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THE CHALLENGE

A CULTURAL PROGRAM TO REJECT EXTREMISM AND VIOLENCE

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Table of Contents

<u>FOREWORD</u>	
THINKING ABOUT THE UNTHINKABLE	7
<u>PART ONE:</u>	
CULTURE IN EGYPT AND THE ARAB WORLD	9
I. DIVERSITIES	9
The Notion of Identity	9
Diversities and Commonalities	9
The Tragic Conditions of the Arab World	9
Multiple identities, one nation	10
Identities: Concentric and Overlapping Circles	11
The importance of local identities	12
Gender equality and the Arab identity	13
II. YOUTH	
The emergence of youth as a cultural force	13
III. CULTURES:	
Cultural Weaknesses and Cultural Strengths	15
The cultural scene in the Arab World today	15
The Range of Cultural Expressions	17
Poetry	18
Literature	19
Children's Books and Programs	23
Folklore	24
Theater	24
Cinema	26
Music and Dance	27
Painting, sculpture and the graphic arts	28
Architecture	30
Reuse of historic buildings	31
Conclusions	32

IV. THE POWER OF ART	32
Unfolding history and the role of creative artists	32
Art and History	32
Mirrors and windows	32
Mirrors	37
The importance of the windows	38
V. RUPTURE:	
The Transformative Revolutionary Context of ICT	39
Changing Times	39
Big Data	40
Privacy	42
Security	42
Social Connectivity	43
Bringing the Rupture Back to the Arab World and Egypt	44
Conclusions	44
<u>PART TWO:</u>	
ON EXTREMISM AND VIOLENCE	47
VI. ON EXTREMISM	47
On extremism	47
Signs and Symptoms: The Emergence of Extremist Power	47
Recruitment and indoctrination	49
Recruits	51
VII. ON VIOLENCE	53
VIII. LIGHTING THE FUSE:	
How Extremism begets violence	57
Planting the seeds of extremism	57
Beyond blatant Injustice: The Bureaucracy	59
Conclusions	62
<u>PART THREE:</u>	
THE DYNAMICS OF CULTURAL CHANGE	63
IX. CONCEPTUAL AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS	63
X. THE MULTIPLE LAYERS OF A NATIONAL CULTURE	64

XI. CULTURAL DYNAMICS:	66
A model of social behavior	
XII. THE TASK FOR THE INTELLIGENTSIA	71
<u>PART FOUR:</u>	
ELEMENTS OF A CULTURAL STRATEGY	75
XIII. CONTEXTUAL CAVEATS:	
The Double Context of the Work of Art or Cultural Output	76
XIV. BROAD BRUSHSTROKES:	
The Arab Cultural Project, its Context and Content	77
XV. OVER THE LONG HAUL:	
Education and the Formation of a National Outlook	81
The Culture of Science	81
The Values of Science	82
The Two Cultures Revisited	85
What Kind of Education	87
XVI. HOW TO GET THERE:	
Cultural Policies and Instruments for a Nation in Flux	88
To have a Vision	88
Translation of Foreign Works	88
Cultural Exchange	89
The Role of the Media	90
The Role of the Family	91
The Friday Prayers	91
The Azhar	92
Monuments	93
Social Rituals	94
Social Media	94
Creativity and Freedom of Expression	94
XVII. THE POLITICAL DIMENSION:	
On Governance, Participation and Pluralism	95
On the Need for Good Governance	95
Democracy and its Imperfections	96

From Representative Democracy to Participatory Democracy	97
Changing the Political Discourse	97
Conclusions	98
<u>PART FIVE:</u>	
SPECIFIC PROGRAMS	101
XVIII. A VAST AND COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM	101
XIX. INTRODUCING THE NEW	
Programs that are specific to the arrows Entering the diagram	102
Intellectual Domain: New Ideas	102
Perceptual Domain: Mass Media	103
Perceptual Domain: The Education System	104
Physical Domain: Modernizing Influences	105
Physical Domain: Physical Changes	105
XX. IMPROVING INTERNALIZATION:	
On the Arrows Within the Diagram	107
An Integrated and Integrating System	107
What the BA is Doing: Examples of Some Relevant Programs	107
Reissuing the Classics	108
Studies with the Mufti and Al-Azhar	109
General Programs	110
XXI. A CULTURE OF SCIENCE AND THE VALUES OF RESEARCH:	111
Promoting Rational discourse and academic excellence	111
For the public at large	111
For children	112
Build up national scientific research capacity	112
University, Graduate and post graduate levels	113
XXII. SEEDS OF HOPE – THE ARTS:	
A Program to Nurture New Generations of Artists	113
Art, Competition and Databases	113
A National eco-system for the visual arts	115
Large cultural facilities: Opera, theater and Symphony	115
Public libraries as national cultural centers	116

XXIII. THE CINEMA AND THE THEATER:	
Where Art Meets the Market	116
Our National Cinema and Audiovisual Production	116
Promoting the National Film Industry	117
The Theater	118
The future of Audiovisual Entertainment	119
XXIV. ON OUR PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT:	
A Humanist Approach to Architecture and Urbanism	120
Building Well, Growing Thoughtfully	120
Reviving the Built Heritage	120
Reviving the crafts	121
Repainting facades	122
XXV. FINDING THE MONEY:	
Funding Arrangements for Cultural Activities	122
The Scope of a National Cultural Program	122
Special funding mechanisms	123
Funding a National System of Libraries as Cultural Centers in Egypt	125
XXVI. INVESTING IN CULTURE:	
The High Economic Returns on Investing in Cultural Activities	126

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FOREWORD:

THINKING ABOUT THE UNTHINKABLE

“If certain acts against humanity appear to place their perpetrators beyond dialogue, we must still embrace interrogation – that is, self-interrogation. In what way, in turn, have we contributed to the making of such a moment? Failure to thus examine ourselves limits the long term effectiveness of response, and brackets us with the mentality of the fanatic who, literally, never seeks to recover, indeed is incapable of recovering, a long-since receded moment of doubt, the zone of possible choices, the potential of the routes not taken”..

-- Wole Soyinka¹,

The following essay is about challenging the extremist currents in our midst, challenging them intellectually, and reclaiming our cultural heritage from those who would usurp it and use it for their own political ends. To do so, it will be essential to question ourselves as Wole Soyinka so aptly says in the above-quoted epigraph. We also have to question the manner in which we have perceived our cultures and our heritage, and the tools we have used for propagating this culture.

This essay represents my reflections on these and related issues, on the role that the Library of Alexandria joining with all the cultural institutions of our society can play in confronting extremism and violence. The essay is composed of five major parts:

- Culture in Egypt and the Arab world
- On Extremism and Violence
- The Dynamics of Cultural Change:
- Elements of a Cultural Strategy:
- Specific Programs

¹ Wole Soyinka, *Climate of Fear: The Quest for Dignity in a Dehumanized World*, (the Reith Lectures of 2004), Random House, NY 2005, p.141.

PART ONE

CULTURE IN EGYPT AND THE ARAB WORLD

I. DIVERSITIES

The Notion of Identity

Diversities and Commonalities:

The Arab World, and the Muslim World for that matter, is remarkably diverse in levels of educational attainment, in socio-economic development, in the political institutions of its governance, and the wealth and incomes of its citizens. So any effort that claims to address the “Arab World” or the “Muslim World” has got to be taken with a great deal of caution. Such definitions are definitions of convenience that consciously and purposely ignore many of the differences to highlight one presumed commonality that justifies using such a delineation. However, there is a level of justification in talking of the Arab world insofar as commonality of language and some common features of joined elements in our past history may excuse a designation that is largely political: they are members of the Arab League. That still combines Somalia and UAE, Yemen and Qatar, Egypt and Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia, and so on... divergences that are quite substantial and definitely incite intellectual caution. Yet, it is true that people in Arab countries feel a certain affinity for that which befalls citizens in other Arab countries.

So with these cautionary remarks laid out at the outset, it is pertinent to address the substance of the challenges that Arab citizens face:

The Tragic Conditions of the Arab World

From isolationism to failed states to civil wars to new forms of barbarism, the political conditions in most of the Arab World could hardly be worse. Violence is everywhere, terrorism and extremism are flagrantly challenging some governments who have but limited legitimacy, and millions have become homeless

refugees both within their own countries and formally crossing frontiers into neighboring countries. Humanitarian crises are continuous. We are witnessing a debacle of historic proportions. Why? Is it fair to refer to an Arab World? Or does each individual country have its own distinct identity and its own individual history that brought about its own demise?

For most of the Arab World, identity is based on culture, and specifically a shared language. This was one of the fundamental insights of such artisans of the *Nahda* movement in the 19th century as Jurji Zaidan. True, they recognized that Islam played a dominant role in the historical content of Arabism, but they contrasted their Pan-Arab project with the Pan-Islamic Ottoman reality of many nations and cultures under the big tent of Islam. In their own project, they recognized Arabs as a distinct people, where not every Arab was Muslim and not every Muslim was Arab.

Multiple Identities, One Nation:

So Arabism was a broad identity that is based on an open inclusiveness: those who adopt our culture and our language and our discourse are included in our society ... it is a rejection of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, ethnic origin or other factor that underlies that vision of inclusiveness. Different Arab Countries have different histories and therefore have different identities, but they share an overarching identity of being Arab.

However, Egypt has a truly unique identity. Ever since Narmer (or Mena) united the northern and southern parts of Egypt in 3100 BC, that is more than 5,000 years ago, and Egypt has been centrally governed as the land of Egypt, roughly in the same frontiers, and Egyptians have been concentrated in the Nile valley. Thus, a truly Egyptian identity has evolved, tied to the land and the Nile, and capable of absorbing all the successive waves of immigrations and conquests that have punctuated its history.

With the advent of Arab Muslims in the seventh century, the country underwent a profound transformation as Islam replaced Christianity as the majority religion, and Arabic became the language of both rulers and ruled. Despite a strong affinity between Egyptians and other Arabs, they remain Egyptians first and Arabs

second. Islam, along with other components are involved as important constituents of the Egyptian identity, but Islam – as perceived by political Islamic movements – is the predominant and first component only for a minority of Egyptians, even though the overwhelming majority of the population are very devout. But many other Arabs lack that sense of primary identity with a larger entity, and thus forge identities that are primarily local or subnational and in which religion plays an important role: thus Iraqi nationals identify primarily as Kurdish Sunnis, Arab Sunnis or Arab Shiites and as Iraqis second. It is a nationalist narrative that is echoed at the micro scale in other places, such as Lebanon.

For a democracy that works it is important that the dominant identity be that of the sovereign government that one belongs to as a citizen. For equality before the law, an essential pillar of citizenship requires that this be the government we most relate to. Other units (states, regions, localities, as well as affinities such a religion, political orientation, etc.) are possible identifiers, but should not supplant the dominant identity. Thus in Switzerland, local identities are strong, but the German-speaking Swiss do not want to split from Switzerland to join Germany, any more than the French-speaking Swiss want to secede to join France. The Swiss identity holds them together.

Identities: Concentric and Overlapping Circles:

The fact is that we are all given multiple identities by birth and upbringing (gender, race, ethnicity and family, national origin) and usually we grow up learning the language of our milieu and accepting the religion of our parents. Most children adopt their parents' religion and few convert to another religion at a later stage. We usually acquire some other identities such as group or club affiliations, political positions, etc. Fanatics want people to reduce their identities to one overarching identity, be it religious, ethnic, or political. This is obviously at the expense of pluralistic affinities and the multi-layered reality of modern society. This point has been forcefully made by Amartya Sen and by Amin Maalouf²

² see: Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (Issues of Our Time), W. W. Norton & Company: New York, Reprint edition (February 17, 2007), and Amin Maalouf, “*Les identites meurtrieres*”, Grasset: Paris, 1998.

The Importance of Local Identities:

It is important to develop local identities, i.e. a sense of affinity with one's neighbors and local neighborhood. This is basic to create a sense of community and a sense of responsibility towards the maintenance and improvement of that community, and its defense against aggression by outsiders.

Note that the major objections that poor remote villagers have towards the more extreme elements is not their extremism as measured by the standards of western society or international Human Rights considerations, rather it is that they are foreigners coming in to impose their will on them. The ethnic, local and religious identities are frequently stronger than moral precepts. In the same way, when confronted with electoral choice, these same individuals will prefer to support one of their own – or as close to that as possible – than to support a demonstrably better candidate who does not share these foundational identities with them.

Yet one cannot design a system of governance for a modern Arab state today on the basis of a mosaic or ever-smaller ethnically-religiously-cleansed homogenous tiles. The Swiss example is a delusion, insofar that it functions largely by imposing very strict limits on the central (federal) authority, which would limit the extent that an Arab country modeled on Switzerland can function as a nation amidst the concert of nations today, especially in so volatile and unsettled a region. Lebanon could perhaps attempt such a formula, although its experience with Confessionalism did produce the 1975-1990 civil war with all its casualties. For many other countries, however, they would have to deal with the legacy of the Arab world's current boundaries, almost all of which are fairly recent in origin, many drawn without adequate regard to the desires of the inhabitants, would put a premium on the local identities at the canton level rather than the national identity at the national or confederation level. This would result in continuing tensions at the border cantons for leaving one confederation to join another resulting in a complete redrawing of the map at the expense of the national federal authorities concerned.

Gender Equality and the Arab Identity:

Let us recognize that the claims of cultural specificity that would deprive women of their basic human rights, or mutilate them in the name of convention, should not be given sanction, especially by those who, like myself, are proud of their Arab and Muslim identity and do not want to see the essence of that tradition debased by such claims. Let us recognize that no society has progressed without making a major effort at empowering its women, through education and the ending of discrimination.

Yet, the more extreme of the conservatives, have become more vocal after the fall of secular autocrats in the MENA region. But this is not “tradition” that is being defended, it is a distorted form of political pseudo-theological “inquisition” that is being proposed, that would limit the freedoms of the non-Muslim minorities and would circumscribe the Muslim majority within the confines of dogmas articulated by a tiny minority .

But, even in those countries that are not torn by the militant Islamist fanatics, for a variety of reasons, most states have tended towards a conservative and even misogynic interpretation of their cultural legacy that has been detrimental to the status of women. Though women in these societies have played a central role in the revolutionary developments we have witnessed in the last decade, and particularly since the Arab Spring, much still remains to be achieved. Empowering women in our predominantly-Muslim Arab societies remains the touchstone of real reform in these countries. It is the litmus test of real progress and will be critical for lasting gains in the cultural, political, economic and social development of these countries.

II. YOUTH

The Emergence of Youth as a Cultural Force

A new youthful effervescence is everywhere. The political expression of the youth movements were manifested in the revolutions of the Arab Spring in 2011 and beyond. That many of these revolutions were taken over by organized religious forces and that the cleavages in many societies led to chaotic conditions, civil wars and the emergence of the most extreme forms of barbaric terrorism

being displayed by the forces of the so-called “Islamic State” in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is a manifestation of the combination of several historic broad societal currents:

- **The intellectual bankruptcy of many of the Arab regimes** over long periods of reign preceding the revolutions of the Arab Spring. Their inability to renew the social contract in a meaningful fashion, and the continued monopolization of power by a mediocre elite that suppressed youthful talent and imposed a system of patronage for political and social advancement.
- **The re-emergence of political Islam**, long suppressed by a nationalist and secular political narrative, but given new wings by the Iranian revolution, the funding of the oil states and rich Arab individuals and the emergence of Hizbullah in Lebanon during the long civil war there and its role against the Israeli war in Lebanon. These and other factors were “topped up” by the return of the “Afghan Arabs” who were allied to the native Mujahedeen against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which yielded the Taliban regime there.
- **The American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent** mismanagement of the tense ethnic and religious cleavages in that society dealt a traumatic blow to the self-confidence of Muslims, who viewed the direct invasion by America and its allies of both Iraq and Afghanistan, as a direct humiliation of Muslims by the West. Furthermore, the systematic murder of civilians by the use of drones in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen and elsewhere; all served to inflame sentiments of victimization that fed the Muslim majorities’ emotional despair and consequent greater readiness to accept more extreme positions that would promise a return of a modicum of self-esteem and dignity in the face of perceived continued humiliation.
- **The continued Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories** and the incompetence of Fatah and its leadership which brought forth Hamas in Gaza.

- **The emergence of a powerful tyrannical bureaucracy**, especially in Egypt, which stifles and alienates all who deal with it. This type of bureaucratic tyranny had already been identified as a cause of the youthful rebellion of the 1960s throughout the west.

So the manifestation of fanaticism and extremism is a renunciation of the more subtle and multi-layered reality of multiple identities. It is an effort that rejects equality of gender, and religions and seeks to impose its will by force. It draws on the religious fervor of new converts and on the bruised local identities of victimized people to mobilize forces against others, e.g. Sunni Arabs in Iraq in the last decade. It is sapping the energies of youth by ever more extreme displays of violence and rejection of any discussion. The cultural battle ahead is therefore one that must assert pluralism and exalt its enriching aspects, while it develops the more complex set of identities that each of us possesses.

To fight such a battle it may be useful to survey the terrain of battle: the cultural scene in the Arab world today, with its weaknesses and its strengths.

III. CULTURES:

Cultural Weaknesses and Cultural Strengths

The Cultural Scene in the Arab World Today

Today, in most fields, we witness a significant increase in the quantity of new productions, be it in paintings, books, films, TV or music. The true avant-garde of Arab art and culture are youthful underdogs while commercial productions of middling merit continue to dominate the markets. This can be traced from the 1970s to the present. Egypt which used to dominate the cultural market in the Arab world (with a feisty Lebanon close behind), today is one of many producers of art and culture as the landscape of production is much more diversified. The Gulf States with their enormous financial resources opened up to new ideas and are now global centers of media producers and cultural institutions, and many other Arab countries have built up their cultural production. Furthermore, in recent years imports from Turkey and India began to find lucrative markets on Arab TVs and cinema screens, in addition to the western, mostly American, films.

In addition, while the socio-economic and political situation in the Arab world today could hardly be worse, there is, on the whole, a remarkable surge of cultural activity. Literature, cinema, theater, music, are all flourishing in a strange, schizophrenic way. In most countries, with a few notable exceptions, the old elites in control of political, economic and cultural institutions refused to create the space that would allow new talent to flourish. This resulted in climates that promoted mediocrity, suppressed youthful initiative, and created **a distinct generational gap** between the establishment and the rising youthful generation of artists, intellectuals and potential political leaders. All this was further exacerbated by **the rupture** that was brought forth by the younger generation's adoption of the new transformative technologies of the ICT revolution, which their elders barely understood, much less mastered.

How could this youthful vigor co-exist with the political and socio-economic disasters we are witnessing across most of the Arab world?

That this strange dualism could exist in our societies with young artists and writers reinventing the cultural landscape of their countries, while their world is falling apart around them should come as no surprise to anyone who would briefly reflect on the history of the West in the last century.

The transformation of western art and literature occurred largely between the end of the 19th century and the end of the Second World War. These were periods where empires collapsed, revolutions occurred, the great economic depression marked generations in America, hyper-inflation marked Germany, and the extremist regimes of Fascism, Nazism and Communism all came into being. The political scene could hardly have been worse. But the cultural transformation of the West was underway, driven not by the elites and the art establishments, but by the rebellious youth and the counter culture movements. From painting with Post-impressionism, Cubism, Dadaism and Surrealism, to Abstract Expressionism, and from the emerging medium of film and powerful works like Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915), and *Intolerance* (1916) and Eisenstein's *Potemkin* (1925), to novels like Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and Malraux's *Man's Fate* (1933) to Orwell's dystopian *1984* (1948), Zamiatin's *We* (1924), Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1915) and the *Trial* (1925), and Huxley's *Brave new World* (1932) to those who chronicled the end of empire or the rise of the bourgeoisie, or

who bore witness to the War, such as Curzio Malaparte's *Kaputt* (1944), literature and art were very much at the heart of that counterpoint to the prevalent political and economic power elites and the dysfunctional societies that they were creating and the unbelievable havoc and destruction that they were wreaking. An echo of that would appear in the youth movements of the 1960s, also analytically captured very thoughtfully in such works as Edgar Morin's *L'Esprit du Temps* (1962) and other works by other analysts and writers.

I believe that we are witnessing a similar dualistic development in the Arab cultural and socio-political scenes today, except, that I still yearn for some artists and creative minds of the stature of the key figures of that western transformation I am here describing. But let us now review some of the most important trends on the most important domains of culture in Egypt and the Arab World.

The Range of Cultural Expressions

When we talk of the cultural scene, it encompasses a wide range of activities: literature (including poetry, plays, novels and short stories), the visual arts (including the graphic arts, painting and sculpture), music, dance, theater, cinema, architecture and the built environment. The cultural scene also involves journalism, TV and the Mass Media, as well as books and publications, plus the new domains of cyberspace and virtual reality. Artistic and cultural endeavors also require teaching and criticism, and the publications and venues needed for both.

But culture also involves the spread of a culture of science, that not only promotes the spread of the values of science (see below) but also promotes reason and logic and evidentiary based approaches to arbitrate disputes and advance government regulation of activities. It promotes pluralism and listening to the contrarian view. It encourages pluri-disciplinary approaches to complex societal problems, approaches that will link the knowledge of the natural sciences to the insights of the social sciences and the wisdom of the humanities. It involves the education system, and the protection of heritage, including the intangible non-material heritage and folklore, as well as contemporary artistic endeavors. Freedom of expression is required in all these media in order to promote creativity and talent.

Clearly, an exhaustive review of all the above would be beyond the scope of this essay. However, we can try to show some highlights that would touch upon much more than one angle or even a sector of activity, especially that it is one of our premises that we need to promote pluralism in all these cultural domains.

Poetry:

Poetry has always had a very prominent position in the Arabic literary canon and in fact has held the primary place from pre-Islamic days to the 20th century. In the second half of the 20th century two major changes occurred. First: the novel totally displaced poetry as the central literary art form; and Second: the classical poetic structure (metered and rhymed) would give way to free verse and colloquial expression. The classical tradition arguably reached its peak with Ahmed Shawky and stayed through till the end of the 20th century with such poets as Abul Qassim Elshaby (Tunisia) Badr Shaker El-Sayyab (Iraq) Nizar Kabbany (Syria) and Mahmoud Darwish (Palestine) among others, and was renewed by Adonis (Syria). This classical tradition was first accompanied by, then somewhat supplanted by, the works of Poet Salah Abdel-Sabour, a pioneer of modern Arabic free verse, and Ahmed Abdel Mo'ety Hegazi, along with and the colloquial-based idiom of poetry such as that of Bayram El Tunki, and later Salah Gahin, Ahmed Fouad Negm and Sayed Hegab..

As we entered the 21st century, as in many other places, the classical role of poetry was no longer central to the literary scene. Poems where they mattered most in reaching and moving large audiences were doing so through songs sometimes political as with Sheikh Imam singing the words of Negm up until his death in 1995, mostly to the tunes of pop-music and now increasingly in the form of Rap and Hip-Hop – or even simply recited to young people in large rallies like the poetry of Hisham El Gakh, who has made headlines before, during and after the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

Poetry in the classical sense, that once Shelley had called the “unacknowledged legislator”³ and that could, in the Arab World, move public opinion as much as any contemporary book or political essay or journalistic endeavor, is no more. The reasons are many, but at least one is clear: our social

³ Percy B. Shelley, “A Defense of Poetry”, 1821.

elites, the educated people, who then as now furnish the personnel of government and business, who would be the natural audience of such poetry, are much less well versed in the classical cultural tradition than they were at the start of the 20th century, and indeed till the 1950s. In the previous age, when a critic like Abbas Al-Akkad addressed his readers, he could expect them to know and care about the classics of Arabic poetry. Today, when eminent specialists like Gaber Asfour or Salah Fadl write about literature, they know that no such knowledge can be taken for granted in the audience they address. Only specialists are familiar with the poetry of the past and the poetry of the present. When such authors want to use literary criticism as a way of writing about society and politics they are better served by the novel than by poetry.

Literature,

Arabic novels—since the middle of the twentieth century—have continuously been a mainstay of our literary market. From the best sellers of Ihsan Abdel Quddous, Youssef El-Siba'I and Yehia Haqqi to the work of Ahmed Abdul Halim Abdullah. However, ever since Naguib Mahfouz received the Nobel Prize in Literature, there has been a greater shift in the public awareness of Arabs towards a greater appreciation of the novel as an art form, a literary awakening of sorts. The novel was not just entertainment it was literature.

Exploring the reality of Arabic novels, there has been a tendency among both critics and the general public to look to the bestsellers. Yet, many of the sales figures in the Arab publishing market are unreliable as there are questions due to the absence of clear-cut mechanisms to monitor how these figures are produced.

But we can discuss some of the most acclaimed books in the Arab world, most of which are quite popular. Currently the most popular genres include horror and science fiction, and adventure stories. In this context, Dr. Ahmed Khaled Tawfik is one of the most influential writers of his time, for he seems to have a very large following and he presents a wide spectrum of topics to young Arab readers through his chain novels that are classified as realistic or horror/science fiction. Dr. Nabil Farouk is probably the most popular after Dr. Tawfik in this particular genre.

Literature concerned with portraying current events, depicting them through the lens of ongoing events in the community, are very important. One of the most famous of these is Alaa Al-Aswany's 2002 novel *Imarat Yaqubian* (The Yacoubian Building). These are sometimes referred to as *Adab Al-Namima* (Gossip literature), for they sometimes use a list of pseudonyms in a thinly disguised roman-a-clef.

Such a literary genre usually achieves an immense, instantaneous success, and this phenomenon has vastly spread in the Arab world, where most of the novelists publish one single bestselling novel, then celebrate their momentary success. Some of these novels bring vast societal controversies to the fore, and may even attack deeply-rooted social customs and traditions, such as Rajaa Alsanea's 2005 novel *Banat al-Riyadh* (The Girls of Riyadh), which was immediately banned in Saudi society due to its controversial content. However, copies of *The Girls of Riyadh* are openly available at major bookstores in Saudi Arabia. In response to this controversial novel, Novelist Ibrahim Saqr published his novel "*Girls of Riyadh: The Whole Picture*".

Criticism of Arab societies in our literature can also be seen in the best of our products which receive the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF), popularly known as the Arabic Booker Prize. Saud Al-Sanousi's novel *Saq Al-Bamboo* (The Bamboo Stalk), was awarded the prize for 2013. The novel depicts the life of a Kuwaiti-Filipino young man—born to a Filipino mother and Kuwaiti father—who fell in love and got married. Set partly in the Philippines, partly in Kuwait, the novel raises disquieting questions about national, racial, and religious identity and the Kuwaiti society's rejection of such marital bonds.

Novels by Waciny Laredj from Algeria, Bahaa Taher from Egypt, and Bensalem Himmich from Morocco adopt a genuine and critical approach to reality in the Arab societies to a great extent. Waciny Laredj's literary works, most prominent of which are *Al-Bayt al-Andalusi* (The Andalusian House) of 2011 and his *Le Livre de l'Emir* (The Book of the Emir), published in 2006, call forth history in order to indirectly address the ongoing problems in his society; whereas Bahaa Taher invokes folk heritage and the socio-cultural value system in his literary works, such as *Wahat Al-Ghoroub* (2007) (Sunset Oasis), *Khalti Safiyya wal Dier* (1991) (Aunt Safiyya and the Monastery), and his short story collection

Bi-al-Ams Halamtu Biki (1984) (Yesterday I Dreamed of You). Other important Arab writers have also endeavored to present a critique, and at times a portrayal, of their societies and the socio-political and cultural changes that have come to characterize these societies, and have achieved much success among readers and critics alike. Gamal El Gheitany's *El Zeiny Barakat* (1974) and Youssef El Quaid's *Al Harb Fi Bar Misr* (1978) (War Within Egyptian Borders), Sun'allah Ibrahim's *Zat* (1992), Ibrahim Abdel Meguid's *Toyour El 'Anbar* (2000) (Birds of Amber), Mohamed Mansi Qandil's *Youm Ghae'm Fi Al Bar El Gharby* (2009) (Cloudy Day in the West Bank) are all examples of such efforts.

Many women writers, too, have published works that undertake the task of revealing the plight of women in Arab societies, and their struggle to achieve parity and social recognition. In Egypt Latifa El Zayat, Nawal El Saadawy, Salwa Bakr, Iqbal Baraka, Alifa Refaat, and the more recent novelists such as Miral El Tahawi and Sahar El Mogui, are among the best known writers. In Algeria, Assia Djebar and Ahlam Mosteghanemi, and in Morocco Fatema Mernissi and Leila Abouzeid have gained recognition among the Arab and western readership. Similarly, Sahar Khalifeh and Fadwa Tuqan from Palestine, Ghada El Samman from Syria as well as Hanan El Sheikh from Lebanon are all women writers whose names have become part of the literary canon in the Arab world.

Looking beyond this genre, Mohamed El-Makhzangy takes a major leap in the history of the Arabic short story. Being a psychiatrist, his short stories reflect unprecedented poetic understanding of human circumstances and a philosophical depth, delving directly into human psyche. His work sets a standard for the short story genre, as the works of Youssef Idris did in an earlier generation. In his articles, El-Makhzangy went beyond the conventional manner of writing, for example using traits of animals and plants with the purpose of addressing social issues and problems.

Today, many young writers have challenged the use of modern standard Arabic (Classical Arabic) preferring to express themselves in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic. Their comic fiction also sometimes breaks with the conventional narrative system or structure. An excellent example of this type of writing is Khaled El Khamissi's novel *Taxi* (2007) which is mainly written in Egyptian dialect, and depicts urban life through the voice of taxi drivers. Amid this emerging generation

of writers Omar Taher author of *Kameen al-Qasr al-Aini* (2012) (The Qasr al-Aini Ambush) stands out as does Essam Youssef, known for his novel *Rob' Gram* (2010) (Quarter Gram) and Osama Gharib's *Masr Laysat Ommy Dih Merat Abouya* (2008) (Egypt is Not My Mother But My Stepmother). This new colloquial Egyptian Arabic is found in many forms of our literature: essays, short stories or freestyle narratives, and they tend to be among the most widely read by the general public.

During the past ten years, it is noteworthy that literary fiction has flourished, which goes in parallel with the boom of the literary critical movement in Egypt, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia. Still, numerous literary works raise issues or tackle themes that encounter problems, such as:

- The status of women in society in Ahlam Mosteghanemi's literary works,
- The critical approach to Bedouin culture, traditional society and wealth in Abdul Rahman Munif's quintet *Mudun al-Milh* (1984) (Cities of Salt),
- The rebellious insinuations against the ruling regimes in Ammar Ali Hassan's *Soqout al-Samt* (2013) (The Fall of Silence),
- The critical approach to religious currents in Ashraf Ashmawi's *Al-Murshid* (2013) (The Mentor)

On the opposite side of the spectrum of controversy, we have also the emergence of the Islamic literary genre, which maintains traditional views, sticks to conventional characterizations and upholds classical styles of writing. Whether long novels or short stories, whether classics or contemporary productions, whether written in colloquial idiom or in classical Arabic there is an undoubted wealth of Arabic literary production that will repay close scrutiny and analysis (see inter-alia Gaber Asfour, *Al-Qass fi Hadha Al-Zaman*⁴ (2014) *Storytelling in our Time*).

Looking at that rich and diversified scene we must still put things in perspective. If the output of 350 million Arabs were to be measured against the

⁴ Gaber Asfour, *Al-Qass fi Hadha Al-Zaman*: Al Dar Al Masriya Al Lubnaniya, Cairo, 2014

output of the USA, which has roughly the same population, our production as well as our markets are puny. We barely compare with France or Spain both of whom have about a fifth of our population.

Children's Books and Programs:

So far, this discussion has focused on the reading materials of adults. But, it is generally accepted that the formation of minds starts at an early age and proceeds through adolescence towards adulthood. Thus children's literature and TV programs are not just a sub-genre, they are a whole different world, and a very critical one indeed, for they play an important role in this development of young minds. There have been important writers well known for their contributions to children's literature such as Kamel Kilany and Abdel Tawab Youssef. Also TV programs such as Sesame Street have shown an almost universal appeal, but few programs can claim such success.

One of the most successful types of children and adolescent literature has been comic books. They developed all over the world throughout the 20th century. In France and Belgium, where Herge's Tintin and Franquin's Spirou became icons and spawned an industry that developed all the way into adult fare. In Japan, Manga includes works for all ages in practically every genre: science fiction and fantasy, drama and action-adventure, sports and games, romance and historical, mystery and detective stories, suspense and horror, sexuality and comedy. Manga is a major part of the Japanese publishing industry representing billions of dollars in domestic sale and hundreds of millions in exports.

In the US the world famous Disney characters from Mickey Mouse to other children's fare, spawned an entertainment empire, while the action genre, pioneered by Siegel and Schuster's Superman, and later Batman, created the superheroes variety, and the Marvel Group is now reaching a global audience through its series of Hollywood blockbuster films.

In Egypt in the 1950s *Samir* and *Mickey* were present but had limited impact on children. Foreign imports dominated through the medium crossing over into film and television.

But some have pointed out subtle cultural characteristics to these imported storytelling product. The foundational myths that underlie the western stories from the brothers Grimm and other fairytales to modern comic books tend to favor the prodigal son, the lone orphan who turns into a hero (Superman and Batman). Nayef al-Mutawwa' of Kuwait has started The 99 series of comic book (cartoon) characters to counter that trend and to create an Arab Muslim foundational myth, using the 99 names of God in Islam as an inspiration and emphasizing how these characters (each representing one of the virtues) use these virtues and advance their cause through teamwork. More recently others have taken to the form, but it still remains very limited and has had feeble impact on the overall cultural scene in the Arab world. However, its potential remains great.

In addition, it is important to note that illustrated children's books and cartoons could become an entertaining medium to teach children history and to introduce them to important aspects of their culture, as was done by the Larousse's History of France series for example.

Folklore:

Different from western fairy tales and modern children's books, but quite rich in content is folklore, from medieval legends to contemporary proverbs. This has been one of the aspects of our heritage that the Library has been documenting.

Since Ahmed Taimour's great work on popular proverbs, there has been limited serious works dealing with folklore and the largely oral and vernacular style it represents. Among these we must include the Thesaurus produced by the Library's Documentation Center for the Cultural and Natural Heritage, the works of Ahmed Morsi, and most recently an interesting work by Said el Masry *'Iadat Intag Al-Turath Al-Shaaby Al-Masry* (Reproducing the Heritage of Egyptian Folklore).

Theater:

Theater, drama and script writing in Egypt and the Arab world traces its roots to the 19th century, and in the first half of the 20th century Egyptian pioneers such as Youssef Wahby brought the international classics to the Egyptian stage and

Naguib el Rihany used comedy to hold up a mirror to many of the social ills of his time. The theater boomed in the second half of the 20th century.

During the fifties of the twentieth century, a new generation of playwrights and directors—as opposed to their predecessors—emerged, starting a groundbreaking phase in the history of the Egyptian Theater. It premiered works by Salah Abdel Sabour, Alfred Farrag, Saadeddin Wahba, Lotfi El-Kholi, No'man Ashour and Yusuf Idris, and directed by Nabil El Alfy, Saad Ardash, and Abdel Rahman Al Zarqani. In the sixties, a new theatrical trend occurred in search for a distinctive theatrical identity other than the traditional theatrical Western stereotypes, under the leadership of Tawfiq al-Hakim, Yusuf Idris and others.

Following the defeat of 1967, the theater produced a comedic, sarcastic and ironical type of presentation, became a major force for criticizing the political regimes of the day, and bringing out the inefficiency and corruption of government. The plays presented in the theater of Tahiya Carioca in Egypt, such as *Al-Baghl Fil Ibriq* (the mule in the teapot) and *Al-Qantara* (the bridge) as well as the work of playwright Mohamed El Maghout and actor Duraid Lahham in Syria, such as the 1979 classic *Kasak ya watan* (A toast to my Homeland) and the 1982 film *Al-Hudoud* (the Border) all of which was a body of work that articulated a highly critical view of the political institutions and leaders of the Arab World and the problematic conditions of our societies. These were the forerunners of the modern television political satire such as the extremely popular Bassem Youssef in Egypt who flourished after the 2011 Arab Spring.

Throughout the 1970s theater pioneers continued their artistic critiques even as the mainstream entertainment theater continued its commercial success. Thus in 1972, Egypt's National Theater presented two theatrical performances based on two of the most acclaimed plays: Tawfiq al-Hakim's *Al-Aydi al-na`imah* (Soft Hands), and Yusuf Idris' *Al-Jins al-thalith* (Third Sex). Moreover, Alfred Farag presented his play *Al-Nar wa 'al-zaytun* (Fire and Olive), introducing another generation of university professors, including Rashad Roushdi, Samir Sarhan, Mohamed Enani, and Fawzy Fahmy.

One of the most important collaborations in the seventies is the distinctive partnership between playwright Lenin El-Ramly, and actor and director Mohamed Sobhi, offering an unprecedented experience in the private sector theaters. In the early eighties, they both founded their own theater company, known as Studio 80, serving to pose topical social and political questions through their remarkable plays in a refined manner. Private sector theaters, most particularly comedy theaters, had been very successful in the nineties, starring comedians such as stage and screen stars Adel Emam, who inherited the mantle of such popular predecessors as Naguib El- Rihany and Fuad El-Mohandess. But commercial pressures as well as censorship subsequently resulted in the decline of the serious theater in Egypt. And censorship stifled theatrical creativity in many Arab countries where generous subsidies were available. The mantle of criticism was then taken up by the emergence of many independent TV channels and the arrival of political satire there.

But despite the appearance of some exceptional and excellent pieces, the vast majority of theater productions today are largely of middling value. The theater as a form of serious artistic endeavor of lasting value has largely disappeared in most of the Arab World.

Cinema:

Cinema is the quintessential art form of the end of the 20th century, and even if it is being overtaken by various types of digital artistry; it remains in this period of the beginning of the 21st century an important art form. Egyptian cinema which started in 1907 was the dominant cinema in the Arab world and has an important position in the tradition of the international cinema. The products of that classic Egyptian cinema from the start in the first decade of the century until about the 1970s have endeared Egyptian actors and Egyptian culture to a wide Arab public.

In Egypt the tradition of thoughtful challenging films that run against the grain of the prevalent commercial enterprises in Egypt can be seen from Youssef Chahine's *Al-Asfour* (the bird) about the defeat of 1967, his *Alexandria* films and his *Al-Ard* (the land) as well as *Bab-el-Hadid* (the iron gate), Shady Abdelsalam's *Al Mummia* (the mummy), Salah Abou Seif's *Al Zawga Al Thaneya* (the second wife), Khairy Beshara's *Al Touk wa Al Eswera* (the) and Hussein Kamal's

Shaye' Men Al Khouf (a little fear) to such films as Khaled Youssef's *Heen Mayasara* (when we'll have money), Mohamed Diab's *678*, Yousry Nasrallah's *Ihky Ya Sheherzade* (Tell me a Story Scheherazade), Ahmed Abdalla's *Heliopolis* and *Microphone* . And in recent years Jehane Nougeim's *Al-Meidan* (the Square) about the demonstrations in Tahrir square in 2011 to 2103, which was nominated for an Oscar as best documentary in 2013, and the daring enterprise of the movie *18 Days*, a film made up of ten short films by ten different directors about the 2011 Egyptian revolution, which premiered at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival. Today, commercial success eludes many of the younger artists, but their work is the one that will define the next generation and help create the frame of reference for the culture of the 2020s. It is thus imperative that a cultural policy that would aspire to fight extremism in society must find ways to promote experimentation in the cinema, especially by young and unknown talent. (more on this later).

Music and Dance:

Modern Egyptian music emerged in the twentieth century with eminent composer like Sayyed Darwish, and eminent performers like Mounira El Mahdiyya and Abdou El Hamouli. It was to flourish in the middle third of that century through several media. The songs of Om Kolthoum, the greatest female Arabic singer of the 20th century, included some of the greatest classical Arabic poetry as well as excellent contemporary poetry and were sung to the compositions of composers of Arabic music, including Riyad El-Sonbaty and Mohamed Abdel Wahab who was himself one of the greatest male singers of the period. Egyptian songs were also performed in Egyptian films, as Egyptian Cinema grew considerably and Egyptian films became quite popular throughout the Arab World till the last quarter of the century. Eminent non-Egyptians such as Wardah El-Gazaeriyya , originally from Algeria, still performed in Egypt. The great Fairuz, was to emerge after Om Kolthoum as the most popular Arab singer from the stages and studios of Beirut. Subsequent oil wealth brought a major desert wind on the entertainment scene in Egypt and the whole Arab World, and the Egyptian music scene became much less important.

Popular music represented by contemporary music videos and emerging youthful music groups has created a totally different style of entertainment, more reminiscent of western style rock bands, jazz and pop music after the emergence of MTV. Some interesting examples of fusion exist and clearly these groups attract large youthful audiences everywhere. We must also note the emergence of what has been loosely called “festival Music” and the growing use of Rap and Hip-Hop to communicate the dissonant political messages of youth, especially post the 2011 Arab Spring, for these are the contemporary manifestation of the dissident singing of Shaikh Imam who sang the lyrics of Ahmed Fouad Negm in an earlier generation.

The Tradition of classical (western) Music performances such as Opera, Ballet and symphonic orchestra started in the 19th century and continues to this day. It was and continues to be supported by the state and playing more to a westernized elite than to a mass public.

In parallel, one must note the emergence of Mahmoud Reda who pioneered the emergence of folk dance and was extremely successful in creating a whole movement in Egypt whereby practically every local governorate has its own troupe of folkloric dance, and continues to attract a public despite the conservative religious right’s disapproval of dance of any kind, from the oriental dancers such as Taheya Carioca and Samia Gamal, to the Ballet to the folkloric dancers to modern pop dance music and its adherents.

Painting, Sculpture and the Graphic Arts:

Four events contributed to the emergence of modern art in Egypt: first, in the 19th century, Shaikh Muhammad Abdu, later Mufti of Egypt, takes a bold position allowing statues and painting and was thus instrumental in promoting the spread of pictorial art (painting and sculpture) despite the objections of religious conservatives who wanted a ban on pictorial art, Egyptian contemporary art strongly came forth to assert our history, traditions and national culture in a contemporary language.

In 1870-71 the Muhammad Ali equestrian statue was placed in a public square in Alexandria, the first such statue in a predominantly Muslim city. In 1908 Prince Youssef Kamel established an Art School, and in 1927 Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil established a Museum of Modern Art (two years before Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and her friends established the MoMA in New York). The Art School allowed students to be exposed to the growing international (European) movements of art that defied the academic traditions from impressionism to post-impressionism. Emerging mainly in Cairo and in Alexandria, the pioneers of modern art in Egypt were strongly influenced by European styles and techniques, but tended to select nationalist themes, under the impetus of the 1919 revolution.

The sculptures of Mahmoud Mokhtar (1891-1934) are the quintessential expression of that liberal period, especially his statue representing Nahdat Masr (Egyptian Renaissance). The tradition of Sculpture went on with the works of Seguni (1917 – 1977), Adam Henein (1929-), Ahmed Abdel Wahab and others and is active to this day.

In painting, the pioneers included Mohamed Nagi (1888 – 1956), Ramy Asaad , and Ragheb Ayad (1892-1982) followed by Mahmoud Said (1897-1964), Adham Wanly (1908 – 1959), Seif Wanly (1906–1979) , and Margaret Nakhla (1908-1977) . The work of Mahmoud Said, probably Egypt's most widely known artist, is now highly valued in art auctions around the world. Feminist themes appear in some of the works of such artists as Margaret Nakhla, who painted scenes in Church weddings and public baths elevated the mundane scenes into great art. Later, Ingi Efflatoun (1924-1989) would be a major figure in our art scene and continues that feminist tradition. Abdel Hadi Al Gazzar (1925-1966), and Kamal Amin (1923-1979) were also important figures in the post 1952 art scene. After 1970, there is a resurgence of calligraphy as a major element of contemporary Arab art, from some of the paintings of Kamal Boullata (1942) to the contemporary and spectacular work of Ahmed Mostafa (Egyptian living in the UK).

The 2011 Egyptian revolution triggered new artistic manifestations. Graffiti and public murals on walls became important. New forms of art emerged such as street theater, street art, music and even the so-called 'electro sha'bi' or 'Techno sha'bi'. Artists trying to capture the essence of the revolution, as they contribute to

keep its flames going, by distributing their work through on-line and social networks. But so far, no clearly identified masterpieces have emerged, by that I mean something akin to Picasso's Guernica or even Mokhtar's Nahdat Masr statue.

Architecture:

The history of architecture in Modern Egypt is marked by three great periods from the first half of the 19th century to the second half of the 20th century. With Mohamed Ali and his enormous program for the modernization of Egypt came the construction of many new buildings, and the appearance of the foreign communities in Alexandria meant that the ancient capital was once more on the move to cosmopolitanism and modernity. Many new buildings in predominantly western styles were constructed, and even The Pasha's palace at Ras-El-Teen dates from that period. The style was later to be overwhelmed as Cairo emerged with magnificent structures from the time of Khedive Ismail, who wanted Egypt to be part of Europe, and a distinctly new look dominated architecture and urbanism in what became known as "Khedivial Cairo". This was to continue – albeit on a less lavish scale – well into the 2th century.

In the first half of the 20th century, Egyptian architects begin to appear on the scene and they gradually dominated the local market. The work of Mostafa Fahmy, Aly Labib Gabr, the Shafei brothers, Anis Serageldin, and Sayyed Karim became dominant until the end of the 1950s. Abou Bakr Khairat was both architect and distinguished musical composer.

By the 1960s, the socialist government was centralizing all decision-making and architecture became more drab and conformist. The schools of architecture were dominated by disciples of the Modern Movement and belatedly caught on to post modernism, but few designs from that period emerge as more significant.

With the rise of Modernism in the 20th century, the presence of Hassan Fathy and Ramses Wissa Wassef emerge as lonely figures following the beat of a different drummer.

But by the late 1970s, despite the work of eminent architects like Mostafa Shawki and Salah Zaitoun, Salah Hegab and Aly Raafat, the élan of the architectural movement in Egypt is largely spent, while excellent local schools of architecture emerge in the Maghreb and distinguished architects such as Rassem Badran in Jordan flourish. However, the new construction in the gulf, getting the most famous architects in the world to work there, shifts the locus of architectural interest away from Egypt and the Maghreb to the gulf. This trends get accentuated in the 21st century and is recently crowned by the Burg Khalifa in Dubai, the world tallest building by far. Creative Egyptian and Arab talent now seeks manifestation through commissions in the gulf much more so than in Egypt. Many of those concerned with these topics seek to revive the flame of architecture in Egypt, and there are sparks of talent here and there in a new generation that has yet to fulfill its promise.

Reuse of historic buildings:

All culture is an amalgam rooted in past tradition, with creative new work using the past and inventing the new partly with imported ideas and partly with local innovation. Within this continuity with renewal there is the unique place of historic buildings and their place in society. In a dynamic creative context, society will opt for adaptive reuse of such buildings and thereby protecting them rather than ignoring them or keeping them unused or even destroying them. Some buildings are unique exemplars and deserve to be protected as museums in their own right. But many more are reused and become part of the living tissue of the inhabited urban fabric.

In Egypt, the process started a long time ago. The success of the “Sound and Light Shows” in the Pyramids in 1960 led to the establishment of the Sphinx Open Theater, where the celebrated English Troupe “Old Vic” presented two internationally renowned plays: Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* and Bernard Shaw’s *Saint Joan* in August 1961. To this end, the concept of rehabilitation and reuse of historical buildings through organizing theatrical performances at their premises was introduced. Many more manifestations of such re-use were to follow. The Muezz street restoration program was an important milestone in dealing with parts of historic Cairo, and so was the base and open space of the citadel. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture sponsored a great project in the Al-Azhar

Park, and most recently the Library of Alexandria re-used Bayt Al-Sinnary as a cultural center in the heart of old Cairo.

Conclusions:

This very fast and somewhat general overview of the cultural scene in the Arab world shows a vigorous growth in many of the cultural industries, which has been further accelerated by a youthful generation of artists, especially after the Arab Spring. But these aspects are paralleled by a rise of intolerance by authoritarian states and an increase in fanaticism by a set of groups militating for extreme forms of political Islam, some of which have transgressed any boundaries of human decency such as Da'ish (Islamic State for Iraq and the Levant – ISIL). Only a few islands of openness punctuate the vast Arab lands from the Atlantic to the Gulf.

We must address the phenomena of Extremism and Violence in our societies also as cultural phenomena, and understand the mechanisms that underlie their growth and expansion. We must also, as mentioned by Wole Soyinka in the epigraph at the forefront of this essay, question ourselves about whether our artists have had the power to impact society as we and they would have hoped?

IV. THE POWER OF ART

Unfolding History and the Role of Creative Artists

Art and History:

Despite the many fine works and great authors discussed above, I think that the novel in our part of the world has still not materialized into a current that allows society to see itself through the literary fictions of the great narrative writers. Naguib Mahfouz succeeded brilliantly, and his Trilogy remains powerful and compelling and in fact in his *Al-Maraya* (the Mirrors, 1972) the personality of the character Abdel Wahab Ismail parallels the very real Sayed Qotb⁵. Youssef Idris also succeeded in producing brilliant works. These giants and a few others have succeeded in producing some of the finest literature in that genre. Some of

⁵ See Gaber Asfour, *Muwajahat Al-Irhab: Qira'at fi Al-Adab Al-Mu'aser*, (Confronting Terrorism: Readings in Contemporary Literature), Maktabat Al-Usra: Cairo, 2003, p.74).

the film-makers today also succeed in producing such creations that, if only there were more of them, could produce a current similar to that of the great tradition of French social-realistic fiction, from Balzac and Flaubert to Zola and Proust. By that I mean the production of literary narratives that have a vivid, documentary and investigative character with a focus on the attitudes, institutions and psychological trends of society both rural and urban, both elitist and mercantile-bourgeois not to mention the plebian underclass who exist in extreme poverty at the margins of society in large slums that remain invisible to all but the most dedicated chroniclers. In France, we find that literary tradition parallels, feeds and supplements the work of historians of genius such as Fernand Braudel.

Great Egyptian and Arab Historians have been quite productive since the late 19th century: Jurji Zaidan with his *Tarikh Al-Tamadyun Al-Islami* (the history of Islamic civilization), and subsequent writers such as Ahmed Amin, with his long series of histories of Islamic Culture, and Abd Al-Rahman Al-Rafey with his monumental history of Egypt not to mention the great works of biographies by such luminaries as Taha Hussain and Abbas El Akkad and Mohamed Hussain Haikal whose works count as literary masterpieces, or Jawad Ali's monumental history of pre-Islamic Arabia all of whom contributed to a perception of the Arab self that is rooted in a long and distinguished historical narrative. More recent and more critical work in the second half of the 20th century and the works of Abdel Azim Ramadan and Younan Labib Rizk and the contemporaries Mohamed Afifi and Khaled Fahmy, there is much to glean towards a narrative of Arab and Egyptian society.

But these historical narratives did not interact sufficiently with the contemporary artistic expression to create a powerful intellectual current that would dominate political life even though it started and served the nationalist narratives of the Baath and Nasser years. But following the defeat of 1967 these currents were unable to respond with a new criticism of self and society resulting in a vacuum that was promptly filled by the emerging Islamic counter-narrative. That Islamic counter-narrative has its roots in the 19th century with Al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, on to Rashid Rida and Hassan Al-Banna and the foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood right after the abolition of the Caliphate by Ataturk in the 1920s. The current turns extreme with Sayed Qotb who would be executed in jail

by Nasser in 1966. It gains strength from the the efforts of governments in Egypt and elsewhere to dal with the expectations of their many nationals returning from thegulf with money and new-found conservatism, and their efforts to work with the Islamist currents in their societies or at least to tolerate their activities as long as they were being watched by the security services. But with the collapse of the nationalist narrative in the 1970s and the 1980s, the narrative if the moveents of political Islam gain strength from the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, and the subsequently vacuous political visions of the Arab regimes in the last part of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century.

Today, we are confronted with disasters everywhere. Challenged as we are with the reality of a total sense of loss in much of Arab society today, we look to our intelligentsia, to our creative writers to produce a great novel of someone undertaking a great hunt after identity, and looking at those enmeshed in the ideological obsessions of our time, will tease out what Steiner referred to as

“... the salvation of mind and soul out of obsession, the hunter being hunted; a fiction repeatedly interrupted by, enmeshed with, a lengthy meditation on the ironic and tragic singularities of [contemporary] man...”⁶

The great American novel that established the benchmark for that type of fiction was, of course, Melville’s *Moby Dick* (1851) But Robert Pirsig’s more recent *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974) can also aspire to inclusion in such a cannon.

Where is this today in our contemporary Arab fiction? I see many fine individual works, but I do not see them coalescing into a current that will sweep society and bring in a new cultural identity. The polemics of engaged artists on television talk shows, and their columns in the daily newspapers are something else, undoubtedly important to our political scene and hopefully also beneficial to our societies, but somewhat lacking in staying power and depth of impact.

⁶ George Steiner at the New Yorker, Edited and with an introduction by Robert Boyers, New York: New Directions Pub., 2009. P.147

Perhaps there is a whole question of the absence of Utopian writing in Arab and Muslim literature. It is not a genre that has flourished despite undoubted dissatisfaction of generations of writers with their rulers and the conditions of their societies. They have not dreamed of the unknown, of the liberating (or enslaving) power of technology, or invented alternative futures that could be read backwards to map onto contemporary realities and help define desiderata for a whole generation. Recently, Science-fiction has appeared as a distinct genre in the offerings of Arab writers, but that tends to be more for entertainment than as a narrative that demands attention and reflection for what it shows us about our contemporary societies and the opportunities and potentialities that are unrealized as a consequence of our past and current social, cultural and political evolution.

In the west, however, such novels of social critique, whether utopian or dystopian, are vitally related to the creation and maintenance of freedom in these societies. In fact so important do some consider the role of such literature, that Borges wrote of how the censorship of governments only serves to refine the writer's art. For writers, real writers, in Borges' view are those who use allusions and metaphors, and are thus compelled by the presence of censorship to sharpen, and to handle more expertly, these prime instruments of the artistic writer's arsenal. Indeed, reflecting on the writing of Borges on this point, Steiner observes that for Borges ...

“... [there is] no real freedom in the loud graffiti of erotic and political emancipation that currently pass for fiction and poetry. The liberating function of art lies in its singular capacity to “dream against the world,” to structure worlds that are otherwise”⁷.

Half a lifetime ago, half a world away, as a graduate student at Harvard, I wrote a paper that asked the question “why are there were no Muslim Utopias?” I argued that with the exception of the well-known *Ara' 'Ahl al-Madina al'Fadila* of Al-Farabi, I could find no famous works that parallel the western tradition utopias and dystopias, although there are some modern writers who have tried their

⁷ Borges, quoted in Steiner at the New Yorker p.174

hand at the genre, though they remain very few and far between⁸. I concluded at the time, and I still believe, that the reason is that most Muslim thinkers believe that the best of all possible worlds has already existed, certainly in the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad at Madina and possibly extending to the four orthodox Caliphs who succeeded him. That period of some thirty years has received disproportionate attention in discussion and analysis, for it was also the period where Islam emerged as an empire and where the basis of the Muslim state was invented and enacted by that handful of men who had been the closest companions of the prophet. But the result of that view has been a systematic orientation to look backwards to history rather than forwards to the unknown world unfolding in front of us and inviting us to give free rein to our imaginations.

Today what the western press call the Jihadists (though I resent the use of such terminology, since I do not consider their terrorism to be a Muslim “Jihad”) show exactly that kind of backward looking approach. They hark back to a mythical past interpreted as they see fit to justify their actions and frequently devoid of any real historic understanding. Even if they did understand history reasonably accurately – which they do not – they would still be tied to the past... They do not try to imagine what sharia should look like in the 21st century or what a highly ethical modern society should be like in the age of the internet, human rights and globalization.

That attitude is very much about using history as “a lantern on the stern” to quote Coleridge...

“If men could learn from history, what lessons it might teach us. But passion and party blind our eyes, and the light which experience gives us is a lantern on the stern, which shines only on the waves behind us.”⁹

But half a lifetime ago, I also wrote an essay by which I still stand. It was titled “Mirrors and Windows: Redefining the Boundaries of the Mind”. It is worth a brief mention here.

⁸ The recent book by Ezz el Din Fischer (Bab El Khoroug) is one such example.

⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge in: Colin Swatridge, Oxford Guide to Effective Argument and Critical Thinking, Oxford University Press: London, 2014. p. 20

Mirrors and Windows:

The mirrors could show us as the chosen people of God on earth, doing his divine bidding as a duty in our work, or it could show us as weak and victimized, it could show us as the unworthy heirs of a great tradition, or simply as the contemporary manifestation the average human family

The windows can show us a world full of opportunities and full of promise. Or they can show us a world of danger and enemies at every turn. Ultimately, it is by these combinations of mirrors and windows that boundaries are formed in our minds, each one. Through that interplay of mirrors and windows, we decide our relationship with the self and the other, with the definition for a specific set of issues, where the “us” ends and the “them” begins. While there are variations related to the issues at hand, there does tend to be a general pattern of narrow exclusiveness or broader inclusiveness that emerges.

Mirrors:

Mirrors should not be distorting, and they should be held up to society to show its reflection, warts and all. But a true image of society will also capture its depth, its multiple layers and its innate strengths as well as its weaknesses and corruption.

It requires no sustained analytic thought, no closeness of observation or clarity of argument to pontificate on the rottenness of society, on the gangrene of corruption, and on the venality of politicians, and to produce superficial recommendations that are no more than declamatory calls for more democratic process, political freedom and creative liberty.

Essays of that type are easy to write, and easy to read, and in the process they flatter the writer and the reader, but they lack the substance produced by more profound analysis and thoughtful proposals.

Compare our current literature or the products of our essayists to the work of Tocqueville, of Henry Adams, of George Steiner and Tony Judt to see just how drastic the difference can be. Their narratives put forth cases that are scrupulously argued, not declaimed. They are informed, at each part of description or proposal,

with an appropriate sense of context, founded on a detailed reading of the complex, contradictory nature of historical evidence, as well as the intricate institutional difficulties that social reform must cope with. As Steiner said of the earlier writers I have mentioned: “The doubts expressed by these thinkers, the qualifications brought to their own persuasions honor the reader. They call not for numbed assent or complaisant echo but for reexamination and criticism.”¹⁰

We live in an epoch in the history of Arab and Muslim societies that calls out to men and women to bear essential witness, to produce works that draw on their private sensibility and individual existence to record, dissect and explain the larger meanings of the age. It is through such works that societies are moved, for these works hold up a mirror where images of society with all its hypocrisies and misconceptions are concentrated and made visible.

The Importance of the Windows:

All societies need to have a future that they aspire to. The ability of the social elite and the political leaders to articulate a vision of that future is central to the ability of a nation to mobilize the latent potentialities of its people and create a sense of national purpose. Then, no objective remains too ambitious, no obstacle remains too big, and such mobilization can literally move mountains! As Eleanor Roosevelt famously said: “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams”.

But a society that seeks to understand its place in the world must be one that remains open to all the cultures of the world. As Gandhi said:

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other people's houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave.”

-- Mahatma Gandhi

¹⁰ George Steiner at the New Yorker p. 245

But the windows can also bring in gale-force winds as the hurricanes of technology hit every part of the world, from the richest to the poorest. The speed with which the ICT revolution has been adopted by seemingly everyone on the planet boggles the mind. In the Arab World, already plagued with suffering from shaken identities and distorted visions of the self and the other, a truly profound rupture of unprecedented proportions is being created between the generations.

V. RUPTURE:

The Transformative Revolutionary Context of ICT

Changing Times:

The Book, not as the codex form we have come to know and love, but as a collection of words of a certain length that instructs, entertains and engages a reader through the magic of the text shall continue. As I said at the inauguration of the first International Summit of the Book in Washington DC in December 2012, the book – in that sense – shall continue forever... Today, I do believe that it is possible for some time to come that the electronic and the printed format can co-exist side by side for a considerable period time, just as scrolls and codexes co-existed for several centuries before the codex finally displaced the scroll. But the role of publishers in the intermediation of that service between author and reader shall be profoundly affected by the new technologies of ICT.

A lot more authors shall “self-publish” in the years ahead, and new forms of intermediation and distribution shall appear as the electronic formats will continue to gain ground over the printed volumes, and as the personalized hand-held devices will replace the old laptops as speed and power bring evermore possibilities to our fingertips.

I have already mentioned how the new revolutionary technologies have made, and shall continue to make, possible things we only dreamed of before. It is increasingly possible through collaborative networks of institutions and the magic of digitization to create global museums with 3-D manipulable objects and virtual reality visits, while texts can be read in their entirety or connected to images and music and video from all over the world and offered simultaneously all over the

world. But all that leaves us with some distinct challenges to deal with: Big Data, Privacy, Security and Social Connectivity.

Big Data

Two inventions: the Internet and the mobile phone have come together in an amazing marriage that requires that we rethink almost everything we know about how we organize our societies...

There is hardly any aspect of our lives that has not been touched and transformed by the Internet, from communications, to commerce, to science, to social networking, to making all the world's information available at everyone's fingertips. As the locus of interaction with the internet shifts from desktop PCs to our mobile smart phones, the magic of an ever-present service that makes almost everything possible is taken for granted by billions of human beings.

- According to the International Telecommunications Union, the number of active cell phone accounts will exceed the world's population by 2014.
- Smartphone Users Worldwide Will Total 1.75 Billion in 2014 ...
- Internet hosts are well over a billion and growing... They went from a few hundred in the early 1980s to over 1 Billion in 2012 and are still growing at double digit rates!

So Where are we going with all that connectivity?

Let's reflect on the amazing scale of the Information revolution:

According to a 2007 estimate by the University of California all of the past history of humanity produced a record of 256 exabytes. That is all of recorded history. But since 2007 we have witnessed an explosive growth of internet usage:

- Between 2010-2013 internet usage grew 20x
- Our current pace as of last year exceeded one Exabyte per day on the internet
- The KSA alone will add another Exabyte a day!

But how much is one exabyte? A billion billion bytes! This is about:

- 100,000 times the amount of printed information in the Library of Congress Every day! or
- 500 to 3,000 times all content of the Library of Congress. Every day!

Google is alleged to have about 10 Exabytes on its servers with another 5 Exabytes on its back-up tapes.

The organization and preservation of that information poses many problems of technical obsolescence and of physical obsolescence. As that volume continues to grow, the challenge to keep everything also keeps becoming larger. And so, we must ask what if we are not able to keep and organize an ever growing internet of things? Are we going towards a form of digital amnesia?

Perhaps not. Perhaps the net will itself create a filtering process that some things will be maintained in the websites of the future as valuable material will be rerecorded in their digital form again and again, and some may fall by the wayside... so that even our understandable desire to maintain everything and protect everything when tempered by physical limitations will force a collective process of selection, that while more forgiving of contemporary trivia may still consign to loss and degradation the trivia of generations past. Not a desirable outcome but one that would be bearable, since the jewels of past generations, would thus stand a new form of the test of time. Archives may have to be treated differently. The receipt for that dinner we had last night does not need to be available for the scrutiny of my great grandchildren.

But whatever the manner in which this goes, it is clear that we have to increasingly be conscious of and to seriously address the problems of technical obsolescence and physical obsolescence. It is here, of course, the power of the Book as codex, with its unbeatable convenience and simplicity comes to the fore. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why we will need to keep a collection of all the world's books in a new form of the ancient Library of Alexandria as we merrily keep adding to our "born digital" content and file them in ever larger computer farms that we neatly refer to as "the cloud". This raises the other two issues: Privacy and Security

Privacy

With so much of our information on line, not to mention all the information that we post ourselves, and all that being collected by governments, retailers, banks, and practically every institution that we interact with, and it is analyzed and used in real time, what has become of privacy?

People are increasingly accepting invasions of their privacy, sometimes for the convenience of the service they get, sometimes in search of that elusive celebrity that the Internet through Facebook or Twitter or You Tube can briefly impart to a person. Fame is usually granted by a society to someone who has done something worthwhile, like writing a great book , or produced a great movie or made a scientific discovery or set a new world record in sports, or achieved great things in business or in government. Such fame is not usually fleeting and is founded on substance. But our new connected culture has produced the phenomenon of the celebrity. A celebrity is someone who is famous for being famous. They come and go, haunt glossy magazine covers, inhabit the social media where for a while they “go viral”, soon to be displaced by a new phenomenon.

Security

But the other side of the privacy coin is security. Whether we talk of our medical records or of government secrets or of commercial information, security has become a priority. Two recent examples:

- Snowden is alleged to have taken 1.77 million documents
 - the technology that made possible the monumental scale of the spying is the same technology that made possible its exposure by a single individual... these are two sides of the same coin...
 - Snowden could never have photocopied 1.77 million paper documents!

- A short time ago, the NYT reported the largest ever hacking penetration of a financial institution ... the huge cyber-attack on JPMorgan Chase that touched more than 83 million households and businesses was one of the most serious computer intrusions into an American corporation.

Our societies in their headlong rush into putting ever more information on line, definitely needs to devote some time to discussion of the security issue in relation to ICT.

Now let me turn to something that is intimately involved with privacy and security...

Social Connectivity:

Whether we send a billion dollars across the planet by the click of a mouse and the flight of an electron, or we send a love note to our beloved across the street with a tweet ... the flow of information is enormous and the scale of the social networking phenomenon is staggering...

The internet made social connectivity possible, and it has taken off at an unbelievable speed and has already reached a staggering scale... reflect for a moment how recently these ubiquitous facets of the ICT revolution were born:

- 2004 Facebook
- 2005 You Tube
- 2007 iPhone, the first smart phone

And the penetration?

- Social Networking Reaches Nearly One in Four Around the World
- This year, >2/3 of internet users around the world will use a social network (at least once per month)
- This figure will rise to more than 75% of internet users by 2016.

The social and psychological aspects of virtual socializing, as opposed to the real world experience, is the subject of much discussion and debate... In addition, the vast expansion of connectivity especially with the huge spread of sensor networks that have the capacity of extending the human nervous system beyond

anything that we have experienced before. This means that virtual experiences can be much expanded in the years ahead. But that opens up many questions which are best left to a discussion for another day.

Bringing the Rupture Back to the Arab World and Egypt:

It is striking to what extent that rupture brought about by the ICT revolution is manifest in the Arab countries, including Egypt. The older generations are truly technophobic while the younger generations take to the new technologies like ducks to water. This brings about not only alienation between the generations, but also a transformative effect on the manner in which the colloquial Arabic language is used and even expressed in texting messages with partially Latin letters and partially numerals to render phonetically some local colloquial Arabic sentences and expressions. Some of the modern writers use only colloquial Arabic which in turn will also undermine Modern Standard Arabic not to talk of the more literary expressions of the classical Arabic in the writing of some distinguished authors. Where will this lead us in a generation? It is not clear, but what is definite is that youth will not go back and they will find their own means of artistic expression whether in music or in the arts or in literature. It is in that last domain of literature that true rupture threatens us; for even though the presence of colloquial Arabic poems called *zagal*, and in plays and TV serials has already been with us for over a generation, the current changes are so vast that they are qualitatively different. Likewise, it is not clear how the social media with its enormous reach and impact will transform our conventional ideas of theater going and film viewing as well as the manner of reading and interacting with novels and with each other and the public. The supporting cultural structures of society such as Libraries, museums and archives will also be transformed into hybrid institutions, both physical and virtual, with augmented reality offerings accessible locally and remotely through myriad devices. It will be a whole new world.

Conclusions:

For many, this deluge of data and transformative technologies coming at us at a dizzying pace, and the new world that is forming before our eyes is a cause for alarm, and generates visions of future dystopias and dehumanized societies. They

echo the profound questions that were posed by T.S. Eliot a century ago when he asked:

Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

But I find these developments exhilarating. They open new vistas that younger people take for granted, and thus I invite all managers of cultural and scientific institutions to bring aboard the young, not as trainees and interns, but as colleagues and collaborators. I feel like Robert Frost who said:

Now I am old my teachers are the young.
What can't be molded must be cracked and sprung.
I strain at lessons fit to start a suture.
I go to school to youth to learn the future.

But because of this rupture and the very youthful structure of the Arab populations, these youth will be the ones to address the twin phenomena of extremism and violence. Thus before we turn to the cultural challenges and opportunities that they will harness this technology to address, let us turn to a more detailed view of extremism and violence.

PART TWO:

ON EXTREMISM AND VIOLENCE

VI. ON EXTREMISM

On Extremism

Extremism is a political position whose adherents reject all possibilities of discussion, reject any notion about the possible error of their understandings and who push their arguments to the most extreme positions. Each political school of thought has its extremists, but extremists of all stripes in the end reject accommodation with others who do not share their views.

Extremism begets violence .

Signs and Symptoms: The Emergence of Extremist Power:

There is an eternal danger of a return to fascist or totalitarian government as many of our intellectuals, philosophers and artists have warned us time and time again. Extremist thought, raising simplistic slogans as answers to complex problems, is also a clear and present danger at all times in all societies. But like any disease, it has signs and symptoms that we can watch for and deploy the cultural forces of pluralism to combat. Among these signs and symptoms of the rise of extremist thought are the following:

- The emergence of the simplistic slogans and the bombastic rhetoric about how society is adrift and that it requires vigorous action to redress it.
- The presentation of the extremists as the party of right and the others – all others – as the parties of error.
- The targeting of attacks on whoever dares to challenge the views of the extremists group.
- The emergence of hate speech against minorities in society, which denies that they are part of the national social order, or that they share in the national identity, and they are then described as foreign agents, evil and undeserving of sympathy.

Up to this point it can still be seen as the rhetoric of a group in society and can be countered by an active and vigorous intellectual response and a broad-based debate in appropriate public forums. The danger signs come when political power is taken over by such groups or significant positions are controlled by their sympathizers, and the extremist thought becomes a form of emerging ideology. This then translates into the following much more dangerous signs and symptoms:

- Introduction of systematic discrimination against the minorities
- Elimination of those who oppose the emerging new ideology
- The systematic intimidation of critics and dissidents
- The gradual elimination of opponents
- The elimination or marginalization of countervailing political institutions which should have provided checks and balances

By now we are poised for a totalitarian regime whose extremist ideology risks taking the society towards the abyss of unspeakable crimes and even genocide. The next danger signals of a possible genocide arising are also well known from past historical examples:

- Elimination of rights
- Elimination of witnesses
- Failure to protect civilians
- Silence of political opposition
- Military oppression
- Increased exodus of threatened minorities.

The society as patient in this scenario is usually too far gone to be able to avoid the catastrophic results of the cancer that has spread throughout its body. This invariably ends in genocide or civil war or a combination of both. Long and protracted agony will be endured before there is a possibility of national reconciliation and turning a new page.

But a somewhat different scenario is likely if the extremism takes root in a minority that is opposed by a powerful and cohesive state. The state is likely to become more authoritarian, and the extremist group is likely to become engaged in terrorism.

It is clear from such arguments that we should put a premium on a cultural framework that promotes pluralism and multi-faceted identities within the national entity, or even the supra-national entity, as in Europe. Such a cultural framework should also facilitate orderly change through discussion and debate and peaceful participatory means of citizen engagement. All of these qualities gives legitimacy to the existing social and political order and encourage its responsiveness to the views and needs of the citizens. In turn, all these qualities will diffuse the potential tensions and make it difficult for extremism to take root, for dissidence to turn to anger, and for anger to turn into violence.

Recruitment and Indoctrination:

From An Early Age: It is important to understand that the grounds for the rise of extremism are prepared from a very early age. There is a famous saying, attributed to the Jesuits, that allegedly says: "Give me the child until he is seven and I care not who has him thereafter." Modern science seems to agree that pre-school and family influences on the child are very important in the formation of attitudes and deep rooted belief systems, that may mix with other orientations later on, but may reemerge later in life. Thus abused children often become abusers themselves. Abuse includes physical as well as emotional abuse and neglect and the influence of adults on the formation of the child must not be underestimated. Therefore the family attitudes towards extremist views as opposed to a tolerant pluralism and how that is reinforced by the community in which the child grows up is vital. If it is the former it will predispose the child to later participation in extremist groups, if it is the latter it will constitute the first line of defense against a drift into extremism and criminality.

Vital too are the teachers in the school system, and the teaching materials they use. Are our children being exposed to a view of the self and the other, of society and history, that will help forge a national and multi-layered identity? Or are they being indoctrinated by stereotypes into the ideologies of hate?

The third and possibly most important source of influence – especially since it is strongest in the transitional stage of adolescence, of rebellious teens – is the influence of peers. Today because of the Internet and social connectivity peer groups include virtual as well as physical groups. Frequently children or

adolescents participate through their schools into summer camps and activities such as the boy scouts which also constitute different peer groups. But children tend to develop their own peer groups and sometimes they drift into gangs, usually ending under the tutelage of an older child or a Fagin-like mentor figure.

Indeed looking at these points it becomes clear that many of the poorer children in society such as children in orphanages and street children, are particularly vulnerable, as they have not benefited from the attention that parenting provides or the proper guidance that adequate schooling should provide. They are even more primed for the drift into gangs and or to be recruited into movements, where extremism is cultivated and anger is stoked.

From Anger to Rage: Anger at perceived injustices that can be redressed is at the start of the process of moving from rational critique to political extremism and from there it is but a step to rage, and fanatical, self-justified violence. When religious belief is added to claim that perpetrating such violence is part of obeying the commandments of God, the mix becomes most potent. As Pascal observed:

“Men never do evil so completely as when they do it from religious convictions”

-- Blaise Pascal

When confronting conditions that offend our innate sense of justice and our values, we are obviously dissatisfied. And dissatisfaction can be turned to anger, and anger can be whipped up into rage... and rage can indeed be irrational and pathological, but so can every other human emotion, but rage is special, for we all know that violence often springs from rage.

The Role of Charismatic Leaders: Undoubtedly charismatic leaders can articulate an extremist message and reach a wide audience in a convincing way. We saw that in such leaders as Hitler and Mussolini, and in Mao – who bluntly said that “All power emerges from the barrel of a gun” – and in many other constituencies large and small. Today, we can see that they can also have followings based largely on the mass media and the new communications technology.

But extremist messages, especially after they grow into a movement and then tilt into violence in an open crusade against the established order locally, nationally, regionally and globally, become qualitatively different. Thus it would be a mistake to think that assassinating the leader of such a movement would terminate the movement. New leaders will emerge. For once it becomes a movement; the extreme political message creates a different kind of dynamic, and is able to recruit new adherents and new leaders until the context which gave it birth is changed by other means. It then becomes marginalized. The end of violent extremist groups is not defeat on the battlefield like organized armies; it is by drifting into irrelevancy and losing all meaningful contact with the aspirations of large parts of the population.

Recruits:

The recruit feels that the leader, or the ideology, or more commonly belonging to the group communicates a strength that can raise the recruit far above the limits of his or her perceived potentialities. Thus breaking the bonds of conventional family and social structure is a liberating and empowering notion that is mediated by affiliation to the new group that follows that leader or espouses that ideology. It is that feeling of liberation and of new empowerment that the recruit feels in surrendering to this ideology that makes them feel that they have not been led away from themselves, but rather that through the leader, the ideology or the group they have found a heightened identity for the first time.

Since we know that biologically and socially teenagers are in that stage of development where they need to declare their independence from their family and biological parents to establish their own identities, not to mention the hormonal imbalances that their bodies go through, youth are most vulnerable to peer pressures and to external forces at that transitional phase of their lives.

Once recruited into a group, the youth are encouraged to break their ties with former family and friends and the group becomes the dominant agent of change in their lives. Their adherence to the dominant ideology of the extremist movement is systematically reinforced, and all external alternative views of reality and effectively denounced and excluded from their purview.

What few of the recruits come to understand, much less openly acknowledge, is that the experience of such extremist groups, whether they are run by a single authority figure in nested hierarchies, as is the case in some of the communist cells of the past or the Islamist cells of the present, or whether they are collectively self-managed in some form of collective self-government still leaves that group and its members extremely limited in perspective and scope. They acquire neither more sophistication nor more tolerance of others. Indeed, they tend to acquire an extraordinary smugness of self-regard, with disdain for those outside the group and thus it actually reinforces the worst kind of ethnic solipsism – In popular parlance they are “brainwashed”. This process is so thorough that many of them are willing to commit suicide for the cause, and more seriously to kill many innocents who are presumed guilty merely because they do not belong to the group.

For youth there is also the attractiveness of the cause... The idea to devote oneself to something larger than oneself, larger than life itself, to argue for sacrifice for the greater good is reinforced in all recruits. It gives purpose to an otherwise aimless youthful existence, and thus we should not be surprised to find that children of privilege, not just the poor and the destitute are often captivated into cults or extremist politics. The nobility of the cause is underlined by a call for sacrifice, not material gain. To sacrifice in order to remove the unworthy rulers and elites of today. When such perceptions are further reinforced by the demonstration of the corruption of the ruling classes and the imperfection of the current realities – something that is all too easy to do in the Arab and Muslim worlds today – you are but a step away from justifying violence. That starts the slippery slope of the “ends justify the means” type of thinking, and from there it is but another step to call forth noble aspirations that can justify in the mind’s eye the worst excesses of violence and inhumanity.

Their appeal must be destroyed: we must understand why their declarations and doctrines are considered attractive by many and respond to the roots of those problems...

VII. ON VIOLENCE

Violence is not just political violence by adolescents and adults in the streets, it is also pervasive violence in society itself, family violence, violence against women, child abuse, in addition to criminal violence, political violence, state violence, as well as terrorism.

Many, if not most, political theorists consider that violence is just the most extreme manifestation of power. But a society is not a jungle, and thus the social contract gives power to the government to have a monopoly of the right to use violence in exchange for ensuring security for all, in an elaborate system of governance that ensures that this power is not used to enslave the population, but is derived from their consent and is exercised only with their agreement.

But this view was challenged by Hannah Arendt who argued that in fact, real power tends to be exercised without recourse to violence precisely because it is derived from legitimacy and consent. Really powerful governments do not have to use violence to exercise power, here defined as the ability to get others to do what we wish them to do, since in democratic structures the elected are mandated to use the power of government to execute the wishes of the governed, or at least the programs approved by the majority, and to do so under the watchful eye of an opposition whose members harbor doubts about that particular program, but remain totally committed to the legitimacy of the process of governance of which they are a part.

Under that social contract based democratic model, the legitimate violence of the state is used only against criminal or fringe elements who refuse the very concept of the social contract and the legitimacy of the government processes.

That kind of voluntary obedience, which is not just to the current rulers, but primarily to the laws and institutions of society is the manifestation of support and consent, and is therefore a manifestation of real, legitimate power. Thus it is wrong to confuse obedience obtained by the exercise of coercive violence or the threat of the use of such coercive power, with support which is willingly given to legitimate power, out of conviction and consent of the governed, even if the external appearance of both may appear to be compliance with government edicts.

Some form of power exists in every political community from a small tribal village to a large modern nation, it manifests itself in the ability of people to act in concert. But that collective action can be driven by obedience through fear of the powers that be, or obedience to the system of which people are a part. The difference between obedience and support is the legitimacy of the system and those who exercise power in it.

So, when does extremism beget violence? I would argue that extremism is the natural incubator of political violence. It creates a climate where the natural element of self-doubt and the natural human distaste for murder is removed by insisting on the correctness of the political position defended and the necessity of implementing the vision that it creates by any means possible. Such sentiments were mostly absent in the works of the vast majority of the great Muslim scholars of the golden age of tolerant Islamic states in the middle ages, when they tended to complete their recommendations with a humble “this is our view, but only God knows for sure” (*Allahu ‘Alam*)... that element of self-doubt is the margin that separates discussion of disagreements from the easy condemnation to death of one who disagrees with the position taken. That however is not the prevalent temper of the times among those who adopt political Islam. Why?

Well, for one thing, political Islam has to contend with the march of secularism during the last four centuries and the rise of alternatives to the traditional forms of governance that emerged under majority Muslim rule in the previous thousand years. That this secularism was advanced by and flourished in the west added to the difficulty of its finding acceptance in the Muslim majority countries – almost all of which were colonized by the west – and in particular among the Arab countries who have felt betrayed by the west time and again from colonization to Palestine.

For a while the Nationalist narrative was more forceful: First Saad Zaghloul then Nasser in Egypt, Bourguiba in Tunisia, Sukarno in Indonesia were all articulators of the nationalist narrative and thus political Islam was overcome in their time... But they frequently used violence when they felt threatened in their power. Even the case of the westernized Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who was able to become the uncontested leader of India’s Muslims, despite the presence of the extremist Abul Ala al-Mawdudy, can be understood when you realize that his

discourse was a nationalist and not a really religious discourse, because Jinnah spoke of creating a new nation where the Muslims would be a majority and he thus brought forth the creation of Pakistan not the return of a medieval Caliphate.

What happened? The nationalist projects were almost all failures, and thus the religious narrative returned to the fore.

The leaders of the nationalist movements were also succeeded by people who lacked the credibility of the initial founders who had gained their legitimacy by their stands for national independence and their conflicts with the colonial powers.

In the name of development some good and much bad was done. Corruption set in and sweetheart deals became common. But more serious was that the vision that had motivated large parts of society disappeared.

Making money, ostentatious spending and material success became the valued norms of society. Millions of youth were unemployed and had no prospect of anything beyond living on a pittance unable to marry and form their own families while their parents watched in despair as elites appropriated the country and excluded the vast majority of the population from any meaningful participation. This profound alienation, with no vision to rally the youth, meant that the elites started losing whatever credible legitimacy they once had. The weakening of legitimate power resulted in recourse to violence against dissidents of all stripes, and begat violence in our streets, aimlessness amongst our youth and anxiety among our elders. The ground was fertile for extremist arguments and the rationality of revolutionary breaks with the past and its ongoing manifestations became unimpeachable.

While we would all agree that the world should not be destroyed to prove the supremacy of a religion or the justice of a cause, the rhetoric of extremism can

be appealing. Listen to the voice of Goldwater:

Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice, and moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue.--
Barry Goldwater 1964¹¹

Extremism and fanaticism invariably beget violence, because the fanatics, convinced of the righteousness of their cause, will act with feelings of superiority and a somewhat smug self-assured and lofty alienation from others, and with utter contempt for community and society.

Note that here I do not distinguish between religious fanatics and fanatic adherents to secular causes. As Wole Soyinka correctly said:

“The world of the fanatic is one and it cuts across all religions, ideologies, and vocations. The tributaries that feed the cesspool of fanaticism may ooze from sources separated by history, clime, and race, by injustices and numerous privations, but they arrive at the same destination – the zone of unquestioning certitude – sped by a common impetus that licenses each to proclaim itself the pure and unsullied among the polluted”¹².

So it is this absence of self-doubt, this superiority born of certitude, that defines the extremists’ attitudes and allows them to arrogantly embark on violent acts against a society that they despise, for the mere fact that they do not adhere to the same set of views.

¹¹ American Senator Barry Goldwater in his speech accepting the Republican presidential nomination on July 16, 1964.

¹² Wole Soyinka ,Climate of Fear: The Quest for Dignity in a Dehumanized World, NY: Random House. 2005. (the Reith Lectures of 2004), p.134

VIII. LIGHTING THE FUSE:

How Extremism Begets Violence

Planting the seeds of extremism:

There is a widespread mistake that views extremism as the result of the conditions of poverty and inequality in society. That is only partly true. There is substantial recruitment of marginal members of society such as orphans and street children, and the destitute not so much for their poverty as for the absence of the protective framework that a sound family upbringing, regular attendance in schools and participation in community life would bring. Think of the vulnerability of orphans, the nature of social contacts with street children and the failure of public assistance programs. Add to that failure of public assistance programs the contrast between the assiduousness, dedication and technique of devoted cadres vs. the general lackadaisical performance of disinterested civil servants. Thus recruitment for extremist groups is indeed present and powerful among the poorest.

Cadres have also infiltrated the teaching professions where they have a natural position of authority and admiration among the students. Thus recruitment is also possible in schools, and more generally the spread of extremist ideas by teachers and administrators needs to be kept in mind.

We also know that teenagers are the most prone to fly into rage against conditions that circumscribe their desired range of actions. Therefore it is there that the emotional framework of the adoption of rebellious extremist views is most likely and that these young people can, step by step, become recruits into the extremist movements, and some of them – under the tutelage of others – will also become the artisans of violence to change these conditions which they have come to believe cannot be changed in any other way.

That mechanism through which each recruit is indoctrinated in the ideology of an extremist movement is reinforced by induction into a group; that gives security and support provided the recruit sheds the old identity and adopts that of the group. From the exercise of that group pressure on the recruit there also emerges the seeds of the next steps, mainly to be a part of a brotherhood of martyrs, who will die together for the noble cause.

But because we understand the mechanism, it can be thwarted at every step of the way by a sensible cultural framework and carefully crafted policies to deal with these challenges.

Except that nothing here is perfect or absolute. A functioning society where there are no blatant injustices crying out to be redressed would obviously limit the level of dissatisfaction at the start. So would the observed ease of changing conditions through the established and legitimately recognized system of orderly democratic adjustments, and that these dispositions are seen as credible, and are not being subverted by “the rich and the powerful”, or “the “debauched and the ungodly”

It is largely when our sense of justice is offended, and our sense that the legitimate structures of governance are a sham being manipulated by the few to gain benefits at the expense of the many, only then do we react with anger, and subsequently rage.

Almost all humans instinctively fear death. But armies have long known that men can be trained to confront danger and continue to advance under fire. Generally, death faced collectively and in action changes its countenance, and concern for the brothers in arms, for the cause, makes many undertake unusual acts of heroism. The cause itself can be seen as misguided by others but at that intense moment it is the manner in which the fighters perceive it that counts. The bravery of soldiers on both sides of a conflict cannot be denied even if the correctness of the political causes they fight for can be questioned. The proximity of death intensifies our vitality and the commitment to colleagues and to the cause calls forth a notion of sacrifice. If, as is often the case, fighters have been politically indoctrinated then all these factors are intensified.

These same factors hold when the fighters are not in a formally constituted army of a recognized state, but are part of a clan, or a band or a political insurgency group. If the latter is part of an extremist movement claiming religious sanction, then the fighter’s own death is perceived to be accompanied by the potential immortality of the group to which they belong. The group is effectively nourished by the dying, of its individual members, who are sanctioned as martyrs, and both those who die and those who stay believe that the group, and the

movement to which it belongs, is surging upward and its presence is actualized by the practice of violence.

Even though the intensity of the feelings is immense, as it has to be for people to be willing to blow themselves up in suicide missions, and the cohesion of the group is enormous, such groups cannot establish a viable society. Though being together in combat creates bonds that last a lifetime among the surviving veterans of such violence, these bonds have never been effectively translated into an institutional, political expression. No body politic was ever founded exclusively on the bonds of shared equality before death and its actualization in violence. Furthermore, the presumed “cleansing effect” of that violence, never materializes to create a new society, a “New Man”. Neither the terror of the French revolution, nor the purges of Stalin, or the violence that accompanied China’s cultural revolution in the 1960s produced that presumed new age. As Hannah Arendt observed:

“But it is undeniably true that the strong fraternal sentiments, engendered by collective violence, have misled many good people into the hope that a new community together with a “new man” will arise out of it. The hope is an illusion for the simple reason that no human relationship is more transitory than this kind of brotherhood, which can be actualized only under conditions of immediate danger”.¹³

Beyond Blatant Injustice: The Bureaucracy:

Earlier we spoke of the anger that is felt at blatant injustice being left unredressed, anger that can turn into rage and be marshaled into extremism and violence. But another route to such violence is frustration. Frustration that our ambitions are denied, that actions are postponed, and that nothing seems to move the bureaucracy to respond to the wishes of the citizens.

¹³ Hannah Arendt, “On Violence”, *New York Review of Books*, 27 February 1969 , <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1969/feb/27/a-special-supplement-reflections-on-violence/> accessed 26 10 2014

In fact, this was a common feature in the student rebellions of the 1960s where both those behind the iron curtain and those in the democratic west as well as those in many developing countries, such as Egypt, all took to the streets in a rejection of the systems that governed them, which they saw as unresponsive to their aspirations. But while those in Egypt were responding to the trauma of the 1967 defeat of the Arabs before Israel, the student rebellions in the two sides of the “Iron Curtain” underlined a different issue. The students in the East were demanding the fundamental human rights of freedom of expression and assembly and the right to participate in elections to select their own leaders. The students in the west who already had these rights, derided them as “bourgeois rights”, largely because they felt that possession of these rights and their participation in the legal political framework of their countries did not result in any noticeable change in their lives, and their frustration mounted because of their inability to affect the course of events in their societies.

As Hannah Arendt observed about those rebellions, powerful bureaucracies and huge party machines succeeded in overruling the voice of the citizens everywhere, even in countries where freedom of speech and association was present and constitutionally guaranteed.

Although the world was to witness a signal rise in the scope of personal freedoms from the time of the rebellions of the 1960s, and the domains of democracy were to expand in Latin America in the 1980s and in Eastern Europe in the 1990s, the triumphant march of democracy was accompanied by a certain sense of unease. Subtly, ever since the Second World War, we have also witnessed the transformation of government into administration, of republics into bureaucracies, and the disastrous shrinkage of the public realm that went with it. This long and complicated institutional history has been inadequately perceived and understood because it occurred in the shadow of the victories of representative democracy

which was seen – rightly – as the important characteristic of our history throughout the modern age. And...

Finally, the greater the bureaucratization of public life, the greater will be the attraction of violence. In a fully developed bureaucracy there is nobody left with whom one could argue, to whom one could present grievances, on whom the pressures of power could be exerted. Bureaucracy is the form of government in which everybody is deprived of political freedom, of the power to act; for the rule by Nobody is not no-rule, and where all are equally powerless we have a tyranny without a tyrant¹⁴.

Moreover, the recent rise of micro-nationalism, whether ethnic, religious, linguistic or geographic, has riddled with cracks the legal structures of the nation state. These manifestations have seen their cause taken up by parties or groups usually allied with ideologies of libertarianism or the extreme political right. Now, we can see how cracks in the power structure of all but the small countries are opening and widening. And if indeed, bureaucracies are unable to deal with such problems, then we must expect that these developments will lead to a decrease of the legitimate central powers, an increase in citizen frustrations and anger which in turn is a forerunner to violence. In the Arab countries, where power is held by governments that are unable to address these challenges, we can also expect that they will turn to violence to maintain their positions, because so many of those who hold power are seduced by it, and when they feel it slipping from their hands they have always found it difficult to resist the temptation of using violence to maintain it. Thus both from the side of the citizens and from the side of the governments there will be strong forces pushing towards polarization, extremism and the use of violence.

¹⁴ Hannah Arendt, "On Violence", New York Review of Books, 27 February 1969, op.cit.

Conclusions:

So a proper design for a strategy for cultural action to reject extremism and promote pluralism is not a feat of precise engineering. Rather it is the design of a collective vision, where many people can see the vision slightly differently from slightly different angles, highlighting this part or that depending on their role in society, their own talents and the proclivities of their tastes. But there is enough commonality for each to recognize that it is the same vision – more or less – that we are adhering to. That image is not a fixed picture. It draws on the world as we find it, recognizes the realities and limitations of our own society, identifies the forces that drive it and move it, and surrounds them with criticisms and suggestions from multiple vantage points. Thus do we make our vision, an evolving “work in progress” that is never completed, as it gets amended by interaction and experience, and the strategy that guides us is more of a compass direction than a road map.

Ahead, we look at the dream that animates us; behind us is the memory of the past. It is in the unfolding present that we must creatively assemble and reconstruct the pieces that improve our conditions and take us one step closer to the ultimate vision, understanding that the goals and objectives that we adopt must be defined by the inherent promise of actual things.

PART THREE:
THE DYNAMICS OF CULTURAL
CHANGE:

IX. CONCEPTUAL AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

There can be no society without a culture and no culture without society. A shared culture is what gives us social norms of human behavior, and in turn that tends to govern individual behavior within the group. When collectivized, individual behavior becomes group behavior, and the interactions between such behaviors constitutes the manifestations of a living society.

To a certain extent one can imagine a society where people live within an integrated cultural framework that is capable of integrating the new. Such a society and culture would be a healthy society, working out the differences that different people would take to adapting the new and to coping with the inevitable changes that time brings about in the individual as well as in the physical and social environment in which the person lives. Such societies also have an agreed governance structure that is perceived as legitimate and which therefore exercises power benevolently, i.e. by the authority it draws from the support of the governed and consequently does not have to resort to coercive violence as discussed in the preceding chapter(s). But sometimes there are breakdowns that result in a group rejecting the path of the majority of society, and gradually becoming more and more extreme in its opposition. Extremism thus born may continue to grow like a cancer on the body politic; and if extremism grows it will usually lead to violence.

But just as societies exist and evolve over time, so do their cultures, through a process of inheriting the past, adapting to the present and integrating the new. What is important for the arguments in this essay is to try to disentangle the mechanism by which a society can exist and adapt constantly to the new and develop its identity accordingly... A healthy process of change that does not leave room for extremism to emerge and for violence to manifest itself.

The approach is a process insofar as there is no ultimate conclusion or product: the perfect edifice is never built, never completed. We cannot get from here to there because there is no final "there" to get to.

Is this a cop-out? Not at all. The French identity was described by Michelet in a felicitous choice of words as the result of a long and powerful labor of self on self: "La France est devenue la France par un puissant travail de soi sur soi." Yet even the vaunted French identity has to constantly reinvent itself. The five or so million North African Arab Muslims living in France are as much a cultural challenge as a sociological one, whether one chooses assimilation, acculturation, or any other of a myriad possibilities including the formation of a Swiss-like two-tier identity.

Thus a process it must be. The pursuit of a conclusive solution to the definition of an identity is the pursuit of a mirage.

X. THE MULTIPLE LAYERS OF A NATIONAL CULTURE:

On the practical side, there is an evolving social reality in Muslim societies from Morocco to Indonesia. Scholars of whatever variety cannot ignore such an evolving reality and expect their work to be relevant. First the realities in both societies were very different, and resulted in different cultural characteristics.

When Clifford Geertz studied these societies he considered that they had remarkably different spiritual climates. In Morocco, the Islamic conception of life came to mean activism, moralism, and intense individuality, while in Indonesia the same concept emphasized aestheticism, inwardness, and the radical dissolution of personality¹⁵.

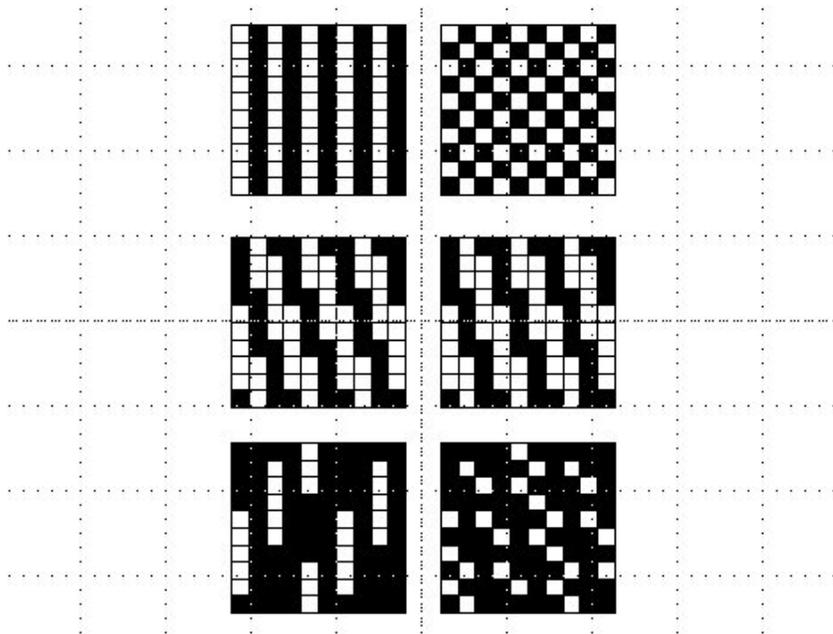
Thus to understand that culture as it manifests itself to the observer, one must imagine that there are multiple layers that interact with each other. Such a reality in the case of Morocco and Indonesia would see that Islam, the common creed, is but one of these layers. By interacting with the underlying socio-cultural "deep structure" of that society, we get a different "new" layer at the surface. If we

¹⁵ Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*, University of Chicago Press, New York, 1971 edition, originally delivered as the Terry Foundation Lectures on Religion and Science at Yale University in 1967 Copyright Yale University, 1968.

want to understand the cultural dynamics of a society we have to be able to understand these Layers and how they interact.

This layering is perhaps demonstrable in a diagram. Here we represent two societies, with different situations, each represented by one of the two columns below. The first two diagrams represent very different initial conditions. The second set – the middle row – comprises two diagrams that are identical. They represent a common feature that is overlaid on the different initial conditions. When the first two rows are added they produce the two diagrams in the bottom row. They are very different in appearance, and just looking at them superficially will not allow us to disentangle the middle element which is similar in both cases. That is why one should beware of superficial analysis of cultural phenomena and how to interpret them in different societal contexts.

Fig. 1: A Layered Perspective on Cultural Development



But each of these realities is also evolving at a different pace. The essence of this evolving reality, I believe, is that communications, technology, mobility, and the demographic transition that many societies are undergoing all contribute not just to change the way societies function but also to accelerate the rate of change. Individuals confronted by these changed circumstances adapt. In doing so, they tend to "unbundle" the attributes they possess, protecting some, discarding others without the scholar's concern for coherence or consistency. This constant adaptation and re-adaptation is what we see in rapidly changing societies. This process is at the core of any explanation of changing social values, for social values do not exist in a vacuum, and they would not be social values if they did not govern individual behavior for the vast majority of the population.

In clarifying the link between the work of the scholars and the evolving social reality of which the scholars are part, we come to the heart of the interactive two-way relationship between the process of defining the mental boundaries and the existence and operation of these boundaries in real life.

XI. CULTURAL DYNAMICS: A MODEL OF SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

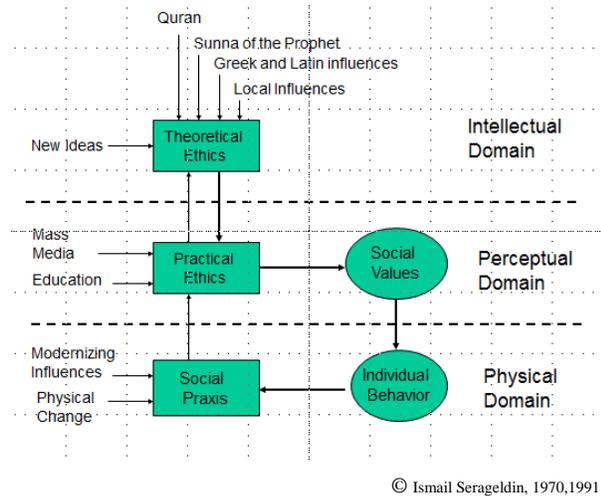
Cultural outlook is about perceptions and about social behavior in accordance with deeply established norms. But culture evolves, slowly in many cases, but sometimes abruptly due in part to traumatic socio-political upheavals, deep economic disasters like the Hyperinflation of Germany in the 1920s, or the great depression in the 1930s, or due to the quiet work of artists, scientists and intellectual that cumulates into a profound change in outlook, which we have come to call: Paradigm Shifts. A most famous work on this was Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) which has become a classic and has produced much reflection on similar paradigm shifts in other aspects of culture such as Remi Clignet, *The Structure of Artistic Revolutions*, (1985)¹⁶.

Thus, the cultural framework evolves and changes, and social behavior also changes accordingly. Elsewhere I have presented my views of a three-tiered model of social behavior, but it is pertinent to summarize it here since it is central to my argument that serious change is required in Muslim-Arab societies and in

¹⁶ See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press: 1962 & Remi Clignet, *The Structure of Artistic Revolutions*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.

Muslim thinking today and also to show how such change, radical or modest, operates. The conceptual model¹⁷ is graphically presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Social Behavior



The three tiers define the intellectual, the perceptual, and the physical domains. At the level of the intellectual domain, "theoretical ethics" (what should be – the normative ideal) are debated by scholars, philosophers, and intellectuals. Here in addition to the Quran, the Sunna and the body of Muslim scholarship, many other tributaries come into play, including Pre-Islamic local traditions, Greek philosophy, and Western contemporary thought.

The vast majority of the population, however, does not perceive this "ideal order" of the theoretical ethics. Their perception of ethics is a distorted one that I have termed "practical ethics."

Practical ethics is one that allows a Muslim to show prejudice, and in some extreme cases even to feel free with the blood of others in the name of being a good Muslim in spite of the categorical injunction, "There shall be no coercion in religion" (Quran 2:256). Less dramatically, it condones the visitation of "saintly"

¹⁷ Source: Ismail Serageldin, "The Search for Identity among Muslim Youth: The Case of the UAR" in *Non-Aligned Third World Annual*. 1970. St. Louis: Books International of DH-TE International, pp. 245-51. It was slightly amended in many subsequent publications by the author.

shrines and demanding intercession by "saints," many of whom, incidentally, historically were unsavory characters. Such practices are categorically rejected by Islamic theology of all schools. Nevertheless, they are widespread practices, and they are considered by the practitioners to be manifestations of being a good Muslim. Thus does practical ethics become the relevant framework for the overwhelming majority of Muslims.

Practical ethics shapes social values. These are the primary guides to individual behavior in the real (physical) world. Many rituals as well as people's sense of "what will others think" are dominated by the prevalent social values. Hence individual behavior, by and large, conforms to the prevalent social values.

Individual behavior, when collectivized, becomes "social praxis," or what we observe society doing every day.

Change can enter the schema in several ways. First, and most commonly, it enters at the level of social praxis due either to strong "modernizing forces" or to major physical changes. An example of the former is the impact that the massive increase in oil revenues in Saudi Arabia in the mid-1970s had on northern Yemen. Not only did massive migration to the north bring money and new consumption patterns, but it also changed practically all aspects of life in Yemen including architectural expression. More importantly, villages depopulated of all able-bodied men meant that women assumed different roles. Such changes became "acceptable" in terms of practical ethics and social values. A change in the social praxis moved up to practical ethics.

Likewise, when fourteen years of drought destroyed nomadism as a way of life in large parts of Mauritania, new patterns of behavior were acquired by the former nomads in a very painful transition to living in quasi-permanent refugee settlements around cities such as Nouakchott and Rosso. Again, changes in social praxis found their way to practical ethics and social values, to support and reinforce necessary changes in individual behavior (and social praxis).

If some things persist long enough in the domain of social praxis and start being widely accepted in the domain of practical ethics, the ulama' (religious scholars and philosophers) and the intelligentsia generally start changing (or

reaffirming) the theoretical ethics to respond to that challenge. Thus, for example, the widespread availability of interest-bearing banking has triggered responses from various Muslim religious authorities.

But change also can come directly into the intellectual domain when new ideas are confronted, analyzed, adapted, and incorporated as was the case with Greek philosophy at the time of Al-Farabi, and as it is today with a number of contemporary ideas (some of which we will discuss later).

Change also enters directly into the perceptual domain by two vectors: the mass media and the education system. Both of these have much to do with shaping the world view of most people, and consequently help define their concept of self and society, however imperfectly or inadequately.

To the extent that all these changes are entering or being addressed at the perceptual and intellectual domains (especially the latter), there is a possibility of maintaining the general framework of society's cultural identity. It would be an evolving framework, even a rapidly evolving framework, but it would be both integrated and integrating. It would be integrated in that the internal coherence of the framework is maintained and people feel at ease with themselves and their society. It would be integrating in that it is capable of incorporating new and novel elements, thus constantly growing and adapting to new challenges, generating the capacity to respond to these new challenges and to create new opportunities. This integrated and integrating framework is a healthy one in which artists and the intelligentsia can continuously probe the challenges of nature, society, and the inner self opening windows and holding up mirrors for each of us, to help us expand the boundaries that limit our scope and define the wise constraints that make us free.

I submit that in the Muslim world today, most of the change is coming in from the level of social praxis, and a good part of it is entering the perceptual domain of practical ethics by the mass media, which have in this age of global communications expanded primarily the influence of the seductive and effective mass culture of "the West" generally and of the United States specifically. More recently regional centers of the gulf, especially Dubai in the UAE, have started to exercise an important level of attraction for Arab youth.

Today, there is little, if any, integration being done at the level of the intellectual domain, hence the power of the rejectionist argument advanced by the Muslim fundamentalist movements. Their framework is certainly integrated, but it is not integrating. Due to the weakness of its intellectual foundations, it fears modifying old solutions or designing novel ones in order to hold onto the coherence and logical integration of the old framework.

The relative weakness of the reformist or innovative current within the broad mainstream of Muslim thinking attests to the inadequacy of the volume and scope of the intellectual output produced thus far by the few active intellectuals among the reformers, although some of it is very, very good. It also attests to the despair of many would-be reformers who have opted for the easy (but in my judgment inadequate) option of equating "modernization" with "Westernization."

So where are we today in terms of this three-tiered diagram?

First: Almost all the Muslim intellectuals and religious scholars have indeed absorbed many of these ideas into the intellectual domain, and see no fundamental inconsistencies between their understanding of the tenets of Islam and adopting many, if not all, of these ideas for the benefit of Muslim societies. Some of the great liberal thinkers of the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century did elaborate their evolving visions of Islam taking into account the ideas of the emancipation of women, the adoption of electoral democracy, and the abolition of the caliphate.

Second: However, an important conservative minority of scholars, who unfortunately have substantial followings that have been swelled by political activism and militant indoctrination of youth, rejected such adoption of new ideas, and

Third: Large segments of the Muslim populations of the world remain devout and conservative in their outlook. They are more resistant to the adoption of the new than some of the more liberal intellectuals and religious scholars. This produces a profound cleavage between the conservative and liberal wings in the theoretical ethics as well as between the theoretical ethics where these ideas have

penetrated to some extent in most countries, and the practical ethics where distorted views of Islam, wrapped in a nationalist narrative, still prevail.

Fourth: The result of such a cleavage is that societies are dysfunctional, they are no longer integrating of the new and there is a wrenching dislocation between the intellectual and the perceptual domains, and the latter still dominates the physical domain and the social praxis. The solution for many is to reject much of the new, and to cling to their distorted practical ethics, which leaves them vulnerable to the more fiery of the conservative preachers and easy prey for recruitment into militant political movements, where the perceived failures of the national governments adds to the anger of the populations.

XII. THE TASK FOR THE INTELLIGENTSIA

Thus, the premise of this essay is that serious intellectual work is needed for Muslims to regain the feeling of being at ease with themselves which an integrated and integrating cultural framework provides. Furthermore, this work needs to clarify the overlap but (non-coincidence) of their national and ethnic identities (especially for Arabs) with their Muslim identities. Such work cannot be done without providing a space of freedom for the intelligentsia to struggle to redefine the meaning and content of cultural authenticity in a rapidly changing world in which isolationism or "de-linking" is no longer a viable option, if it ever was. The intelligentsia, both artists and intellectuals, have a major responsibility. They are the ones who fashion the mirrors in which we see ourselves and the windows through which we see the world. Through their work the boundaries defining our identities are reshaped.

I also believe that the Muslim intelligentsia presently is imperfectly equipped to handle such a task. For us to move to a new level of critical analysis of the issues we confronts, it is essential that:

First, Intellectuals develop a more systematic methodological basis for the appreciation of such key concepts as community, culture, Islam, society, identity, myth, imagination, and creativity. This is not just an intellectual's request for esoteric discourse and hair-splitting definitions. This is an essential task that must be accomplished to construct a more sophisticated edifice for the theory and

practice of intellectual criticism and art criticism in the Muslim World today. Without clearly understood and agreed upon concepts, terminology, and methodology, the interdisciplinary discourse on these vital topics is bound to remain loose, unstructured, and possibly unconstructive. In fact this concern has been expressed by a number of distinguished intellectuals, most vehemently by the late Mohammed Arkoun.

Second, Muslim intellectuals should explore more thoroughly the problem of cultural continuity in today's Muslim societies. What is needed is not an endless array of descriptive monographs, useful as these may be, but a thorough analytical probing of the complex phenomena of an evolving culture and the way it is manifested, to situate the role of the intelligentsia both as agents of change and products of the milieu.

While the first of these tasks is arduous, it is a prerequisite to implement the second.

Given the speed with which physical development, technological transformation and socioeconomic change are taking place, Muslim intellectuals have a monumental task ahead if they want their ideas to be relevant to this rapidly changing world. They must restate the basic questions that all societies ask so that their understanding of self will not be degraded into the mere modes of consumption of both materials and time. At present, Muslim intellectuals cannot afford to be alienated from their societies.

Muslim intellectuals and artists must learn to correctly decipher the past and the present. Both the high technology of today and the socioeconomic reality of their societies must be integral parts of their present consciousness; a proper understanding of their cultural past must be an integral part of their sense of self and society.

Together, intellectuals and artists must dare to think the unthinkable and to go "where others fear to tread," in order not to fall prey to the prevalent mode of degraded thinking that has manipulated the symbols of the Muslim culture into debased ideologically charged signals that supplant critical appreciation with

populist slogans. This is a tall order but it provides the springboard for the tasks ahead.

Three inter-related contemporary ideas still pose a profound challenge to many contemporary Muslim thinkers. These are Human Rights, Democracy and the role of Women. In the end, they are all manifestations of the notions of human rights, gender equality, and the rights of contemporary societies to seek their contemporary solutions that they consider suitable to their social context. This will also require a proper understanding of the historical narrative and the historical legacy of the particular societies concerned. History matters.

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PART FOUR:

ELEMENTS OF A CULTURAL STRATEGY:

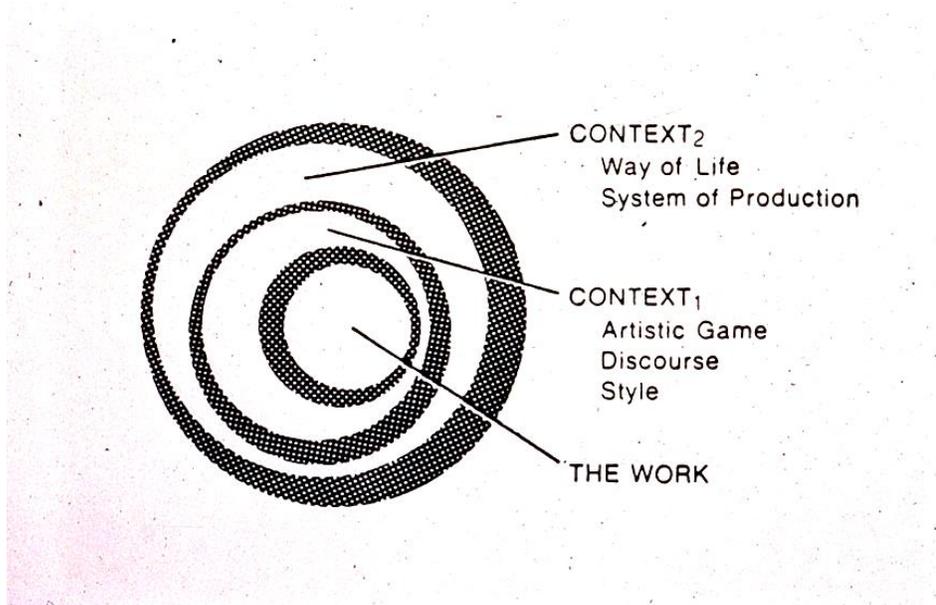
Reflecting on the diagram presented in the preceding section, and the discussion surrounding the dynamics of cultural change that the three-tier diagram was intended to simplify, it is clear that all the arrows on the left hand side of the diagram represent the manner by which change is introduced into the schema. Starting at the top, with new ideas, such as thorough reviews of such issues as the status of women, and the fundamental human rights attached to the notion of citizenship and the need for equality before the law, it will be necessary to unclog the arrows within the diagram to ensure the internalization of these ideas into other levels of the perceptual and physical domains. These ideas are themselves impacting on the other arrows from changed mass media content, and here we include the artistic offerings no matter how they are communicated to the public through publishing, art galleries, concert halls, television or the internet, as well as the revision of educational content and method in addition to venue. Finally social praxis both in terms of the rituals in society and the types of buildings and the environments in which we live and work and transact business, all must be modified to reflect the changing lifestyles of the new generation and an enhanced appreciation of the value of esthetics and the built environment.

Thus the content needed to feed these arrows on the left, and the means of strengthening the flows of the arrows throughout the system spells out the essential and basic structure for a cultural policy to promote pluralism while retaining identity; to promote creativity while rejecting extremism, and to promote change while rejecting violence.

But the content is produced by artists and scholars who are very much of their time, and who are influenced by the context within which they work. Thus a word about the context of cultural expression and artistic output is pertinent here.

XIII. CONTEXTUAL CAVEATS:

The Double Context of The Work of Art or Cultural Output



Many scholars have recognized the importance of context in the appreciation of works of art and different forms of cultural expression. Among others, Remi Clignet identified a double context for each work of art, a view that I share, i.e. any work of art, any form of cultural expression, actually fits into not one but two contexts.

It fits first in the context of the prevailing cultural framework of its time, in the flow of the discourse of the intelligentsia and the artists, either by conforming to the prevalent style or discourse or by intentionally breaking away from it. It consciously takes one position or the other, for no art is produced without reference to what preceded it and what accompanies it. No one can write without having read the works of others before him, no one can compose music without having heard music before. So that is the immediate context, the first of two circles that provide context to the work of art.

The second circle is wider. It refers to the socio-economic situation in which the artist is working and producing. The level of technology, the type of economic activity, the prevalent social norms and physical landscape, and the level of interaction with an immediate or a large public, all these provide the reference

points of society that inhabit the artist's consciousness. That constitutes the larger context, a context that can go beyond the nation to the region or even the entire global society. It is the outer boundary of the context that provides meaning to the form that the art or the cultural expression takes. Thus a local artist working in a small village in the remote mountains of Afghanistan will produce things that are very different from an artist working in New York.

So all forms of cultural expression, all works of art have to be understood and judged within their context, in the double sense explained above, and in the context of the time that they were produced in. The dimension of time is very important as the contexts evolve over time, and the masterpieces of the past are not only the milestones of our history and our heritage, but they also inspire and provide the foundation for the new.

XIV. BROAD BRUSHSTROKES:

The Arab Cultural Project, its Context and Content

Elsewhere I have proposed a major pan Arab effort for a new cultural renewal. (see: Ismail Serageldin, *Al-Mashrou' Al-Hadari Al-Arabi* (The Arab Cultural Project), Bibliotheca Alexandrina, October 2010). That was in October 2010, an important initiative that has been mooted by the Arab Spring in 2011. Fundamentally the project proposed three broad pillars to reform the context of Arab culture today and promote a culture of pluralism and free expression, a culture of cosmopolitanism that celebrates diversity and politically accommodates not only co-existence but also interaction and mutual enrichment, and the corollary of all that: the protection of freedom of expression and the nurturing of creativity. The three pillars would be:

First: such an ambitious project must be **based on laws, policies and institutions**. In other words, it should involve (i) The evolution of the rule of law; (ii) good governance; and (iii) the institutionalization of the proposed changes. In other words, that the proposed cultural reforms should touch the social institutions of society, reaffirm the rule of law and minimize the dependence on individual leaders who, after all, come and go.

Second: that reforming the cultural framework in any society should largely be a **bottom-up** affair, nurtured by the top, rather than a top-down affair. Let a thousand flowers bloom, allow the new to enter the cultural frameworks of our societies.

Third: recognizing the **diversity of Arab Societies**. In other words, there is no one size fits all in terms of strategies and programs. The cultural project that I proposed was to take cognizance of the enormous diversity in the Arab World, and the diverse components of the layered identities of the various groups that should co-exist in the Arab world. This Arab World being defined politically by the Arab League, and defined culturally by a shared language and a shared history.

Accordingly, this Pan-Arab project was to recognize two major aspects of the context in which it was to be implemented:

That Cultural expression is increasingly taking place within the context of an enormous scientific expansion, with a broad scientific culture increasingly permeating society, and the Information and Communication Technological (ICT) revolution which is manifested by social connectivity, big data, cyber security and precarious respect for privacy. The speed of the adoption of these elements, and the rapid expansion of the penetrations of the technologies and the manner of interacting with it from mobile phones to the internet, from social connectivity to ease of travel, all are causing a real rupture in the more conventional and usual inter-generational evolution of cultures and cultural expression.

But beyond that, there is a profound **transformation of knowledge** itself, how it is organized and presented, how it is expressed and apprehended. A real knowledge revolution is taking place, which I identified around “**seven pillars**” that include:

- Parsing, Life & Organization of knowledge;
- Image & Text;
- Humans & Machines;
- Complexity & Chaos;
- Computation & Research;
- Convergence & Transformation; and
- Pluri-Disciplinarity & Policy

Clearly there is so much to be said about each of these items, but it is enough here to just list these as a reminder of the complexity of the scene in the next decade and beyond, for globalization, localization and the issues of identity will all be manifest within these changing contexts.

Against that background, I also put forth my absolute belief in **Freedom of Expression** as the fundamental precept that will encourage creativity and promote pluralism, the very negation of a dominant role of extremism in society. I also discussed at length the issues and complexities of freedom of expression.

These **broad brushstrokes** give us a number of different contexts and essential features that must be taken into account in the proposals for cultural transformation called for in this essay.

But if in the end the cultural output produced by our artists and intellectuals is to have an impact, to be internalized in the system, we also need the context in which they produce that work, and within which the society that they address receives it. Thus issues of governance, of democratic representation and of inclusiveness need to be looked at and addressed in any reform effort. Authoritarian governments, even if they bring stability and security in the short term, will always end up alienating those who are excluded from decision-making and those who feel they have no future in that society. Public involvement in the public realm is necessary. The Agora and the Aeropagus cannot be just for the elite or for tolerated artists and intellectuals if societal change is what we hope for , profound societal change where society will marginalize the extremists and will reject violence and celebrate diversity and rationally debate issues for the country's future.

To create a climate where pluralism will prevail, where a culture of science will permeate our way of thinking, and where human rights will be considered the most important treasure we possess as a society, recognizing that the abridgement of the rights of any of us is an abridgment of the rights of all of us, we must build a socio-cultural framework that equally promotes security and freedom of expression. As Carl Popper so presciently observed over half a century ago:

“The alleged clash between freedom and security ... turns out to be a chimera. For there is no freedom if it is not secured by the state; and conversely, only a state which is controlled by the free citizens can offer them any reasonable security.”

—Karl Popper

So this discussion is focused on the cultural transformation of our societies, but it equally posits that this cultural transformation will interact with and guarantee these desirable changes in the political system towards more participatory democracy (as opposed to just representative democracy). However, the political and governance issues will be developed elsewhere in another essay specifically devoted to the forms and manifestations of political institutions, and how they (not only our cultural framework) must be able to accommodate change by peaceful and orderly means, remembering that democracy is not about the rule of majority, but about the protection of the minority's right to speak and participate against the potential tyranny of the majority. Remember that all the rights we take for granted today, from limits to sovereign power, respect for human rights, equality before the law, and rejection of racial, religious, ethnic or gender discrimination, were all once minority positions that only gradually gained the acceptance of the majority over long periods of debate. Once accepted, they become the prevalent cultural values of society.

Such values are transmitted by family, school, media and public example. Thus a cornerstone of any transformation of the cultural framework of any society must involve the education system as a primary instrument, not just of skill formation, but of socialization of our young children and our growing youth.

XV. OVER THE LONG HAUL:

Education and the Formation of a National Outlook:

The radical reform of our education systems is the essential bedrock of any attempt to correct the cultural framework of Egypt and other Arab societies to establish pluralism as a core value, to promote rationalism, and to change the political, social, religious and cultural discourse of the nation. I have discussed many of these reforms elsewhere and shall not repeat my other reports and [publications here, but I do want to reemphasize something that may be missed in the generally political framework that issues of extremism cast on any discussion of culture, and that is the importance of a broad *Culture of Science* in society.

A culture of science does not mean that all the students are exposed to math and science which they should be in all systems, but that science in terms of a method of thought, an outlook on the world and the values that undergird the scientific enterprise are widely disseminated in society. It is a function in which many institutions must participate, from the learned societies to the media, but the education system remains the backbone of any such enterprise.

The Culture of Science

To have a culture of science is more than a widespread knowledge of scientific facts and figures. It is about acquiring a skeptical outlook, and adhering to logic and evidence to arbitrate disputes, as well as promoting evidence-based regulation of human social activities and interactions. A society whose culture is permeated by a culture of science is one where the school system and the media promote these qualities and the public discourse manifests these qualities. This is undergirded by what I call the values of science.

Academies of science and learned societies have a major role to play in the spread of scientific culture. For they are not only the meeting place of the best, but also the custodians of excellence and they frequently partner with other institutions to assist in the promotion of public outreach. Learned societies also assist in the production of films for the Mass Media (e.g. the National Geographic Society in the USA) and assist in developing better teaching programs for science in the

schools (e.g. the French Academy of Sciences and the Main-A-La-Pate program). Museums, planetariums and special institutions like EPCOT and the city of sciences (e.g. La Villette in France) also reach out to the public directly.

Values of science

Science is more than just a profession for scientists and researchers. It involves living by the values of science, and it promotes an entire worldview among its practitioners.

Actually, although science is millennia of years old, the notion of scientist is fairly recent. Indeed it was not until 1840 that the word first appeared in the English language! “We need very much a name,” said the brilliant English philosopher-mathematician William Whewell (1794-1866), “to describe a cultivator of science in general. I should incline to call him a Scientist.” And the forceful link between science and technology, what we have come to call Research and Development (R&D) first appeared in 1923, when the private sector began to enter into a partnership with government and educational institutions in the pursuit of new knowledge, harnessing it to produce new and commercially valuable technologies. Since that time there has been an explosion in the extent of our knowledge and the reach of our applications. Today, almost two thirds of all research is funded by the private sector and in some advanced industrial countries, even more.

But whether it is done by the private sector or the public sector, in universities or in independent labs, the practice of science is governed by certain values. The values of science are adhered to by its practitioners with a rigor that shames other professions.

Science, arguably the greatest enterprise of humanity, promotes the values of science: Truth, honor, teamwork, constructive subversiveness, engagement with the other, and a method for the arbitration of disputes.

Truth: Any scientist who manufactures his data is ostracized forever from the scientific community. Just recently, we have seen the most eminent scientist in South Korea, forced to resign from all his positions for having manufactured his results. It was his colleagues in the scientific community who tore off the mask of

achievement and exposed the reality. In science, truth will always come out, and the practicing community of scientists ensures that all its members rigidly adhere to the standards it has set.

Honor, to give each his or her due, is another tenet for the practice of science. The second most heinous crime in science is plagiarism. And a whole array of tools, from footnotes to references are deployed to ensure that none steals the work of others. Perhaps a most eloquent statement of that is Newton's statement that ... "if I have seen farther than most, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants".

Teamwork has become essential in most fields of science. The image of the lone scientist who challenges the established order with unique and brilliant insights, exemplified by Newton and Einstein, exists only in a few small domains of contemporary science. Increasingly it is teams of researchers in labs who make the breakthroughs, especially in experimental science. We must teach our young scientist of the future the importance of teamwork, and the essence of that is to ensure that all the members of the team receive the recognition that they deserve.

Science advances by overthrowing the existing paradigm, or at least significantly expanding or modifying it. Thus there is a certain **constructive subversiveness** built into the scientific enterprise, as a new generation of scientists makes its own contribution. And so it must be. Without that, there would be no scientific advancement. But our respect and admiration for Newton, is not diminished by the contributions of Einstein. We can, and do, admire both.

Engagement with the contrarian view: This constant renewal and advancement of our scientific understanding is a feature of the scientific enterprise. Its corollary is that scientists must engage with all opinions, coming frequently from very young persons, no matter how strange or weird it appears at first, subject only to the arbitration of evidence based confirmation of the claims.

Arbitrating disputes by rationality and evidence: This final point is essential. For in science, there is a process and a method, based on rationality and empirical evidence that rules. It is the way to arbitrate disputes. It is what makes science great. The unknown Einstein's view of the bending of light by celestial

objects was accepted when it was empirically verified by the 1919 observations of the positions of stars during a total eclipse of the sun. Conversely, the claims of cold fusion made by the well-established professors Pons and Fleischmann were rejected when the claims could not be replicated in other labs. Thus in science, the ultimate authority is not a person, but a process of reasoning and a method of empirical observation.

These are societal values worth defending, not just for the practice of science, but also because they promote a tolerant and open society.

On the other hand, the scientific enterprise produces a different kind of understanding of truth than the belief systems of religion. Science produces an understanding of reality that is partial, probable, awaiting the next interpretation that will take us ever closer to an understanding of our universe and ourselves. It does not claim to be absolute, for all time. Even in mathematics, after the work of Kurt Gödel, it is now accepted that there are indeterminacies in the structure of mathematics that are not likely to be overcome.

So, why has religion so frequently been set up in an antagonistic role vis-à-vis science? We think of the trial of Galileo and the battles over Darwinian evolution. It is largely due to an error in trying to unite two systems or magisteria, where each magisterium has its own authority structure. In reality, as Stephen Jay Gould has ably written¹⁸ these are non-overlapping magisteria or NOMA!

The reality of human consciousness is that we address some questions in the scientific enterprise, asking questions such as what is... But science cannot address the issues of what should be, or what should I do about something or other. That is another magisterium, that of religion and philosophy. These two magisteria are not the only ones. For example, the judgment about beauty in art is neither governed by science nor by moral or religious beliefs. What makes music great or a color composition pleasing is part of another magisterium.

So to those who are concerned with the advance of science and fear its conflict with a system of religious beliefs, we can reassure them. There is no conflict. They operate at different levels.

¹⁸ See Stephen Jay Gould, *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life*, New York: Ballantine. 1999.

The Two Cultures Revisited

When C.P. Snow wrote about “the two cultures”¹⁹ over half a century ago, he bemoaned a degree of ignorance, even rising enmity between the culture of science and the culture of the humanities. The ignorance of each about the other was noticeable then and has grown since. Today, that non-science culture has mutated into a variety of groups, all sharing the same level of ignorance about the basics of science. Some are gravitating towards a fundamentally anti-science posture. Many deny that science is anything more than just another discourse reflecting the power relationships of society, and that its practitioners, the scientists, are no more than another social group vying for resources and power. They politicize debate and reject evidence.

Yet Science is different. We lose sight of that difference at our own peril. In science, there is no individual authority, no book that governs right or wrong, no high priests that interpret the sacred texts. There is a method. A method based on rationality and evidence. Science encourages the engagement with the contrarian view, and hails the overthrow of existing paradigms and conceptions as breakthroughs. Most of the innovators in science are very young. Einstein was 26 when he published his revolutionary papers in 1905. Watson was 25 when he co-discovered the structure of the double Helix. All were hailed for their discoveries and are in the pantheon of the greatest scientists.

But powerful as the empirical scientific method is, it is not enough to deal with many of our problems, which are not just individual or systemic, but also social and environmental, local and global. We need the insights of the social sciences and the wisdom of the humanities. We need to bridge the two cultures more than ever before.

The methods of the mainstream social sciences, may differ from those of the natural sciences, but their scholarship is not in doubt. Usually more qualitative than quantitative, the social sciences tend to description rather than prescription, and avoid generalizations across societies, with the obvious exceptions of cross-sectional economic studies.

¹⁹ C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, New York: Cambridge Univ Press, 1959.

The social sciences use different methods than the natural sciences, to collect different forms of knowledge that enable the development of insights. These include narrative which is a very powerful tool. For example, it is very difficult to come to grips with conflicts within or between societies without understanding their different historical narratives. It is impossible to deal with the Palestinian-Israeli issue if you do not recognize their (totally) different historical narratives, or to understand the problem of Race in America, or the post-colonial context in many places.

Extremism posits a different historical narrative than mainstream society. It also uses distorting mirrors to show a society so riddled with injustices and corruption that it is beyond redemption, and it opens windows that show nothing but vast conspiracies against the chosen members of that extremist group, ergo all others are enemies or dupes not to be trusted.

The values of science demand evidence and rationality in argument, respect pluralism, and these values do bridge the gap between the two cultures. They are equally applicable to the pursuit and articulation of the knowledge of the humanities and the social sciences as they are to practice of science from research to medicine, engineering and agriculture. They will undermine extremism and the violence that it engenders.

But as our programs seek to spread a culture of science and to promote the values of science, scientists must not presume to have an exalted separate position in society. At present, many of the problems of our time, from gender to medical issues, from the deployment of technology to environment, from social cohesion to international peace, focus attention on human individuals and societies as much as on the natural world we live in. Human beings are social beings, living things that have motives, intentions, norms and values, and whose social institutions have meaning symbols, rituals and cultures... All of that is not directly measurable, but has to be inferred from observations. These are precisely the contributions of the Social Scientists. For the benefit of humanity in this new century, we must bridge the rift between the two cultures. We must be able to bring their different and complementary insights to bear on the great problems of our time, and add to the insights of these intellectuals the creativity of the artists and the wisdom of the humanities. Then and only then will we truly have transformed the political,

social, economic and cultural discourse in our nations to marginalize extremism and embrace pluralism.

What Kind of Education:

A sensitive issue that needs to be addressed is the continued presence of a dual education system in Egypt: one under the ministries of education and of higher education, and the other under Al-Azhar. It is now obvious that militant Islamic ideology has made significant inroads in the Al-Azhar system, and it is hoped that the present leadership of Al-Azhar will be able to reinstate the tolerant, open moderate Islamic outlook for which Al-Azhar was famous. However, it is still a question whether we should have two separate systems that run from earliest childhood to post graduate studies.

Pluralism would imply that multiple schools and curricula could be tolerated to the extent that a core curriculum is respected by all, including, of course, the Al-Azhar schooling system and the foreign language schools and private universities.. But given the obvious and declared interests of a number of foreign parties towards the promotion of extremism, it becomes questionable whether this should be allowed without limits. If there is indoctrination going on in some of those schools or universities, then how far should we allow that indirect indoctrination of our children to proceed? Yet, the other alternative of government-sponsored censorship of all educational activities is hardly more appealing.

The likely least-bad solution is the creation of an Autonomous Accreditation Agency that should review all schools and institutions of learning, including the government sponsored ones, to review content as well as to assess quality.

XVI. HOW TO GET THERE:

Cultural Policies and Instruments for a Nation in Flux

To Have a Vision:

There is a need to have a sense of a credible future vision that maps a path to a future where we are better off, socially, economically and politically. That vision, which the French refer to as a “*Projet de société*” must be of a practical future as opposed to a utopian ideal, and must also be perceived as attainable. Attainable does not mean easy, for it is highly probable that its attainment requires effort and sacrifice, from the individual as well as others. But to have such a vision is I believe Necessary, as it was aptly pointed out:

“Without Knowledge of wind and current, without some sense of purpose, men and societies do not keep afloat for long, morally or economically, by bailing out the water.”

—Richard Titmuss²⁰

From that vision, it is necessary to think of the ways to design a comprehensive cultural strategy for a complete socio-cultural framework of action. That will involve many actions in many areas. They can be mapped onto the three-tiered diagram that I used to explain cultural dynamics and changes in social behavior. But for pluralism to work, there must be acceptance of the other. Thus some clear policies in some areas must be pursued. Below are some of the most obvious needs

Translation of Foreign Works

It is important that cultures do not become closed upon themselves. It is not just by the intercourse of commerce that they should interact with other societies, the exchange of ideas and art works is not only enriching, but also a force of promoting change in our own society. All cultures are the result of memories of the past and interaction with the new in the context of the present.

²⁰ Epigraph in Tony Judt, *Ill Fares The Land*, The Penguin Press, New York, 2010 p.167

Only mathematics and music are universal languages that need no translation or commentary. The visual arts can also speak to the inner soul of the viewer in ways that cannot be paralleled by other forms of communication, but it remains true that in these interactions, an educated imagination and a critical eye will be more appreciative of the subtleties of the artwork than the untutored senses. Thus a thoughtful critique of art in all its manifestations is part of the cultural scene and enriches the experience of the new, whether it is home grown or imported.

But universally, language is the primary means of communication, and until machines can do the task of translation at a certain level of excellence, we must expect all sensible governments to promote a substantial effort at translation into our own language: Arabic. Here I speak not only of science so that scientific findings can reach a wider audience, but also of artistic output such as literature, poetry and the theater. We must expand efforts that would promote translation of books and magazines and journals, as well as the subtitling or dubbing of films and TV programs to assist such products in having a wider audience and in turn to expose that wide audience to a wider range of artistic products. The subtitling or dubbing of films and TV programs can be very much private endeavors with minimal government support. In fact, because artistic output of that kind is so socially charged, it plays a special role in the development of culture.

Regretfully the efforts at translation into Arabic are still woefully inadequate. We must strengthen those efforts and vastly expand the number of books and plays and magazines that are translated, and also legislate to encourage such efforts.

Cultural Exchange:

It is remarkable that almost all extremist tendencies have an aversion to being open to the “other” and invariably tend to want to close themselves on their own definition of the “pure” form of the ethnic or religious culture. Thus our own brands of extremists want our societies to be “protected” from the pollution of foreign fads and tendencies, and want to impose rigorous censorship and enforce manifestations of public piety. The new extremist right-wing groups in Europe and the US are opposed to immigration and what they consider cultural subversion. They want to exalt the state as instrument for the promotion of their vision of the

purified society, with all minorities and dissident groups excluded. Therefore, enhancing cultural exchanges is one of the most important means of promoting a pluralistic culture and an open, changing society.

Hence, I believe that foreign presences – whether our cultural offices abroad or the cultural offices of other countries in our own – should be encouraged. The government should facilitate such exchanges and promote the work of artists and intellectuals beyond their political borders in both directions.

There should be a facilitation for the sponsorship of events and festivals, especially those that invite foreign talent in addition to promoting local artists, and encourage that necessary and highly productive cross-fertilization of artists across cultural divides. In the process, such events also promote the education of the public about what creative artists and their works are all about.

The Role of the Media

The media today, whether through the printed or electronic press, the social connectivity phenomena, or the cable TV channels or the radio, has become ubiquitous and instantaneous. It sets the tone of the public discourse as well as the political agenda of the country. It can whip up a frenzy or calm a nation. The Media can, and often does, set the tone for the discourse of a nation.

While the Free Press remains the primary guarantor of the accountability of power to the public, it needs to have a code of ethics that holds it accountable to minimal levels of accuracy and courtesy. Libel laws should be enforced promptly and effectively. But this in no way is a call for censorship, for whatever the evils of a free and unfettered media, it is far less than the evils of government control of the media. Journalistic excess is a necessary price to pay for the cherished right of freedom of expression.

But what about hate speech? Should there be limits to such discourse? Undoubtedly we should be aware of the danger signals when freedom turns into license and to calls for violence and for attacks on entire groups of people. These limits have been worked out in every society to fit its specificities and it is best addressed on a case by case basis.

In our case, a few guidelines might lead to a more responsive media that is more sensitive to the importance of promoting pluralism. Such guidelines should be voluntarily designed by those in the Media, and this could lead to a “media covenant of ethical behavior” that would be voluntarily adopted by all in the profession to emphasize the value of accuracy and truth in reporting as well as place limits on excess. With or without such a voluntarily adopted covenant, improvements could be achieved in part by measures that would:

- Simplify libel procedures
- Accelerate court decisions and stiffen fines and force payments
- Reaffirm the need for pluralism by ensuring means for those who do not have easy access to express their views on the media to be able to do so, at least to a minimal level as required to ensure diversity.
- Reaffirm the unacceptability of promoting breakup of the nation, or ethnic or religious cleansing or hate talk that is likely to demonize groups of people and lead to violence.
- Enforce net neutrality

The Role of the Family

The family unit is the fundamental building block of society, and efforts to maintain it and strengthen it are essential. Street children and children born out of wedlock are frequent victims of all sorts of exploitation and are also easy prey to those who would turn them into accomplices. The parenting function has no equal in bringing up the child, and is far more important than schools in developing character and orientation. Neglect of that function creates opportunities for drift into criminality and political extremism.

Today a very large part of the public can be reached by the mass media. The religious institutions are also an essential component that acts on parents’ beliefs and behavior, and in turn impact the children at all levels.

The Friday Prayers

The Friday prayers are an enormously powerful tool of communication. Each Friday, millions of devout Muslim citizens voluntarily go to the mosque

mentally ready to listen to and to accept the sermon that the local imam preaches. That process is repeated without fail every week. Thus the content of these sermons are important. It is not a coincidence that many of the extremist Islamist movements have been nurtured in small mosques and neighborhood Zawiyas (little makeshift mosques) where fiery and charismatic politicized imams mobilized and recruited dissidents and spread hatred and venom.

In Egypt, under the general guidance of the Sheikh Al Azhar, well-known for his tolerant and humanist view of Islam, the minister of Waqfs has actively taken over the direction of the Friday sermons. It is now forbidden to have local Imams preach in neighborhood Zawiyas and organize their own Friday prayers outside of the mosques as they used to. It is hoped that this will check the expansion of the venomous brand of fiery jihadist sermons that are wreaking havoc in many Muslim communities in the world, as they call for killing all those who disagree with their particular view of Islam.

The Azhar

The Azhar is the bulwark that many look to refine the ideas of a moderate Islam *Al-Wasatiyya al Islamiyya* and the rejection of extremist currents. Its influence on the formation of Imams and the vast educational system which it possesses need to make full use of the most advanced concepts and teaching materials and communication techniques. Reforming the Azhar education system would undoubtedly also have consequences in reforming the *da'awa* formation work and the training of future Imams under its auspices.

The Azhar under the impetus of its leader, Shaikh Al-Azhar Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, has already taken very important steps in promoting *Beit al 'A'ila*, and the effective cooperation and dialogue between the Church and the Azhar. Recently, They organized a magnificent conference with a vast attendance of many denominations that denounced the terrible acts of *Daish* and its ilk among terrorist groups.

The Azhar is an enormously important player in any effort to reject extremism and violence in our societies and to accept pluralism and dialogue. They

will also have a global role to play on matters pertaining to the dialogue of civilizations and of cultures.

Monuments

Monuments have a special role to play. Monuments are not only a valuable heritage and exemplars of a bygone era's achievements, they are the touchstones of our memories and the wellsprings of our imaginations. We document and conserve our past, celebrate our present and hope to influence the future through the lasting heritage, tangible and intangible, we leave behind.

Not surprisingly many totalitarian regimes desire to destroy the inherited monuments of a bygone past, as they aspire to create the monuments to their own vision and exalt their own tenure in power...

Architecture defines a social era as much as a contemporary society. It is not just a reflection of the prevailing taste of the governing elites, be they political or economic, it also provides the touchstones of our memory and the wellsprings of our imagination.

Architecture defines the sense of place in which we live, the streets we move in, the city landmarks by which we navigate the city. It provides our shelter and our places of meditation and worship. It can be ugly or beautiful, and it comes alive in its interaction with the humans who use it.

In that sense, the use of a building is itself an experiential phenomenon, for you have to enter and experience the spaces within, and they can be inviting or crushing, they can be cozy or monumental, they can be dull or inspiring. Therein lies the artistry. In the capacity to implement the vision of the architect lies the science of building. In the land of the pyramids, we have an awesome legacy to live up to!

Social Rituals

That brings us to another phenomenon of cultural manifestations: **the social ritual**, from birth to adolescence to adulthood to courtship to marriage to death. All societies have created rituals by which they handle these major way stations of human life, and these rituals are not innocent: they tend to reinforce inherited societal stereotypes such as gender differences and the respect due to elders, rather than the liberation of creative talent or the encouragement of youth to explore their world.

But the destruction of present rituals without their replacement cannot be functional. Society needs its rituals as much as we need to be part of a larger social grouping than the self.

The Social Media

The new ICT now play a dominant role in recruitment, indoctrination and propaganda as they are wielded by the extremists in our societies and those who back them. But we should be self-confident. More social media, greater internet penetration, more mobile phones and greater outreach will help the cause of pluralism and moderation and enormously enhance the density of dialogues and discussions. There are short term risks but enormous benefits in the medium term. No cultural strategy that looks to the future can ignore the social media.

But it may be good to allow the acceleration of the complaint and adjudication process in cases of libel, hate speech and fraud of different types.

Creativity and Freedom of Expression

Where are the boundaries of free expression? This is an important question on which I have written much elsewhere that I will not repeat here. However, it is important to have some boundaries (e.g. enforceable libel laws) for these are truly the “wise constraints that make people free”. The wisdom lies in finding the right balance between these minimal boundaries needed to maintain the necessary cohesion of society and the necessary freedom of expression for the nurturing of creativity and renewal of society. That is the task for the political system of governance.

XVI. THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

On Governance, Participation and Pluralism

On the Need for Good Governance

Change and violence: The presence of change in society is important. A society that changes rapidly and where political change is possible and visibly happens peacefully through democratic means, robs those who advocate violence of one of their most potent arguments.

Those who advocate violence posit a continuous process of more of the same or more along the same lines unless there is violence in the shape of war and revolution to interrupt such a course of events. But we should point out that the difference between violent and non-violent action in opposition to the status-quo or the present direction of events is that violence is really about the destruction of the old, while non-violent discourse is necessary for the establishment of something new, something new that will benefit from the support of the majority and that is not forcefully imposed on the people at large.

The Civil Society: The legal framework within which civil society organizations are formed and work is an important part of the political climate and the effective practice of democracy. We need to have a multi-faceted society that is vibrant, changing and dynamic; a society where pluralism and freedom of expression are cherished and given political support and encouragement. That will be a prime defense against the rise of extremism and the appearance of violence.

Yet we should also analyze the prevalent views that just through political pluralism and freedom of expression we are automatically going to succeed in the limitation of extremism and violence. Tunisia, the country that sparked the Arab Spring and where there institutional freedoms have most advanced, seems to have also been the country that contributed one of the largest contingent of its youth to the armies of Da'ish.

On Balance: So we are not blind to the potential misuse of such tools by those promoting hatred, extremism and violence, be they nationals or driven by international connections. Thus some regulatory framework is needed to ensure that these institutions play their constructive role and are not twisted to become the instruments of brainwashing and the incubators of terrorism

How to find that necessary balance is the task of the political system, and to this day, democracy, in the sense that the legitimacy of government is derived from the support of the governed, remains the best guarantor of our freedoms and the best means to chive transparent and accountable government.

Democracy and its Imperfections

Democracy has attained a widespread acceptance as the only, or at least the best, form of government to protect the human rights of citizens, ensure equality before the law and that protects the minority from the tyranny of the majority and that allows minority views to be heard before decisions are made.

Yet despite these recognized advantages, there seems to be a widespread dissatisfaction with the way contemporary democracy is being practiced in most countries. In the established democracies of the West, the citizens of many of these countries consider that the system is flawed, that elected politicians are too much under the influence of powerful interests and that the campaign finance laws lead to distortions if not outright corruption. After seeking the franchise for two centuries, the results of exercising this franchise has not led to a system that meets their expectations. They feel excluded and that “others”, the ill-defined “they” , meaning powerful moneyed interests, “own the system”.

This feeling of disenfranchisement is widespread. People have taken to the streets to express themselves, and not just in the Middle East where the Arab Spring revolts set new standards for the exercise of People Power, but also elsewhere from southern Europe to Hong Kong.

Perhaps it is time that fashionable trends be scrutinized against the lattice of empirical evidence so that the shape of the reality we are living emerges before our eyes. Yes we need to separate myth from reality in what really happened in the last

three centuries as human societies all more or less evolved their forms of governance towards some form democracy.

From Representative Democracy to Participatory Democracy

There is no substitute for the notion that the legitimacy of any regime is rooted in the consent of the governed. But though the system of representative democracy (or direct democracy in a small scale such as a town hall meeting) is a clear way of achieving that legitimacy, issues become more complex as the society grows and its transactions become more intricate. We can and should explore and discuss alternative and maybe better instruments through which the manifestation of the consent of the governed can be verified. Such a discussion, however, is for another essay. Let us here simply state that we need good governance that promotes inclusion, participation and legitimacy of government derived from the consent of the governed. Furthermore, that participation, especially of dissident minorities should be meaningful, and that change, peaceful and legal change, is possible.

Changing the Political Discourse:

Our political discourse must be changed from its current subjective, shallow and cliquish mode to one where a coherence of intention and action is notable, and an ethic of political responsibility prevails. All politics is grounded in public discourse. Without such an improved discourse not only our politics are impoverished, but also the texture of our national societies is weakened.

It is inconceivable that the broader context of cultural expression (The outer circle) would remain unaffected by the nature of the political system and the character of the prevalent political discourse. Exercises in deception and double-talk, the failure of those in power to admit error under any circumstances, the unwillingness to engage with contrarian views, all are symptoms of loss of legitimacy and self-confidence, which in turn must impact on the exercise of creative abilities and the nurturing of talent.

Conclusions:

As we conclude this section, we call upon the three diagrams that have so far been used in this essay to clarify some of the most important underlying concepts.

The Dual Context of the Work of Art: In section XIII above, we discussed the two circles that, in addition to time, provide context to the work of art. Good governance is essential to the outer circle. We need effective inclusion, participation and transparent and accountable governance... People who are secure in their sense of self, and who know where they belong and the values that they stand for, do not normally get enthralled by charismatic demagogues or seek the solace of submission to another personality or even to a general cause. They may however seek a specific cause that redresses perceived injustices that other forces seem unable to address, but the political system should allow that to be part of the normal exercise of politics and provide the legal and legitimate means by which this should be done.

The Layered Reality of Cultural Identity: The multi-layered diagram, which we explained in Section X in Part Three above, showed how commonalities can co-exist with difference in a multi-layered reality. Pluralism requires that we allow these differences to enrich our own society, while we ensure that there is a common layer of national identity that links all citizens to the sovereign nation-state by their rights of citizenship, equality before the law, and their guarantee of fundamental freedoms and all their human rights. It can be done.

So we aspire to a society at peace with itself, a society that has adopted its own mode of governance, which promotes pluralism and is open to the intercourse of nations and other cultures. A society where rationality and civility prevail, where political change and social activism are legal and encouraged. A society where the values of science are taught and practiced, but where art and the humanities are valued. An education system that helps embed these values as it nurtures talent and creativity. A society where the young are brought up with these values, while the adults live by those same values. To “walk the talk” is essential. To move towards such a society we must adopt a systematic approach to the promotion of the new and its integration into the nation’s cultural framework.

Back to the Three-Tier Diagram: To achieve such a system, and to promote such a society requires a broad array of cultural policies that are mutually reinforcing and that strengthen the ability of the country to recognize various local and minor identities while promoting a cohesive sense of national citizenship.

Such a set of cultural policies and programs is best designed and mapped around the three-tiered diagram for understanding cultural dynamics that we presented earlier (see Section XI in Part Three above). This means that the policies and programs we will advance in the next part of this essay are designed to strengthen the arrows on the left hand side of the diagram (the entry points of the new) and to strengthen and accelerate movement along the arrows within the diagram to ensure the rapid integration of that part of the new that suits our society and that adds to its richness and vibrancy.

With this background that identified the elements of a cultural strategy, we can move to identifying **specific programs**, understanding where each will fit in this vast canvas that we are trying to paint – granted still with broad brushstrokes – to explore how we can deal promoting the cultural transformation of our societies as we move to reject extremism and violence.

PART FIVE:

SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

XVIII. A VAST AND COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM:

It is important to realize that the program we want to launch must be one that tackles a broad front of cultural activities, a program that is directed at all facets of the phenomenon we have studied, and that must be pursued with a serious determination and over a long period of time. Anything less will not be effective. The many disparate elements are ultimately complementary and mutually reinforcing.

Thus we need to imagine this program as embodying a series of policies, programs and projects to address each arrow on the left hand side of the preceding three-tier diagram, so that the entrance of the new into the diagram is reinforced. And we also need to reinforce the arrows within the diagram so that we have a smoothly flowing current of ideas streaming forth within the different levels, and joining the parts of the three-tiered diagram into an integrated and integrating system where culture evolves dynamically, and constantly renews itself without ruptures or blockages, and their concomitant social pathologies.

In terms of content, the policies and programs will be vast, for the changing cultural framework will be attended by changing social, cultural, religious, public and media discourse. It will be a pluralistic environment, encouraging of innovation and creative self-expression, and endowed with a critical, thoughtful and skeptical discourse that will sharpen points of view, hone arguments and engage society in listening and discussing in a civil manner. It will arbitrate disputes with rationality and evidence. It will incorporate the knowledge of the natural sciences, the insights of the social sciences and the wisdom of the humanities. It will use the tools of the ICT revolution including social connectivity tools, and keep adapting as that fast-paced revolution keeps rolling on at an ever faster pace. It is nothing less than a total transformation of society that we seek, so that the extremism we see and the violence that it engenders will have difficulty growing in such a transformed societal environment.

While the promotion of science and the values of science will emphasize a spread of rationality and evidence-based argument and decisions, it is important that artists continue to thrive. There is no life without art, no culture without music, the visual arts, and the collective literary productions of a people. Such products can be also geared to local identities within a cosmopolitan tissue of intermingled identities that help form the national identity of a people.

For clarity of presentation, we shall discuss the program elements in three ways:

- Programs that are specific to one or more of the arrows on the left-hand side;
- Programs that are specific to the links between the different parts of the diagram; and.
- Programs that are sector specific and yet broad enough to cover most parts of the three-tiered diagram

There are, of course, overlaps, but for greater convenience and clarity we will adhere to this organization for the presentation of the proposed programs.

XIX. INTRODUCING THE NEW:

Programs that are Specific to the Arrows Entering the Diagram:

From the diagram's three tiers, we have five arrows on the left hand side, all being entry points of the new.

Intellectual Domain: New Ideas:

It is important that an intensive national dialogue be launched, not just in terms of the issues of socio-economic policies and development options, but also in terms of the issues of national identity and the meaning of human rights and freedom of expression and assembly. Developing, expanding, debating, and spreading new ideas all require that the vehicles for discussing issues that transcend addressing immediate needs and gossip be allowed to exist and that thinking outside of the box be encouraged. Here **the learned societies** have a major role to play, for the standing of their members will protect the articulators of new ideas, especially if they organize that in terms of new ideas competitions for

youth. On the other hand, these same organizations should also keep the society linked to all the most recent developments in terms of ideas and technologies. Forums like TEDx or the innovation conferences held in several European cities should be encouraged to multiply.

But powerful and active learned societies are not enough. For these ideas to take root in society, or at least those that may benefit society, will require the presence of powerful university departments, and both will need the outlets to reach a broad public. This is where we need powerful and learned TV channels and other mass media outlets that understand the importance of investing in the production values of documentaries and science series. Media discussions, with specialized and large-public journals, critiques and alternative views, whether literary journals or science magazines, are all necessary for creating the critical cultural eco-system within which art and science and the products of culture can function and flourish.

This clearly is linked with the mass-media and the educational system, but the reason that I mention them here is that they nourish the all-important links between the theoretical ethics and the practical ethics, so that the latter will have a lesser degree of distortion of the former.

Perceptual Domain: Mass Media

The Mass media includes all forms of direct communication with the public. The content we are discussing here covers everything from the arts to the sciences and humanities. The density and scale of the content is important. A few gems lost in a sea of mediocrity will have no impact.

But recognizing the importance of the ICT revolution and the rapid expansion of the new personal devices from tablets to mobiles, it will be important to ensure that proper content is produced for these devices. Mobile applications are different than conventional websites viewed on laptops or desktops.

Here it will be very important to combine both the spread of penetration of the internet and the expansion of the available quality content.

The issue of content on the mass media brings to the fore the issues of creativity, freedom of expression, hate speech and incitement to violence. Elsewhere I have discussed at length the issues of freedom of expression and I will not repeat here this lengthy discussion. Suffice to say that, in general, it is better to have more freedom and counter bad messages with more good ones than to try to limit the bad ones. Exceptions must be made for libel, hate speech and incitement to violence, and special codes of ethics should be drawn up, and possible statutory limitations may have to be drawn up, all subject to the general rule that more freedom of expression is always the desirable goal. Without such freedom no democracy can function, no accountability is possible and no creativity is likely.

The mass media provide the supporting milieu for cultural output. They help reach the public and they help inform people of new cultural output.

Perceptual Domain: The Education System

Elsewhere I have written at length about reforms of the education system, covering strategies for major improvements in the education system from pre-school to post-doctoral levels. Here I will just mention several items:

- Education starts at home. Involving the parents in the school activities through Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) is important.
- The importance of pre-school education and reading programs needs to be emphasized.
- Girls' education must be emphasized at all levels and in all fields as well as in athletics.
- Schoolbooks at all levels need to be totally revised, and children's books and Young adult literature should be given special attention. The introduction of hands-on materials from science kits to art materials are also needed.
- The current curricula and syllabi are in great need of review and improvements, especially in the teaching of history, religion and civics.
- Teachers need to be trained for a pedagogical approach that is interactive and does not rely on rote learning and memorization.
- STEM programs, with a special emphasis on problem solving, must permeate the education system at all levels.

- Teaching of English is essential. Today 55% of the material on the internet, both good and bad, is in English.
- Provide extra-curricular activities from science clubs to excursions as well as plays and debating groups and other activities from art to music to reading clubs.
- The role of arts in the curriculum is critical. Early attention to talented youth is important, and developing and nurturing such talent is badly needed.
- Focus on motivating students with awards and recognition rather than through fear of grades and exams.
- Develop mentoring programs and tie them to programs for nurturing talent.

Earlier, I have also mentioned the need for institutional pluralism in our systems from Kindergarten to post-doctoral, and to have private universities and carefully consider the effectiveness and quality of the government sponsored institutions, including those that are being run by al-Azhar. There I suggested that the least bad compromise that we can consider is the creation of an **Autonomous Accreditation Agency** that would review the quality of education in all these institutions including those that are run by the Al-Azhar as well as those that are run by the government.

Beyond these measures, it will be important to send more of our excellent students for **graduate studies abroad**, and this will require sponsorships for university and graduate schools and to develop special exchange programs with special art and creative schools like the Tish School for Cinema. A particularly relevant program to develop here would be the new media distance learning techniques like the Harvard/MIT edX program based on **MOOCs** or future variants that use the new ICT technologies for educational purposes.

Physical Domain: Modernizing Influences:

Exposure to the other and enriching the pluralistic experience is important for all societies, but in this rapidly changing world and in the hyper-connected society, it is important to develop both programmatic content from abroad in the mass media, and also to intermix with foreign talent through such events and happenings as festivals, public concerts, exhibitions, and cultural tourism attached

to such events. It is not just the show, it is also the enriching experience of having the foreign talent mix with the local artists.

Physical Domain: Physical Changes

There is little doubt that the physical surroundings in which we live, the sanitary and hygienic standards, the suitability of the housing and the beauty of the urban character all impact on our perception of life in general and the affinity for community, and the sense of inclusiveness which we feel. Thus we must pay attention not just to the architecture and urbanism of civilized space, but also use these spaces as inviting spaces that tell the stories of the past and emphasize their relevance to the present. Statues in public squares and historic buildings should have plaques that explain who and what they are. The integration of the old with the new, if well done, will enhance the urban milieu.

Iconic buildings have their purposes. The Burg Khalifa in Dubai undoubtedly makes a statement about the emirate's self-image. So do the many fine buildings that have been commissioned in various parts of the Arab World, especially when these iconic buildings are for public purposes, like museums, art galleries and libraries. If these are inviting and approachable, as is the case of the Library of Alexandria, they certainly add to the urban landscape and bring modernizing influences to bear on society as a whole. One of the great successes in this is the Al-Azhar park, which combined recreation, culture, historic district renewal and community action. The new Family Park in East Cairo will also have similar beneficial effect.

The restoration and adaptive re-use of specific historic buildings like Bait Al-Sinnary helps create a sense of community, while doing so for entire historic districts, such as the Al-Muezz Street in Cairo is significant. (see section XXIV below for a more detailed program to address the physical environment).

XX. IMPROVING INTERNALIZATION:

On the Arrows within the Diagram:

An Integrated and Integrating System:

In general, the many arrows inside the three-tier diagram must flow smoothly to allow the system to be a culturally integrated and integrating one.

- **Integrated** in the sense that there are no breakdowns between the intellectual and perceptual spheres (i.e. that people should know more about the real teachings of Islam and have more accurate perceptions of their culture and history) or between the perceptual domain and physical domains (the actions people do should conform to the ethics and values that they profess to believe in); and
- **Integrating**: in the sense of the capacity of the system to incorporate the new and digest it, keeping some if not most of it and making it part of the integrated system.

In other words, we must also promote greater movement of ideas between the different domains and nurture the links between them, thus facilitating the internal flow and evolution of culture and social behavior.

What the BA is Doing: Examples of Some Relevant Programs

To strengthen the arrow going down from the intellectual to the perceptual domain, the BA holds many conferences and programs that introduce complex concepts to a wide public, but even more and directly relevant in terms of Islam there are two programs that affect the arrow down from Theoretical Ethics to Practical Ethics (the Reissuing the Classics program with its publications and conferences), and the arrow back up (the Studies with the Mufti). This, of course is in addition to the work we do on many other programs that permeate the various parts of the diagram, However, I believe that a word about each of those two particular programs is pertinent here.

Reissuing the Classics:

A few years after the inauguration of the Library in October 2002, we wanted to reissue the classics of humanist, reformist Islamic thought in the last two centuries in a series of critical editions that would appear as the definitive edition of these great works. This project, for which we assembled a distinguished international team of experts from Morocco to Indonesia, was intended to introduce each work by a younger contemporary scholar of the author or material in question, where that introduction would explain who the author was, their body of work, where that book fit in this body of work, a brief summary of the work, the questions that were raised by the publication of that book in its time, and finally, why we believe it is still relevant today. Then there would be the actual full body of the text with explanatory footnotes that would allow contemporary youth to read that material. The publications, at present all still in Arabic, would be posted on-line as well as provided in print and distributed by the publisher throughout the Arab world. In the process, with all the accompanying seminars and conferences that the production of those series is undertaking, we are also creating a network of younger scholars, and linking between them and the older generation. We have so far issued some 50 volumes out of a projected 150. These works have already found their way to the offices of many of the religious authorities in the Arab countries.

Since many of these works have been out of circulation for a while, it reinforces their presence in the theoretical ethics and by linking to younger generations of scholars; it is emphasizing the need to bring them into the practical ethics.

These works which have been lauded by the Shaikh Al-Azhar, require our attention because they show that one does not have to give up being a Muslim to have the benefits of good governance or advanced institutions of learning or to share equality of rights before the law. Collectively, these works give most people a different view of Islam, and just circulating their summaries would strengthen systematic efforts to revive and reform Islamic thinking in the 21st century. They generally tend to share a profoundly humanist message, and do address “sensitive issues” such as the status of women, showing how men like Qassim Amin could speak of the liberation of Women in 1898, and Muhammad Abduh could speak of

limiting polygamy in the 19th century. Taken together these works show that there is a meeting ground between reviving Islam and the practice of democracy. They therefore underline that the polarization in much of our societies, being pushed by Islamist militants is not necessary, and that this non-polarizing intellectual argument is not being made out of political expediency, but represents ideas that have a distinguished background of 200 years of eminent thinking.

Studies with the Mufti and Al-Azhar:

The authoritative expression of theoretical ethics is given voice by the people who function on that level. But in the case of Islam, the most authoritative formal statements come in the form of “*Fatwas*” official statements by designated religious scholars known as *Muftis* (or groups such as the Supreme council for Islamic Studies). Frequently well-known scholars give informal *Fatwas* that provide their understanding of religious sanction to particular judicial decisions or legislative actions or guidance for personal behavior. Therefore, beyond the general discussions of scholars that the BA organizes on almost all topics it was important for the Library to engage the Mufti of Egypt on a number of controversial issues that the media, the public and many Muslims are confused about. These include issues like: Jihad, *ridda* (apostasy), inheritance, women, democracy, etc. We started with Jihad and *ridda*.

After lengthy formal studies we intend to publish the studies as a joint product with the office of the Mufti. These studies will show that many of the popular perceptions of the meaning of these terms and even more important, what should be done about them, are erroneous and need to be rectified. The results of the ongoing studies are still being widely discussed as we hope to obtain an important and weighty consensus around them, so that they are not seen just another person’s opinion, but carry enough weight to have wider influence.

In parallel we are also organizing with Al-Azhar a number of activities including seminars related to the status of women, a perennial subject in many Muslim societies that require studies from many different approaches, religious scholarship being only one of them.

If we can strengthen the rational Islamic Middle Ground (*Al-wasatiyyah Al-Islamiyya*) on many of these issues, we will help strengthen the arrows from theoretical ethics to practical ethics, a definite positive step towards achieving and integrated and integrating cultural framework in Muslim societies riven by uncertainties and being pushed towards extremism by marginal local personalities of prominent politico-religious leaders.

General Programs:

We could of course talk about many other programs that the BA is designing and executing. For example our documentation programs and the archiving work we are doing, including the archiving of the internet, are important for issues of national identity and to help researchers sort out the specifics of our history. Our outreach programs and our promotions of the values of science, and many other such activities all contribute much to the many different needs of society. But the BA has many relevant programs and these must be positioned within the context of what the country as a whole should do and is doing. Accordingly, the next two sections will deal with general programs to nurture talent, encourage innovation, and promote pluralism

To avoid rejection of the new and to enable society to evolve while retaining its self-assured sense of identity and openness to the other, a general atmosphere of openness and pluralism must reign, as should a general cultural outlook that promotes the values of science and encourages free expression and recognizes creativity and imagination. The programs described below would help achieve that goal.

XXI. A CULTURE OF SCIENCE AND THE VALUES OF RESEARCH:

Promoting Rational discourse and academic excellence:

This program needs to be pursued through many different ways:

For the public at large:

- The learned societies, Science Academies and other such institutions, through their intensified activities will have to bring to the public at large the importance of the enterprise of science and its results;
- There should be special TV programs that address the issues of science, designed for both the general and the specially interested public. Production of original material should be assisted and the dubbing and subtitling of foreign material should be encouraged;
- Training of science journalists in major publications so that they can properly report science news;
- Encouraging major newspapers to have a science page;
- Encouraging the distribution of general purposes science, engineering and medicine journals (e.g. scientific American, national geographic, etc.);
- Massive translation programs of the enormous amount of science material available in English and other languages;
- Implementing the great science museum project (Science City) and multiplying the science centers in different parts of the country and not just in the major cities;
- Organizing science fairs and major exhibitions about science-related subjects;
- Giving a high profile to events that honor national scientists; and
- Involving the learned societies and academies in policy and elaborating a truly national policy for science.

For children:

- Redesign the curricula in primary and secondary schools;
- Retrain the teachers of science;
- Provide the teachers of science with the resources to enhance their teaching experience of science (such as main-a-la-pate, science kits, pre-designed experiments, etc.);
- Organize science clubs in the schools;
- Organize debating teams to promote the art and science poof presenting arguments;
- Organize inter-school competitions for science teams with prizes and broadcast the competitions on TV;
- Identifying talent through national math Olympics and science competitions;
- Give scholarships and national awards for the winners; and
- Provide special schools for the talented.

Build up National Scientific Research Capacity:

While some may think that advancing scientific research in a country has little to do with the popular culture that is not true. The promotion of effective achievements in science translates through the teaching and education system, through the media and the sense of national pride into interest and aspirations that subtly permeate society. The desirability of people choosing careers in science, medicine, and engineering, and the availability of prominent national scientists to speak to the public, all contribute to the pervasive presence of the culture of science as a prime component in the constituents of the national culture.

- National capacity must be built up through:
 - Developing a known and credible national strategy;
 - Enhancing contacts with the outside world (through conferences, exchange programs, and festivals);
 - promoting more connectivity between science and decision makers; and
 - promoting more connections between scientists and the media.

- The improvement of human resources through better STEM education from kindergarten to Post-docs;
- Promote research institutions that managerially and technically have the capacity to become autonomous centers of excellence;
- Define the strategy to work with the national and international private sector including joint research and better patenting procedures; and
- Provide resources on a competitive basis, such resources could be channeled through special institutional and project funds as well as sector funds with government providing only a part of the funds.

University, Graduate and Post-graduate Levels:

The values of science, not just science content, have to be taught. These values are taught by teacher example and student practice. The bedrock foundation of this is the university experience in all domains, including the social sciences and the humanities, not just formal science programs.

XXII. SEEDS OF HOPE – THE ARTS:

A Program to Nurture New Generations of Artists:

Art, Competition and Databases:

Artists are the lifeblood of the cultural scene in a country. It is important to identify talent early and to help budding artists reach their full potential, through training, mentoring and appropriate fellowships for further studies. Merit based competitions for children, organized at the local, regional and national levels and even the international level, for different age groups will be a useful way to engage the mentors with the promising talent and to get the promising onto a path that will be most conducive to their development.

That fairly conventional approach, already being practiced in many countries is actually lacking several aspects in most applications in Egypt and in many other Arab countries. These additional points must be systematically added to get the full return on the programs, and optimize the obvious benefits:

To systematize the approach nationally we should do the following:

- Hold the events every year;
- Publicize the events with local and national exhibitions and events for the winners;
- Publish catalogues for the winning and most promising works and events;
- Assist young artists onto their first formal concerts, or first formal sales of artwork like the BA's "First Time" program;
- Keep careful records of the entire enterprise with digital records of the works retained and those not retained;
- Open files not just on the winners from each province, but also the close seconds and the also-rans, for some may blossom later;
- Engage the local senior artists in each province in the exercise of nomination, review, selections and bring them to the final national selections;
- Maintain detailed records of all those artists in a parallel data base;
- Maintain that data base of contacts not just to track the careers of the young artists and promote mentoring for them, but also to build up a network among them;
- Build that network by regular updating of the contacts and ensuring that the contact is retained maybe by sending a simple digital newsletter and maintaining monitored/managed digital chat rooms;
- Create a network of the senior artists across the country, who would have the common thread of having participated in the process on one or more years. They should become the network of mentors for the budding artists.
- Promote forums and festivals and events that can bring many if not all of these artists together at least once a year;
- Establish similar programs for music, singing and dance and not just for the visual arts; and
- Secure funding for such a program. This is feasible in the same way that local libraries as cultural centers will be funded (see special program for local libraries and cultural centers).

A National Eco-System for the Visual Arts:

Young artists grow into, and established artists thrive in, an eco-system of a cultured and appreciative society. That eco-systems requires developing many related institutions such as galleries, auction houses, museums, and special publications, and related professions such as art appraisers, gallery managers, art restorers, critics, etc.

Government programs to support such institutions should be included. These can be in the form of direct and indirect support.

- Direct support would mean that the government would support such endeavors financially. That does not have to be straight from the budget. It can be in the form of loan guarantees and other financial instruments such as long term bonds or sharing in the capital stock of companies to help them get started and to provide a legislative cover to promote start-ups in such fields.

- Indirect support would be by the government becoming a major purchaser of art to put in our museums, our embassies abroad and in public buildings in Egypt. That would help to support the art market and the related professions and institutions in the art and culture eco-system. Indeed, Government can help activate the ecosystems of the art world by such an active program of purchasing of art works of young national artists for diplomatic missions and for the museums of the country. The funding for such purchases can be organized conjointly with large private businesses that would get a systematic mention for their philanthropy that remains attached to the work wherever it will be exhibited.

Large Cultural Facilities: Opera, Theater and Symphony:

There are large massive cultural activities that require special facilities and a large talented staff, served by an even larger number of technicians and specialists. These will require government funding and nation-wide or even international recruitment. Opera, ballet, symphony orchestra, the national theater and similar activities can never cover their costs. The facilities are never amortized and the operational costs invariably require subsidies. But they can and do play essential

parts in the countries and cities where they are famous: from the Bolshoi Ballet in Russia to the Sidney Opera House (an iconic building that became the symbol of the city) to the Staats Oper in Vienna, to the Opera in Paris, to the Scala in Milan to the Met in New York, and the Kennedy Center in Washington, the world is witness to the enormous intangible benefits that these facilities have brought to their cities and their societies.

Great libraries and museums are equally very important. They will have to reinvent themselves in the light of the new technologies and the revolutionary changes that are impacting a whole new generation. (I have written at length about these issues elsewhere and will not repeat these arguments and suggestions here).

Public Libraries as national Cultural Centers:

Just imagine a nation with public libraries in every small town, in every neighborhood of a major city, with these public libraries functioning as community centers, not just repositories of books. Vast collections can now be made available digitally to the most remote areas and effectively updated. Our Arabic content must grow in tandem, through translation, adaptation or new production. However, Public libraries can and should also be the spaces where public exhibitions and cultural events can be held. They should have spaces dedicated for such activities.

Such a change is not impossible. Limited funds can be leveraged as explained below. (see section XXV).

XXIII. THE CINEMA AND THE THEATER:

Where Art Meets the Market

Meeting the challenges of the 21st century

Our National Cinema and Audiovisual Production:

Egyptian cinema has a long and distinguished tradition and that heritage must be protected, while contemporary efforts must be supported. Protecting the heritage will require that we have a functioning depositary of all film audio and video materials, with specialist librarians for cataloguing and storing the material.

An institution like the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA) in France evolving from our currently limited National Film Institute would be eminently desirable. On the intellectual side, this requires the strengthening of the national Film Institute and to develop the university training programs that will train future talent.

The new national institute proposed would be like the INA in that it would become the legal deposit of audiovisual material including radio and TV as well as film. It should conserve the archives of such audiovisual materials, promote research relating to them and provide professional training.

The availability of these services should be provided in **three separate institutions** , one dealing specifically with film productions and their study and critique, and the other dealing with cable and satellite TV channels and news reporting, and the third for music, voice and all other audio materials.

The national **Cinemathèque**, responsible for Cinema Films, should be the custodian of the entire cinematic heritage of Egypt as well as its current production, with the aim of conserving and making its holdings available to researchers and students. Therefore it should also have showing theaters, viewing rooms and lecture halls and seminar facilities as well having its holdings supplemented by a specialized library (increasingly digital).

The other two facilities dealing with the Audio collections (music and voice and historical material) and the third dealing with all the rest of the audiovisual materials would be endowed with only one analytical and supporting facility for these archives, although the audio labs and the visual screening material may be used in parallel by those wanting to access these archives.

Promoting the National Film Industry:

Although the production business for film and for TV programs will remain largely a private sector affair, the government needs to intervene for two reasons. It is a strategic industry in terms of its “soft power” influence both inside the country and regionally, and because it is important that not all productions be solely dependent on commercial success. Documentaries and other productions sometimes require government support. Even countries the size of France feel the

need to subsidize certain aspects of their national film industry, and to promote the francophone cinema in Africa and elsewhere. Thus the Government of Egypt should have no qualms about supporting the national film industry by many different measures including, but not limited to, the following:

- Remove obstacles to their operations which tend to be strangled by red tape and lack of funding.
- Facilitate the presence of international film-making within Egypt, by providing easy entry and exit for equipment and crews, facilitating access to filming sites and expanding the provision of first rate studios and support facilities.
- Facilitate the promotion of the range of additional services required by such companies locally to benefit from a price advantage while strengthening local starting companies in everything from food catering to film crews to arranging stunts to CGI and mixage
- Assist joint production arrangements with international companies and/or promote local subcontracting for part of the big international movies.
- Facilitate support for national and international production and marketing start-ups and medium size companies.
- Promote internships and apprenticeship programs throughout the industry by paying the basic wages of entry-level trainees for the first year of their employment.
- Allow for and assist a national scheme for partially financing or providing loan guarantees for films deemed valuable and/or nationally relevant (such as historical drama, and TV series) – these notions are discussed further in section XXV where we explore funding arrangements and financing mechanisms.

The Theater:

The theater experience is different from the film and TV experience and requires special support for the revival of the theater tradition in the country. National theaters, with their won troupes can be supported by the government and subsidies in terms of access to theaters or even of additional minimal revenue

guarantees (e.g. equivalent to say 20% of the seats) can be provided for private companies that will revive significant plays.

The Future of Audiovisual Entertainment:

The ICT revolution (discussed under “Rupture” in chapter V above) is transforming entertainment and the tools of communication and social connectivity.

So, what kind of entertainment will emerge in the new age of the internet? It will probably be much more interactive and more personalized than the traditional mass media such as TV that have dominated the second half of the 20th century. Graphic design and animation by computer will dominate much of the most popular new entertainment, and 3-D and augmented reality will be common.

The merging of devices and technologies: We are witnessing a merger of the laptop with the tablet with the personal phone, and the cross-over between Video games and film viewing is also accompanying the explosion of cable TV channels and Video streaming and downloads on the internet. This may mark the demise of the old fashioned cinema experience (which I would miss) and the emergence of youth as masters of these new technologies and opportunities... all this makes for new opportunities for innovation, creativity and the emergence of new talent.

However, they also foreshadow dramatic changes in transforming the markets including the markets for cultural products. It had been argued that this would create many new possibilities for “niche” productions (the theory of the “long tail” of a demand distribution), but so far where financial types have dominated the decisions making of major studios in Hollywood, they have tended to focus on the production of fewer “blockbusters” rather than creative products tailored to smaller niches. So it looks like we will see a reenactment of the creativity vs. commercialism debates. Here government programs with relatively little input could help strengthen the hands of the creative champions (see holding companies and loan guarantees discussed in section XXV below).

In addition, “big data” and the new analytical software increasingly developed and used in the private sector promise to revolutionize marketing approaches all over the world.

XXIV. ON OUR PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT:

A Humanist Approach to Architecture and Urbanism:

Building Well, Growing Thoughtfully:

We all live within architecture and urbanism. We live in houses, work in buildings and move in the streets between buildings and enjoy ourselves in other buildings or the specially landscaped spaces between them. Inviting spaces and well-designed well-maintained buildings create a more human milieu. Dehumanized and ugly architecture and urban spaces can devalue our daily lives, while a much improved such milieu will be inherently more conducive to artistic talent and overall well-being.

In general, it is not enough to seek to reinforce the authority of the “Al-Tansiq Al-Hadari” administration. It is not enough to plan and forbid actions, actions must respond to the real felt needs of inhabitants in historic districts and old neighborhoods, while providing incentives for those who would try to change things for the better. It has to be a dynamic approach, recognizing that cities and habitats are living organisms that must change with time, to meet the needs of every successive generation. But such growth can be done in a manner that protects the heritage and maintains the sense of place that is unique to the locale. This approach goes beyond the protection of monuments, to revive the built heritage through adaptive re-use. But we must also create a system of incentives that will allow established actors and new investors to introduce new elements, new projects that fit with the cultural context and yet add to it significantly.

Reviving the Built Heritage:

Egypt is one of the richest countries in the world when it comes to antiquities and monumental heritage. It also has the enormous “new heritage”, buildings and spaces that have not yet been listed as national monuments or antiques but which acquire importance by their association with prominent people

or which need to be preserved to protect the urban character and feel of particular places, neighborhoods and locales. It is not enough to create an institution whose mandate is to look at the urban character and context of such buildings, it is important to develop strategies, programs and instruments to make that happen.

The most important means of preserving the old in the context of the new is to ensure sensitive “adaptive re-use”. New functions must be involved in the context of the new society but sensitively housed in the inherited structures that make up the local, that give the feel of a “sense of place”. The Restoration of Al-Muezz Street in Cairo, Bait Al-Sinnary in Sayida Zainab, which is now a vibrant cultural center, and the transformation of some old palaces into Hotels, or the transformation of an old house into “Teatro Alexandria” are all examples of adaptive re-use. A special fund to support such projects should be created (see funding arrangements discussion below).

Reviving the Crafts:

A massive program of restoration and maintenance of the old in combination with systematic adaptive re-use will also need to revive the old crafts for building and furniture. Egypt’s legendary craftsmen, who were once the envy of the Ottoman Empire, are all but lost today. The cheap knock-offs that they produce for tourists would hardly be recognized by their forefathers. It is not enough to have a school for training craftsmen. They must be assured a market for their work. The late King Hassan II of Morocco maintained a vast program of new buildings and restoration of the old that kept Morocco’s craftsmen among the best in the region. Egypt, endowed with enormous cultural heritage, can do no less.

Some may question why give this importance to the built environment and its history in a program to deal with contemporary cultural activity and to combat extremism. The reason I believe that this is justified is that it helps a country to develop a healthy relation with its past. It honors the past and helps make the people aware and use the past in their daily lives. Countries like France, Italy and the UK are prime examples of how the past is appreciated and admired and lives on in the contemporary societies of today.

Repainting Facades:

The appearance of the cities of Egypt is terrible. Many of the old buildings that are stable and well-constructed have not been cleaned, much less painted, in decades. A large program of painting the facades and repaving of the streets would be helpful in raising the self-esteem of the inhabitants and in improving the overall appearance of the cities. Note the experience of the NGO “Gudran” in Alexandria.

Government should enter on the basis of a carefully constructed formula of cost-sharing where they may work with the homeowners/renters of a building, local NGOs and CBOs who would handle the work, government that would provide the materials and pay half the minimum wage of young people of the districts to work on the project. This would help provide a bit of local employment for the youth of the neighborhood, reinforce community spirit and give a sense of renewal of the neighborhood.

It is essential however that this be done with appropriate taste and in no way should it be allowed to be seen as a substitute for the provision of real basic services, such as water and electricity, which are also missing or inadequate.

Programs such as this that strengthen the bonds of local community and engage the local residents in the improvement of their immediate condition. These programs are an important antidote to the overall climate of disengagement and despair that is a fertile ground for the spread of desolation and the development of extremist narratives and movements.

XXV. FINDING THE MONEY:

Funding Arrangements for Cultural Activities:

The Scope of a National Cultural Program:

Every government should have a program of support for cultural activities if it wants to maintain a healthy society and a pluralistic polity. Egypt, which is incredibly well-endowed in terms of cultural assets, has to integrate its concerns with the past with its concerns for the new. However, in this discussion I will not address education. Likewise, I will only mention but not really discuss how to

spend on monuments and museums which should be addressed and which should be funded. Rather this discussion is about how to handle and leverage the limited funds available to cope with contemporary cultural activity in the following domains, some of which will require major funding and some less.

The composition of spending and support by sector would be:

- Major:
 - Cinema /Film
 - Theater
 - TV
 - Music (classical) and Opera
 - Books (translation, publication, digitization)
 - Archives
 - ICT
 - Museums
 - Monuments and buildings of historical value
- Minor (in terms of amounts required to assist in nurturing it):
 - Painting
 - Sculpture
 - Graphic arts
 - Architecture
 - Arts and crafts
 - Literature
 - Poetry

The politics of choice: In any country, within any available envelope, however it is distributed between ministries, an overall envelope exists and it will be subject to political pressures by different interest groups.

Special Funding Mechanisms:

Funding cultural activity poses particular challenges. On the one hand there is the open market that should allow those with ideas and talent to fund their activities, provided that the government does not interfere through extensive red tape or outright censorship. But the open market risks using a strictly commercial

yardstick to evaluate merit, with the result that worthwhile works may not find an outlet. Thus to really promote creativity and imagination, non-commercial support is needed either through the intervention of rich philanthropists or the government.

Governments can provide support using straight finance from the budget or through the creation of markets by purchasing artworks for museums and embassies, or by hiring particular craftsmen and artists for government projects. Some of these mechanisms were described in connection with the programs discussed above in earlier sections. Here we are discussing additional kinds of **direct and indirect funding instruments** that are available.

Holding Companies: Government sponsored Holding Companies with a capitalization of say two billion pounds and a paid in capital base of say 200 million pounds could be used to do the following:

- Set up new ventures for undertaking specific worthwhile films or productions, attracting other funders to therefore leverage the company's funds.
- Join talented individuals in joint ventures to implement their own visions of what they want to do.
- Participate in raising capital for cultural projects internationally

A Loan Guarantee Facility for Cultural Projects: The government can initiate such a facility to bring to bear the full faith and credit of the government in the form of loan guarantees to maximize the available financing through the banks. Where the ventures are successful, the loans would be paid back, and the facility could be paid back by taking a share of profits after the project has realized a certain return on the investment.

Government studios: could always be launched with full financing from the government, but soon there is a temptation to seek monopoly rents rather than take risks on worthwhile projects.

Funding a National System of Libraries as Cultural Centers in Egypt:

To provide the funds and technical expertise necessary for the creation of “libraries that also function as social or civic centers” in many locations in Egypt. Here it will be important to arrange a dual structure to finance the libraries and their activities and to provide the training and technical support that the librarians need.

It is proposed that:

The Ministry of Culture (MOC), the official government agency that oversees libraries, set up a **Central Fund** through which it will channel its contributions. The governance of that central fund will be separate from the traditional ministry administrative structure.

The ministry of culture will also support a special **program of technical support** with the major independent libraries in Egypt (The Cairo Library, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, etc.) to train librarians and provide technical support. The governance of that program will rest with a committee chaired by the Minister of Culture.

For clarity, we track the funds and the technical support separately:

The funds: A central Fund is created: In addition to the MOC central contribution, the Ministry of Reconstruction (for allocation of buildings and land) and the major national and local NGOs (who will provide the links to the local communities) and the private sector all contribute through a matching formula into the Fund. The matching formula provides encouragement for international donors and the International private sector, who will see the leverage on their contributions. Thus the original MOC funds are multiplied three fold: with the additions of the NGOs (in cash or in kind) and the private sector nationally and the contributions of the international community.

The Central Fund's money is used again in a matching fund approach with local governorates who in turn provide their funds if the local communities contribute in cash or in kind to the library system. So the amount that comes from the Central Fund (already pooled from several sources) is again matched at the local level.

The Technical Support: Modular training for librarians can be set up. A system of rotational visits and of on-demand support (similar to the experience with help-lines that is commonly provided by IT suppliers of software programs). This program is to be managed centrally by an independent structure organized by the Library of Alexandria.

The computerization aspect can be supported separately through other initiatives coming from the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and other international sponsors.

The National Organization for the Book can provide the basic books that will be available, in addition to the on-line library and other library e-resources, which can provide the bulk of the material which will not be printed and will be consulted on-line. This is actually much more cost-effective than trying to provide the books locally in remote areas. One connection will ensure access to very large amounts of information that is constantly updated. Besides this supports other national goals of increased connectivity and increased computer literacy throughout the nation. Print on demand (similar to the Bookmobile operated by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina) can also be provided as an add-on.

XXVI. INVESTING IN CULTURE:

The High Economic Returns on Investing in Cultural Activities:

While there is much to be said for supporting each of these activities, the cost of the whole program with all these specific proposals has to be carefully evaluated. In general, the economic and non-financial returns of such investments cannot be overestimated. Of course, the cost of each individual proposal should be worked out and evaluated properly, as one would for any other national program or project. But if well done, this collection of programs should be mutually reinforcing, and collectively would help produce a remarkably creative, dynamic

and pluralistic environment. Egypt and the Arab World would be well served by the effective implementation of such programs.

It is worthy of note that a number of Arab countries are already implementing parts of this agenda in successful national programs, from Morocco to Dubai. Egypt, a pioneer of the Arab cultural scene in all its manifestations can do no less than to address the needs for this massive cultural revival... To respond to the challenge posed by the presence of extremism in our midst, and to defeat the armies of violence and terrorism, by the power of ideas that will spread throughout society, ensuring openness to the other, adoption of the new and the celebration of diversity and pluralism... A true Cultural Transformation -- That is how we will respond to the Challenge!

XXXXXXXXXX END XXXXXXXXXXXXX