

The Social Sciences between Importation and Reappropriation: Anthropology and other Disciplines¹

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Abstract: Drawing on postcolonial debates about the decolonization of anthropology in the Maghreb and the Middle East, I distinguish between “importation” [*al-iqtibās*] and “reappropriation” [*al-tawfīn*] as the two ways that have been used to approach Western?/ colonial knowledge in the region. Importation in an earlier form considered the imported knowledge finite, to be adopted without ado. In its new form, however, it is not averse to change, but it follows in the footsteps of the Euro-American innovators. Being open to innovations coming from elsewhere is, in itself, a good ferment for thinking. Yet it should not stand in the way of a creative striving towards an autonomous new tradition of anthropological discourse, which can be achieved through reappropriation, which I use to describe the way in which formerly colonized subjects engage from a position of both subject and object with the knowledge produced about them by colonial scholarship. Using the example of anthropology, which was rejected as a result of the call to decolonize knowledge from European hegemony, I contend that the decolonization of the social sciences entails an undertaking to reshape, rather than reject, such knowledge as critics consider to be inherently colonial. I argue that the task of ridding the social sciences of their colonial imprint, and rebuilding them with the aim of producing an autonomous discourse can be achieved through anthropology. We will only be able to free ourselves of intellectual dependence if we succeed in decolonizing this field and achieving its autonomy.

Keywords: Anthropology, Importation, Reappropriation, Maghreb, Double Critique, Decolonization.

The subject I have chosen to discuss here may seem somewhat strange to younger students and colleagues. Why choose this topic today, one might ask, when the social sciences have flourished both within and beyond the academy in the Maghreb and the Middle East in the twentieth century? Growing numbers of departments, students, and teaching faculty, and research and publication trends, are testament to an increasing dynamism in the field. Given the status achieved by the social sciences in Arabic, then, why raise the issue of importation and reappropriation at this particular juncture?

1. This chapter is the text of an opening keynote that I delivered on Wednesday October 11, 2017 at the Department of Social Sciences, Université Mohammed V de Rabat. I would like to thank my colleagues Mokhtar El Harass, Jamal Fezza, Hicham Ait Mansour, and Amina Mekkaoui for that kind invitation. My thanks go to Brahim El Guabli for helping me finalize the final version of the manuscript.

The answer lies in the period before the recent growth of the social sciences, at a time when the field was in its infancy in Morocco, elsewhere in the Maghrib, and indeed across the Arab states more broadly. One powerful question was widely posed: do the social sciences, inherited as they are from Europe, have the legitimacy to endure in our institutions? The answer was a qualified yes: the social sciences were to be welcomed, on condition that the concepts and methods of the field should be decolonized.

This set of problems arose in the aftermath of decolonization, in the middle of the twentieth century, when efforts to establish a national university were underway and new research and education programs were being implemented. The voices calling for the decolonization of social knowledge, both in Morocco and elsewhere, are well known: in our case they included such figures as Abdelkebir Khatibi, Abdallah Laroui, Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, and others. Of these, the first represents the field of sociology, the second history, and the third philosophy. All three agreed on a proposition I would sum up as follows: an indispensable mediation had to be exercised. The question was how it was to be conducted. I use the term intermediation because the circumstances of the time imposed a strict binary: on the one hand, the European colonial legacy; on the other, the body of knowledge produced by our societies prior to the imperial onslaught and colonial occupation.

With this intermediation, the change from intellectual dependence to independence would be akin to the one from colonization to independence and sovereignty. Knowledge had to be decolonized if it was to be legitimate and autonomous. In this context it was only natural that one concern in particular would take precedence over others: methodology. But before I turn to this matter, a brief observation about the title of this article is in order. I shall explain here my use of the terms “importation” [*al-iqtibās*] and “reappropriation” [*al-tawṭīn*], and explain why I have given priority to anthropology in the present discussion.

One well known example of the “importation” of knowledge, as I am calling it, took place in Egypt in the early twentieth century, when the Egyptian government sent a student delegation to Paris to study sociology under Durkheim and his school. Upon return from their studies at the Sorbonne, the students took up leading positions at Cairo University. Curiously, they considered the knowledge they had obtained to be complete, and did not believe it needed to be supplemented by research; they taught what they themselves had been taught in a static form which took no interest in empirical phenomena. This example illustrates what I call importation, a

process in which knowledge was simply plucked from its place of origin and transplanted to a new setting. I offer it by way of instructive contrast. In what follows, I will discuss a rather different process of knowledge transfer: one that takes place in a relationship of dependency as a result of colonialism.

I use the term “reappropriation,” meanwhile, because I think it describes rather well the action by which a formerly colonized collective adopts, with new and different objectives, the body of knowledge produced about it by the former colonizer. In the case at hand, that knowledge is transferred into a social and linguistic environment other than that which produced it. The Arabic term I use is *tawṭīn* (literally, to transplant something into a new homeland), though I distance myself from words derived from the same root such as “nation” (*waṭan*) and “nationalism” (*waṭaniyya*), which would introduce an unwanted nationalistic bias into my project. Alternative terms might spring to mind, for example *tāṣīl* (“integration”) but I have avoided these because their Arabic root, *aṣl* – which yields words meaning variously “origin,” “first principles,” “authenticity,” and so on – carries powerful political and religious connotations which might risk derailing our discussion.

Lastly we come to the prominence which I give anthropology in this account, for which there are two reasons. The first is simply that anthropology is my own field; the second is that the call to decolonize knowledge brought about a rejection of anthropology on the grounds of its perceived implication with European hegemony. Scholars of the time regarded anthropology as utterly illegitimate.

I would contend, however, that the decolonization of the social sciences entails an undertaking to reshape, rather than reject, such knowledge as critics consider to be inherently colonial. My central argument can be summarized as follows: the task of ridding the social sciences of their colonial imprint, and rebuilding them with the aim of producing an autonomous discourse – that is, a discourse that transcends the historical and current state of dependence – can be achieved through anthropology. That is because we will only be able to free ourselves of intellectual dependence if we succeed in decolonizing this field and achieving its autonomy. Lessons learned from the experiences of anthropology will allow us to reappraise the other social sciences, sociology in particular. How so?

I will attempt to cover here the four points I think are essential to answering this question. First, I revisit the matter of ending intellectual dependence by decolonizing knowledge. Second, I look at the case of history and its implications for anthropology. Third, I employ the concept of

“equivalence in symmetrical opposition” in a discussion of how anthropology might be reshaped. Fourth and last, I look at the implications of the case of anthropology for the field of sociology.

1. Revisiting the Problem of Ending Intellectual Dependence: the Decolonization of Knowledge and the Rejection of Anthropology

I have already mentioned what I am calling intermediation in the fields of sociology, history and philosophy. In this section I shall restrict my comments to sociology and history, since Jabri’s intermediation in philosophy, and his treatment of the heritage-modernity binary, produced no concrete propositions with regard to the social sciences other than an outright rejection of anthropology – which he described as a collection of “labyrinths” – in his approach to culture. I have shown elsewhere that philosophers do not, in any case, have a satisfactory grasp of the social sciences.²

We remain, then, within the confines of history and sociology, where the answer to our question is established in the dialectic of the “double critique.” The terms in which the question is posed differs between the two fields and their adherents; they agree, however, on the proposition that critical effort be exercised towards inherited Moroccan and Arab knowledge and traditions as opposed to the colonial Western heritage.

This proposition was articulated most clearly and fully in Abdelkebir Khatibi’s work. Initially examining sociological works, Khatibi later broadened his focus to works which combined sociology with Orientalist scholarship, notably those of Jacques Berque. He restricted his analyses to materials that stemmed from the Moroccan cultural heritage and its Arab-Islamic founding principles. This endeavour was unique and highly significant for both the Maghrib and the Arab region in the 1970s; it inspired numerous other thinkers, reaching beyond the field of sociology to inform cultural criticism more broadly (as with, for example, the magazine *al-Thaqāfa al-Jadīda*, the product of collaboration between Mohammed Bennis and a group of other writers, intellectuals and artists).

Intermediation operates by positioning the postcolonial scholar between Western knowledge and the intellectual heritage of the newly independent nations; from this position the scholar enjoys the prerogative over research, lines of questioning, and scholarly agendas. In other words, the new researcher seizes discursive sovereignty from its colonial and Western possessors with the aim of reshaping knowledge and the production of knowledge – an

2. Abdellah Hammoudi, *Fī i’ādat šiyāghat al-anthrūbūlūjiyā* [Refashioning Anthropology] (Rabat: Manshūrāt Kulīyyat al-Ādāb wa-l-‘Ulūm al-Insāniyya, 2010).

authority that s/he assumes in order to express the ambitions and tribulations of newly independent societies. The postcolonial researcher and their society are no longer simply objects but become subjects which take as their object the bodies of knowledge originating in both the foreign society and the home society, interrogating them via a process of double critique. The researcher is thus both subject and object.

I have drawn these three points from Abdelkebir Khatibi's formulation. They are not fully described or analyzed in his work; nevertheless, the problematics articulated by Khatibi left a major imprint on the period and opened up numerous areas of further study and debate. I note, however, that this did not develop into a sociology that was Arabophone or Moroccan in its research concerns, or in its programs or methodologies. Instead the double critique in Khatibi's work gave priority to literary deconstruction and innovation, thus lending itself to cultural criticism. The establishment of Moroccan sociology fell to Khatibi's colleague and friend Paul Pascon, who harbored a longstanding concern with hitherto neglected aspects of Moroccan culture. His interests touched at the very heart of the transformations taking place in Moroccan society; it was precisely the endurance of tradition in the face of transformation that he took as his research problem. This was another kind of intermediation, undertaken by a researcher whose own origins were dual: the son of a French family long established in Morocco who supported the anti-colonial struggle, Pascon took Moroccan citizenship. His dual background was undoubtedly partly responsible for the attention he paid to phenomena that had thus far escaped scholarly attention, and for the novel questions and solutions that he posed.

While Khatibi was presenting his ideas on the double critique in the late 1960s and 70s, Abdallah Laroui, a historian, was exploring the intellectual history of Arab elites through historical sociology and ideological criticism. Laroui's *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine* (contemporary Arab ideology) appeared in 1967. In this work we encounter a special kind of intermediation, owing to the author's training and interests, which nonetheless very closely resembles the double critique. It begins with an observation which was unprecedented at the time: that whether we like it or not, the West has become part of us. From this premise, any solutions which attempt to deny or reject the form our societies have taken under the influence of Western knowledges are misguided; our project must therefore set this denial aside. What is this project?

According to Laroui, it is useful to examine the intersections between Western portrayals of our society, and Maghribi and Arab portrayals of our society. To this, Laroui adds a vital point, one on which he differed with others of his generation. The point was methodological: the correct method, in his view, consists in oscillating between the two images of our society such that critique may arrive at a new method of knowledge production rather than becoming trapped in a circle of pure ideology.³

Laroui attempted to enact the double critique in many other published works, even if he himself did not use the term. Among these publications were *L'histoire du Maghrib: Un essai de synthèse* (The History of the Maghrib, an Interpretive Essay, 1970) and *Les origines sociales et culturelles du nationalisme marocain* (The Social and Cultural Origins of Moroccan Nationalism, 1977). After that he became absorbed in his project of theorising history, comparative social and political thought in the Western and Arab traditions, and social thought and the construction of modernity; Laroui's ideas on those subjects are well known and do not need to be revisited here. It is likewise of no consequence for the matter at hand whether or not Laroui succeeded in his project. I will make do with one observation which I consider relevant: notwithstanding its immense importance, Khatibi's project of double critique lacked, in my view, both epistemological foundation and methodological process; that is to say, it failed to reconsider the subjective-objective binary, and did not set out a methodological path to a new and independent form of knowledge production. By contrast, Laroui developed the dialectic into a problem of method, which galvanized the "internal" perspective and Moroccan historiographical voices. Laroui attempted to oscillate between the two images of Moroccan society, as for example in his account of Moroccan history, which was an attempt to reclaim the initiative in narrating the history of the people of the Maghrib. Although this oscillation may not have yielded great results, he certainly succeeded in seizing the prerogative in methodological terms, and was responsible for a number of innovations, particularly in *Les origines sociales et culturelles du nationalisme marocain*, in which he cleared a path for Moroccan historiographical perspectives to take precedence. In this connection, the distinguished efforts of Germain Ayache, who drew upon Moroccan archives to an extent unequalled by Laroui, should also be mentioned.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, while Laroui may have made progress in the dialectic of decolonizing knowledge and the double critique, the epistemic

3. Abdallah Laroui, *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine: Essai critique* (Paris: Maspero, 1967), 164.

foundations of this critique in his work nevertheless remained limited, given his failure to reconsider the subject-object binary. Laroui proceeded as if his oscillation between the two aforementioned images could take place through a hypothetical purely objective consciousness, without any interrogation of the subject. He thus tends to write as if he is a mirror that reflects reality with an unquestionable objectivity.

This observation brings us one step closer to identifying the missing element which is the epistemic dilemma of the double critique; the next task is to identify a tangible methodology by interrogating more profoundly both subject and object, via a comparison of the cases of history and anthropology.

2. History and Anthropology: Equivalence in Symmetrical Opposition

A comparison of the disciplines of history and anthropology from the perspective of the double critique, as it was elaborated in the 1960s and 70s, will offer some vital insights, I think, if we wish to broach the epistemic question that was absent from the double critique project. We should begin with the hierarchy of disciplines prevalent at the time, which gives some indication of the vital position of the subject and allows us to reconsider its relationship to the object. This relationship differs between disciplines, including history and anthropology.

History, along with the incipient field of sociology, occupied center stage in the project to decolonize knowledge. This is especially clear, as I have said, in Abdallah Laroui's work; broadening our focus to the countries of the Maghrib and then to the Mashriq, we can see that the phenomenon was indeed widespread. This pre-eminence seems to have been taken for granted. The question has thus never been asked: why the priority given to history as a discipline? One wonders if the answer lies in the nature of history itself, as process and temporality. The former is of consequence to how one imagines the events and accretions of the past; the latter is of consequence to the self-doing this imagining, and likewise to groups of humans as historical agents, and to such of their undertakings as regard the defense of their right to exist and to organize their affairs, and their relations with friendly or antagonistic neighboring groups.

Only history, it was thought, could return to the precolonial past and study Moroccan society as it was before the calamity of colonization. That is to say, only history was capable of grasping an identity that is now almost extinct. Likewise, only history could describe, in the present, the life of the Moroccan collectivity – including state, resistance, continuity – and envision how the country could be rebuilt in a post-independence future.

I am not concerned, here, with the fact that this collectivity may be founded on narratives of the past that can easily be challenged or disproven, or with pointing out the pluralities that exist within such a collectivity yet are elided in hegemonic nationalist accounts. These things are well known, as is the nature of nationalism(s). It is also not my aim to revisit the question of how history might be written from the perspective of these pluralities or of “external forces,” thereby demolishing the concept of the historical agent that assumes that there is an “internal” historical actor such as an *ethnos*, nation, or any other such entities as tend to be assumed in classical historians’ accounts of events. The crucial point in the topic at hand is that we assume actors – be they individuals, groups, or institutions – to have knowledge. For example, the political center – i.e. the state – had official historians, who performed an information-gathering role and sometimes also recorded geographical and geological knowledge (concerning mineral resources, for example), and information regarding foreign regimes, from the region or elsewhere in the known world. I do not need to mention the main figures of this kind of knowledge, Moroccan or otherwise.

Having placed the disciplines in order of the importance accorded them by the project to decolonize knowledge, we find economics in second place after history. The latter wished to decolonize thought, discourse, and the image of the Moroccan collective both past and present; the former, by contrast, was a project that strove above all else to build for the future, seeking to strengthen the Moroccan collective and anchor it to a new system of production. This being the case, economics appeared not to require a process of intellectual decolonization. This impression was probably amplified by the fact that most thinkers of the period were adherents of Marxist theory, which they considered to hold sufficient potential for intellectual liberation in and of itself; in this view, economics and socialist politics went hand-in-hand in the struggle against imperial hegemony.

The hierarchy of disciplines included other fields which studied the human and society, notably geography, sociology and anthropology. Geography was not subjected to the same scrutiny as sociology and anthropology, and went on to occupy a prominent place in the new Moroccan universities, where its research agendas were gradually domesticated in parallel with national development programs. It did nevertheless come in for some criticism – though not the double critique – from a number of Moroccan and French scholars, such as Yves Lacoste, with researchers investigating its connection to European policy, particularly its relation to military activity and role in preparing the ground [for colonialism or conquest?]. The situation

of sociology was somewhat different, in that colonial research was analyzed and criticized, if in abridged form; yet all the while, sociology programs were appearing in Moroccan universities as if they could simply be imported from French universities without any need for modification to meet the needs of the newly independent society. Sociology was taught in the philosophy department at the Faculty of Humanities in Rabat, and later at the Institute of Sociology until it was closed by state decree in 1971 due to the political climate which distrust social sciences.

I have sketched out this hierarchy of disciplines, albeit with some simplification, in order to describe the specific status of anthropology. But to be absolutely precise, anthropology does not belong within this hierarchy at all, since the decolonizing project refused to grant any legitimacy whatsoever to the field. Initially this applied only to Western studies of North African society, but the criticism soon expanded to include anthropology within Europe itself, particularly in its structuralist incarnation, and in the late 1970s the entire discipline was demolished by the radical critique of Orientalism.⁴

To describe the situation of anthropology requires a certain expansion of our subject, for four main reasons. First is the crisis of what I call intermediation in the field of anthropology. Second is the dialectic which, according to Laroui, permits us to account for the intersections between the two images, i.e., the image formed by the other of our reality, and the image which we are able to form of ourselves – a dialectic which anthropology, to many, appeared to be incapable of entering into. The third reason comes in the form of a contradiction: either the double critique as it was elaborated by the major figures of the time is of limited intellectual utility, or it sets a firm standard which rules that anthropology must be rejected in the production of knowledge about our societies. That standard, as is well known, finds that the colonial nature of anthropology and its canon is such that the discipline cannot be integrated into the projects of the independent Moroccan collective. The fourth reason lies in an analysis and reconsideration of this contradiction, that aims to lay the epistemic foundations necessary for a transformation

4. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) and “Representing the Colonized: Anthropology’s Interlocutors,” *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (1989): 205-25; Talal Asad, *Anthropology & the Colonial Encounter* (London: Ithaca Press, 1973); James Clifford and George E. Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). See also Abdellah Hammoudi, “Al-dākhilī wa-l-khārijī fī al-tanzīr li-l-zāhira al-qabaliyya: khaṭwa fī tariq tāsīs khitāb anṭhrūbūlūjī mustaqill” [Internal and external in theorizing the tribal phenomenon: towards a non-dependent anthropological discourse], in *al-Masāfa wa-l-tahlīl fī shiyāghat anṭhrūbūlūjiyā ‘Arabiyya* [Distance and analysis in the formation of an Arab anthropology] (Casablanca: Dār Tūbqāl, 2019), 49-104, and *Fī i’ādat shiyāghat al-anṭhrūbūlūjiyā* [Refashioning Anthropology] in the same volume, 23-48.

of the inherited anthropological canon, and to work towards creating an anthropological discourse that will transcend the limitations of the double critique and the intersections of the two images as formulated by the generation of the 1960s-70s.

The proponents of the double critique and the decolonization of knowledge did not include any anthropologists among their number, and it is possible that their grasp of the discipline – which was flourishing in Europe and the USA at the time – was limited. They were, however, interested in the ethnographic and anthropological writings produced in large number by French researchers, amongst them scholars and experts employed at various levels of the colonial administration. Some of the anthropologists to have theorized about Maghribi societies came in for critique; most writings produced by experts and researchers associated with colonial administrations, however, met with outright rejection.

The major wave of critique of classical academic anthropology in Europe, especially France, began in the 1970s. It expanded to include the most important theoretical schools, notably structuralism, which was widely popular at the time thanks to the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss and his students. Various currents of anthropology participated in this critique, including Marxist anthropology, and those based in some form or other upon phenomenology. Among the fundamental points of contention were the idealisms of structuralism, about which Marxists had serious reservations, and its colonial baggage, which came in for critique in the works of Robert Jaulin and others, and later in Derrida's deconstruction of Lévi-Strauss in his famous *De la grammatologie* (Of grammatology, 1967).

The double critique tendency in Morocco and elsewhere had its own distinguishing features and aims, prime amongst them that of establishing a discourse and fields of study that were not subject to European hegemony. These aims naturally set it apart from the European movement of critique, with the exception of deconstruction, which was adopted by Abdelkebir Khatibi alongside his emphasis on literary writings. Yet deconstruction, particularly in Jacques Derrida's conceptualization, did not bring about a Maghribi production of knowledge that was independent of European forces.

In any event, what matters to us here is the epistemic and theoretical background to anthropology, which played such a decisive role in its rejection as a discipline, whether this applied to the various European schools of anthropology or only the research that had been produced about Maghribi societies (which rarely concerned itself with broader methodological and

theoretical questions). Without giving a full history of the discipline, a brief glance will be enough to acquaint us with this background.

There are three main points of relevance here. Firstly, as is well known, the West has always studied, while our societies have been the objects of study. Secondly and consequently, anthropology traditionally approached these societies from a localist perspective which denied their imbrication in larger collective entities; universality was a quality reserved to European societies, while societies that were studied were condemned to relativity. Finally, anthropology, including all of its various schools of thought, assimilated non-European trajectories into a universal image of the dialectic of human existence, thus making these trajectories into parts whose meaning derived only from their assimilation into this larger image. That is to say, the societies under study were denied the prerogative to form their own view of their present and future existence.

Anthropology was thus constrained to studying societies as purely local phenomena, and no matter how approaches changed – from evolutionary theory to structuralism to functionalism – the approach to anthropology's object did not, perpetually involving description by the European researcher of a society's local specificities, and a comparison with the general or universal. As such, scholars rarely paid attention to systems, relationships and forces that transcended the local; this task has fallen to the societies under study themselves. In the case of studies of the Maghrib specifically, colonial experts largely adopted an approach of fragmentation towards their object which was necessarily hostile to or ignorant of the larger Maghribi collective, and disregarded the colonized society's own visions of its past and its future, and those of thinkers who belonged organically to that society. In other words, societies were dissected into parts, and those parts presented as objects lacking any subjectivity or ambition to universality. The denial of subjectivity simultaneously denied visions of the past and the formation of visions of the future.

This last observation explains our choice of history as a starting point from which to understand and move beyond the rejection of anthropology. The problematic here is defined by the intersections and contradictions between the image which we encounter in colonial writings, and the image that can be painted by returning to the historiography inherited from Maghribi thinkers. It is precisely this which is the intermediation performed by the historian. Integrating disparate elements of the Maghribi collective and history, the process transcends colonial fragmentation; it does not deny the existence of

constituent parts or local specificities, but performs a reordering within the guiding outlines of a coherent Maghribi collective.

It remains that Abdallah Laroui posed the methodological question with perfect clarity, seizing the initiative with a dialectic in which Maghribi societies became simultaneously object and subject – a subject able to represent its past and envision its future. By investigating the relationship between subject and object, this point takes us beyond methodology to epistemology, to the rule which makes knowledge possible and at the same time defines its nature.

A paradox appears here that is inherent to the historian-subject, which we will also observe in the case of the anthropologist. The historian is an active subject both in the sphere of knowledge and in other spheres (society, politics, etc). S/he, too, is therefore both subject and object. Method creates a distance between the historian and the processes of the society which is his/her object; this distance originates in the critique that is intrinsic to an engagement with sources, and in the period of time that intervenes between the historian and the events which s/he attempts to study as history. Finally, there is the type of intermediation in which s/he engages, specifically the oscillation between the two images of society, as we saw above.

To understand the position of the Maghribi historian, we must take note of the differences between him/her and the colonial historian, remembering that the Maghribi historian must describe the intersections between the image that s/he is attempting to draw, and that created by the colonial historian.

The colonial historian's project aims simultaneously to fragment, and also to envision a larger entity that brings together colonized and colonizing societies (as in the attempts to incorporate Algeria into the French metropole, and to incorporate Tunisia and Morocco into a common space governed by France). The Maghribi historian's project is the opposite: to create distance, when s/he is an organic part of the history and aspirations that pushed against the larger colonial project regarding the Maghribi collective's vision of the future, in both the past and the future.

Where the colonial historian claimed objectivity, denying his own subjectivity and that of the society under study, the Maghribi historian adopts a new dialectic, oscillating between two images and occupying both subject and object positions. Out of this process, a second subject appears, a subject connected to the fate of the society that the historian simultaneously attempts to posit as object of study and feels his/herself to belong to. Positing and belonging are coupled and in tension; the historian is both object and subject, the latter divided into two parts. We should note that the colonial historian is

also connected to the fate of the collective to which he belongs; he too is a subject which imagines itself to be an abstract, knowing self when it is in fact also divided in two.

This comparison, taken from the discipline of history, will shed light on the case of anthropology, if we can find a concept that will allow us to perceive the vital relationship between the position of the colonial historian and that of the Maghribi historian. Returning, then, to the two positions under comparison, we find that they are equivalent and opposing. The specificities of each are opposed to the specificities of the other; they cannot be considered to be the same, yet they are nevertheless equivalent. The concept of equivalence illuminates the intimate relationship that exists between them.

The points of antithesis are clear: fragmentation versus collective coherence; local versus universal; studying subject versus studied object; the denial of initiative to the studied society versus the reclaiming of initiative in knowledge-producing and other acts, and so on. But with equivalence in symmetrical opposition, it becomes visible, for example, how fragments and local specificities change as the relationship between subject and object changes. Ultimately, these meanings multiply when the parts and components of the collectivity are reconsidered, and these can in turn multiply and intensify as research progresses, and as visions of the complete collectivity multiply. So the fragmentary nature may be enriched or remain as it is, but its meanings will be transformed.

This is what is entailed by the reconsideration of the past performed by Abdallah Laroui and Maghribi historians. But the theory of the knowing subject in Laroui's work lacks sufficient epistemological analysis, in that the scholar behaves as if s/he were an abstract instrument for producing new knowledge about society and history. We must nevertheless rejoice in the creative force of his/her subjectivity.

3. Equivalence in Symmetrical Opposition and Reshaping Anthropology Beyond Rejection and Importation

In this section I employ the concept of equivalence in symmetrical opposition, which we saw above, with the aim of reshaping anthropology in such a way as to move beyond the critical movement against it which took place first in the Maghrib and later internationally. The latter movement was more radical in that it connected colonialism with the basic method of knowledge production in anthropology, i.e. the relation between anthropologist and interlocutor, to use Edward Said's formulation. According to this theory, as is well known, the relationship of power that operates within a colonial context

grants the anthropologist hegemony over his interlocutors; knowledge is thus produced through the power of the anthropologist. The verbal engagement between anthropologist and interlocutor is itself determined by the difference between Western society, to which the former belongs, and the other society, to which the latter belongs. In this view, as we have seen, the entire discipline of anthropology is rejected. While history occupied a central position in the first wave of rejection, the second replaced anthropology with cultural studies. The equation changes with what we have been calling equivalence in symmetrical opposition. This concept transforms the meanings of the parts and the collectivity as a whole, by examining fragmentation and local specificity more deeply. The Moroccan or Maghribi postcolonial researcher may experience these pluralities in local systems and practices and in larger collectivities. For example, s/he experiences daily life – as do his or her interlocutors – in its local meanings. Yet the larger collectivity is never absent from local experiences. And local specificities, along with universalities, become simultaneously subject and object. Through the researcher's endeavors, the fragments and local specificities amassed in colonial writings are detached from their positions within the colonial order and made available for refiguration and reinterpretation. New aspects of both local and universal thus appear that were absent from colonial approaches and indeed also from the critiques which sought to reject anthropology.

The equation of subject and object is thus transformed: the subject, i.e. the researcher, comes to comprise many forms of diversity (family, group, category, gender, class, race, ethnicity, language, region, etc...) and what masqueraded as objective abstraction in colonial writings is rendered subjective, i.e. acknowledged as present within the new understanding of subjectivity. Rewriting history from a position of discursive initiative can thus be understood to represent a vital and necessary step forward. And yet it is insufficient in itself, since it does not acknowledge or engage philosophically or methodologically with the multiple forms of the researcher's subjectivity.

We have identified the roots of the rejection of anthropology in the binary of fragmentation versus collective coherence. This has left the colonial essence of the discipline untouched. But reconsidering the meanings of local specificities and larger collectivities demonstrates that this reordering forms the foundation for building new knowledge out of the ruins of colonial ideas.

The second wave of rejection – which was based on the theory of discourse and Western hegemony, and based its rejection on the inflexible nature of knowledge production in the field of anthropology – poses a

problem which must inevitably be revisited. It may seem that the relationship described by Said was a generic relationship of power in which there was no difference between, on one hand, the European anthropologist who came from far away to study non-European societies, and on the other, the researcher who belonged to those societies. I will return to this point in order to demonstrate that there is in fact a difference, and that it has ramifications. But what is important at this juncture is to elucidate the relationship itself, which cannot be simplified into a theory of absolute power on the part of the anthropologist over his/her interlocutor. There are many well-known cases we might mention in which the researcher does not possess absolute power, since his/her interlocutors are under no obligation to share their opinions or knowledge. Indeed, powerlessness and dependence are very often the lot of the person doing the research rather than the person being researched!

This perspective, therefore, requires modification. Said employed a form of structuralism, and similarly to the theory of discourse and power which has been widely used following Foucault, he brought structure to bear upon a relationship which is essentially an interactive relationship. These theories, I notice, have in general abandoned the relationship itself – i.e. the tangible dialectic of verbal interaction – and restricted themselves to textual analysis. It should be obvious that methodologies of literary and textual analysis do not count verbal interaction amongst their number.⁵

I have shown, then, that the rejection of anthropology, which is seen as studying Maghribi societies under colonial conditions, does not stand up to a reconsideration of the relationship between object and subject, and that a new critique of subject, object, and the relationship between them reveals that pluralities exist within them. This grants us the freedom to reinterpret the colonial canon in light of multiple meanings. It has further become clear that the postcolonial rejection of anthropology is not tenable when faced with a reconsideration of the dialectic of verbal interaction, a tangible and real dialectic which operates differently to literary and textual deconstruction.

As is well known, the critique of Orientalism was accompanied by a moment of critique of anthropology as a whole in the USA and Europe that witnessed numerous attempts to establish a new discourse and methodologies representing a break with classical anthropology. Writings in the field moved away from the dialectic of the stable subject and object and instead came to employ notions of plurality and interconnectedness in their accounts of the

5. John Borneman and Abdellah Hammoudi, eds., *Being There: The Fieldwork Encounter and the Making of Truth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

transformations of globalized flows. Many believe that the new anthropology has rid itself of its colonial baggage, that it no longer, for example, regards any group of humans as “primitive” and now studies all societies as equally modern. Similarly, the phenomenon of migration and globalization now pose questions of identity and difference everywhere.⁶

With this, many believe that we have moved beyond rejection, and granted legitimacy to the new critical anthropology. Yet as I see it, this solution simply means acceptance of an anthropological discourse which originated in the European and North American academy. That is to say, we have moved from rejection to importation – a phenomenon which has dominated the Arab social sciences since the end of direct colonization.

Thus, having moved from a rejection to a legitimation of anthropology, what we ultimately legitimize is a new universalist discourse, this time in the name of globalization. We remain within a cycle of importation, i.e. the generalization of critical anthropology in the name of a general object, namely identity and difference. The dilemma appears clearly when we subject this pair of concepts to questioning. Do identity and difference appear in the same forms in all societies, and in our societies in particular? I do not believe they do, since our societies occupy a position of weakness in the globalized world. Difference and identity are both experienced in ways that must be observed on local scales before they are connected to global flows. It is a far more worthwhile methodological process to observe the local and link it to global flows, than to make generalizations derived from sociohistorical contexts other than our own. We might usefully start, then, by refusing to grant the new anthropology a universal character. It is simply a discourse which must be met with another discourse – one that grows out of questions regarding our societies and aspirations, and a scholarly practice that reflects them. I have made two attempts to lay the foundations for an autonomous discourse of this type; this is what I mean by reappropriation as opposed to importation.

At this point I should define the concept of reappropriation, and then offer an observation concerning the dialectic of subject and object which will assist in building the epistemic structure of an autonomous and distinctive anthropological discourse; my comments on both points will be brief since I have dealt with them elsewhere. Reappropriation is not, as some would have it, a nativistic or Salafi-style transformation of the social sciences prior to

6. On this see Faouzi Adel, Khedidja Adel, and Nadir Marouf, eds., *Ayu mustaqbalin li-l-anthrūbūlūjiyā fī al-Jazā'ir?* (Oran: Manshūrāt Markaz al-Baḥṡ fī al-Anthrūbūlūjiyā, 2002), 47-63. The authors adopt a number of ideas from French anthropologists, notably Marc Augé, regarding critiques of classical anthropology and attempts to renew the object and methods of the field.

their adoption. Attempts to establish a sociology founded on Islam, I believe, are doomed to fail, since they replace reason and experience as starting point with religious dictum in the form of revelation. This amalgam can only cause confusion between different types of knowledge and their conventions, and will end with the subsumation of the social sciences within the study of *sharī'a* (Islamic legal theory).

Reappropriation also differs from narrow conceptions of nationalism and Arab nationalism, since its sole aim is to develop a sociology that devises its own concepts and methodologies and produces research in Arabic. We must consider language itself a homeland for the social sciences in our societies – and indeed for all the sciences which were once written in Arabic, with the participation of Arabs, Persians, Imazighen, Kurds, Muslims, Christians, Jews, and others. It is self-evident that there can be no returning to the past, but that is not to say that we cannot establish a sociology that is conducted in Arabic, just as there are Anglophone and Francophone sociologies in exactly this sense. I should also add that there is no reason why there should not be a sociology in Tamazight, or indeed any other language, that coexists with its Arabic-language counterpart and the knowledge it produces.

As for building a new epistemic structure, I have described the relationship between subject and object with a view to establishing an anthropological discourse that is connected to the histories of Maghribi societies. Here we must attend to the commonalities, as well as the differences, between the researcher who belongs to those societies and the foreign researcher. The point is a crucial one, since anthropology has always been and will continue to be practiced by foreign anthropologists.

I have already made clear that the relationship between a foreign and, in this case, say, a Moroccan anthropologist is one of equivalence in symmetrical opposition. The latter approaches from a distance, seeking to reduce the distance between him/herself and his/her interlocutors; the former attempts to establish sufficient distance between him/herself and his/her interlocutors as to allow him/her to describe phenomena that are intrinsic to his/her own experience. The two positions are equivalent and unlike. The anthropologist who belongs to the society in question experiences a paradox of distance within intimacy, making his/her methodological efforts both enormous and vital. But within equivalence, intimately familiar things are posited as objects by virtue of a distance which permits a relative understanding of the foreigner's distance. The exchange between them is one of discussion and critique, rather than rejection. I have also shown how fragments and local specificities

may come to hold new meanings in the subjectivity-objectivity relation which proceeds from the work of the Maghribi anthropologist, allowing a reconsideration of colonial work and a reordering thereof within liberatory theoretical frameworks that transcend familiar binaries and rejections both old and new.

4. Sociology and Other Disciplines

It is clear, having examined the present and future of anthropology, that ending the rejection of anthropology represents both theoretical and, in some countries, institutional progress. In the case of Algeria, however, anthropology has achieved an official presence without resolving the problem of its theoretical and methodological state of dependence. In other countries, such as Egypt, the situation of the discipline resembles the situation in Algeria, the difference being its age. Anthropology in Morocco, meanwhile, has enjoyed promising achievements, and theoretical progress has been made in the field that has ended its dependence on European and American universities. I emphasize here that ending the state of dependence does not mean isolation but, quite the opposite, a desirable openness to fruitful exchange with those universities and the intellectual currents they are home to.

Having discussed the experience of the double critique, the attempt to devise a methodology sufficient to tackle the colonial image we have inherited, and the image that can be produced by attending to the new subjectivity, which transforms the subject-object binary, we now turn to sociology, if only briefly. What, based on what we have learned from colonial and postcolonial contexts, and from the move away from dependence, can we say about sociology?

Unlike anthropology, sociology has a relatively strong presence in Middle Eastern and Maghribi universities, as evidenced by the many departments that teach and research, in Arabic, the various subfields of the discipline, publishing their research in Arabic while keeping abreast of publications in other languages. Given that we have spoken of importation, it bears mentioning here that the process of importation happened relatively long ago in certain countries, like Egypt, as we have seen. Importation took place in other Mashriqi countries and in the Maghrib in the 1960s, following the end of colonization, when new universities were established out of colonial research and teaching institutions, and local French-educated elites joined these new universities, along with others. Yet sociologists seemingly did not heed the call to decolonize knowledge, or proceeded as if it did not apply to their discipline.

As sociology departments developed further after Arabization, their programs, methodologies and research agendas appear largely to have continued to resemble those produced by European universities (particularly those of France, though the growing use of English has changed this in recent years). Aside from linguistic Arabization and the exceptional interest in the Khaldunian tradition, there do not appear to have been any significant attempts made to found a discipline of sociology that is autonomous of its Western origins, or to change this state of dependence.

Arab sociologists have long complained about dependence, and it has proven to be a recurring theme at meetings of the Arab Association of Sociology (*al-Jam'iyya al-'Arabiyya li-'ilm al-ijtimā'*). The complaint was voiced at the meeting of 1986, for example, and then at the 2000 meeting, which was entitled "Towards an Arab Sociology," and then again at the meeting of 2014. At one of these meetings, an Egyptian sociologist commented that "it is rare for seekers of knowledge to find materials that quench their thirst to understand Arab reality," concluding pessimistically that the discipline consisted of little more than "tribes who cannot move beyond their state of dependence."⁷

The commenter focused here on "understand[ing] Arab reality"; on dependence as reason why Arab sociology struggles to understand that reality; and on specifically "Arab" sociology. Yet no practical suggestions were made regarding the issue of dependence other than for programs derived almost entirely from Western points of departure – a contradiction which appeared to go unnoticed. Neither did the commenter or the meeting specify what "Arab" sociology was – that is to say what is meant by its being Arab – which is an absolutely crucial question; the desideratum, in my view, is a sociology that is Arabophone but that distances itself from narrow nationalism. In any case, this question remains open, and the answers proposed have not become any more realistic with time, with the exception of some observations that Arabic writing styles should be modelled after the ideal represented by Ibn Khaldun.

The 2014 meeting was entitled "The Future of the Social Sciences in the Arab World." In his opening keynote, president of the conference Dr. Bouazizi raised the same issues with a force and tone likely inspired by the mood of the Arab Spring, asking, "Why do we continue to regard our own reality through the eyes of others, and using paradigms built by those who belonged to realities different to us and our reality?"⁸ He went on to make a number

7. Sari Hanafi et al., eds., *Mustaqbal al-'ulūm al-ijtimā'īyya fī al-waṭan al-'Arabī* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Wiḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2014), 347.

8. Sari Hanafi et al., eds., *Mustaqbal al-'ulūm al-ijtimā'īyya*, 362.

of suggestions, including deriving concepts from the Arabic language and borrowing styles of interpretive writing from the Arabic scientific tradition. He advised moving away from Weberian concepts on the grounds that Arab societies have not modernized or developed to such a point that the individual has replaced the collectivity as agent.⁹ Yet he did not provide a single example of a concept drawn from the Arabic language or the Arab scientific canon; and as for rejecting Weberianism, the point is dubious, in my opinion, since it does not account for the individual, or the focus on the individual, that is to be found in the Arabic scientific tradition, or for the individualism that exists in contemporary Arab societies.

Speaking of Weber, I notice that the effort expended in the quest to escape dependence often manifests in a reliance on Marx as a liberatory thinker who purportedly does not, unlike Weber, present the experience of the West as an idealized process of rationalization. Rarely do Arab Marxists notice that Marx did, in fact, present the experience of the West as the only route to modernity, and that his own Eurocentrism is as clear as Weber's. Likewise, the concept of the mode of production has, for some, provided a means to describe the historical specificities of Arab societies by describing the systems particular to agriculture and trade, and the exploitation of surplus by powerful classes. There is little effort made, beyond this, to connect research agendas with the concerns of society or to identify a point of specificity, a "global/universalistic moment" or a "normative moment," other than in one recently published work.¹⁰

In parallel to the Arabizing endeavors which I have listed here, there are also attempts to Islamize knowledge, which have been underway for over four decades in countries of both the Mashriq and Maghrib. Surveying these endeavors confirms the process I touched on earlier, namely the amalgamation of sociology with the disciplines of *sharī'a* (Islamic legal theory) and *tafsīr* (Qur'anic exegesis).¹¹

Conclusion

The case of anthropology represents an experience to be emulated in the reshaping of the social sciences in Arabic. It is imperative that we reconsider the relationship between object and subject, and make efforts to connect broad research agendas and questions with the histories of Maghribi and

9. Ibid., 25.

10. Sari Hanafi and Rigas Arvanitis, *Al-baḥṭh al-'arabī wa-mujtama' al-ma'rifa: Ru'ya naqdiyya jadīda* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Wiḥda al-'Arabiyya, 2015).

11. Mahmoud Dhauadi, *Muqaddima fī 'ilm al-ijtimā' al-thaqāfi bi-ru'ya 'arabiyya islāmiyya* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-Jāmi'iyya li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī', 2010).

Arab societies. As I have attempted to show, importing disciplines without refashioning their research questions and methodologies on an epistemic basis that reflects the complex relationship between the Maghribi scholar and the process of positing as object phenomena that are intimately familiar and inherent to his or her own experiences, will not help to create a sociology that attends to lived reality in the region.

We must, it seems, abandon the universality that is claimed by the imported sciences, be it in the name of European rationalization or of contemporary globalization. The most logical way forward may lie in accounting for phenomena on the basis of two specificities brought together by a complex and ongoing dynamic of interchange, and under new conditions of plurality and contestation, within a wider context of ever-renewing universality.

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العلوم الاجتماعية بين الاقتباس والتوطين: الأنثروبولوجيا والتخصصات الأخرى

ملخص: بالاعتماد على مناقشات ما بعد الاستعمار حول إنهاء استعمار الأنثروبولوجيا في بلدان المغرب والشرق الأوسط، أميز بين "الاقتباس" و"التوطين" كطريقتين تم استخدامهما للتعامل مع المعرفة الغربية؟/ والاستعمارية في المنطقة. ويعتبر الاقتباس في شكل سابق المعرفة المستوردة بأنها محدودة، ليتم اعتمادها بهدوء. ومع ذلك، فإن الاقتباس في شكله الجديد لا ينفر من التغيير، لكنه يسير على خطى المبتكرين الأوروبيين والأمريكيين. ويعتبر الانفتاح على الابتكارات القادمة من مكان آخر في حد ذاته، مبادرة جيدة للتفكير. ومع ذلك، لا ينبغي أن يقف في طريق السعي الإبداعي نحو تقليد جديد مستقل للخطاب الأنثروبولوجي، والذي يمكن تحقيقه من خلال التوطين أو إعادة التملك، والذي أستخدمه لوصف الطريقة التي ينخرط بها الأفراد المستعمرون سابقاً من موقعي الذات والموضوع مع المعرفة الناتجة عنها من خلال الدراسات الاستعمارية. وباستخدام مثال الأنثروبولوجيا، الذي تم رفضه نتيجة للدعوة إلى إنهاء استعمار المعرفة من الهيمنة الأوروبية، أؤكد أن إنهاء استعمار العلوم الاجتماعية يستلزم التعهد بإعادة تشكيل هذه المعرفة بدلاً من رفضها كما يعتبر النقاد أنها استعمارية بطبيعتها. وأعتقد أن مهمة تخلص العلوم الاجتماعية من البصمة الاستعمارية، وإعادة بنائها بهدف إنتاج خطاب مستقل يمكن تحقيقه من خلال الأنثروبولوجيا. ولن تتمكن من تحرير أنفسنا من التبعية الفكرية إلا إذا نجحنا في إنهاء استعمار هذا المجال وتحقيق استقلاله.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأنثروبولوجيا، الاقتباس (الاستيراد)، التوطين (إعادة التملك)، بلدان المغرب، النقد المزدوج، إنهاء الاستعمار.

Les sciences sociales entre importation et réappropriation: Anthropologie et autres disciplines

Résumé: En m'inspirant des débats postcoloniaux sur la décolonisation de l'anthropologie au Maghreb et au Moyen-Orient, je distingue entre "importation" [*al-iqtibās*] et "réappropriation" [*al-tawfīn*] comme les deux voies qui ont été utilisées pour aborder les connaissances occidentales et coloniales dans la région. L'importation sous une forme antérieure considérait que les connaissances importées étaient finies, à adopter sans tarder. Dans sa nouvelle forme, cependant, il n'est pas opposé au changement, mais il suit les traces des innovateurs euro-américains. Être ouvert aux innovations venues d'ailleurs est, en soi, un bon ferment de réflexion. Pourtant, cela ne doit pas faire obstacle à un effort créatif vers une nouvelle tradition autonome du discours anthropologique, qui peut être réalisée par la réappropriation, que j'utilise pour décrire la manière dont des sujets autrefois colonisés s'engagent à partir d'une position à la fois de sujet et d'objet avec les connaissances produites à leur sujet par l'érudition coloniale. Prenant l'exemple de l'anthropologie, qui a été rejetée à la suite de l'appel à décoloniser les connaissances de l'hégémonie européenne, je soutiens que la décolonisation des sciences sociales implique une entreprise de remodeler, plutôt que de rejeter, des connaissances que les critiques considèrent comme intrinsèquement coloniales. Je soutiens que la tâche de débarrasser les sciences sociales de leur empreinte coloniale et de les reconstruire dans le but de produire un discours autonome peut être accomplie par l'anthropologie. Nous ne pourrions nous libérer de la dépendance intellectuelle que si nous réussissons à décoloniser ce champ et à atteindre son autonomie.

Mots-clés: Anthropologie, importation, réappropriation, Maghreb, double critique, décolonisation.