of business and activism. Shawki was working in an Islamic computer company in the Hardware Maintenance Department. He was hired because he was both good in his career and affiliated to MBG. Once he had many conflicts with his boss, a member of MBG, the General Director told him that he must find another job because soon they are firing him. He protested that it is only injustice. The Director said, "This is the only way to keep the work in the company smooth and effective." How could this be Islamic? Shawki contended? The Islamic thing is to have this company working successfully, the Director explained. He then promised Shawki, the brother, to help him find another job. "Successful" here means the company is flourishing and able to produce more products to help spreading the word of Islam. To be that successful, however, the company should be economically successful as well. For Medhat, who runs a big shop of ceramics, Islamic activism is to maintain his business flourishing. How selling ceramics is considered an Islamism? I asked. He said, "Selling ceramics is a necessary function that the society needs. When you do it successfully you will be contributing in the success of our society that is supposedly Islamic. I like to work with brothers but as far as that would make my business more flourishing."

The attitude of "Islamic business" thus is aimed to be similar to regular business. In her interesting study "Islamic Business and Business as Usual: A Study of Firms in Egypt" Karen Pfeifer concluded, "The Islamic and non-Islamic firms in our sample have many important traits in common. No meaningful differences appeared between the two groups of firms in how they relate to their customers, for example, or in their import of capital goods. Furthermore, all firms seem equally driven by the force of market competition, equally terrified by the prospect of the more open competition expected from liberalisation, and equally willing to contemplate joining together with other firms in the industry to set prices and output at more profitable levels. They are also similar in their paternalistic attitude towards employees and in their employment policies, although a majority of IFs (Islamic

Firms) explicitly prefer not to employ women. The Islamic firms in our sample are as well distributed across the spectrum of economic activities and industries as the non-Islamic firms. This may be the outcome of a deliberate policy on the part of Islamic banks and investment groups, an illustration of their efforts at channeling capital to targeted industries (Gazzareen 1994; El-Rabbat 1994). If so, it gives credence to the idea that Islamic financial institutions engage in a kind of indicative planning, a practice reminiscent of the Japanese and Korean models of development. However, the outcome so far appears not to differ from the non-Islamic, and presumably unplanned, dispersion of private firms across sectors.²⁶¹

The newly created network is consciously maintained as less political and more socio-economic and cultural network. Political activism is seen as risky and useless. It is hazardous to the safety of the active and successful network, and has yet been failing. In fact it is Islamists who want to go to the public sphere and show themselves up and it is the government that would prefer pushing them back fearing that they will dominate that sphere. They are keen to keep their products as apolitical as it could be, to keep their relations within the professional framework, and to keep their files and accounts transparent. They are also very keen to keep their units and the inter-relationships between them quite independent from MBG or any organized Islamic movement. Yes, they frequently recruit their workforce from the ranks of MBG, and get financed by money paid by MBG members, but they always do this on "professional" basis. Once joining the network both capital and workforce are stripped off of their MBG character and markers and get treated as "regular" workforce and regular capital. The articles against MBG published in IOL, the protest against any discussion of their activities within MBG circles, the strict regulations prohibiting any posters or stickers belonging to MBG or political Islamic affiliations to be used in their business and social action spheres and the refraining from financially supporting MBG activities or using the network facilities to promote its propaganda are sometimes maintained and performed obsessively to stress the sharp borders between two spheres that should never overlap.

A one important character of this network is its openness. It is grounded in the public sphere and open to a variety of players. A qualified accountant, editor, programmer, graphic designer or marketer will easily have an access to it. Besides, NGOs, study centers and business companies are easily networked on the same professional basis. Those who participated in the one million CD campaign are unnecessarily "Islamic". In fact governmental institutions are frequently networked as well. Safeer and RDI companies got rewarded by Mrs. Mubarak and the Minister of Media respectively. The owner of an Islamic software company is a member of a committee headed by the Minister of Communications to promote the software industry in Egypt. Abdel Mon'em Abu El Foutouh in El Hussein's article said, "We also call the official governmental institutions to adopt this idea. Enough delay! Time is not in our side. The danger is coming and will not differentiate between the people and the rulers. Everyone is targeted!"

This network of business and activism is embedded in, and open to, a larger global network. In *Le Monde Diplomatique* Ibrahim Warde wrote, "Islamic banking and financial institutions grew along with political Islam: it declined, they did not. In fact, Islamic finance is now a confident part of the new global world of venture capital, ethical investment and profit-and-loss sharing. The assets of Islamic financial institutions now top the \$230bn mark. That is more than a 40-fold increase since 1982. Most of the large Western financial institutions, following the example of Citibank, have their own Islamic subsidiaries or, at the very least, Islamic "windows" or products aimed at their Islamic clientele. As proof of how many companies are compatible with Islamic law - and not just from within the Muslim world - there is now even a Dow Jones Islamic market index."²⁶² So far, however, according to the *Economist*, this capital is absorbed in Western financial institutions. It says, "Much of this innovation (sophisticated financial products conforming Sharia laws) has been driven by non-Muslim, western financiers. Several big international banks have set up Islamic-finance subsidiaries: besides Citi Islamic Bank, there are HSBC's Amanah, UBS's Noriba and others."²⁶³ For several reasons enumerated by Guy Brown the Middle East is the last place on earth to receive this capital²⁶⁴.

The above view does not say this huge capital is directly invested in "Islamic" projects. Nonetheless, it reflects the size of potential Islamic finance that could back the business-activism network globally. This potential has materialized to finance charity transnational organizations that are stretching their scope of action through the four corners of the world, Islamic universities in Malaysia, Pakistan, Netherlands and US, as well as research centers, editorials, media institutions and giant websites, and student organizations all over the world. It is in this global network that national networks are embedded in and relying on. It is through this global network of business and activism that RDI could finance its first project, a kid's multimedia CD telling the story of Prophet Joseph/Yousuf, Safeer could start up its long and successful journey, Salah Sultan could move from Egypt to the Gulf countries and finally to US where he co-founded and has headed an Islamic university, the Islamic university in Rotterdam received its financial subsidiaries flowing from Kuwait and Emirates and the Editor of International Studies moved from Egypt to receive his post in Pakistan and then come back through a temporary job in Qatar Charity Society to reach Egypt again and head IOL. While the American Administration is tracing this global network assuming its infrastructure function to global terrorism the network indeed is not less benign than say the Egyptian or the Qatari networks. In fact if it had been used to finance terrorism at all that would have resulted not from its conspiratorial character but in fact from its very openness character. Interestingly, though this notion would deserve an independent study, the newly emerging cultural, social and economic institutions, which come out of this network, are not "fundamentalist", salafi, or conservative but rather neoliberal as the network is a legal daughter of cultural and economic globalization and is maintained and regulated through their mechanisms. To further this notion a bit forward I will proceed to the following point of the producer.

The Producers

Writing about monopoly capitalism George Ritzer raised the notion that the few giant corporations controlling the market are directed not by single-handed entrepreneurs as it used to be with competitive capitalism but rather by managers. He wrote, "Although stockholders 'own' the corporation, managers exercise the day-to-day control. The managers are crucial in monopoly capitalism, whereas the entrepreneurs were central in competitive capitalism. Managers have considerable power, which they seek to maintain."²⁶⁵ In the social terrain we have a few giant Islamic discourses monopolizing the market of religion in spite of all the noise raised day and night about cultural pluralism. In fact cultural pluralism per se is but an integrated component of the giant monopolizing Islamic neoliberal discourse. This giant neoliberal Islamic discourse is not directed by single-handed intellectual entrepreneurs as El Banna in old-fashioned MBG, Hafez Salama in Gama'a Islamiya, Ibrahim Ezzat in Tableegh wa Da'awa or Ben Baz in Salafiya. It is produced, reproduced, managed and regulated by people like Amr Khaled, Al Habib Al Jafri, Ragheb El Sergani and the alike.

Mike Featherstone recited Hassan and Bauman to emphasize the decline of the intellectual role in postmodernism²⁶⁶. He also reflected on Bourdieu's work to shed light on the increasing importance of the "cultural intermediaries" who "actively promote and popularize the intellectuals' lifestyle to a larger audience as well as help to break down the exclusivity of intellectual knowledge and the range of pursuits and fields intellectuals can be induced to comment on. This helps to collapse some of the old barriers and symbolic hierarchies, which were based on the high culture/mass culture distinction. It also helps to educate and create a larger audience for intellectual and artistic goods and experiences, which are receptive to some of the sensibilities manifest in phenomena like postmodernism."²⁶⁷

The so-called New Preachers, IOL editors and the organizers and attendees of cultural Islamic salons are cultural intermediaries who, adopting the intellectuals' lifestyle, are

engaged in the production and circulation of the new discourse. They, unlike the intellectuals, lack a clear vision, if at all. They only seek to increase the production and spread of their produce like the managers of the giant corporations who are "highly rational group oriented to maximizing the profits of the organization. Therefore they are not inclined to take the risks that were characteristic of the early entrepreneurs."²⁶⁸ They maintain and regulate the production rather than innovating, orienting or directing it. They would reproduce 29 minutes taped from satellite channels to copy them on one million CDs and use the network and all their marketing skills to distribute them all over the world in seven languages. They will however not dare to offer a new vision proposing either fighting Israel or making peace with it.

The CDs of scholars like Sha'arawi, Hassan Ayoub and Qaradawi are humbly withdrawing leaving their RDI shelves to performers', like Amr Khaled, CDs. Featherstone concluded, "In short their skills as communicators and performers thus have priority over the sacred content of their messages."²⁶⁹ It is also the form, in which they deliver their message and its very marketability that gives weight and authority to their discourse. If Featherstone is giving priority to the performance over the content of the message Gregory Starrett is giving it to the form of the message over the performer. Starrett wrote, "Authority now is more a characteristic of products themselves (sermons, lessons, advice, books, magazines, cassette tapes, computer software) than productive processes (apprenticeship, certification, jurisprudential skills). Who the producer is -when that can be determined- is less important than the marketability of what he has to say."²⁷⁰ In both cases above the message and its carrier are giving their status away to the form of the message and the way it is performed. It is therefore not what Khaled or Qaradawi know but how they display their knowledge, whatever its content is, before their audience that matters.

That brings us back to the pretender petit bourgeois notion and also to the notion of the open network. The point I want to stress here is that this network is as open as a prestigious social club is open to the "public". Yes, the club is not like MBG, which

membership is restricted and closed. It is open to anyone, anyone who can afford the fees of his/her membership. Issandr El Amrani and Tjitske Holtrop wrote, "When she gave Amr Khaled the position of head preacher at Al Maghfira mosque in Agouza, where her father, renowned Quran reciter Sheikh Al Hussairi used to preach, Yasmine Al Khayyam probably had little idea of what she was in for. Within a couple of years, Khaled's Saturday afternoon sermons at the mosque had become so popular that they systematically gridlocked nearby Midan Sphinx as hundreds of young upper middle class youths came to hear his words. Al Khayyam continued to use her own social credentials to introduce him to her peers. At the peak of his career, Amr Khaled gave over 20 lessons per week in the homes of educated, upper middle class women for whom the gatherings—which the staunchly secular weekly Rose Al Youssef pejoratively dubbed "Islamic salons"—provided access to a form of religious education that was a lot less intimidating than listening to older sheikhs. The latter, such as the late Sheikh Shaarawi, were not likely to appeal to this audience—their discourse tended to be either arcane discussions of the finer points of Islamic theology or fire-and-brimstone harangues about public morality."²⁷¹

The "open" network of Islamic salons, Al Maghfira mosque, the upper middle class women homes and later Iqra Satellite Channel, owned by the Saudi billionaire Saleh Kamel, has a keeper, Al Khayyam, an expected behavior and style from the invitee and accepted form and content of the message delivered through the network. In *Rethinking the Public Sphere*, Nancy Fraser wrote, "But this network of clubs and associations -philanthropic, civic, professional, and cultural- was anything but accessible to everyone. On the contrary, it was the arena, the training ground, and eventually the power base of a stratum of bourgeois men, who were coming to see themselves as a 'universal class' and preparing to assert their fitness to govern."²⁷² She even went far to argue that "A discourse of publicity touting accessibility, rationality and the suspension of status hierarchies (bracketing them in Habermas' words) is itself deployed as a strategy of distinction."²⁷³ Fraser later contends that in fact "it would be more appropriate to *unbracket* inequalities in the sense of explicitly thematizing them"²⁷⁴.

An editor in IOL who comes from a lower to lower-middle class background was driven away from working there. Moving to a variety of posts in Egyptian and Arab newspapers and traveling for a while to work in Netherlands he changed his status from a brother into a recognized professional journalist (in fact much of his popular work that made him famous was attacks to MBG) and got enough cultural capital to be rehired in IOL. According to his estimation he has not yet been fully tolerated. "They just do not like me and make me feel alienated. It is not a professional thing; it is probably my attitudes. They like those of the 'small-water-bottle'", he said. Curiously I asked him about this "small-water-bottle" metaphor. He laughed and said, "They are the group whom you see carrying a small mineral water bottle while wondering in IOL. They live in air-conditioned homes, which are very near to our headquarter. Nonetheless, they move to their work in their air-conditioned cars to enter eventually their air-conditioned while carrying this small mineral water bottle and I do not really have any idea why do they need it! You see them after work hours frequenting air-conditioned cultural salons, with their small bottles of course. Guess people here want me to carry my bottle to be tolerated!"

Fraser wrote, "discursive interaction within the bourgeois public sphere was governed by protocols of style and decorum that were themselves correlates and markers of status inequality. ... Here we are talking about informal impediments to participatory parity that can persist even after everyone is formally and legally licensed to participate."²⁷⁵ However, it is not only the 'cultural' capital that discriminates, economic factors do injustice to accessing the network as well. How can this editor move to attend a cultural salon, to which he is invited, in Nasr City, a salon that starts a half an hour after the work hours, unless he has simply a car? How can he attend it if the meeting is conducted in English, if the attendees can relax and enjoy the meeting when he has to think of the way he will arrive back to his home in Helwan, and if they are discussing home education in England as a way to preserve Islamic identity in the West while he can barely pay the school tuition of his kids? Concluding Fraser wrote in a one sentence, "Thus, political economy enforces structurally what culture accomplishes informally."²⁷⁶

Here, I have to come, once again, to Bauman's key remark, in which he wrote, "Things that happen inside the ideal consumer co-operative are [like culture] neither managed nor random; uncoordinated moves meet each other and become tied up in various parts of the overall setting, only to cut themselves free again from all previously bound knots. Spontaneity here does not exclude, but, on the contrary, demands an organized and purposeful action, yet such action is not meant to tame, but to invigorate spontaneity of initiative."²⁷⁷ The uncoordinated actions and moves in and through the network are neither managed (in a manipulative sense) nor random (in an anarchical sense); they are regulated.

The previous editor refused to publish an article about Orientalism. He said that it is too difficult to be understood by the teenagers; it is not the style of writing they like. He pronounced the "teenager" in English with heavy Arabic accent as he hardly speaks a few words in English. Let us put what he says beside what Mahmud in Chapter one said: "That is the kind of Islamic websites we want to see. It is not like the boring classic Islamic sites. It is *reweesh* (a word used by teens to partly mean odd, fringe and interesting)." If we would put the editor and Mahmud in two separated sides that one of them is the producer and the other is the consumer, a relation and a situation I do not accept, we will find that the common between them is the "teenager", which is an ideal, an imaginary concept, an image in their minds. Though both of them are above thirty the editor produces to the "teenager", the one in his mind, and Mahmud consumes in a sense of a teenager, the one he imagines. The "teenager" here is a regulating concept, dictating, or rather inspiring, what a "free" editor should publish and what a "free" reader should read. It is not a repressive concept, only a hegemonic one, a one that, in Bauman's words, invigorates spontaneity of initiative.

The argument here is twofold. First, it is not the producers who obtain the power and regulate the production; power is embedded in the network itself. Power is mediated and shaped through the kind of economic and cultural *aspects* of this network. There is no conspiracy weaved and promoted by a certain elite or some individuals, though there are elite

and individuals who benefit from the exercise of this power and who have more access to use this power. Reflecting on Foucault Ritzer wrote, "Foucault does not see a conspiracy by elite members of society. Such a conspiracy would imply conscious actors, whereas Foucault is more inclined to see structural relationships, especially between knowledge and power."²⁷⁸ Bauman claims this power is not meant to tame. That could be right but it could still be even worse; it is meant to contain and transform. The editor's resistance is contained and transformed so that he wants to write in a style that suits the teenagers. It is only the form not the content, he emphasizes, forgetting that it is frequently the style not the content that is consumed. Mahmud, who can barely survive with his very little income that should cover himself, his wife and his two kids urges the creation of a *reweesh* website.

Second, both authors and actors (in fact we referred earlier to Bauman, who considers both actorship and authorship as two aspects of the same process) are not completely deprived of power and not absolutely stripped off their will. Let us go back to the same editor I am referring to him above. He is conscious of the class difference and its impact on his career. He created the metaphor of the small-water-bottle. Yes, he refused to publish the article about Orientalism because it does not fit well in the "teenager" paradigm, but he asked the same writer to write against the dominating stream of civil jihad, something that has hardly a thing, whether in its form or its content, to do with that paradigm. He wrote himself and published an article portraying Amr Khaled as a bourgeois whose discourse does not meet the needs of the majority of society, an article that stirred much anger against him and put his position in IOL at risk. Mahmud, on the other hand, who wants Islamic websites be *reweesh*, is the very author of "A Preparation of a Martyr" document, to which I referred in chapter two, a document that could never be dubbed as *reweesh*. Relatively 'free' producers with some relative power could and do exist, but they exercise their relative power through the network and according to its regulation, which they 'encounter'. Therefore, we can see that network not only as a discursive power-mediating and power-exercising entity, but also as the 'site', in which class interests, economic factors, cultural elements, as well as individual

motives interact and compromise. Moreover, it is the site, in which the discourse is manufactured and, through which it is displayed.

4- Monopoly

Structure and Processes

Gregory Starrett in "Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics and Religious Transformation in Egypt"²⁷⁹ wrote that the Egyptian government is far from being a secular one. In fact it propagates religious education and religious symbols, though mostly in a national framework. This action itself creates a need, Starrett argues, which the governmental programs can't fulfill. On the other hand, the national government turned Al Azhar scholars to be *specialists*. Accordingly, their special knowledge could not be widely reached and they lost their stand in the public issues. In this environment, where there is a huge need but no suppliers, the Islamic Trend was born. Starrett wrote, "Rather than benefiting from its patronage of the 'ulama', the state has suffered from the public realization that there are, empirically, a number of alternatives available on the market, and that the state version hardly looks like the most disinterested."²⁸⁰ Starrett's work is indeed fascinating, going away from Western secular/religious dichotomy and going deep in the multi-layered complexity of Egyptian society and its modern history. It aims to show the inter-relation, be it cultural, social or political, between different Islamic discourses available in the Egyptian market of religion. Nevertheless, that relation is always working, in his writings, in a competitive framework, a competition between different discourses to get larger sectors of Muslim customers. There is, nevertheless, in his work a muffled, sometimes even muted, voice that struggles to show up.

My work here, far from aiming to contradict Starrett's work, aims indeed to extend it some steps forward. By doing so I hope to show how religious reality in Egypt has changed and how the voice muted in Starrett's work was but a herald of that change. If his work is

economically framed in the context of competitive capitalism, mine is framed in that of monopoly capitalism. The inter-relation between the state, al-Azhar and Islamists (or what Starrett calls the Trend) is competitive, authoritarian and conflictual. He wrote that state religious education undermines the authority of ulama²⁸¹; that state competition of Islamists would rather encourage their discourse²⁸²; and that al-Azhar promotion of religion through seculars will compromise his authority²⁸³. For Starrett the question is political, in terms of *who* has the authority to speak of "the" Islam. The answer to this question is grounded in the *authenticity* of the respective discourse; whose discourse is really authentic? For him, the players in the market of religion are political parties, the state, al-Azhar and the Trend. The end result of this competition is only the creation of a huge need to religion; a need Starrett thought could be met only by the product offered by the Trend²⁸⁴.

My argument would be rather different. There are/will be neither three discourses, nor three parties, nor competition. There is only a one monopolizing neo-liberal Islamic discourse produced and reproduced by an extensive socio-economic network. Perhaps parts of this network and a number of the producers belonged one day, or still officially belonging, to a one party. That, however, is not important. The point is *what* they say not *who* is saying it. What they all say, and what the network is producing is the same neo-liberal Islamic discourse that I reflected on its knowledge in the third chapter. The three discourses have finally changed and met to produce a one new discourse and the three supportive networks have meshed together to support the newly triumphant discourse. There is no competition for authority or about authenticity. It is a competition to satisfy the customer, the consumer; and it is a competition about marketability. I have already in chapter one emphasized the recognition of failure Islamists maintain, something that has motivated them to change, and the nowadays irrelevance of the notion of authenticity. Baran and Sweezy thought that a modern Marxian theory must recognize that competitive capitalism has been largely replaced by monopoly capitalism.²⁸⁵ "In monopoly capitalism, firms no longer have to compete in this way because one or a few firms control a market; competition shifts to the sale domain.

Advertising, packaging and other methods of appealing to potential consumers are the main areas of competition."²⁸⁶

New Islamism, therefore, is not working through organizational hierarchical structure like that of the state, al-Azhar or MBG. New Islamism is a discourse producing and being reproduced by a network of business and activism. It needs neither an outsider authority to further its views nor a claim of authenticity to appeal to the consumers. It is like the Foucauldian madness that "is ceaselessly called upon to judge itself"²⁸⁷. Rather than security forces, underground organization, or Azhar-sanctioned fatwa institutions, new Islamism relies on the three instruments of disciplinary power Foucault described, namely hierarchical observation, normalizing judgments and examination, all are exercised by and through the discourse, the new Islamic discourse. It fragments what is still left of old structures and creates new collectives based in lifestyles, media and taste of consumption. In his work Starrett elaborated on the socio-economic Islamic network. He wrote, "From the network of private businesses that are funded by and contribute to Islamic political and charitable activities to the quotidian spats and arguments that reveal just "how close religion is to the surface," in the words of Andrea Rugh, the Trend has moved beyond the level of a "movement" to become one of the most important contexts in which everyday life is lived."²⁸⁸

This shift from a movement to a one of the most important social contexts has been neither consciously intended nor controlled as one may conclude. In fact Starrett implied a political conspiracy by writing that "Diane Singerman suggests that there might be developing, in addition to the parallel economy (created by Islamists economic network), a 'parallel polis'"²⁸⁹ However, the 'muted' voice in his work would say, "Like other institutions, religious and educational ones fill not only a social need, but a social space. They take on a very real life of their own with interests, dynamics and potentials that are only incompletely determined by the intersection of forces that brought them about."²⁹⁰ Starrett emancipates the network from the Trend but once again he mutes this emancipation by using "incompletely" and more important by giving the Trend the state of a 'prime mover' that

"brought them about". I argue, nevertheless, that it is the transcending neo-liberal discourse "out there in reality", which is grounded in both local and global socio-cultural and economic dynamics, that changed both the structure and the processes as well as the Islamic discourses of the state, the MBG or the Trend and al-Azhar institutions. New Islamists are not deprived, though, from "agency". They *responded* to the global changes by changing their realization of the challenge they face, by letting their metanarrative be fragmented, decentralized and recycled, by changing the knowledge substance of their discourse and by leaving their structures behind to contribute in the continuous process of building up the power system, the infra-structure socio-economic network of the triumphant new discourse.

Diffusion and Inclusion

After the last Friday sermon and when I was in my way out of the mosque a smiling young man was distributing small papers. I got my paper and read it. The title was seductive: "A One-Minute Investment Projects". Fifteen "one-minute projects" were listed, among which there were reading the first sura five times to get seven thousand *hasana* (a unit of reward in Islamic tradition), reading al-Ikhlās sura fifteen times, which equals reading the entire Quran five times, praying on the Prophet PBUH twenty times so that Allah would pray on you two hundred times... I did not like the language, though I, of course, believe in the message and the text behind. Anyway, I came back with my father to his home and picked up an old magazine left open in the living room. It was al-Ahram al-Arabi²⁹¹, a supposedly governmental magazine. Interestingly, a colored attractive picture of Amr Khaled was right on the glistening cover. The title below the photo was no less seductive than the small paper's title. It says: An Invisible Caller (came to me) While Sleeping (and) Brought Me Back to Allah. The Magazine devoted three colored pages right in the middle to interview Khaled. I skipped the first half of the magazine to read the interview. The inside titles were: "Amr Khaled calls for the *hasanat* annual sale (*okazion*)", I used to fast and not pray until the invisible caller came to me in sleeping, he slept after a football match in al-Ahli Club so the invisible caller came urging him to go praying, the first star of Islamic *da'wa* is keen to buy the *fanous*, and in the dark scene

he still emphasizes that Islamic Civilization is still able to rise up and Muslims and *Umma* youth are still fine.

After the first question the second question came to ask Khaled how much of Quran does he read in Ramadan. Immediately Khaled made the calculations. He said, "The reading of a one letter equals one *hasana*. That makes it ten because normally Allah multiplies the one *hasana* by ten. Because it is in Ramadan it will be again multiplied by seventy. Taking into consideration that the one part of Quran has an average of seven thousand letters and that the Quran of course is composed of thirty parts the equation will be $1 \times 10 \times 70 \times 7000 = 4900000$. Now this is for a one part. Imagine this figure multiplied in thirty! This is why I say it is a real sale/*okazion*."²⁹² Khaled's interview occupied the pages from 44 to 46. Page 47 was devoted to Qaradawi, the most famous MBG Azhari scholar. The page has a name: Fatawi al-Qaradawi/Qaradawi Fatwas. The two titles making the headlines were: that who has sexual intercourse in Ramadan while forgetting it is Ramadan will be forgiven and kissing, for the fasting, is no problem. More Islamic pages occupied pages from 53 all through 67. Tantawi, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Ali Guma'a, the Mufti of Egypt, Hashem, the ex-President of al-Azhar University, Zakzouk, the Minister of Religious Affairs and Fahmi Huwaidi, the 'independent' modern Islamic intellectual were interviewed. Those interviewed represented what Starrett recognized as competing adversaries using competing structures and networks to further different, and of course competing, discourses. A reader of the Magazine, however, would find almost no problem to exchange quotations with names to get the same open, modern and tolerant neo-liberal discourse that has engulfed the all of them.

To draw lines between different 'representatives' and grant them titles of assumed discourses in the name of classification or theoretical work is to make aggression against the innocent reality. How can we accept Starrett's view when al-Ahram is hosting the assumed whole spectrum? How can we accept it when the people, whom I met, even the ones tortured and humiliated, emphasize once and once again "the government is no problem"? How can we imagine a separate, distinguished and isolated Azhar discourse just because Azhar

students get different education? Were not Ghazali and Qaradawi the most famous MBG scholars Azhari sheikhs having the same education? Was not Omar Abdel Rahman, the Jihad leader and mufti an Azhari scholar? How will we explain the foundation of the society of Azhar Scholars Front, which alienated itself from the official Azhar discourse? How can we draw any line between what Mubarak is saying in the annual celebration of the Prophet PBUH and what Sheikh el-Azhar, the Minister of Religious Affairs or the General Guide of MBG?

Far from being three separate and competing structures and networks as Starrett claims²⁹³ it is in fact a one transcending network that could have, as a network, many approaches, approaches that lead right to the heart of this network where politicians, scholars, activists, businessmen, bureaucrats, and intellectuals, be they affiliated to specific parties, institutions and organizations or just 'independent' -whatever the word independent means- meet and work through its discursive channels. The units of this network, whatever their "country of origin" was, migrate independently to meet other units and join them in a movement and connections enhanced by socio-economic, cultural and political incentives and ambitions. Perhaps the government is founding a new Islamic periodical to further the 'right' version of Islam. Once the periodical is in the market driven by its invisible hand and visible actors it will invite writings and interviews to people the government perhaps never thought of giving them a chance to air their views. To produce the one million CDs the member of the Guidance Office of MBG invited and sought the help of the government because "Time is not in our side. The danger is coming and will not differentiate between the people and the rulers. Everyone is targeted!" Gamal Qutb the Azhari scholar and the ex-president of Fatwa Committee of al-Azhar has been frequently invited to talk and participate in the activities of the International Center for Studies and Misr Society for Culture and Dialogue. IOL has always been open to both Azhari scholars and governmental speakers and politicians.

As people are getting suspicious and worried from the government intentions and plans to change religious curricula, it was no one but Selim el-Awwa, the 'independent' Islamic intellectual, the lawyer of MBG and the advocate and supporter of al-Wasat Party,

who far from using the chance to attack the government, he wrote in el-Osboa announcing that "the development of education in Egypt is made by a center that includes the elite of pedagogic professors and the distinguished experts of educational curricula." To remove any doubts of the center he went to narrate a personal story that happened to him when he was invited to a "closed symposium" attended by "the big responsible officials" who have "the power and the correct information". He clearly stated, "Changing educational curricula is something that continuously happen by all education ministries through special institutions that take care of the global scientific advancement and the local and global social relations..."²⁹⁴ El Awwa is currently heading Misr Society for Culture and Dialogue, which he co-founded and invited to its board a variety of figures representing a wide spectrum of Egyptian intelligentsia and activism. In a meeting with Mohamed el-Samman, a co-founder and a Board member of MSCD I was debating the necessity of a clear view to further dialogue when he interrupted me saying, "... you do not understand. We invite people to the Society to express their different views and dialogue them. We, on the other hand, emphasize only the dialogue itself; I mean the value of the dialogue." El-Samman has indeed left his unit of the network quite open, (perhaps too open that once again we remember that the content of openness could be only emptiness) to mesh with and receive any *trend*.

Going to the "public sector religious periodicals" Starrett found no much difference than their private sector counterparts. Rather than concluding they both have a one discourse he concluded "This has been part of a concentrated effort to adopt the language and tactics of the Islamist movement so as better to compete with them on their own ground."²⁹⁵ Their "own ground" and "their language and tactics" are to "emphasize the application of Islamic principles to daily life."²⁹⁶ This language indeed neither belongs to the Trend, al-Azhar, nor the government, though it had been adopted by the three of them for long decades. This language, in fact this discourse, is a complex body of knowledge bringing together 'Islam' and 'modernity', a discourse that is rooted in and had been nourished by al-Afghani, Abdu, Reda, Abu Zahra, Taha Hussein, el-Akkad, el-Sharkawi, Heikel, Abdel Kader Auda, Mustafa Mahmud... who are Muslim scholars, intellectuals and writers and professionals. Moreover, it

is a discourse developed and furthered by Muslims who are distributed from end to end in the Islamic World as well as by religious academies and institutions in the four corners of the globe. It is the modern Islamic discourse that we will make much injustice by reducing it to MBG activists' work. The competition Starrett was interested in was real, but between political parties, namely the state, the Trend and al-Azhar, not between different discourses. Like the Trend the government has maintained a discourse of Islam that emphasizes the validity of Islam in all times and places, that asserts the existence of Islam in the public life, that states clearly and explicitly in the constitution that Islam is *the* main source of legislation, that advocates religious values and religious education and that any difference in stands between the government and the Trend would be grounded in different interpretations of the text not a denial or undermining of religion per se.

How much the above picture could be different from the view today? Why do we speak today of monopoly as a shift from a competitive paradigm? In fact the difference is not of having a one or a more than a one discourse. The modern Islamic discourse that was created and has been developed and maintained to help Muslims articulate their religion in everyday modern life is swiftly replaced by a neo-liberal discourse more suitable to the new socio-cultural and economic reality, in terms of post-modernity, plurality, a triumphant liberalism, a monopoly capitalism, a shift from the political to the economic, etc. There is a one more difference, an important one indeed. There is no longer much need to political parties with their competing structures and hierarchies to further this discourse. The discourse is grounded in a relatively independent network of business and activism, less influenced by the direct control of any state institution, Islamic movement or religious authoritarian institution. The neo-liberal discourse, here in its Islamic version, is fragmenting all old structures and recycling them inside its continuously moving, diffusing, and roaring restless glutton network. Even the non-popular and/or more marginal discourses of salafi, jihad, and sufi Islam are reproduced as 'lifestyles', in spite of all the rhetoric and polemics of multiculturalism and pluralism, which are frequently and unfortunately reduced into diversity of lifestyles. More than ever the Islamic discourse cannot be claimed to a one party like the

Trend. From now and on there should be no more arbitrary use of the word Islamism to refer to only Islamists' Islamism.

Sale Competition

If You are Not Out Selling, You are Being Outsold; that was the title Michael St. Lawrence, and Steve Johnson chose for their book. Advertising to their book they went writing, "*No matter what sort of business professional you are, you have to sell to succeed: make yourself heard, make your ideas known, convince others to act on them. No matter what you are selling, you need confidence, energy, and, above all, a positive attitude. If You are Not Out Selling, You're Being Outsold shows you how to energize your outlook, sell your ideas, produce top-quality work, and make others want to do business with you.*"²⁹⁷ The authors gave their readers an advice. They wrote, "Find the highest *achievers* in any industry and you'll find a legion of winners who know how to OUTSELL—*whose drive, confidence, and persuasiveness power them to the top and keep them there.* To join this exclusive club, you don't need an Ivy League education or an alphabet soup after your name, but you do need to understand the basic principles, absorb the positive attitudes, and learn the fundamental skills you will find in this book."²⁹⁸ Sale, it seems, is the slogan of the time. The two options left are being a salesman or a sold commodity; of course the third option is to be both, to sell yourself. What you are selling is not important as long as you have the drive, confidence and persuasiveness. In this feverish, and horrible market, in which everyone is necessarily engaged, the successful is the one who sells the most, no matter what he is selling.

The dark picture above poses a simple and possibly naïve question; where will all this product go; who will consume it; and how would consumption keep pace with such feverish sale? According to Baran and Sweezy, the only choice remaining is waste.²⁹⁹ Waste is a very part of consumerism. Always-bored consumers keep moving searching for the new; the new article, the new preacher, the new cassette, the new website... They take less and less time in consumption. The drive to search for the new is more intense than the willing to enjoy

consuming what they find. The intensity to have what they have not is more than the willing to enjoy what they have. They are never satisfied. They want to keep all different and new options available, to keep surfing, tasting, deciding, buying... The ever-expanding market creates new places for salesmen; everyone is invited to try his/her luck. Advertisers for this ceaseless pace grant the culture positive names: plurality, interactivity, power shift and prosumption, multiculturalism and cultural democracy... One of the secrets of this competition is that diversity sells. In a one magazine you would have a plenty of styles; Khaled, Tantawi, Guma'a, Zakzuk, Huwaidi, Hashem... "What they sell is no matter". Diversity per se pleases the consumer. Having the all of them on the table in the living room is certainly good. Looking at their smiley faces shown in big colored and glistening pictures is "cool".

The pictures and titles in Khaled's interview occupy at least 40% the size of the three pages. There are two big photos. There are also two short last questions posed to him at the end of the interview. First, "through you frequent visiting to Lebanon, how did you find the environment of da'wa there, what are religious and religio-legal issues raised among the Lebanese youth and how different these issues are relatively to those raised in Egypt." Khaled's answer was quite simple: "The Lebanese society is a strange structure of different factions, different religions and different ideas. No doubt I got great experience from being in the Lebanese society. I could, al-hamdu le-llah, gain the respect of most of those factions. The Lebanese society has learnt from the war a great lesson; how to live together and accept the other. There has been great love and great understanding between me and the Lebanese youth, even in playing football games. They attend my lectures whenever I come from London to Beirut." The interviewer went right away to ask the next question, assuming he has received an answer. "Through your direct experience with Arabs and Muslims abroad, what are the aspects of shortage in the Islamic discourse to the West? Do Islamic centers play the role it is assumed to play in defending Islam in Europe and America? How do you see the future of the Islamic da'wa in the shadow of this fierce attack against Islam and Muslims everywhere? What are the learnt lessons that we can take from Ramadan to rise up with the Umma and the Islamic Civilization that once stimulated the world?" Khaled was not less fast

in delivering his answer. "There is a severe shortage in making West know Islam. The Islamic centers do their best but it needs more efforts. I am optimistic that this Ramadan will bring in victory to Muslims and Islam. I have evidences and proofs on that. You will see with your eyes signs of Allah's signs in guiding the youth in Ramadan."³⁰⁰ The sophisticated questions and the irrelevant shallow answers might be my problem; unnecessarily they are consumer's problems. A consumer of Khaled will be happy enough to find his photos, skim through the headlines, read the first interesting lines of the invisible caller and the last optimistic lines of the imminent victory and be happy that he has a newest version of a marketable product, which occupies three entire shelves/pages, right on his living room table. From a use-value perspective the questions and answers are no value, a problem; from a sale competition perspective they are necessary waste, a solution.

On the other hand, who said the new customer wants the best? The better is all what s/he needs. Reflecting on Richard Rorty's article 'Movements and Campaigns' Bauman wrote, "It is better to concentrate on the better than to chase the best, implies Rorty. The alternative as we know now only too well, never managed to reach the best, while it did manage to sacrifice a lot of the better in the bargain. Campaign politics looks attractive precisely as a substitution for the discredited movement politics, notorious for neglecting the real present for the sake of an imaginary future, only to neglect again today's future for the moment it stops being imaginary."³⁰¹ Khaled was not happy because in the future Islam will get victorious. Khaled is optimistic because he has right now proofs and evidences Islam *is* doomed to be victorious. The journalist was rambling with questions about steps, real steps, to change reality and make a better future. The first star of da'wa, on the other hand, was too smart to slip down with him. He has already evidences Islam is victorious. That is what a new customer would expect from a perfect new salesman.

IOL has been launching a number of campaigns. These campaigns start suddenly and cease off promptly. She'ab al-Hureya the promised visitors to be their own media means vanished and no one is asking where or why. The same could be said about the Anti-

Profligacy Party, the Anti-Nudity Brigades and the Anti-Zionism Campaign. The Intifada was accompanied by campaigns that were meant, or that what was said, to continue; boycotting American goods, boycotting Coca Cola, collecting money to the victims, sending thousands of e-mails, signing e-petitions... The only thing that continued is in fact Intifada itself.

Starrett wrote, "This kind of knowledge-produced-for-exchange is what Lyotard labels "postmodern"; it is knowledge whose claim to attention is its social efficiency and the speed with which it is produced, rather than its place in a metanarrative of progress or salvation."³⁰² I would use "marketability" here in the place of "social efficiency". In chapter three I mentioned and elaborated on two standards that regulate everyday Islamism namely usefulness and un-prohibited-ness. I also briefly mentioned the third standard: being successful. What makes an idea, a project, or an initiative successful is its level of marketability; how much it is accepted by the market and desired by consumers. Success here is not measured "to a metanarrative of progress", a claimed meta-Islamic project, or even to its effect on a partial change in reality. There is neither a meta-project, a dream of the future, to which Islamists work, nor a vision of what "essentially" must be changed. Un-prohibited-ness and usefulness are important, but not enough to declare a piece of work or thought 'Islamic' in its activist sense as 'Islamism' unless it is marketable. To be marketable, action or knowledge should pass quality control tests of cultural consumerism. Dynamics of sale competition, campaigning, advertising, packaging, etc. would also be needed. Tarek Ramadan, a Swiss liberal Islamic scholar who calls for a European Islam to Muslims minorities in the West is important to the Arabic page of IOL to be covered. In his covering the editor introduced/advertised him, to visitors supposedly not living in Europe and have not yet heard about him, as "one of the most important 100 persons in the 20th Century, the Martin Luther of Islam!"

Ramadan is important for Arab visitors of the Arabic page because the market to which action and knowledge are measured is rather global. To be marketable in Switzerland and France is to be marketable in Egypt as well. Three factors are making the market rather

global. First, there is the new technology of communication, satellite channels and Internet. Khaled is living now in London and sometimes he moves to the Gulf countries or Lebanon. In the previous interview he said, "There is no any difference between my work in da'wa now and when I was in Egypt. Satellite channels broadcast from everywhere. My website exists everywhere. In fact there are now more channels I work with them besides Iqra."³⁰³ Second, the business/activism network is extended to and meshed with a global similar network. Third, the knowledge itself the discourse is carrying is rooted in and nourished by a global discourse of liberalism. In fact the American Anti-terror War and all the consequences of September eleventh are optimistically perceived by new Islamists. In my interviews they emphasized that what happened is certainly for the benefit of Islam. After what happened everyone is interested to know about Islam, they keep saying.

The Anti-terror War is creating a market for Islam, and especially for neo-liberal Islamism. Islam and democracy, the dialogue between Islam and the West, Islamic reform, etc. are frequent themes of non-stopping meetings, conferences and symposiums. 'Liberal' Islamic activists have more chance than ever to marketize their products and network their activities. Scholars, activists and scholars like Khaled Abu el-Fadl, Tarek Ramadan, Abdel Rasheed Omar, Farid Ishaq, Amira Abdin and Mohamed Abu Nimer find more ground to further their views and develop their relations. The Central European University has announced its summer program of Islamic Reformism. Nasr Abu Zaid, Aziz al-Azmeh, Nadia al-Bagdadi and Mushirul Hasan, among others, are invited to lead the work and direct it. In the CEU website an abstract was published that says, "The purpose of the course is methodologically to invigorate and historically to enrich the study of Islamic Reformism. Not least in light of more recent developments in Muslim and non-Muslim countries, including the development of scholarship, it is felt necessary both to reconsider the origins of Islamic reformism proper, including its intra-regional and intra-national dimensions, and to rethink its general conceptual configuration. This will facilitate the suggestion of theoretical approaches that would open up the phenomenon for broader understanding in its religious dimensions,

especially when compared with other religious reformist currents, and in regard to its historical and ideological relationship with secularisation and secular movements."³⁰⁴

In fact it is interesting that new Islamism is getting globally marketable not only through rooting itself in global discourse of liberalism but also through relying on and meshing with non-Islamic networks. The examples are so frequent. Besides the scholars mentioned above in the CEU program one can notice a meeting between the United Religions Initiative, an American based global interfaith dialogue organization and the Center for Islam and Democracy, a liberal American Islamic center to support the Geneva Accord recently signed by Israeli and Palestinian ex-negotiators. Sheikh Abdel Rasheed Omar is invited to be a member in a committee of the World Council of Churches. This January he is traveling to Bombay in the delegation of WCC. Abu El Ela Madi is working through a German parliamentary forum to help understanding Islam today. Mohamed Arkoun is invited to work with academic center that is both meshed with Jesuit circles and belonging to Antwerp University in Belgium. Sheikh Zaki Badawi, the Dean of the Islamic College in London is the head of the Abrahamic Forum Committee of the International Council of Christians and Jews. These endless affiliations and co-operations help support the new Islamic discourse and increase its global marketability.

The Marginalized

By gathering power and knowledge the discourse, by definition, is marginalizing some voices. The new Islamic discourse is no exception. The silence voice could hardly be detected in angry messages sent to IOL editors, shy articles published very infrequently pointing to the political problems of autocracy and human rights violations, in humble initiatives that are almost always individual to cling to a different discourse calling for political freedom and/or social justice, in jokes exchanged quietly while preparing Amr Khaled's CDs, in complaints people bring in to you after the end of the interviews, in metaphors like the small-water-bottle created to protest a dominating discourse, etc. An Islamist whose cyber-nickname is Ibn Abdel Aziz has been posting very interesting material, poems, messages and songs written, composed and song by himself to an Arabic website³⁰⁵. He points his finger right to the rulers as 'the' problem. He says his aim is to "create a discourse of resistance".

In one of his poems he says,

"I hang myself two thousand times!

Every morning never changes.

I know no matter how long I live

I will finally die because injustice is getting arrogant.

Never will I wail my luck.

Luck is the son of my silence.

My cowardice is my sin.

I swear this is my greatest sin!

I wait victory as a miracle.

I wait Mahdi to show up!

A tyrant rules thousands.

No one of them changes.

Everyone is a retreating coward.

But this is a new morning!
It is not like any other morning.
Tonight I decided to show up!
My name is never important.
It is written on my chest
A slave who decided to be free.
Verily, today my morning is different.

What is more relevant is the wide support he gets from the visitors of his pages and the messages they left. Young males and females tell him this is exactly what we want to say. Someone said, "I wish I could be the one who can write these poems." Visitors leave also other poems of 'resistance', resistance that is profoundly different than that displayed by the new Islamic discourse. I contacted Ibn Abdel Aziz and managed to meet him in US last May. The meeting was full of surprises. He was a newly immigrant to US. Nevertheless, he looked to me as a fully integrated one. An American friend whom he contacted to arrange the meeting thought he was born in California, though he immigrated only two and a half years ago. He was very 'open'. He said that he has dramatically changed his ideas after leaving Egypt. We discussed the Arab Israeli conflict and though he looked like a very conservative devout Muslim he told me that Israel is no problem. Peace is the way. We (Arabs) are selling the Palestinians and will finally give them nothing. It is strictly prohibited to harm an Israeli civilian. The problem, the only problem, is our political dictatorships and the social injustice rooted in fomented corruption.

Ibn Abdel Aziz was affiliated to MBG before he leaves Egypt. Once in US he got interested in interfaith dialogue activities especially with Christians and Jews. He has many friends of them nowadays. I was moving forth and back between two readymade models of conservatism and liberalism that seemed very insignificant at the time. Finally I decided to invite him to stay the night with me. After a long interview I went to sleep and he stayed for a while to pray. We got up to pray the Dawn Prayer and started talking again. This time he

was more emotional. He was thrilling and finally broke into crying because he thought he is a coward that he left his battlefield and went to US for material interests. He said he has always dreamed of being a martyr and never imagined this would be his end. A few days ago he sent me a message and told me that he made his mind. Soon he is coming back Egypt not to be a martyr but to be the master of martyrs. The master of martyrs/sayed al-shuhadaa according to Sunna is the one who stands before a tyrant ruler to tell him what is right and what is wrong and get killed because of his explicit verbal opposition.

Ibn Abdel Aziz and others who infrequently object and more frequently do not know how to articulate their protest to the new Islamic discourse are not classic MBG-like Islamists or activists belonging ideologically to Jihad or salafi agendas. They are not the expected marginalized voices that are most probably doomed to fade out and die, voices that have no place in the future. They are people who do not look much different than new Islamists. They share them a number of their activities, but they are unsatisfied. Most of them believe the discourse of new Islamism is no help. They are sometimes active in launching individual initiatives. They are vehemently against violence and for many aspects of the neo-liberal discourse. Almost all of them are economically pressured by the difficult economic reality in Egypt. They try to use modern technology to communicate and construct their views. The website to which Ibn Abdel Aziz post his material is the very one described by Mahmud as "rewesh". The graphics, smileys and the spoken language used in writing their messages are resemble to those of new Islamic discourse. They communicate with global discourses of resistance and activism. Ibn Abdel Aziz in his material represented in praise resistance in Latin America and tried to idealize political protest in Georgia. So far they have not succeeded to build their way. Nonetheless, they are continuously trying. Their "challenge" is different; their narrative is "new"; their discourse need much of work to be theoretically carved out and separated from new Islamic discourse and their market is still in its very beginning, if at all. They have been even more marginalized in my work. I left them to the end almost silenced. The new Islamic discourse *usually* does not directly oppress them. It is worse. It tries to make their very existence rather impossible, un-creatable.

In *Structuralism or Pragmatics* Nancy Fraser wrote, "The notion of hegemony points to the intersection of power, inequality and discourse. However, it does not entail that the ensemble of descriptions that circulate in society constitute a monolithic and seamless web, nor that dominant groups exercise an absolute, top-down control of meaning. On the contrary, 'hegemony' designates a process wherein cultural authority is negotiated and contested. It presupposes that societies contain a plurality of discourses and discursive sites, a plurality of positions and perspectives from which to speak. Of course, not all of these have equal authority. Yet conflict and contestation are part of the story."³⁰⁶ That optimistic view might do some justice and give some hope to the marginalized. It shifts them from the position of unintended artifact to be a very expected part of the new Islamic discourse, the part that carries the seeds of its own transformation and unfortunately the part that was mistakenly overlooked in my work. It is the part that poses many questions and more importantly opens many new possibilities in the future of Islamism in Egypt today where tens of thousands of Islamists are detained and imprisoned, torture is practiced systematically, people like MBG young activist Mosaad Qutb get murdered during their interrogation in State Security offices, and where corruption is spreading from end to end aggravating social injustice and pushing five young people to commit suicide only in the last few weeks because of their unbearable poverty.

Believing in the incompleteness, weakness and imperfection of human action and thought is no news. What made me chose this end is the belief that it is the work and duty of a researcher to be his/her first own critic. It is his/her work to help create a new profound perspective that endangers all what s/he has been building, to free his/her readers, to make them more skeptic and less influenced by his/her work, to emancipate the oppressed in his/her research and to promptly open his research in the very moment it is going to close.

Conclusion

Islamic discourse of Muslim Brotherhood Group MBG has been submitted to fundamental changes. The motivation behind Islamic activism/Islamism became recognition of the failure of their project, and an encounter of what they perceive as new global challenges. For Islamists those two factors re-legitimized the state, which is seen more as a partner, though with peripheral and minor significance. Globalization, far from being recognized as exclusively a threatening power, is seen as offering new spaces and opportunities of action and progress. There has also been a dramatic change in the framing metanarrative of comprehensive Islam. It is now decentralized, ghettoized, and emptied from its content and refilled with new temporary mini-contents. That was accompanied by a shift from macropolitics and collective action to micropolitics, pragmatism and individual initiatives.

The new Islamic discourse is created through the display of two main concepts: openness and resistance. Islamism, in terms of action and thought, is shaped out through the ongoing negotiation process of these two concepts. Besides coexistence and negotiation the dynamics between them could be a one of collaboration, or, on the other hand, a one of compromise. This discourse promotes a subjectivity that stresses the characters of openness, innovation, independence and richness. A power system composed of a dynamic and active network of business and activism supports this discourse and get reproduced through it. This network has a dramatic effect on re-engineering the 'active' structure of MBG. A commodified neoliberal discourse is produced and reproduced through the above network that is embedded in a similar global network of business and activism. By adopting postmodern culture characters the new discourse gets more appealing to its consumers. Market dynamics of sale competition are practiced to promote the spread of the now monopolizing discourse adopted by political players who used to be adversaries.

The new discourse is grounded in a global neoliberal discourse. It accommodates politico-economic and socio-cultural local and global changes accompanying the

disengagement of power and politics and the move of power to the realm of the economic. It also accommodates the technological progress, the consumer culture and the transnational corporate capitalism. The framing mega-changes and the liberal knowledge of openness furthered by the discourse re-define the 'Islamic' in terms of usefulness un-prohibited-ness and marketability. That fundamental change leads to a re-definition of Islamism making it a kind of add-on modules far from being components of a meta-project. The openness of the discourse and its producing network, its framing in a global neoliberal discourse and the mega changes grounding it will make Islamism add-on modules available to a number of different social activists and re-question the very definition, if not even the existence, of 'Islamist'. Instead of having distinguished Islamists with distinguished Islamic agendas and/or activism we would more witness pieces of Islamic activism incorporated and integrated in a diversity of social action local and global frameworks. Resistance to this discourse is rooted in and nurtured by the same factors and contexts responsible for the creation of the new discourse.

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