DISCUSSIONS

EGYPT'S REVOLT AGAINST THE EXISTING ORDER: ON THE EFFECTS OF FORMS OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Two years after the initial revolt against the existing order, on January 25, 2011, contemporary Egypt finds itself in a revolt in progress. The ideals of the pioneering protestors, mainly from middle to upper-middle class youth, geared with the latest products of communication technology, have not materialized. In fact, the empirical realities of the actual situation of Egyptian society has taken over. Yet, without the new communication technology this revolt would not have been possible, not have been able to take off the ground. The initial revolt was launched in a paradoxical situation: the young people, many of them from elite families, initiated something that was not appreciated at the end by the majority of Egyptian society: freedom of expression, equal opportunity, and, most of all, a cry for a better future of Egypt's children. In fact, most of Egypt population can't read or write, have no time to worry about equality of opportunity, not the least freedom of expression, but subscribe to a crude kind of understanding of democracy. That is to say, the rule of the quantitative majority. It turns out that this paradox, a misunderstanding of classic representative democracy, may lead Egypt into a kind of dictatorship of the majority; exactly what Plato had predicted in his Republic, describing the educational project known as "The Allegory of the Cave".[1] At the end the emancipator and educators of the slaves will be blamed and intended to be killed because, apparently, they have mislead the cave dwellers. Plato's "sun", the accusation has it blinded them, instead of leading them to riches. The basic problem we want to show: there is a paradox since Plato's Cave, namely, that those who need emancipation from slavery, be it bodily and mentally, are the once who refused to be emancipation, because they don't understand the purpose of emancipation and freedom of ignorance. Marx's famous "opium" is operating on the majority without conscious and knowledge thereof. The majority can't distinguish

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1   See Chapter ten of Plato's *Republic*.

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between genuine spirituality and religious propaganda, exactly, as some had envisioned the latter day revolt. The irony: the existing order, against which the middle-class youth had been protested, with the tools of the latest versions of communication technology, internet, YouTube, twitter, mobile phones, digital photography, has been sabotaged by the ignorance, illiteracy, and opium of the majority, who seem to prefer an order closer to the village roots, from which they stem.[2]

No doubt, without communication technology the revolt would not be been even partially successful. However, at this point we would like to dwell upon some paradoxes and contradictions in which this technology has had a decisive function. The effects of this communication technology upon the existing order has been devastating, but, instead of provoking an alternative order that promotes the classic enlightenment tenements such as liberty, equality, and justice, it promotes an order of the village, or in the words of the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnis, "*Gemeinschaft*" (tribal community).[3] Modern communication technology, as we have experienced the phenomenon since 1991, the launching of internet and social media, has been subverted into a tools propagating the "post-modern village". Not exactly what Marshall McLuan, the Canadian professor of English literature, and celebrated communication guru had in mind during the late 1960s.[4] The global world has, indeed, turned into a global village, but in a very different modes than he had envisioned: not cosmopolitan, or up-graded-jet-set society, but many communities that nourishes local traditions, rooted in ancient rituals and believes, yet, at the same time, proclaiming global membership. The cyber world on screen turns global, but the local situation turns backward, in the language of science fiction movies, "back to the future". Based on our experience of twenty years in Egyptian society, and a teacher in higher education, we have witnessed some of these developments, first hand, on the ground, in empirical reality.

Thus, in this essay we want to explore a dimension that has its roots in the philosophic tradition since Plato and the sociological dimensions since the classic Enlightenment, from Voltaire to Max Weber.[5] The present essay is to be understood as a socio-philosophical trial and error exploration. It emphasizes first hand eyewitness accounts, experience on the ground,

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2   The contemporary situation: Egypt (2011-2013) shows, considering the analogies from Plato to Marx, that the nature of the human species has not changed. Technology has made progress and support the material conditions, improving the daily life of many, while human nature remains at a constant, causing the stress and anxiety of modern life, while some revolt.

3   The German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnis developed the conceptual contrast between urban modern Society (*Gesellschaft*) and the rural country side (*Gemeinschaft*) in the 1880s of an industrialized Germany.

4   Cf. Phillip Marchand, Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium and The Messenger*. New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1989.

and a theoretical framework that tries to find some meaning of the contemporary revolt of Egyptian society against the existing order. This is no small undertaking, therefore, we will proceed with qualitative analysis and hypothetical claims that may, or may not materialize. There is no one, at this time, including those living in Egypt that can predict or claim to know how the contemporary revolt will turn out. The story may turn out, after a generation, with some luck, into a kind of democracy, but it also may turn out a classic dictatorship, in the sense of Thomas Hobbes. Chaos and fear will call forth the powerful leader, who is given unlimited rights to use violent means of any kind, to subdue real or apparent enemies of the state, or those, who happen to be in power, controlling the economic and political machinery at the time.

We also want to deepen our understanding of Egyptian society reminding ourselves of some basic sociological facts that determine Egyptian society since Pharaonic times. The historical framework in which the Nile Valley and Delta has been shaped, as well as the structural composition of its societal make-up are of utmost importance. Egyptians have had always a sense of space, but never of time; temporality was not a limited commodity, space was, considering that the sun and the desert rule a land that is kept alive by the river Nile. Thus, the Nile defines the geographical and historical dimension of Egypt. This few facts are decisive in basic understanding of contemporary Egypt. Based on this reminder we try to make an attempt to see how Egyptian society tries to transform itself, in the light of the new communication technology, as to possible forms, will evolve within the bedrock of a tribal society, composed of generations of extended families. This turns out to be a complex situation; yet, we presuppose, at this point, that we are dealing with the human species in an Egyptian historical formation. For the human species, as the classic saying goes, nothing is new under the sun, but, the experience of history has provided us with sufficient evidence and data collection, from Egyptology, for instance, to make a reasonable assessment of the Egyptian situation, hitherto. This is no small feat, but possible.

Thus, at this preliminary point of the essay we must ask: how does contemporary Egyptian society intend to solve the initial revolt against the existing order? In order to help us out, historically, we might look at various forms of revolt, such as the class social-economic-political revolution in France of 1789, or the Soviet Revolution of 1917 in Russia, or the German revolution after the First World War, ushering into the much-hated Weimar Republic, by the multitude and conservative forces in German society, to find the final solution in another disastrous world war. Revolts and revolutions are dangerous, in the long run, for

any existing society for the simple reason: human beings are physically destroyed, on purpose or accident, or simply bad luck (being at the wrong time at the wrong place), or human beings are catapulted into exile and refugees status, existentially uprooted. In revolutions, as in war, there are no real winners, contrary to received opinion. Whoever turn out to be the benefactor of a revolt or revolution, on the one hand, also has to account for the price that was paid in blood and up-rootedness.[5]

INTRODUCTION

Again, we are dealing with a revolt in progress. We are shying away from calling what is happening in contemporary Egypt a "revolution". Certain is, it is not a classical revolution in terms of Paris of the 18th century, or Russia of 1917.[6] The differentiation between State and Society is not clear, since the understanding of religion for the ordinary Egyptian complicates the issue. At this point it is useful to remember that we find in the German philosopher Hegel the crucial difference between State and Society, explicated in his Berlin Lectures of 1821, and published as his famous Philosophy of Law (*Rechtsphilosophie*). Hegel is the first thinker of modern times who understood the industrial revolution and its social and political consequences. Marx followed in his footsteps and made some crucial adjustments to deal with the economic and political issues in England, France, and Germany.[7] They are useful historical and systematic markers to be used as standard references toward understanding of contemporary Egypt.

This essay intends to come to terms, as sociology and philosophy, with Egypt's revolt. Of course, it has become an open secret that the newly developed communication technologies were decisive tools in the revolt against the old regime and its order. However, any tool used is only as useful and of value whoever services the technology. This is the reason why we will spend space on the sociology of groupings of Egyptian society: that is to say, who did what, at what time? This is based upon eyewitness accounts, on discussions with many participants,

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5 Philosophy and sociology meet in the works of Ibn Khaldun and, still, highly useful for a holistic grasp of Middle Eastern societies not modernized and remained tribal in societal structure.

6 See the classic, Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*. New York: Vintage Books, revised edition, 1965; relevant, Marshall Berman, *All that is solid melts in Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Penguin Books, 1988; and by the late British-Austrian historian, Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1959.

7 Cf. Jonathan Sperber, *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life*. New York: Liveright Pub. Co., 2013.

who also happen to be students in philosophy classes this eyewitness teaching. The fact that this writer happens to live in Garden City since 1991, about half an hour walking distance from Tahrir Square, adds some dimension to my essay. Thus, the following treatment of the revolt is a mix of biographical accounts of some of my students, first-hand experience by members of his family, discussions on-going at home, at the universities, or meeting places of Cairo's intellectual circles, like Café Riche, downtown Cairo.

The writer has made an effort to check out reports and books, in the meantime, of other eyewitness accounts of what happened at Tahrir Square in January 2011, as well as his favorite Cairo street, Mahmoud Street, that has seen some of the bloodiest battles between demonstrators and the old order. In addition, the newly emerging Graffiti art has established itself at Mahmoud Street, on the Walls of the American University, as well as the former French Lycee, and the German grammar School (Borromäeum).

We will focus on demographic facts since the relationship between fertility and mortality, as well as density-dependent urbanity, format important conditions for the ensuing revolt. It is a fact, established by historians and demographers, that a preamble to the French Revolution was a population explosion in France, aside a fiscal and monetary crisis at the court of Versailles. Financing revolutionaries in the American colonies turned out to be costly for France.[8]

The normative aspects are important: it is well known that Cairo had been a very safe city, considering its size and the abject conditions under which many ordinary people have to live. The normative aspects of these ordinary people has been instrumental that a revolt did not erupt sooner. There had been some bread riots, or some terrorist activities in the early 1990s, but the populace did not play the terrorist's game plan. It was religion, in the broadest sense of the word that functioned as a corridor for normative behavior of the ordinary Egyptian. Many tourists and foreigners in Cairo wondered, privately, why the population did not revolt, considering what they saw as abject conditions and neglect by the existing order of its citizens. In this self-fulfilling prophecy events turned out to be more complex than meet the photographic gaze of the tourists. It is too soon to judge as to how and what the rebellion achieved. If we combine demography with normative considerations we also find an interesting connection: the fact that over half of Egypt's population is under thirty years of age and many young people jobless, hopeless, comparing their blight with the peer groups globally, it is clear that cultural ramifications are important. The rebellion, thus far, has been understood in different terms by different segments of Egyptian population. For the initial

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8 Cf. E. A. Wrigley, *Population and History*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973, 108ff.

rebels of January 25, 2011, no doubt, there were idealistic notions of freedom of expression (since they were the class who knew how to read and write and represent their interests in terms of written language competence, especially in English, French, and German) and representative democracy in the European style. The general populace was not happy with the situation, but mainly in terms of economics. A bread winner has interest in making a reasonable salary to support his family of four or six and does think, immediately, of freedom of expression. And the young boys and men, the global television viewers and YouTube watchers sees on international satellite stations, are interest first in a decent job and financial well-being. This is not to say that they are simply greedy, more so, according to Egyptian tribal culture young males become "real men" at the point of marriage. In order to be properly respected as a real man and provider of his future family, marriage is the key to social obligations on him. We can see that anthropology can help us in the understanding of motives that drive the passions of the young males. And, we should not underestimate the nature of sexuality within the context of the rebellion, precisely that the majority of rebels are young males, who also fight for a manly dignity which they think has been taken from them by not being able to provide favorable conditions for marriage.[9]

The participation of women in the rebellion challenges us to come to terms with modernity in contemporary Egypt. In January 25, 2011 at Tahrir Square we saw many young women, mainly the minority educated handling modern technology of communication: especially digital photography and YouTube and Twitter. Their rebellious response was far more into linguistic and symbolic protests than directly physical participation. Of course, we have seen some graphic events in which women were humiliated by the guards of the existing order, but women have been considered an extra addition to the rebellion, rather than part of the revolt. The fact that we hear about virginity tests made it clear that sexuality played a highly sensitive tunes to the ear of the ordinary male, on both sides of the revolt. It depended on the social group and class to which one belonged to. Conservative forces that follow the tradition division of labor between household and public representation of the family, did not like the idea of women participating in the revolt, that is to say, presenting themselves physically in the streets.[10]

The more liberated minds among the protestors, usually the children of the elite and upper-middle-class considered the participation of the female as an act of emancipation in a tribal society, and an act of modernity, if you will. As the revolt evolved we could see that less and less females, young and older, participated in the direct confrontation between the rebels and the existing order. Sexual harassment started to increase to the level that rape became, in due course, a serious concern for all females participating in the protests. Of course, the real issue has never been spelled out: the institution of marriage is under heavy bombardment with the increase of sexual harassment and rape, in the sense, that the majority of young men don't have the means to provide the conditions for proper marriage. To put it in direct language: socially acceptable sexuality in the form of controlled engagement of the "passions between sexes", as the demographer Thomas Malthus put it, is at stake. The social fabric of normativity derived through generations practicing rituals and organizing sexually acceptable practices is under fire. Egypt's revolt is not simply about toppling of an old order, but it is a crises of a belated modernity, appearing in the form of communication technology. Only a minority of Egypt's population can afford a home computer or lap top; in addition, only a minority is competent in a written language, be it Arabic, English, French, or German. The majority of Egyptians follow the news on state television, use simply mobile phones, and listen to gossip, still a powerful weapon of propaganda. Gossip in a tribally organized society is very powerful and can turn out to be deadly.

This essay is exploratory in nature and can't say anything definite about how this revolt will end. In fact, no one can know, at this point, how Egypt's revolt will end up. Perhaps the Algerian writer Albert Camus had a point when he declared, in his well-known work *The Rebel* that the slave demands justice, but wants to end up king.[11]

REBELS WITH A CAUSE

There is a famous Hollywood film entitled *Rebels without a Cause* starring James Dean. It is a movie that transports us to join American teenagers of Hollywood High School revolting against America's white middle-class social order of the 1950s. Indeed, American society was the first modern society that produced the teenager, young people in their teens, living in an economics of surplus value, sufficient well-off in order to afford the young not to have to go to work, but attend school, learning how to read and write and preparing for a profession. The

9   Useful in this context is Andrea B. Rugh's, *Family in Contemporary Egypt*. Syracuse University Press, 1974.
10   These facts are based on first-hand accounts by women attacked and manhandled at Tahrir Square; relevant, Fatema Mernissi, *Scheherazade Goes West: Different Cultures, Different Harems*. Washington Square Press, 2001; an instructive novel by Hanan al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh*. New York: Anchor Doubleday Book, 1988.

11   Cf. Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*. New York: Vintage Books, 1956, 20 ("The spirit of rebellion can exist only in a society where a theoretical equality conceals great factual inequalities.").

result is boredom and experimentation with alcohol and sexuality and engaging in general "kicks".

If we compare the social and economic situation of young people of America of the 1950s and contemporary Egypt, 2013, we see immediately that it is not a fair comparison. Whatever, this is not the point, the point is, the Egypt's teenagers do have a serious reason to rebel: they are rebels with a cause.

Anyone having been on the streets of Cairo, especially the downtown area, would have noticed that the sociology of the young people has changed. At the initial stage of the revolt we could see many upper-middle-class youth, young men and women, usually with academic background, handling sophisticated communication devises, with strategy and tactics in their minds, as to circumvent, or outsmart, the existing order that opposed them. Most of these youth have vanished from the streets, especially the female upper-middle-class students, do to the fact that it has become too dangerous for them to be in the streets, demonstrating. The present young people are mainly boys and young men, usually lower-middle class, if not underclass, that express their emotional outrage at being sidelined, again, in a society that neglected them for too long and condemned them to poverty and social misery. The concerns of the "street people" are not theoretical, theocracy or civil state, but jobs and dignity. They are screaming for the chance of respect, honor, and dignity, in short, social justice. They do not engage in strategic or tactical games of hide and seek, at times this happens, guided by the older youths and men with some professional background of military experience and subversive street activities. Ideology is not a strong component, or slick and sophisticated slogans, but simply outcry in the form of anger and intense aggression. Of course, within the framework of violence criminal elements integrate themselves in the demonstrations and try to take advantage of a favorable situation that make promotes criminal activity.

Again, youth gang phenomenon and street people behavior is part of the demonstrative purposes. Deep in the psychological structure of these youths we will find highly potent aggressions that are released due to sexual frustration, insult to their manly honor, and denigration in the eyes of their female counterparts. This aspect, of course, is never highlighted officially, but discussed on a more private level, or simply ignored in public discourse.

Especially the phenomenon of sexual harassment is discussed on a more formal level as to what and what is not allowed and acceptable in a tribal society like Egypt. In fact, in the early 1990s one hardly would experience the attitude of sexual harassment since any topic that dealt with sexuality was consider not proper to be discussed in public. Within another decade

this issue started to be discussed, especially by upper-middle-class Egyptian young academic women: ironically, the group that was able to protect itself well, considering its social status, pecuniary clothing, and protection by an extended family politically influential, who belonged to the elite of Egyptian society. The main group that was affected by these harassment tales and stories were the middle and lower-middle class women who could not protect themselves in public, since they had no possibility of private transport, such as a privately owned automobiles and drivers. Needless to say, the reason why we emphasize some of the details and peculiarities is to demonstrate that Egypt is a class society, well understood by Europeans, little appreciated by Americans, who do not have the social experience of a society operating on class, especially culturally. There are, of course, pecuniary classes in the United States, as in any society, but it is not accompanied by cultural analogous baggage, such a peculiar language usage, or specific class accents, which we find the United Kingdom.

A society like contemporary Egypt that has been neglected by the state's institutions and reduced to basic need-activity, mainly in an informal economy, in order to survive has nothing to lose at the end, except a form of slavery. There is no future for its children since the next generations exist in order to be able to feed their elders and live from hand to mouth. Formal education is in a dismal state, physically and intellectually. Illiteracy, especially among the female population of contemporary Egypt, is still beyond fifty-percent of the total population. Health care is basically non-existent, medical doctors in public hospital badly compensated, and nurses are not trained professionally. The hygienic conditions are dismal and need serious improvement. Life expectancy in Egypt is less than twenty years compared to European countries and Japan. These facts are not simply enumerated but can be witnessed in daily life in the streets of Cairo and its institutions. Thus, the rebels known by the western media as "the Arab street" has serious grievances to bring forward, addressed to a state that has failed them for a decade and more.

With the sudden appearance of modern communication technologies, especially the mobile phone in 1996, there was a sudden shift in communications, even among the underclass. No doubt, the revolt would not have been a success, disposing a potentate of the existing order, without the clear usage of modern communication technology, especially by the children and young people of the privileged segments of society. The lower middle class, as well as the underclass of Egyptian society did not, initially participate in the more sophisticated forms of communication. Computers and lab tops are too expensive even for the middle class to acquire. The skills to use various websites, blogging, or twitters, are beyond

the majority comprehension. The irony has it that the children of those, who may, at one time or another, supported the existing order, initiated the revolt, incognito, against their own parents. Some of these young elite men and women did not properly understood their class interest, otherwise, they may have had a second thought. Again, an irony in the revolt, many parents and the very people who participated and supported the revolt, have been forced to leave Egypt, precisely because their economic interest did not overlap with the results of the revolt. Plato's assessment of the "Cave people", in his famous allegory of the cave, in *The Republic*, also could be witnessed in the Egyptian revolt: the very people who were supposed to be emancipated from the old cave, started to confront their emancipator, since the cave people did not understand that the future interest of their children had a great deal to do with the revolt. This part was badly misunderstood by the underclass. It would go too far, perhaps, to claim, as Marx did, that the "opium" was working on the underclass consciously. Yet, it turned out to be a fact that claims of religiosity by some groups in Egyptian society were able to solicit, positively, to the lower ranks of the society, particularly in the rural areas. Religious understanding by Egypt populace is very different from European ordinary people: any sort of religious sentiment is understood as a "natural" part of a person's make-up, especially the family. Religion is not something a person chooses, he or she is born into a family that has religion: a non-religious family does not exist, it would be contrary to social nature. Social life, naturally, includes religion as well as marriage, this is the meaning of the Egyptian proverb that marriage is a person's second religion. In that sense, the rebels with a cause are part of a society in which religion and marriage, basically, provide the basic foundation of its social networks.

It is social network that has been disrupted due to the modern communication technology. Although, the television was readily accepted by ordinary Egyptians, considering that most were illiterate, because the visual communication in the form of soap opera dealing with family matters, poor girl marries rich landlord, or social discrepancies between young lovers, turned out to be the favorite topic viewed on a daily basis. However, the social and psychological consequences for the whole social network was not well understood. No doubt, the revolt can be understood more like a volcanic activity that has been smoldering for a long time and suddenly exploded. Needless to say, there was no exit plan to escape the volcanic outburst.

In the subsequent parts of the essay we want to explore, in more details, the consequences of modern communication technology, in terms of institutions that are supposed to safe guard the basic values of Egyptian society, like marriage. However, we need to discuss the demographic factors that have become apparent in the whole Middle East, within the last half-century, especially in Egypt. For the demographic pressures have accumulated the psychological conditions of high density-dependent environment. In Cairo, especially since the 1990s, the village had taken over, large areas of Cairo, proper. The clashes between the values of the rural areas with the sophisticated cosmopolitan life style we find in Cairo four districts (Maadi, Zamalek, Heliopolis, Garden City) have alienated the rural population that worked as maids, nannies, servants, or drivers for the elite. There is no doubt that the children of the servant class have had some inroad into the modern communication technology, usually copied from the children of the elite, and thereby heightened the consciousness of their social and economic dismal life.[12]

THE DEMOGRAPHIC FACTOR

The demographic factor has been long in the making in Egypt. Especially Cairo swelled from a city of five million at the turn of the century, moving from the 19th century into the 20th, to about twenty million inhabitants by the mid-21st century, and no end in sight. This is merely the density-dependent phenomenon that lead families from the rural areas to act in squatter style occupation and housing in areas that are neglected by the authorities. However, the problem is more serious and acute.

Compared to a country like Germany, contemporary Egypt's population is shaped in form of a demographic pyramid: the base of the pyramid forms the young generation, that is to say, over half of Egypt's population is under thirty years of age and younger. The size of the ordinary family is still about five to six children per family. The fertility rate is still high, compared to a country like Germany, whose demographic profile resembles that of an inverted pyramid. Exactly the opposite of Egypt, namely most ethnic German family consists of father, mother, and child. Very often, single family existing becomes the norm, basically unheard of in Egypt. This, of course, has consequences in terms of the revolt in progress.

Especially young men in their teens and early twenties are seen in the streets of Cairo very little to do due to unemployment. Basically, most young men make their living, as do many families in Cairo, by hustling in the informal economy in order to survive. Education

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12 There is some useful facts and analysis of Middle Eastern societies to be had in the United Nations Development Programme publication, Nader Fergany et al., *Arab Human Development Report 2002*. New York: United Nations Publications, 2002.

is negligent, illiteracy is rampant, especially among rural girls and women in Egypt, at large. The consequence for Egyptian society is disastrous and must be singled out as an important factor in the revolt. Since Egypt's underclass consists of the majority of the population it is no wonder that the street is in revolt against the existing order.

The imbalance between fertility and mortality among Egypt's population, considering the density-dependency of about ten percent of habitable land, is another serious social issue. Although Egypt is a large country, close to half of the size of Europe, the entire habitat is only somewhat less than ten percent. Anyone who had the experience of living in Cairo need not to be convinced of the density-dependency of its inhabitants, even in districts considered to inhabit the upper-middle class.

There must be a serious and critical analysis of Egypt society in terms of the interlacing of economics, sociology, natural environment that influence and constitute the demographic structure of birth, death, and marriage. Social convention, cultural local traditions, and fertility regulation make the demographic structure even more difficult to grasp. One of the reason why there seems to be anarchy in the streets of Cairo and the sense of unruliness, among the young, is the age hold tradition constituting the social order seems not to function, as it used to. Old traditions are challenged due to economic needs that provide the psychological drive towards aggression and resentment among the dispossessed. Needless to say, the issue of sexuality becomes highly charged, as witnessed since the original revolt at Tahrir Square.

Group control seems not to function in the traditional way, contrary to the imagery of women wearing different sort of protective clothing, in the streets of Cairo. The imbalance of the age structure has a tendency to provide a condition of instability for the entire society. The fact that the "passion between sexes", as Thomas Malthus pointed out, rules the basic instinct of the human species provides aggressive drives funneling into confrontation between the sexes and libidinal violence dangerously charged.

In addition, it is an open secret that the "winners" of the communicative technology has been girls and women in Egyptian society. It is a fact that young women, especially of the middle and upper-middle class, have been empowered with the communicative tools such as the mobile phone, internet, Facebook, twitter, YouTube, or digital photography. Not only an empowerment, but also a kind of emancipation from the male has occurred in Egypt. However, this is only true to some extent, since the social stratification and economic reality tends to favor the upper-middle class young female. This, again provides for the antagonism between the majority of young powerless men in the streets of Cairo and the literate communicative

empowered females in Egyptian society. The mobile phone, first introduced in Egyptian society in 1996, initiated the communicative revolution in Egypt. The consequences, at that time were not taken serious, since it was considered a circumstantial necessity due to the fact the ordinary telephone lines did not function, most of the time, or not part of areas that were inhabited by the underclass of Cairo. Thus, the communicative revolution had had a decisive imbalanced empowerment effect in the society at large.

Contemporary Egypt, in many areas of social and economic life finds itself in a pre-industrial stage. A comparison with Europe, prior to the French Revolution is wanting. The so-called "Facebook Revolution" seems to have an indirect effect, unconsciously felt, by large parts of Egypt's society. Especially younger females are confronted with contradictions between old traditional behavior and the communicative possibilities offered by Facebook. This conflict has not yet been resolved and the effects can be witnessed in the streets of Cairo. No doubt, much research is needed, facts and data collected in order to be able to make social science statements that are meaningful in terms of the revolt in progress. Since there is hardly factual data available about the family social networks of ordinary Egyptians it is difficult to make verifiable statements in terms of a meaningful sociology of the family in contemporary Egypt. The distrustful attitude of family members towards social science researchers and an attitude of non-compliance towards the stranger, or anyone not belonging to the family, makes social science research even more difficult. We can state that in the demographic Egyptian pyramid that our social science knowledge is spotty, especially the higher we move in the pyramid.[13] Some western female anthropologist have made some progress in understanding the constitution of the extended family in the lowest realm of Egyptian society; yet, there is hardly any real social science knowledge about Egypt's elite, not to mention factual data of the elites tax records or pecuniary activities. These are some of the reasons why factual statements about the revolt in progress is difficult to come by. Most eyes follow the streets in Cairo and Alexandria, either as eyewitness accountant or international satellite viewers. Very few have serious insights, and inside knowledge of the social formation and social dialectic that fuels the revolt.[14]

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13 Ibid., 25 ("The Arab region suffers from a severe shortage of detailed data and information necessary to undertake a comprehensive examination of human development, especially but not only with respect to the dimensions of institutional context and knowledge acquisition.")

14 Relevant, William J. Goode, *World Revolution and Family Patterns.* New York: The Free Press, 1970; as well as Diane Singerman, *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters in Cairo.* Princeton University Press, 1995.

ON THE STATE, SOCIETY, AND FAMILY

The events in Europe between the late 18th century and the early 19th century witnessed an industrial, social, and political revolt in the making. Initiated by the French Revolution and its consequences we find useful analyses by the philosopher Hegel in his philosophy of law and state. In due course, we find the analysis of industrial society at the hands of Marx and Engels. At this point, it could be fruitful to come to an understanding of Egypt's current revolt in a comparative mode. This is an exploratory experiment and may be of help in light of the absent of concrete facts of the social formation of contemporary Egypt.[15]

Hegel, as is well known among scholars of classical German idealism and the early Marx of 1844 (*Paris Manuscripts of 1844*), came to terms with a rapidly changing societal structure in light of the industrial revolution. Hegel, in his lectures in Berlin of 1820s, differentiates between the state, society, and family. This is significant in the analysis of the development of modern society, moving from a pre-industrial to an industrial basic economics and analogous social structure. Hegel made a note and pointed out that the state represents the institutions and its regulations in society, that is to say, he uses the term "*Sitten*", which refers to the old German concept of institutionalized regulated traditional behavior. These norms are controlled and regulated by the state and laws are formulated accordingly. On the other hand, we find in Hegel's lectures that he sees society (*Gesellschaft*) as constituting "Morality", that is to say, the ancient and age old habits of traditions that have been handed down from generation to generation. Since sociology proper did not yet exist, it was philosophy in form of Hegelian philosophy, that discovers the bifurcation of human community into formal institutions controlled by the state, on the one hand, and the socially constituted habits throughout local history of traditions that shape the bricks of social construction, cemented by rituals and traditional habits, such as marriage. No doubt, European society entered into a confrontation in the form of consciousness itself. Marx discovered this conscious contradiction and tried to make his play against an apparent idealist interpretation of world history in Hegel's story. At this point we may ask: what has this got to do with Egypt's revolt? In a sense, nothing, and everything.[16]

Of course, now we know, that the differentiation between state and society occurred analogously with the industrial revolution. The division of labor among segments in the

society and the disintegration of the aristocratic estate, as well as the weakening of the church bonds, between itself and the faithful. These processes can be studied historically, if we focus on England, France, and Germany. Although Egypt had a "modernization" program under Mohammed Ali, it was not accompanied by an industrial revolution. It profited from exporting the famous Egyptian cotton, replacing the American South, due to the American Civil War. The story of Egypt bankruptcy is well known, the Cairo districts of Maadi, Zamalek, Garden City, and Heliopolis are examples of Cairo's city planning and architectural brilliance, yet, to be discovered by art historians.[17] At the same time the demographic bomb proceeded slowly, until it exploded in mid-20th century, becoming uncontrollable by the late 20th century. The differentiation between state and society did not take place, for the simply reason, that for Egyptian communities, locality and tribal habits and patterns were prior to any modern state administration. We could describe the Nasser times as tribal socialism that functioned until the 1980s, when the up-coming-middle class could not keep up with a respectable middle class income. Along with the economic disintegration of the Egyptian state in its Arab-nationalistic-socialist form, the education quality of its system started to fall apart. Cairo University, known as Fuad II University, had an excellent reputation during the time the Egyptian Nobel Prize Laureate Naguib Mahfouz was a literature and philosophy student. Famous European scholars spent some time at Cairo University; however, under the burden of negative demographic developments as well as overzealous state control, Cairo University developed into an uncontrollable octopus in a way, that that quality control of that once splendid institution could no longer be guaranteed. It is no accident that the privately established American University, downtown Tahrir Square in 1919, took on a leading position in higher education in proportion to Cairo University's decline.

This can also be said about Egypt's elementary and secondary education supported by the state. Egypt's elite send their children to expensive private schools in order to learn English, aside the French that was spoken in the homes of the elite. Thus, we can see analogous development of the rise and fall story of modern education in Egypt from the early 19th century until the late 20th century. From this decline the privately established schools and American University profited: the first students at the American University were the youth of the business class, like the family of the Alexandrine poet C. F. Cavafy, with Greek

15 Cf. Manfred Halpern, *The Politics and Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa*. Princeton University Press, 1963.

16 See Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1966.

17 See the pioneering work by local Egyptian historian Samir W. Raafat, *Cairo: The Glory Years*. Alexandria: Harpocrates Publications, 2003; and an interesting eye-witness account of the modernizing Egypt by Magdi Wahba, "Cairo Memories" in Derek Hopwood, ed., *Studies in Arab History*. London: McMillan, 1998, 103-115; still of interest, Hamied Ansari, *Egypt: The Stalled Society*. SUNY Press, 1986.

background, the Armenian community, as well as Jewish community send their children to the private American University. In due time, the children of Egypt's and upper-middle class switches their interests from the French model to the American curriculum, including Nasser's daughter in the 1950s.[18] The public schools and basic education of the population was neglected. In fact, illiteracy increased as to a record high of over half of Egypt's population is not literate, especially among women. At large, this has not changed until, slowly, the present generation started to participate in the "Facebook revolution", as it was called at Tahrir Square. The introduction of television in the 1960s and the increase in audio-visual communication helped to surmount the literacy in the form of books. Someone said that there are more writers than readers in Egypt, unfortunately true. There had been some breakthrough for the female members of the upper-middle class due to the introduction of the cell phone and social-media. Female members of the lower middle-class and the underclass are still surveyed carefully and controlled through social institution of the family and public dress code. We should not forget that the majority of young women of the upper-middle class hardly can be spotted in the poor districts since their families employ at least one driver and servants. Thus, Egyptian society developed into a checkered set of units that would be considered in the United States as a class society. This is the reason why contemporary Egypt resemble more a class segmented European society than immigration societies such as the United States, or Canada.

For the elite and upper-middle class the state hardly existed since it could handle their affairs with very little interference by the state including tax matters. Overseas travels and extended family connections made it possible for the upper-middle class and the elite of Egyptian society to connect to the modern communication technology based societies. Again, the ordinary Egyptian, more and more, lost a sense of identity in the onslaught of modernity, retreated to spiritual, ritualistic, and popular moralistic maxims deduced by their religious leader, proclaimed as sacred commands. Needless to say, the rift between the elite and the majority of the Egyptian population felt more like the two parts did not live in the same country. The alienation, to use a modernist term, was complete. This rift, we see daily on satellite television broadcasted to an older generation as well as the "Facebook generation".[19]

Egypt's revolt exposes the rifts among various segments of Egyptian society that developed, first as estates in the Ottoman period, second as classes during the 19th century, then as fragmented interest groups following economic interests and cultural pattern supporting the respective class. The rift was simply an eruption of a surface that tainted itself with harmonious colors reflecting a pseudo harmony of Egyptian society. Egypt had never entered a classical phase of an industrial revolution and was introduced to modern technology with the Napoleon invasion and the occupation of British troops during the Second World War. The introduction of mechanization, like cars, trucks, and mechanized transportation introduced modern modes of transportation to Egyptian society. Tourism was another dimension in which Egyptians and a selected group of European tourists, especially English, French, Italian, German, and American, entered a dialogue, perhaps unequal, at the famous tourist sites at the Pyramids, or the Valley of the Kings. The discovery of the tomb of the young Pharaoh Tuthankamun by Howard Carter in the 1920s put Egypt among the world's host leaders of touristic sites.[20]

Perhaps useful towards an understanding of Egyptian society is a careful application of Ibn Khaldun's notion of "*asabiya*", that is, a feeling of belonging to a group of people, be it extended family, tribe, or immediate community. It seems that, at least to a European, that almost everyone in Cairo is, somehow related to someone, according to his, or her class, to which one belongs. This runs analogous to the district or special locations, such as gated communities, to which a person belongs in the class and sub-class. The idea of individual rights is foreign to the larger segment of Egyptian society; of course, the educated and intellectuals of the upper-middle class understand the western notion of individual rights, but their social behavior is still, especially its female members, tribal. In an ironic statement Hegel once pointed out that marriage in a civil society (he spoke of the period in German history called Biedermeier in the early 19th century) means the "freedom" from constraint as a married woman. It is in that sense that the Egyptian female finds "freedom" in the extended family within the institution of marriage. This is exactly the situation against which the western 1968 female generation protested, especially in Western Europe. The inverted pyramid of Germany's demographic graph by the early 21st century testifies to the ironic victory of the women's emancipation

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18 See some excellent literature on the cultural background of Cairo and Alexandria: Max Rodenbeck, *Cairo: The City Victorious*. London: McMillan, 1998; Harry Tzalas, *Seven Days at the Cecil*. Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 2009; D. J. Enright, *Academic Year*. Oxford University Press, 1985; Michael Haag, *Alexandria: City of Memory*. Yale University Press, 2004; Cynthia Myntii, *Paris along the Nile: Architecture in Cairo from the Belle Epoque*. AUC Press, 2003; Lawrence R. Murphy, *The American University in Cairo: 1919-1987*. AUC Press, 1987.

19 Satellites broadcast show the ideological tendencies that serve western constituency; rarely can a non-Egyptian gain insights into the essential issue relevant to the structure of Egyptian society on international television

or YouTube. At this point the safest area of insight about Egypt can be had in modern Arab literature, namely, poetry and the novel.

20 Useful is David P. Silverman's, (ed.), *Ancient Egypt*. AUC Press, 1999; also David Roberts, *Egypt: Yesterday and Today, Lithographs and Diaries by David Roberts R. A.* AUC Press, 2010; and Salima Ikram, *Ancient Egypt: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

going back to 1968. Of course, women's emancipation movements are much older and can be traced to the romantic rebellion among the smart Berlin saloon lady's such as Henriette Herz (the wife of physician Marcus Herz and close friend of the Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant), in which notable such as the Humboldt brother, Fichte, or Schleiermacher, or Schopenhauer, discussed literature, philosophy, the status of women in civil society. The language that we find in subsequent feminist movements, such as empowerment of other voices, is the language that Hegel and the Berlin saloon lady's invented. In Cairo, too, we find a women's emancipation movement enmeshed with the protest against British occupation combined with Egyptian nationalism in the 1920s.[21] The first decade of the 21sth Century has shown the new generation of upper-middle class women in Cairo picking up issues from the 1920s, to include discussions on political and economic empowerment of women, especially in the rural areas, the veil/hijab, female circumcision, and, the latest sexual harassment crises. These issues, however, have to be treated in detail and handled in a framework of historical dimension. In Egypt there is hardly any notable work that can be useful to read, in detail, about some of these issues. There are some anthropological studies by young Ph.D. students, but the broader, mature vision of what forces and motives and economic interests fuel various issues among all segments of contemporary Egyptian society is missing. In fact, social science research has a very weak basis in Egypt and needs serious support. Of course, in a time of revolt, no one has time to think. Again, as Hegel puts it, it is in the twilight when the owl of Minerva starts it flight, that wisdom arises. Let us hope that Egypt needs not wait until the twilight, for it may be too late to interfere, before the light that shines into Plato's Cave is totally blocked.

We have mentioned Ibn Khaldun's "asabiya": in his great work "Muqaddima", the introduction to his history of Arab and Berber people in the Maghrib, he describes highly interesting aspects of community structures that are cemented by "*asabiya*", blood relations and "group or community solidarity". He expresses himself in the new language, known academically as a philosophy of history, in which philosophy, sociology, psychology, and spiritual community is interlaced. Egyptian society, or for that matter, many society's in the contemporary Middle East can be better understood through the interpretation of Ibn Khaldun, than statistics by international organization that may, or may not, be accurate. What has not changed, since the time of Ibn Khaldun, is the notion of *asabiya*: it makes the "wasta system" possible, it provides for many traditions in Egyptian society, as well as in the Maghrib, that are

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21   Cf. Cynthia Nelson, *Dora Shafik: Egyptian Feminist*. University of Florida Press, 2004.

usually ascribed to religious commandments. Aside the fact that Egypt's panoramic history represents the rise of the absolute state, a tribal society committed to spirituality, even before Islam entered into the picture, through invasion by the Arabs. Christianity's monasticism has its foundation in the deserts of Egypt and the fact that segments of contemporary Egyptian society worship in Churches, whether in Cairo, Alexandria, or upper-Egypt in the valley of the Nile, needs to be understood in a proper historical sociological framework. From a social science point of view much work and research is necessary in order to understand the development of Egyptian society. It is not sufficient to publish treatises on the imperialism of Napoleon, despite the good works of his Savants, or the policies of the British, who treated Egypt like a parking lot to be used to reach its favorite colony, British India. The early educational missionary works in the 19th century, from Istanbul to Cairo, needs to be studied and understood in a proper framework in which the American University in Cairo plays its role, as well as the subsequent developments of private schools and franchised European Universities on Egypt's soil.

Thus, the relationship between the state, society, and family in contemporary Egypt needs to be reassessed historically, as well as social science research needs to focus on the structure, psychology, and ideological attitudes of segments of the society. Serious data needs to be produced in order to make sense of the revolt. Housing problems can't be properly be handled if specific data is not present, or, claimed to be adequate, while millions of young people can't commence a married life because of inadequacy of housing. Needless to say, the catastrophic job market and inadequate educational opportunities fuel the fire of protest. Serious cleavages between the segments of Egyptian society have to be closed, or, at least bridged over, for the time being. It can't be that the children of an elite household speak three languages, usually have bi-national passports, have access to international news and information at will, and have a guaranteed educational future, without worry about making a living: at the same time their driver, having a family of four, can't make ends meet because he and his family live on a minimum wage, by international standards. Not to mention the female servants that are probably illiterate and have a tribal attitude they brought along from their village located only a few miles away from the city. To a Western observers it was always noticeable how close the rural and urban mentality live side by side, at times, and how they mingle on a subtle level, except when marriage is at stake, where strict rules and control, and special interest of the class comes to terms as Realpolitik. These habits and ideological interests are not subsided simply because of a new communication technology. In fact, the upper-middle class has understood

that the communication technology needs to be used for its own purposes that may include the considerations for a better life of the underclass, however, the interest of its own class has priority, particularly when it comes to the institution of marriage and family alliance.

VALUES AND MODERN COMMUNCATION TECHNOLOGY

Considering the various strains that can be detected in Egyptian society throughout its history the transfusion of modern communication technology, from the cell phone to the internet and digital photography, remains elusive.[22] We should not forget that one-third of Egyptian society is in possession of communication technology, while over half is illiterate. The question arises, to what extend does the communication technology influence various segments of the society, and how does the state deal with this new reality? Of course, the initial uprising at Tahrir Square in January 25, 2011, showed clearly that the state apparatus had serious problems responding to the clever and strategic usage of the new communication technology, by a young generation of the upper-middle class. It remains to be seen to what extend the communication technology has impact upon the norms, basic habits and institutions on which Egypt's society rests. Egypt's revolt has exposed normative cleavages between segments of the society, as well as the different interest of men and women. The old pattern of an authoritarian run society seems less possible than prior the new technology. Especially female members of Egyptian society profited from the social-media. How this translates into empowerment is yet to be determined. The current sexual harassment phenomenon in the streets of Cairo and other urban locations are only a hint as to the serious confrontation between the social-medial empowerment and realities of an unyielding authoritarian bent in Egypt's tribal structure. However, it can be said, that this is not exclusively Egyptian trait, but, on a global level, we find this confrontation played out in the form of an undeclared global confrontation within the framework of globalization.

Egypt's revolt is also a revolt against old time values of the old order, not necessarily the political order, but also the order of the tribe. The confrontation that we see on satellite television, or, if we happen to be eyewitnesses in the streets of Cairo, is a confrontation of values between old tradition of a tribal organization and the possibilities, due to the communication technology, of a new sociological order. European countries, such as France, German, or the Scandinavian countries, are at the stage of consolidating the new order analogous to the transfusion of the social-media: cyber dates instead family deliberation as to who qualifies to

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22   See Maria Golia, *Photography and Egypt*. London: Reaktion Books, 2010.

be a mate and future member of a family; Facebook friendships instead chaperoned meetings with the watchful eye of the brother or some aunt. Much black humor and gossip has been spent on these phenomenon; however, the response of the angry young men in the streets of the Middle East are not orchestrated for celebration, but signal a dangerous explosive frustration that includes the libidinal being difficult to control. Both sides, the angry young men, and the upper-middle class bourgeois families are under pressure and try, each in their own way, to survive the protest with minimum loss, or, maximum protest. The end game is not yet in sight: it might take another generation. Values are important in any society and whenever a new technology is introduced, be it the automobile in 1950s America, or reproductive technologies in Europe, or the communication technology globally, values are at stake. There are values which will not survive for the simply reason technology makes them superfluous or the educational advances of a generation deletes values that are an obstacle to daily life in a modern society. The transformation of values in Egyptian society will have to be rewritten within the coming generations. What seems to be "back-ward" signs may simple be a retreat from confrontation into meditation for the ordinary people, and scientific analysis for the educated, in order to come to terms with the new realities of communication technology and its impact on daily life, from the elite to the underclass. That there is no escape from the new communication technology everyone has, by now, taken notice. The name of the game is, at present: how do we arrange ourselves in a profitable manner in which, however, a strategic value of live and let live, survives. That, so it seems, it the paramount issue awaiting the Egyptian protest.

FROM RADIO VIA TELEVISION TO FACEBOOK VIA MOBILE PHONE

In this paragraph we want to give a nutshell view of how modern communication technologies in the 20th Century has influenced Egyptian society. From the outside we should remind ourselves that the majority of Egyptian do not own a laptop or have access to any social media networks. This is especially the case in the rural area. We also want to remind ourselves that modern communication technologies have not supplanted the old traditional ways of communication as is the case in a tribal society: face to face communication within the framework of social control, especially of the female members of society.

Prior to Nasser's time there was little communication among peoples at large except among extended family members. Surface mail, notes and letters written by special scribes that were posted at the police station, or the major's office of a local village and town. The majority

of Egyptian, then and now, sadly, are illiterate, especially prevalent among the women. In that sense the written word had never had the importance in public life as it did in Europe of the 19th century. Yet, the advent of the radio was an important step at public communication between the governments, local and national, and its people. Nasser relied on radio for the effectiveness of his ideological program. More important was entertainment: normally, the male member of a household would spend time at a local Café and smoke *shisha* (water pipe) and entertain themselves with storytelling, or the latest "scandals". However, scandals and rumors are very dangerous in a tribal society, especially, if personal matters are at stake. Political issues were discussed, but in a disguised form, if it was critical of those in power. Well known were the Thursday evening program of the Egyptian national singer Um Kulthum that the privileged could listen, such as the downtown auditorium of Ewart Hall at Tahrir Square. Old documentaries show a frantic, but polite audience in 19th century gentleman suits and ladies' dresses, mostly in respectable black, with tie and coat. Um Kulthum radio program was a national, if not, an Arab national event across the Middle East. It was the times of social life in Egypt, between the two wars, as described by Mahfouz in his Cairo Trilogy.

Accompanied by the radio was the cinema. The development of the cinema in Egypt was quite early in the 20th century with Alexandria and Cairo leading the number of cinema and attendance. Again, due to the fact that most Egyptians were illiterate, the radio and cinema were excellent substitutes for the deficiency in book reading. The works of Mahfouz were well known in the form of the cinema, but not the actual book reading. The cinema was quite advance until Nasser's time, when heavy censorship start encroaching in the cinema production. Yusuf Chahin produced the classics *Alexandria: Why?* and *Bonaparte, Goodbye*; these were topics and issues closer to the cosmopolitan middle and upper-middle class of Alexandria and the impact of French cultures upon Egypt, along with the invasion of Napoleon's revolutionary army and a group of highly distinguished scientist. However, these issues and topics were not part of the majority of Egyptians who simply found the cinema magic on the silver screen. Yet, with the introduction of the black-and-white Television into the household of the ordinary Egyptian forms of social life also started to change.[23]

With the advent of Television in the late 1960s, especially during the Sadat era, the ordinary Egyptian started to follow football games closely and enjoyed comedy at the Café. The

old storytellers receded with the onslaught of the Television. At home, especially the female members of the household, followed Television in the form of family drama, usually engagement rituals and marriage. Television shows and films where controlled by the government and the focus was to reinforce local moral codes. Following cinema the television series would deal with, again, the household of the rich and the pashas and their travails. The ordinary Egyptian was to sense, at least on Television, that even the rich are limited by Divine wrath, or bad luck in life. The idea: at the end, rich or poor, God's will be done. Humans can't escape the kismet of life. Of course, controversial topics and issues, such a homosexuality, or non-sanctioned sexual activities were forbidden. Sexuality was presented in form of romance, or bad luck, but at the end happiness for the righteous. Marriage ceremonies were an important part of any television series to reinforce, again, proper ways of doing thing in society. Rebellious youth was censored, or, with exceptions in warfare, the hero, was to be applauded. Youth as heroic sacrifices for the family and country was encouraged, especially during war time in the Sadat era. Defeat was dealt with as a loss of faith and not bad military planning and execution. Whatever, the "Dream Makers on the Nile", as one book title had it, presented movie stars in Hollywood fashion across the Middle East, made in Cairo. The young Omar Sharif, to be known in the West for his role in *Lawrence of Arabia*, was a beloved screen appearance for the ordinary Egyptian. The sense of humor, that Egyptian's are famous for, rightly so, was displayed by the elderly Omar Sharif in an interview at this Hotel in Cairo, when he pointed out that he was watching the revolution at Tahrir Square from his Hotel balcony, but Egypt's youth did not see him. Very much Egyptian humor in essence. Stars of the silver screen and television series such as Yusef Wahbi, Layla Murad, Farid al-Atrash, Fatin Hamama, the singer Abd al-Halim Hafez, or contemporary Nour Sharif (the author's favorite), are names that bring smiles to the faces of the ordinary Egyptians. Entertainment in the form of cinema and television brought the Egyptian dialect of Arabic to the whole Middle East in a way, that every Arab speaker understands the Egyptian dialect of Arabic. Roughly speaking, this was the situation until the late 1980s, beginning 1990s, when internet appeared on the scene in 1991 in the United States and Europe.[24]

This eye-witness arrived in Cairo in 1991 and happily, his son Sinan was born in 1991, along with internet. The importance of these events to this eye-witness is clear: he was able to follow the development of the internet and, first, the introduction of the mobile, or cell phone,

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23 A joint book by the authors who are witnesses of Egyptian-British generation and epoch in Cairo, see Mursi Saad el Din and John Cromer, *Under Egypt's Spell: The Influence of Egypt on Writers in English from the 18th Century.* London: Bellew Publications, 1991; and Deborah Manley and Sahar Abdel-Hakim, eds., *Traveling through Egypt.* AUC Press, 2004.

24 Cf. Mustafa Dawish, *Dream Makers on the Nile: A Portrait of Egyptian Cinema.* Cairo: Zeitouna Book, 1998; and Pierre Gazio, *Van Leo: Photographer, Cairo.* Cairo: Zeitouna Books, 1997.

to Egyptian society in 1995. As his son grew into a young man, along with his Egyptian and international peer group in Cairo, this father was able to witness the modern communication technology introduced by the 1991 generation first hand. In fact, the introduction of the mobile phone was the first real communication revolution for Egyptian society in the Mubarak era, starting in the mid-1990s. The fact that this eye-witness functioned a professor and teacher at the American University downtown Cairo near the Tahrir Square, turned out to be very helpful in following the dissemination of mobile phone usage by the young elite of Cairo. Especially female students benefitted from this communication devise. Suddenly, the tradition of female harem "protection" was sabotaged by the mobile phone. Ironically, most family who could afford a mobile phone, especially the mothers, made sure that their daughters had a mobile phone with them, all the time, open and to be reached at any time. This teacher question, with a sense of humor, as to what the mothers' would ask first when their daughter's replied was, "Where are you?" the standard question of every Egyptian mother to their daughter. No doubt, the cell phone, or mobile phone, empowered young Egyptian female with a communication devise that subverted the tradition habits of shielding the female against evil eyes. And, no doubt, Egyptian society had problems adjusting to this new devise. This eye-witness watching the goings-on in Mahmoud Street, near Tahrir Square, at the time when many establishments such as Pizza Hut, McDonalds, Beano,Cilantro, and other eateries for the middle class were established, between the late 1990s and early 2000. The mobile phone was in the hands of every young person of the middle class. Slowly, this eye-witness could make out how the shoeshine man and the people handling the newspaper stand at the corner of Tahrir Square, emulating the young middle class for their own usage, applying it to small business ventures. Considering that the classical landline telephone did not always function, the mobile phone was a blessing for all Egyptians, since a constant communication was possible between rural area and the city, between extended family members, and, new associations were explored via the mobile phone, that would have been considered under the old form of traditional communication as forbidden (haram), or simply impossible. The eye-witness remembers from memory a survey done by the Egyptian Mobinil company in which it became clear that the older generation did not make new friends or changed their social life, but, it was the young generation, especially the female members of the new generation that expand their associations to the "outside world". No doubt, these factors must be taken into consideration when we speak of the revolt in Egypt of 2011. Needless to say, the majority of Egyptian did not, and still do not, have sufficient means to afford a laptop or a computer. Internet Café substitute for this material want, but still

not sufficiently used and exploited in terms of communication information. For poor refugees and exiles in Cairo the Internet Café has turned out to be a center of communication with the diaspora in Europe and the United States and the homeland.

By the time the revolt reached its peak at Tahrir Square in January 2011, Facebook and the social media had arrived in Egypt, especially the generation born in 1991. The young sophisticated users and organizers of the protest were in their twenties, with support of middle class teenagers, especially street smarts, understanding immediately the political relevance of the internet and social media, as tools to organize protest and propagating propaganda and ideology. It seems that those in power, the older Mubarak generation, did not really grasp the potential of the social media as a tool for protest and social rebellion. No doubt, without the internet, social media, Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter, Egypt's revolt would have turned out very different. But these are speculations for future historians. One thing is clear, that as soon as the ordinary Egyptian understood, especially those in political associations, the internet and social media to be the political tool of unlimited expression, at least at the initial phase of the rebellion, the time of the revolt was ripe. With time, even those in power, from the military to the bureaucracy began to understand the explosive power of this modern communication technology. However, the difficult episode in any rebellion, turning into a full fletched revolution, starts after the initial spontaneity of expressing emotions of discontent has subsided. Contemporary Egypt is in this stage at present. The difficulty lies in the social adjustment, in terms of institutions and societal associations, along with the integration of the communication technologies into a social world that has deep roots, prior to modernity of the 18th century. Of course, the communication tools, as has been witnessed globally, can be used to reinforce old habits and traditions, but, no doubt, human beings choose the pragmatic way of making life easier on this earth, and pragmatism does not necessarily support old habits. Especially in the explosive social arena of sexual encounters, gender issues, and marriage rituals, the communication devises at disposal to the young generation is at odds with the social and economics demands of a tribal society. At present, perhaps as a transitory stage, the integration and "proper" use of the communication technologies need to be explored and new forms of association, revised and reformed, need to be put into place, instead of the forms of the older generation. This is not only an issue in contemporary Egypt, but a global issue that generations within respective societies have to deal with in the 21st Century.

Critical books, documentary films, visual arts, photography, and other communicative devises need to be utilized to come to terms with the integration and adjustment of the new

communication technologies within every society, at this point, Egyptian society. To the majority of ordinary Egyptians the basic tenets of religion seems to be the rescue from the onslaught of these modern devises that are able to brake societal taboos at will; yet, the issue is not religion, since human beings, in whatever society, need a psychological strong hold for a spiritual dimension, but the real issue is, how to integrate and change the forms of religious practices and habits in such a way, as to align the spiritual with the new communication technology possibilities. This eye-witness remembers, in Europe during the early 1960s, the question popped up whether Church services are to be shown on Television, and, what if a person is ill and can't attend Church services person; if a person would watch the service on Television, whether it is admissible as beings religiously correct. These issues no longer exist and there are those who may not be seen in a Church, Mosque, or Temple, in person, but may participate in religious services on Television, or YouTube. These are simple examples, but, hopefully, make the point: that the new communication technologies, indeed, herald a new era in human association. How the new communication habits and rituals will evolve in the 21th Century is difficult to assess, but the generation of 1991 does not seem to have problems adjusting to the new communication devise, for the simple reason, that they are the present form of communication at large. The philosophic and historical problem, especially for the older generation, from Nasser's time is, to explain to the younger generation the significance of the new communication technologies and that they are a new possibility of association for humans, on a global level. The teaching and learning of the new communication technology is one of the challenges of the 21st Century for old and young. We want to make sure, as the Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana pointed out once, that we understand historical events, in order not to repeat their mistakes.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

A critical account of Egypt's revolt still needs to be written in the future. It is far too early to tell if this revolt turns into a revolution according to the classical paradigm in terms of the French or Russian revolutions. At this point it seems that Egypt's revolt show analogous to the European revolts of the 1848, in which Marx and the Young Hegelians were involved, but failed. It was a political failure, but, a social revolution of European society. Thus, revolts need not necessarily be classified as failed, if they don't achieve their goal, but, during the stages of revolt many minds and hearts a kindled to protest and revolt and not be afraid of oppressive forces.

At this point we can only speak of a preliminary conclusion: it is too early to tell how the new communication technologies will affect Egyptian society in the long run. Yet, it seems that the young generation of Egyptian have sensed a way of expressing themselves that negates the typical strong-handed repression of old. In short, the new communication technologies have open up novel possibilities of social association, unknown in Middle Easter societies. Of course, it is natural that the majority consoled themselves in old forms and habits there are used too, mainly in the religious forms. In the long run, however, every society, globally, and that includes Egypt, must find ways how to accommodate and integrate the new communication technologies possibilities within an expanded and more refined framework of an Egyptian society that can recognize itself as still being Egyptian. The application of tools and techniques is far easier than rebuilding societal institutions and redefining and reforming social tradition and habits.[25] It is no surprise that, on the one hand, we steer towards a global society, on the other hand, each individual locality on the globe is scrambling to find some sort of authenticity of its own society as to declare it unique. That is the reason why there is a vogue in authenticity and the search for roots; the historical times that was not necessary since the majority of human did not leave their village: they were born in the village, married in the village, and died in the village. This is not necessarily the case anymore, certainly not for the Global elite and middles classes. The global migration, especially since the 1960s, has shown that indigenous societies can no longer retreat and shut themselves off to outsiders. At the same time, countries in Europe and the United States find that the newcomers, in the long run, bring with them fresh blood, initiative, and a kind of energetic activities that promotes the well-being of the whole society, including via remittance of the villages they left behind. How this migratory scenario will play out in the 21st Century is difficult to foretell, but, one thing is certain, the village of one's ancestor will take on another meaning after some enterprising villagers have left for the cosmopolitan world interconnected not by blood, but by the social media and new communication technologies.

At present the social data and information as to the structure and make-up of Egyptian society is wanting.[26] Hardly any critical and substantial works give inside into the dynamics of contemporary Egyptian society, especially for the non-Egyptian. This needs to be rectified. A

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25 The work by the American anthropologist Margret Mead in the 1960s was pioneering the relationship between novel technology and the generations, see Lois W. Banner, *Intertwined Lives: Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Their Circle*. New York: Knopf, 2003; and an eye-witness account, Mary Catherine Bateson, *A Memoir of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson*. Washington University Square Press, 1984.

26 See Galal Amin, *Whatever happened to the Egyptians?* AUC Press, 2000.

case in point is the Egyptian modern literature from Mahfouz to Al-Awany. The literature, say, for instance, a well-known book among the educated middle class is by Khaled Al Khamissi's Taxi; a clever novel set in Egypt between 2000 to 2010, in which the author and taxi drivers and bystanders express their opinion about the state of Egyptian society at large. It is informative, humorous, and discusses the issues in an enlightened way. Any sociologist should search the modern Egyptian novel for hints as to the state of Egypt's society. We would want to mention, aside Mahfouz, who gives us a sort of Thomas Mann mode perspective of Egypt between the wars and, Sonallah Ibrahim's Zaat, an interesting treatment of the daily existence of women in Sadat's Egypt and its social contradictions and paradoxes. And there is the best seller novel of the Mubarak era by Alaa Al Aswany's The Yacoubian Building dealing with the transition from the old Cairo downtown of neo-colonial Architecture, including the *Yacoubian* building at Talaat Harb Square, and the fate of its inhabitants. Socially taboo topics are dealt with and widely discussed, at least in places like Café Riche, the jewel of downtown Cairo's intellectual set. The cinema version of the book was also successful, at least with the English subtitles shown in Europe, and revealed historical aspects of an Egyptian society in transition that very few critical history books would deliver.[27]

The essential problem for Egyptian society, to put it in the terminology of Ibn Khaldun is: what kind of '*asabiya*' do Egytians want for the future? With the new communication technologies, a new form of *asabiya*, or a paradigm of Egyptian social association has to be generated, based on the new communicative conditions. The *Mashrabiya* was a beautifully designed window frame (a wooden-lattice) for the females of the old style Egyptian household to make themselves 'visible' by seeing, but not being able to be seen. Yet, everyone knew the magic that was behind the Mashrabiya; needless to say, in modern times, with modern communication technology, not to mention internet, Facebook, or Skype, and Webcam, the Mashrabiya no longer serves its function. It becomes a beautiful design of old with a specific functions no longer making sense in the process of empowerment of female members of the household. Again, scholars and intellectual researches should start mining the cultural heritage of a society that can yield very informative data of a given community of locale at hand. Literature, or architecture, music or social etiquette can tell us many things as to the social fabric of a given society. Very few people, especially in the western World, Latin

America, and Asia, know anything about modern Arabic literature; aside the lacunae in the sociological fields in terms of Middle Eastern societies, literature, architecture, or music, literature, particularly poetry provide a rich source for coming to terms with these societies. How the communication technologies will reshape the forms of assabiya or associations in Middle Eastern societies is difficult to assess, at this time. Perhaps there is wisdom from the bowab Hassan (housekeeper) of a building in Garden City, a well-known district of Cairo, who replied to the question posed by this eye-witness as to how Egyptians will deal with the future: "Sir, we Egyptians have survived all Pharaohs, we will survive this one too". This statement was made prior to the Egyptian revolt at Tahrir Square in January 2011.

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27 For non-Egyptians a useful volume of a cross-section of contemporary Arab literature, see Denys Johnson-Davies, ed., *Modern Arabic Literature*. AUC Press, 2006; very important literary magazine of Modern Arab Literature based in London, see *Banipal*.

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