



THE VISIONARY IN GHASSAN TUENI

went beyond his professional excellence as the man who single-handedly transformed an Arab daily into the most reliable and influential newspaper in the region for over half a century. The part of his universally acknowledged vision ran through a gamut of talents which were clear for whomever read him, got to know his interests, or simply followed his political and literary career: a personal charm with interlocutors across the world, an always sharp attention to new talents, an engagement with transcendental spiritualism, Job-like resilience in the face of adversity, knowledge of art and attachment to beauty in all its forms, and a vast culture.

This is universally acknowledged. I want to add here a recollection from a discussion with him on Kant. Tueni was a student of government at Harvard in the late 1940s. This was a

privileged moment for him, which he had to interrupt abruptly when his father died to return to Beirut for the stewardship of the *Nahar*. At Harvard, he studied with Carl Friedrich, a famous professor of constitutional and political theory. Tueni read Kant's *Treatise on Perpetual Peace* (1795) in the class. Kant's famous *Treatise* remains to date the bedrock of any attempt to talk seriously about the end of history as we know it, the history of violence and wars. We luckily have Tueni's annotations, page by page, in the margins of the English version of the book which was used in class.

These are notes from an attentive and creative reader. On the second page, for instance, Tueni notes that the translation "*perpetual*" is not quite right, for the original German word *ewig* suggests that "*eternal, or everlasting may be better.*" Where

Kant writes: "*the glory of the state is placed in its continual aggrandizement, by whatever means,*" Tueni's note in the margin says: "*This then is the cause of future wars.*" Some notes are in French, some in German, one even in Arabic, when Kant towards the end of the book shows how superficial and evident *Realpolitik* precepts sound. Where Kant writes that the first maxim of a sophist is "*Fac et excusa. First do and then excuse,*" the margin says: "*syasat al-amr al-waqe'.*" The politics of *fait accompli* is no rocket science of government.

Perhaps the most telling annotation is on page 6, where the *Treatise* presents a preliminary set of maxims on perpetual peace as Kant perceived it. "*V. No state shall by force interfere with either the constitution or government of another state.*" Tueni writes in the margin: "*Limitation of*

this principle by first definitive article, [which is] that the constitution of every state should be [a] Republic. Has any state the right to establish a dictatorship? Does that give the community of state[s], or any other individual state [a] right to interfere? But who is to judge? Can freedom be used against itself, for its own negation? This is [the] central issue."

Indeed.



TALE OF A YOUNG KANTIAN

CHIBLI MALLAT