

## Suddenly, revolution!

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The Tunisian revolution sprang up from a blindspot. To want to explain its causes today via the objective categories of socio-economic rationality is insufficient. Such explanations end up making us adhere to the determinist illusion that does so much harm in our epoch, in which everything seems programmed. They deprive human existence of a future by rendering it predictable, in the cold comfort of the retrospective. They suppose, retroactively [après-coup], a sort of logical machine that knows everything in advance, with a transmission belt that would lead ineluctably from facts to effects. No, the Tunisian revolution is a surprise, including for those who triggered it and resolutely carried it out. What is more, it springs up in a situation in which the idea of revolution has been withdrawn from the space of our thought, at least since the fall of the Berlin Wall. This implies much more than a simple reactivation: a *reinvention*. That it occurred in a reputedly “docile” country, in an Arab world judged to be without an aspiration for freedom – this is what completes the tableau unexpectedly. Yes, the outcry of the Tunisian uprising, as much as its power, escaped the entire world. Beginning with Ben Ali’s system. Its triggering came from a zone that was inaccessible to the field of controlled vision that he constituted. How is this blindspot to be approached? The notion of *triggering*, which goes beyond the mechanical conception of accumulation that creates a rupture, or even of the image of the drop that makes the vase overflow, must be accorded its own value. Human overflow is not that of a volcanic magma; it flows from the springing up of a new perception, a sudden breaking of sense, a fulgurating desire that sets passion, language, representation going. We must think this “suddenly” that designates, in language, “what comes without being seen” and which, in a brief lapse of time, turns submission – at least, the apparent submission – into the flagrant and generalised insubmission of the same subjects. How do these “same” subjects become “other”? What is this transformative energy by which “I”, “We” are no longer like they were before? Such is the question of what is called “subjectification”, according to a certain psychoanalytic conception, a notion sometimes taken up by political philosophy to think the process by which an individual or a group becomes autonomous, recognises the irreducible otherness of which she is the bearer and separates from the cause of her alienation. With regard to the Tunisian revolutionary experience and its propagation, I would for my part prefer to put the accent on the movement of an exiting *out of oneself* – an *ejection* rather than *subjection*. It takes place as if the injustice that instituted a lengthy period of low self-regard turned suddenly from the register of a bearable to that of an unbearable reality, and triggered a separation of subjects from what had hitherto kept them contained in themselves. It is a movement of exteriorisation, like a cry, by means of which a tearing away from the intimate constraint of belittling and its buried pain is produced, to be expelled in the insurrection, in which

all of being is to come. Fear seems abolished, but in fact it doesn't disappear, it is turned back towards the outside: from a fear that is experienced it becomes a fear that is inspired in the tyrant.<sup>1</sup> How did that happen in Tunisia?

The Tunisian trigger, whose story crossed the frontiers of this country, now bears a name, that of the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi in front of the governorate<sup>2</sup> of Sidi Bouzid, a small farming town at the centre of Tunisia. The articulation between an individual act and the collective action that it provoked, of which it will become the emblem, remains to be thought at the level of its power of traversal, without being encumbered by idealist prescriptions. What does the translation from one sphere to the other derive from? Contrary to what has been said, Bouazizi was not an unemployed graduate, but an unlicensed fruit and vegetable seller, whose cart the municipal police confiscated several times and who was slapped during the last episode by one of the police agents whilst going to make a complaint. It was not only because his means of subsistence was taken from him that he set himself on fire but because his complaint met with an intolerable affront. It was the accumulation of material privation, the failure to recognise a wrong, to which was added the outrage that led to his desperate act. The fact that the author of the slap was a woman placed the offence at the highest level on the scale of dishonour for a man from his social milieu. We must underline the fact that the effect of radical destitution, subjacent to his self-destruction, results from the conjugation of attacks that arise from several oppressive logics: those of class, authority and sex, even if this last element presents itself in reverse. Precisely, with regard to the anger that led to the drama, one cannot pass over his motive in silence. Because even in a country like Tunisia, where men and women have gone a non-negligible distance down the path to equality, incomparable in the Arab and Muslim world, in any case, the scene of a man beaten by a woman, and, what is more, one who was protected by her official status, constitutes an intolerable reversal of a traditional masculine prerogative, one that is still pregnant. In the terms of a system in which the phallic imaginary more or less endorses virile, sadistic motions and attributes the active role to the male, Bouazizi suffered an excruciating passivisation, a depropriation that in one blow deprived him of his being as a man. A powerful sentiment of loss had to have been experienced in order that someone – described by the testimonies as a likeable, devoted man, carrying the burden of a large family in which he was the oldest brother<sup>3</sup> – is thrown into self-destructive melancholy. Let us note that in similar cases, altruism appears as a disposition that facilitates self-sacrifice. In truth, we don't have enough details to go any further in an exploration of his idiosyncrasies, and besides, biography matters little here, to the extent that in these circumstances the act exceeds the person. Even supposing that one day it is discovered that this man was far from [possessing] the ordinary amiability that has been said, and that he was in every way disappointing, it would be even more striking that the least admirable of men might trigger such a hurricane. No-one knows what the death of the most ordinary or least glorious of men can reveal to his community. We know that the idealisation of those who acquire the status of martyr, as Bouazizi has become in the Arab world, often effaces the rough bits, which don't coincide with the pity or the purity that they inspire. One can ask oneself the question of what might have happened with this municipal policewoman in order to end up in a humiliating quarrel. At the same time one can recall, pace those who would seek to

sublimate the rage of martyrs, what the clinical analysis of suicide teaches us: that no one can find the energy to suppress himself if he doesn't turn against himself a deathwish with regard to another person present in his history.<sup>4</sup> Whatever the case may be, the narcissistic collapse of someone remains a fathomless event, it supposes that something incalculable – precious, cherished, noble, highly considered, priceless – synonyms of 'azizi' in the name 'Bou-azizi', 'Bou' being the father, was touched, that the subject could no longer stay living, that in the face of forces that seemed crushing, he found no other recourse than the protest of suicide, in this case by fire. One must ask oneself, then, how this modality, rather new in Tunisian and Arab culture in a general manner, has come to constitute the means – not of rediscovering self-esteem, as is often said, it's not enough – but of restoring the *inestimable*<sup>5</sup> that a whole people has been deprived of.

Now, in the days that followed the fall of Ben Ali, listening to men and women in the street, I was struck by hearing them relate the uprising to Bouazizi's act, using a signifier that recurred ceaselessly, like a litany: "qahr". It is a frightening term, which belongs to the highest register of *power, the power that enslaves someone and reduces him to total impotence*. Words that designate: the imperious victor, the Irresistible (one of the names of the divine), the name Cairo (the victorious city), imprisonment for rape and, strangely in ancient Arabic, the state of flesh that has been burned and emptied of its substance, all derive from its root.<sup>6</sup> Too much of a semantic coincidence, it might be said; yet it is still true that the Tunisians have drawn on the language of distress relating to man reduced to absolute impotence so as to designate Bouazizi's act as a source of identification with his despair and revolt.

It is no exaggeration to characterise Ben Ali's regime as a system of power reduced to total impotence: the political neutralisation of Tunisians and the transformation of public actors into puppets, a brutal and technically sophisticated organisation of the police, the pillage of common goods by his voracious clan, with everyone's knowledge, the physical and moral humiliation of opponents - and in many cases torture and liquidation - everyday arrogance and untruths, with the compliments of the leaders of Western democracies, who pretend, as always, not to know anything. Many of them entered into much more than State-to-State relations, making alliances and consenting to proven ignoble actions.

With the collaboration of a part of the elite, more than two decades of such an enterprise instituted something that has no other name than a system of the massive perversion of politics and the political, in the sense of the foundation of common life and of the government of the city.<sup>7</sup> Plato's remark in the *Republic* "the perversion of the city begins with the fraudulence of words" was put to work here rigourously. Behind the everyday exhibition of "democracy", the "legally constituted State", "human rights" etc., a systematic organisation of corruption was put in place<sup>8</sup>, not only the corruption that touches on the financial sphere but, worse still, the corruption that affects *functions relative to the public good, to the institutional third party, to countervailing powers*. The visible meanness of the ruling circle, the ostentatious jouissance of the possessors of illegally acquired wealth, ended up shocking the moral spirit of a people in who

Bourguiba, the founder of the republic, had inculcated a high-minded ideal of serving the common good. This shock sanctioned the proliferation of base actions in the daily struggle to get by: petty crookery, corruption, string-pulling, circumventing the law, etc. In recent years, on the occasion of my visits to Tunisia, I have been struck by the growth of complaining among Tunisians in all situations, complaints that testify to this nauseous discontent, when the disapproval of power also becomes a disgust with oneself, a disgust with accepting the unacceptable. Between anger and derision, they couldn't stand themselves any longer. Aggressiveness puts its stamp in social relations in a country known for its civility. A criminal conspiracy seemed to devour the promise and intelligence [of the country].

Ben-Ali's regime certainly did not perceive the nausea of the Tunisians, so assured was it that it had instilled in them an unlimited capacity for absorption. The revolts were interpreted as accidents en route, without significant import, and violently crushed.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, his tribe thought they could permit themselves anything, confident that they had inspired enough fear not to have to fear anything themselves any longer. This equation containing self-satisfaction on one side and impotence on the other seemed to guarantee the perpetuation of a power embraced with images of its jouissance.

The effect of Bouazizi's act was suddenly to insert into the equation an unknown that upset the calculation. It introduced the possibility of overturning relations, by showing how a man can find a power in his very impotence, can exist by disappearing, assert his rights in losing everything. It is the very antinomy of a Ben Ali, who only existed by making others disappear, like his image, slapped on every wall in the country. A yawning gap straightaway came to light, between someone whose portraits never stop saying 'Me, Me, Me' and someone who no longer has any face, because he is totally wrapped up in the bandages of the burn victim. We must give all our attention to these scenes, these images, these snatches of speech that constituted the ferment of revolution. Thus, when the tyrant, constrained by the groundswell of the coming revolution, went to hospital to act sympathetically towards a man who, in his bed-ridden agony appeared as nothing more than a ghost, the Tunisians saw a scene on television that had incalculable repercussions. This image, which circulated in all the social networks, showed power bowing at the foot of a human form that had been erased through despair. It was the overturning of the narcissism of the 'qahr' by a poor peasant from a region left in neglect. Between a *Ben Ali* and a *Bouazizi*, between the first person of the State and the last of men, between the sovereign and someone who is no-one, history seems to have called on stage two actors who should never have met, to make them act in a play in which arrogance and weakness, cruelty and pity, fear and humiliation were going to be dialectically opposed, so as to produce the event of the revolution. Who said anything about the end of the master narratives and the model of tragedy? This real theatre, this writing that is destiny incarnate (writing and destiny have the same root in Arabic) place us before the fact that the *suddenly* is the effect of a dithering of the unconscious in human history, the manifestation of which is comparable to a gaze which opens up for the human community in the gap between the figure of cruel power and the figure of the person burned to practically nothing on his deathbed. That is why we say that the unconscious cannot not be political.

The basic syntagm or phrase of the unconscious as political turns around what *deserves* to live or die. Faced with the sovereign power that can decide “who” deserves what and “when”, and supposes that his subjects will seek to deserve their life as a function criteria that he has established (which are only the rule of his own *jouissance*), an ordinary subject appears who subverts this power, by acting that one only deserves one’s life through death, one’s “being human” can only be preserved by accepting the passage to one’s own destruction, conferring on the question a value that exceeds self-preservation. It is from the core of this syntagm, which was tarnished by the discourse of dignification, that surprise and subversion arises.

It is effectively from there that that which neither the tyrant nor his police, nor councillors nor any expert can see or foresee comes, this incalculable that the *machine-that-knows-everything-in-advance* was unable to anticipate and will always misrecognise. What? That the problem is not to live or die, phenomena that by virtue of the state of bodies are objectively determinable and administratable, but the question of the *merit* that happens to trouble the frontiers, in such a way that to take one’s own life can indeed appear to someone as a prolonging of his being, in order to merit an *inestimable* value. Otherwise one would not understand why there is *putting of oneself to death*. That is what Goethe, in a poem from *West-Eastern Divan* called ‘Blessed Yearning’<sup>10</sup>, defines with a formula: “die and be new-born!” As will be seen later, it is not a matter of the command of the poet, but of that of which the subject who consumes himself is the host. More precisely, it is the imperative that seizes hold of him, exalting the manner in which the unconscious ordinarily denies our death or doesn’t represent, which consists in believing that *dying is becoming*.

I’m not sure that Bouazizi’s act can be simply characterised as “sacrifice”, yet we still see situations in which “die and become!” is linked - subsequently in this case - to a common cause. What is more, this common cause appears at a given moment, for a community, as the very cause of its belonging to the human species. In this circumstance, what seizes hold of its members, collectively and in an acute manner, what could be called *the passion of being humans*, or if you wish, the desire to renew its pact! That supposes that the being of man is not given once and for all, that it can be lost and be regained anew. It is a constant of the human species, not in the register of birth but of desire, to affirm that this “being” is lacking and that it must be conquered ceaselessly. Besides, when a group claims to have accomplished the human in it and filled up the insufficiency of its being, that is the moment when it is the closest to committing the worst.

What distinguishes a revolution such as took place in Tunisia from riots or many revolts touching in such and such unjust condition - those of minors, of workers, or peasants, for example - is the fact that it was moved by this passion in which the whole of “human being” seemed at play. That is where the mark of its filiation with the French Revolution of 1789 is to be found - and not in the logic of its unfolding.<sup>11</sup> During their massive uprising, the Tunisians did not demand something that it would have been possible to agree to, they demanded nothing less than *work, respect, freedom, equality, justice!*

Who could have satisfied such a demand? In one sense, it was the impossible that was demanded, from a power that could do nothing, and which responded with the possible: jobs, prices, the presidential mandate, etc. All these propositions appeared like patches [rustines] stuck over the abyss that suddenly opened up. Repairs [rustines<sup>12</sup>] indeed because it is not the repair of a lesion in such and such other part of the body that it is a matter of, but of a wound from top to bottom. Everything was at stake, for everyone. Because the uprising wasn't guided by a leader, nor a party, nor a doctrine, nor in the name of God. There was no longer any representative with which power could hold discussions, representativeness itself had disappeared, it was the people as such which was present. Henceforth, no [quite], no prayer could modify this decision that the demonstrators resolutely expressed with placards on which *game over* was written.

That the self-immolation of Bouazizi appeared as the *originary scene* of the revolution is indeed true: but it is a matter of a construction, that is to say, of a sense given retroactively [après-coup] to an act of protest by a desperate man acting alone and without leaving any other message than his public act. Certainly, as a protest, the act was addressed to and took as its witness his community. It testified to the unsupportable and took the exorbitant price that he paid to free himself from it as its witness. But that was not enough to impel a revolution. Others before him, in the same period, set fire to themselves, without their acts having the same consequences as that of Bouazizi. The hypothesis that I have started to sketch out, that I am now specifying more precisely, is that this name is so charged with the traversal of signifiers that for the Tunisians, it linked together originary and becoming. The *originary* in the psychoanalytic conception of the unconscious is not the origin, it does not designate what an individual or group comes from, but what they are advancing towards, more precisely, the fictive destination that they actively give to themselves; they give themselves this destination by seizing hold of fundamental signifiers so as to project them ahead of themselves. The *originary* is the fact of *drawing* origin from ... Thus, in Arabic, *Bou* = father, *aziz* = dear, noble, esteemed, precious, priceless, that is to say the stake of an *inestimable* foundation, actualised here and now. In the Tunisian idiom, *Bouazizi* literally designates "the father who is dear to me". As "azizi" is often the name of the grandfather, *Bou-azizi* would convoke the father of the grandfather, in other words, the ancestor, something which coincides with what Pierre Legendre indicates, that is, that the *inestimable* arises from the *genealogical principle*. But for Pierre Legendre, the inestimable, or the "priceless object" of the genealogical principle cannot be situated in the reality of filiation or in the "magma of the family", but on the side of the "figure of absolute lack", in other words, the metaphorical dimension of the father as gap, defect, the void of substance. A coincidence: to illustrate what he means by the figure of absolute lack, Legendre has recourse to the example of the defect in the carpet, left there deliberately by Tunisian weavers (in the region of El-Djem and of Djbeniana, some 20 or 30 kilometres from Sidi Bouzid!), a defect which refers to "non-perfection as the sign of humanity".<sup>13</sup> What is lacking in man so as to remain human, such is the stake of *inestimable*. By pronouncing the name *Bou-azizi*, the Tunisians evoked the man who set himself on fire, the initial cause of their uprising, but in saying this, they said at the same time – certainly unbeknownst to most of them – that the *son of the inestimable father died for [the sake of] dignity*. Even if this formulation entails a resonance with the

Christlike, it is remarkable that the inestimable was not referred to any transcendence, any religious or extraordinary ancient reference: an ordinary man was the incinerated support, a burned human remains.<sup>14</sup>

As is often the case, a small group, that of those close to Mohammed Bouazizi, then of the inhabitants of Sidi Bouzid, took his protest very badly. One can imagine the frightful anguish caused by the self-immolation. At the very moment that they bestow on him the meaning of a man who had died for them, they identified with him through the idea of a sacrifice for all. One passes from the dismay of each person to the assumption of a collective guilt through which a fictive common body is formed. Initially, Mohammed Bouazizi's act was a *self-sacrifice*, in the sense that he sacrificed his life for something more precious and deserving of his love. Once again, the clinical analysis of suicide shows us that through his act the subject desires to preserve *one more loved* than himself, in itself lost and which he wishes to safeguard by and in death. It is the enigma of absolute love in death. The step accomplished by this first community plunged into mourning is to transfer this private self-love into a collective love through identification. There is a sort of infusion of narcissistic individual love into a bigger container. The Freudian thesis regarding the "libidinal constitution of a crowd" seems topical: a number of individuals put the same object in the place of their ego ideal so as to identify with one another.<sup>15</sup> They love each other through him in them, or even: they convert the most loved of him for himself into the most loved for themselves: him. Such is the imaginary aspect of the setting off of the revolt around the act of self-immolation. Even if it had some precedents, the latter is without any significant reference in Tunisian and Arabic culture, if not, perhaps, the echo of what as children we learned by heart, from the gesture of Hasdrubal's wife, throwing herself into the fire, crying "fire rather than dishonour", to escape from the "qahr" of Carthage by the Romans. The question regarding what *self-lysis* through fire (I'm deliberately using "lysis", which signifies disintegration) convokes as a new imaginary by virtue of the recent multiplication of such cases in the Arab world poses itself. Among the iconographic treasures of the revolution on Facebook, there exists a whole cyber theatre of "presidenticide", where in some hilarious scenes one can see the President's head rolling, from one clip to another, stuck on the necks of ridiculous and cowardly characters.<sup>16</sup> In one intensely circulating collage in particular, one sees Bouazizi's head in place of Ben Ali's, bearing the insignia of the President of the Republic.

Idealisation thus seems to be the hallmark of the imaginary process of the crowd theorised by Freud. Now we find ourselves faced with a situation in which the head of the fallen chief is changed for another, better loved, head. Except that here, Bouazizi is not a leader but the *incinerated man* who, by disappearing, allowed the multitude to liberate itself. This characteristic opens up a different perspective, which leads us to qualify the Freudian theory of the crowd, in which the process of identification leads to the putting in place of an all-powerful, even superhuman, figure, who is nothing other than the return of the archaic father. It operates through the power of *an* ideal, the massification of individuals, creating an illusory completeness that can lead them to commit the worst. In short, it is a matter of a theory of alienation in the mass, a dangerous mass. This approach is dictated by the European historical context of the

epoch, heavy with grave threats that turned out to be real, whether that be the different types of fascism, Hitler or the Stalinist cult. Hence in psychoanalysis there ensues, much more than a critical pessimism in the face of idealities that can harbour limitless cruelty, a scorn with regard to politics, suspected of fundamentally containing the appeal to the massifying tendency, constitutively present in the individual psyche. There follow from this serious consequences for the psychoanalytic thinking of the collective which I can't examine here to their full extent, other than by underlining its geopolitical shortcomings, at a moment when individual and community subjectivities are being so intensely reworked by scientific and economic globalisation.

Now, even if we are only at the start of the revolutionary process in Tunisia, and we have to wait a certain amount of time for the results of the transition to a new organisation of politics, the modality by which the crowd rose up around the figure of the incinerated man, the fact that we do not encounter there the noted characteristics of submission to an all-powerful leader, a redeeming doctrine, a transcendent being, leads us to evoke the hypothesis of a disalienating effect of the multitude, of a peacefully liberating crowd. Indeed it should be recalled that the violence that occurred whilst the events in Tunisia took place were committed by the police and the militias of Ben Ali's regime, and that to this day there has not been any lynching or informal trials. In fact, the man in question had no noteworthy qualities, possessed neither the portent nor the aura that would be likely to make him one of the elect, exactly the contrary, actually. He had his cart taken away from him, caught a slap in the face from and responded by turning the aggression against himself. He did not confront an enemy heroically, unless it was his own life that he brought down with two litres of petrol and a match. This is the man that the Tunisians loved, with whom they identified, and with whom as their ideal they carried out their revolution. In this case one would have to say the "anti-ideal" or inverted ideal of a fragile, self-perishable human, a "moth consumed", according to Goethe's expression in 'Blessed Yearning'.<sup>17</sup> By the hazards of birth, this man, who died from his own inadequacies thus had to bear the name of the *inestimable*, in other words, a symbolic attribute. A characteristic which, when all is said and done, supposes a withdrawal of the body, which was realised tragically here by immolation.

If we consider that Bouazizi represents the withdrawal of the *one* of the unifying ideal,<sup>18</sup> of which only incinerated remains are left, then the identification with him by the Tunisian revolutionary crowd might correspond to the desire to distance from oneself the idol incarnating the all-powerful, to the benefit of a *soluble* figure which, by its absence, leaves space for the play of difference and of change-overs.<sup>19</sup> The revolution would in fact have as its source the *disidentification* of the hegemonic figuration of power (the primordial father), in correlation with the possibility of the "empty place" of democracy that no-one can appropriate, such as Claude Lefort has thought it in his work.<sup>20</sup> That supposes an agreement between a subject that does not allow itself to go with the massifying tendency, who, in other words, maintains that gap between the ego ideal and the object of desire, and a structure of the organisation of politics the democratic character of which doesn't only reside in the equality of all but in the desubstantialisation of the place of power, for which the passing occupant can only symbolically be an *inadequate man*, which doesn't mean incompetent.

I am not saying that this theoretical condition has been realised in Tunisia, far from it. But the setting off of the revolution includes these ingredients within itself. To the extent that we have neither seen nor heard any religious or identitarian sacralisation, it is strengthened by a discourse on the social immanence of uprising. No prayer but a constant demand with the rhythm of *the people/wants/the end/of the regime*, which will then be chanted throughout the Arab world.

If we return to what I called earlier the discourse of *dignification*, we could, with regard to these developments, introduce a major distinction between two sources of dignity: that which proceeds through command: “be worthy” or by finding fault: “you are not worthy”. It has as its source the Superego, an instance that judges, that censors, which has as its source, anxiety firstly in the face of parental authority, then in a more oppressive way, in the social order, because it isn’t tempered by the love of the parents. Tyrannies (secular, religious, moral, patriarchal, psychological, etc) seize hold of it to decide who merits what, life and death, infamy, nobility. It is a dignity that organises the categories of the man who can be humiliated and the man who can be honoured, not without a jumble of ideas to mark them, crush them or release them.

In comparison with another, this dignity, the source of which is symbolic and pacifying, and is well named here *inestimable* (aziz), is terrifying. In other words, it is that which cannot be evaluated, or linked to any estimation, any price, any object whatsoever. It originates in a *pure desire* to keep the place of power empty, only to allow always insufficient passers-by, so that the value, the meaning, the merit of the *being of man* remains indeterminable for itself and for others. In this sense, the Tunisian revolution was set off so as to reconstitute the *inestimable* for all. Such is the blindspot, the deadzone from which it rose up.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup>Cf Etienne Balibar’s essay *La crainte des masses* (Paris, Galilée, 1997). The entirety of this book, and in particular the chapter entitled ‘Spinoza, l’anti-Orwell’ bears on this question. [Balibar’s book has been partially translated as *Masses, Classes, Ideas* (New York, Routledge, 1993) and the essay in question as ‘Spinoza, the anti-Orwell: the Fear of the Masses’. Translator’s note]

<sup>2</sup>The equivalent of a prefecture.

<sup>3</sup>Cf the investigation into Mohamed Bouazizi by Farida Dahmani in *Jeune Afrique* No.2615, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2011, pp. 40-43.

<sup>4</sup>This phrase is almost a quotation of what Freud writes in ‘The Psychogenesis of a Case of Female Homosexuality’ Sigmund Freud (1920) ‘The Psychogenesis of a Case of Female Homosexuality’. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 1:125-149.

<sup>5</sup>The *inestimable*, of which Bouazizi’s name evidently convokes the signification, has been proposed by Pierre Legendre as the principal stake of the priceless object of transmission between humans, an object that represents each subject as a pure value or as an exception, as referred to a genealogical order. Cf Pierre Legendre *L’inestimable objet de la transmission* (Paris, Fayard, 1985).

<sup>6</sup>Ibn Mandur *Lisân Al'arb* (Lexical Encyclopaedia of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century), (Beirut, Dar Lisân Al-'arab) v.3, Entry 'qahara', p.185.

<sup>7</sup>This distinction between le and la etc corresponds to the theory of Jacques Rancière *On the Shores of Politics* (London, Verso, 1995)

<sup>8</sup>Described well by Ridha Ben Slama in his essay *Libertés fondamentales et modes de corruption des systèmes* (Paris, Editions Thélès, 2010).

<sup>9</sup>Like the revolt in the mining basin of Gafsa in 2008. One of the first acts of the revolution certainly began there.

<sup>10</sup>In the French translation of Goethe, the title of the poem is 'Le Bienheureux désir' and the phrase cited here 'meurs et deviens'. [Trans]. J.W. Goethe *West-Eastern Divan* translated by E. Dowden (London, Dent and Sons, 1913) 1.18 p.19

<sup>11</sup>Jean Tulard, a specialist on the French Revolution, introduced the comparison with the Tunisian revolution in terms of process in an interview that appeared in *Le Monde* on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2011. He said "revolution extols a radical change in humans, institutions, ways of thinking (...) It [the uprising] follows a trajectory parallel to that of the French revolution, which makes both events comparable enough (...) To draw out the comparison, Tunisia is without a doubt in the process of living through the year 1789 of its own revolution – which corresponds in France to the putting into place of a constituent National Assembly still dominated by the nobles. In 1789, as in Tunisia today, it is the hour of enthusiasm, of the craziest hopes for reform.

<sup>12</sup>'Rustine' is a proprietary name for the kind of rubber patches that are used to mend tyres.

<sup>13</sup>P. Legendre, op. cit. p. 40.

<sup>14</sup>This remnant corresponds exactly to the theory of the object a (little a) of Jacques Lacan. I'm skipping the complex development of this theorisation here, keeping only the following indication: the *desire* that Spinoza makes the power of being, can only exist through a lack of being, which supposes the detachment of an object, taking the place of the lack. The object is at the same time both real and unreal, and is thus an intermediary phenomenon. Language is its vector, as Nietzsche suggests in this phrase: "what is a word? The image of a nerve stimulus in sounds" (Friedrich Nietzsche *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-moral Sense* (New York, Viking, 1976). I would add that the intermediary phenomenon and state were powerfully thought by Ibn Arabî (12<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> centuries) through the theory of the isthmus (Barzakh), as he defines it thus: "a possible between being and nothing" (Ibn Arabî, *al-Futûhât al-Makkyya* edited by Osman Yahya (Cairo, Al-Hay'a al-misryya lil-kitâb) v.1 p.5, v.3 p.12, 188, 280, 353.

<sup>15</sup>S. Freud 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego' in the *Standard Edition* V.18.

<sup>16</sup>For example, scenarios in which he telephones heads of State who were his "dear friends" to ask them for refuge. Fearing the contagion of the revolution, they reject his requests, on the most ridiculous of pretexts.

<sup>17</sup>The English translation of Goethe has 'A moth art in the flame consumed' [Trans.].

<sup>18</sup>This point deserves to be developed in terms of Jacques Lacan's theory of the *one* and of *jouissance*. I will take this up elsewhere.

<sup>19</sup>'alternance' – alteration or a change-over of political parties [Trans.]

<sup>20</sup>Besides the work of Claude Lefort, such as *Un homme de trop* (Paris, Seuil, 1976); *Essais sur la politique* (Paris, Seuil, 1986), I recall the excellent issue of the journal of the college of psychoanalysts, entitled 'Le

mythe de l'un dans le fantasme et dans la réalité politique', which was devoted to a debate between Claude Lefort and some psychoanalysts. See *Psychanalystes* No 9, October 1983.