

The Genealogy of Historical Periodisation in Western Civilisation

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Abstract:

The question of the division of history into stages is a complex one, reflecting the overlap between different branches of knowledge. It has aroused the interest of intellectuals, philosophers, scientists, sociologists, literary scholars, economists, politicians as well, all of whom have had their own investigation and have singled out a certain perception of time, its basic features, that have led them to determine the beginning and end of stages of cultural, political, intellectual or social activity.

But the division of history into epochs remains at the heart of the process of historiography and the essence of historical knowledge, which varies from one civilisation to another. Western civilisation has a particular point of view on this subject, which has developed over centuries and has been influenced by all the intellectual, religious and political transformations it has undergone. We can see this by tracing the milestones through which historical periodisation has passed in the West, until it has settled into the quadrilateral form we know today. How has Western thought travelled this long road? and how has this quadrilateral, produced by a particular mental experience, become a form that frames the history of all the peoples of the world?

Keywords: Periodisation - Historical knowledge - Western civilisation - Artificial division - Christoph Keller.

Introduction:

We can distinguish two main types of periodisation. The first relates to the history of human life in this universe and can be further divided into two categories. The first category is the periodisation of prehistoric eras¹, which begins with the beginning of human history in this universe and ends with the development of writing and the recording of human actions in stone, clay or other materials, some 3,000 years before Common Era, under the Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilisations². The second category is the historical periodisation of human activity, which begins where the first category ends and continues to the present day.

The second main type of periodisation is the natural or geological periodisation (geological epoch), which scientists have divided into four major epochs, each of which is further divided into periods spanning hundreds of millions of years. The last of these geological epochs is called the Holocene, dating back about 11,000 years to the present, and is the period in which human civilisation and writing emerged³. The focus of this paper, however, is on the second type of periodisation from the first main category.

The question of historical periodisation is an integral part of the philosophy of history, and it has great epistemological significance as a rich field for exploration and reflection. Western thought has long devoted considerable attention to this topic.

In fact, tracing the origins of historical periodisation with any precision is difficult, as European scholars acknowledge. This paper is an attempt to trace the emergence and development of the process of dividing history into periods within Western thought. The fundamental problem, however, is not limited to uncovering the roots of this process and outlining its stages of development within Western civilisation, as the title suggests. Rather, it is to understand the broader civilisational dimensions and the reasons for the widespread adoption of the four historical periodisations coined by the Western mind, which have become the standard divisions of history in universities worldwide. Faced with this reality, the big question is: Is it possible to transcend these terms and invent alternative ones? This is a pressing question that confronts everyone, especially historians who do not belong to the European continent.

First / Genealogy of historical periodisation: Concept and meaning:

1- Explanation of the concept of genealogy:

Genealogy, a term originally belonging to the field of history, refers to the study of the lineage of individuals, institutions and ideas, and the historical tracing of various phenomena, presenting them sequentially from their inception to the final stage of their development⁴. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche⁵ borrowed this term and gave it a philosophical dimension, using it to raise questions about the origins of moral values, not just to establish them but to critique them. He wanted to explore the ancient source of values, tracing it back to the conflict between nobles and slaves, and between the free spirit of the warrior and the spiteful spirit of the priest⁶. In this sense, the term has a strong critical connotation and, for Nietzsche, has a double function: to investigate the origin of values and, at the same time, the value of this origin. According to Nietzsche, every phenomenon, language or text derives its value from the meaning we ascribe to it. Religion, for example, has different interpretations and meanings that vary according to the forces that benefit from it. Thus, all existence cannot be found as “raw reality” because it is a series of interpretations and subject to the “cunning of symbols”. Ideas, according to Nietzsche, do not express anything, but reveal and conceal at the same time⁷.

2- The concept and meaning of historical periodisation:

Linguistically, the term “era” means a period of time, regardless of its duration. This meaning is found in Arabic as well as in French (*période*), English (period) and German (*Zeitabschnitt*)⁸. The term “periodisation” (*périodisation* - periodisation) has two meanings: a general, literal one, which is the division of time into periods⁹; and a more specific, scientific or technical one, which is the correct understanding of the different periods of time and their interrelationships and sequences. This involves subjecting various individual and collective activities to interpretation and analysis, which helps to construct an accurate concept of a given era¹⁰.

In this sense, periodisation is the process of framing past events and categorising them according to epochs with common characteristics. At the same time, each era bears the hallmarks of a “cognitive or factual break” that distinguishes it from the preceding and succeeding periods¹¹. This means that periodisation is based on elements of simultaneity and succession, encompassing relative similarity or homogeneity as well as differences¹².

Periodisation has many advantages, as it serves to organise and frame events in memory, preventing them from becoming scattered fragments. This process is neither easy nor simple, as it

requires the fulfilment of certain cognitive and scientific conditions, which can only be achieved through the integration of several mental processes, such as reading, reflection and interpretation of different types of activities and achievements within a society. Without these mental processes, periodisation would become an arbitrary and haphazard task. As a result, the writing of history would become a series of scattered events, devoid of coherence and hampering the understanding that can only be achieved by categorising, organising and placing events in their general context¹³. But is historical periodisation merely an artificial division imposed by technical and professional necessity, and a procedural tool needed by researchers to frame their subject in order to facilitate the understanding of history? Or does it have other dimensions?

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of historical periodisation is its epistemic dimension, since it is linked to historical knowledge in two ways: on the one hand, it is a product of it, and on the other, it delimits its domain in terms of time and space, defining the markers of beginning and end and elucidating the set of constants and variables that characterise the stage or the epoch¹⁴. It is well known that historical knowledge plays a key role in the process of understanding history.

It is well known that historical knowledge plays an important role in shaping the self-understanding of societies, since it helps a nation to express its will and to declare its independent and distinct entity, in addition to creating the appropriate climate for unity, cooperation and understanding among individuals¹⁵.

Through this organic relationship between periodisation and historical knowledge, we realise that periodisation is an activity not without ideological backgrounds¹⁶, which influence not only the writing of history and its accompanying details, but also the human conception of reality and truth. It is characterised by specificity because it is subject to the historian's perspective, which reflects the environment and civilisation to which he belongs.

As pragmatic linguistics has shown, this is the case with any term that embodies the meanings of the cultural circle to which it belongs and the civilisational context from which it emerged¹⁷.

Perhaps an understanding of the history of periodisation and the stages of its development within Western thought would further clarify this judgement.

Secondly, the religious periodisation of history:

It is said that man is naturally civil, and it is also said that he is naturally religious. Religion has been a fundamental factor in the emergence of every civilisation throughout history. The observer of the history of human thought will realise that every intellectual advance achieved by mankind is based on and emanates from ancient religious beginnings as old as man's existence in this world¹⁸. The process of periodisation is no exception to this phenomenon.

The Heavenly Books contained the earliest recorded histories of human life, the beginning of creation, the relationship between man and other beings, and the immortalisation of the great events experienced by humanity. The first attempts to write history were made by priests, such as the Egyptian priest Manetho (Manetho), who wrote a book on the history of the ancient Egyptians in the form of annals, and another Babylonian priest called "Berossus", who wrote a book on the history of Babylon. After the rise of Christianity and its adoption as the official religion of the Roman Empire during the reign of Emperor Constantine (306-337 AD), the clergy monopolised the writing of history and the religious event became the centre of history. Annals were written to recount religious feasts and the history of the Church, reducing historical writing to the story of man's relationship with his Creator, filled with stories of miracles and saintly deeds¹⁹.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the first attempt made by man to divide history into periods was based on a religious concept, and one of the oldest forms of religious periodization is the periodization mentioned in the Book of Daniel²⁰.

It places the historical events of the world within the framework of four empires: the Babylonian, the Median²¹, the Persian and the Greek²². Close to this periodisation was that of the Spanish priest and historian "Paulus Orosius"²³.

One of the most important religious periodisations of history is that of Saint Augustin²⁴. He divided the historical epochs into six periods: from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to David, from David to the Babylonian captivity, from the Babylonian captivity to the incarnation of Christ, and from the incarnation to Augustine's time and beyond²⁵.

This division is in keeping with the religious text, which states that God created the universe in six days, as mentioned in the Book of Genesis in the Torah (the Creation): "And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made"²⁶. Augustine made the course of these epochs correspond to the life span of a human being, from childhood to old age²⁷.

He also believed that human existence will end on the seventh day, which will witness the return of Christ and the resurrection, marking the end of time and history and the entry into the eternal stage²⁸.

All religions have agreed that God is the Creator of the universe and of time, which means the overthrow of the idea of deifying time, which is no longer endless but teleological, ending in a sacred goal.

The journey of humanity is determined by a straight line, from original sin to final repentance. It has become possible to count the years from the beginning of creation, and history, according to the Jewish and Christian interpretation, is God's providence in His creation and His will in the world, a series of stages beginning with Adam's expulsion from Paradise and ending with the Resurrection. This trajectory is also supported by other beginnings, such as the moment of creation and the appearance of the message or the incarnation of Christ, so that religious thought has resolved the problem raised by philosophers when they asked whether time had a beginning, since the heavenly books prove that God created the world from nothing²⁹.

It is worth noting that the religious periodisation is based on the tripartite division of time and includes: the time of temptation and darkness, or the time of Paradise and the beginning of the universe; then the earthly time and worldly life; and thirdly the time of the Resurrection and the Final Judgement. The time of the worldly life is characterised by being a time full of contradictions, because it is a life of guidance and faith as well as a life of ignorance and disbelief, and its events are temporary events governed by divine providence³⁰. The theory of divine providence is the theory of the worldly life.

The theory of divine providence is a religious approach to the interpretation of history and it appeared with the emergence of man who believed in the existence of a constant power that controls all the transformations that societies undergo. The origins of the principle of Divine Providence go back to ancient civilisations such as the Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian and Greek, all of which considered man to be part of nature, so that what happens to nature happens to him. The wise God must intervene in order to plan for the helpless human being, who is incapable

of doing good for himself, and without this intervention history would have become merely an accumulation of turbulent ages. The Jews were unique in their belief that they were a people with a special status in the universe, for the Creator's providence is limited to them and they are His chosen people. They believe that historical events do not repeat themselves, but proceed in a line that ends with their return to the Promised Land³¹.

Augustine, in his book *The City of God*, says:

"...and divine providence has its place, for it is the judgement in victories as well as in defeats"³². And we find much in Orosius that is similar to this text, such as what is mentioned in his book *The History of the World*: "... and the proof of the design of God Almighty in establishing the kingdom of the Romans in place of the kingdom of the Syrians, and that this is not from the doing of mortals, nor from what the world brings according to agreement", and he also says: "...and what can be understood in itself, the nature of mankind was created to deny that the world from its beginning and foundation is but a succession for the sins of its people"³³.

Moreover, Christianity sees history as a course determined by divine providence, telling the story of the emergence and settlement of humanity on earth. Events are not attributed to human wisdom and action, but to a preordained destiny known to God. The figure of Christ is central to this world history; everything that precedes his coming is seen as a prelude, and everything that follows is seen as a consequence of his coming³⁴. It is obvious that the religious interpretation of history and the concept of time in Judaism and Christianity have directly influenced the formulation of periodisation according to these perceptions.

Religious periodisation has survived for many centuries, despite the significant changes that Europe has undergone. Its three-part structure, mentioned above, cast a long shadow over subsequent forms of periodisation, becoming the background from which they emerged.

Third, the emergence of the tripartite periodisation of history:

The religious periodisation of history persisted, with some modifications, until the seventeenth century, thanks to the French priest Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, a prominent representative of Christian fundamentalism³⁵. In his book *Discourse on Universal History*, he chronicled world history from a Catholic Christian perspective until the end of Charlemagne's reign in the ninth century AD, dividing history into epochs based on the Bible. He believed that religion was the only phenomenon worth recording because it was eternal truth³⁶. In 1681, he wrote an essay entitled "Discourse on Universal History", in which he argued that the events of human history follow a causal sequence according to the sacred divine plan, with Christianity at its core³⁷.

Bossuet proposed a threefold periodisation of history with religious and philosophical significance, which he considered simpler and easier:

1. The first epoch: from the beginning to the foundation of Rome, covering 4004 years.
2. The second epoch: from the foundation of Rome to the birth of Christ, covering 747 years.
3. The third epoch: from the birth of Christ to the present day³⁸.

In addition to the philosophical and religious significance of this periodisation, it should also be noted that it was known to the peoples of the East, from where the Jews adopted it and then passed it on to the Christians. It was also adopted by the philosophers of the Enlightenment, but with fundamental modifications. Bossuet can be considered the father of historical periodization in Europe, since the trace of his tripartite periodization can be found in all subsequent periodizations, which maintained the tripartite structure of the division of history³⁹.

However, its connection with religion gradually began to fade, in line with the scientific development that Europe was experiencing, coinciding with the religious reform movement and the intensification of the conflict between scientists and the clergy, who had monopolised the authority of knowledge, which drew its strength from its relationship with the Holy Scriptures and its reliance on divine truths. But despite this intense antagonism between the two sides, the empirical scientists were not driven to fight religion by their conflict with the priests and the clergy. On the contrary, they affirmed their connection with it and devoted their scientific efforts to the cause of faith⁴⁰.

One of the philosophers who tried to reconcile the religious interpretation of history with the scientific method based on induction, similar to the natural sciences, was the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico⁴¹, author of the book “The New Science” (1725), in which he outlined the origins and axioms of this science, which he limited to one hundred and fourteen philosophical and linguistic axioms. Axiom number 28 dealt with the law of the evolution of peoples according to a historical cycle, which is an eternal, fixed system to which the history of all human organisations is subject⁴².

Vico believed that human history was a spiral of constant change, divided into three ages, each dominated by a particular language and nature:

The Age of the Gods: In this age, nations live under despotic governments controlled by the clergy, who enact laws they claim to be divine. This age is characterised by the dominance of superstition and myth, and the use of a special, sacred and secret language. The dominant human nature in this age is the religious nature, whose influence increases due to the weakness of rational thought.

The Age of Heroes: In this age, rule is in the hands of mighty heroes, whom people believe to be superior to ordinary humans. This has led to the enslavement of humans by other humans. The language of this age is symbolic, and human nature in this age is heroic, characterised by quick tempers.

The Age of Man: In this age the equality of humans is recognised and the role of despotic monarchies diminishes. The language of this age is popular or vernacular. Human nature in this stage has become more civilised and its dominant traits are humility and a sense of social duty.

According to Vico, all peoples have passed through these roles and continue to do so in a cyclical succession in which the end of the third role is linked to the first, so that the problem of an eternal, complete cycle is perpetually renewed. When a nation has completed its human stage, it returns to the stage of the gods and begins a new cycle⁴³. This does not mean, however, that peoples return to their starting point, but rather that their historical course takes on a spiral form, like one circling a mountain to reach its summit. Each cycle, though seemingly similar to the previous one, carries the climber to a new, higher point. Thus, with each transition from one cycle to another, human thought expands. Vico believes that divine providence intended history to follow this trajectory⁴⁴.

Another tripartite periodisation came from the German philosopher Hegel⁴⁵, who described the movement of history in the language of logic, considering historical events as the embodiment and manifestation of the Idea⁴⁶. Reason is the essence of both nature and history, but the reason inherent in nature is an unconscious one, existing in natural phenomena that are unaware of the laws that govern them. Therefore, nature is a world of unconscious thought, and human history only began when humanity separated from this world and became self-aware.

The course of history is thus the expression of the movement of the rational mind in search of self-consciousness, which realises its freedom⁴⁷. Hegel believed that humanity reached this goal through three stages:

The Oriental stage, characterised by despotic rule, in which freedom is the prerogative of a single individual, the ruler or patriarch - representing the stage of childhood.

The Greco-Roman stage, characterised by aristocratic-democratic rule, in which freedom was not yet recognised for all, but only for Greek and Roman citizens - representing the stage of youth.

The Germanic stage, marked by monarchical rule under the Prussian state, representing the stage of maturity, in which individual freedom is achieved. Hegel considered this to be the final stage, as it embodies the spirit of freedom⁴⁸.

It is clear that this periodisation was tainted with a racial bias, glorifying the German people as the true, original people of God⁴⁹. This also reveals Hegel's close relationship with religion, since for him the state is the actualised, conscious embodiment of the divine idea on earth, akin to the church in its divine essence, and the ultimate religion of humanity⁵⁰. This is not surprising given Hegel's theological background and his emphasis in his early writings on the close connection between religion, faith and science, which earned him the title of "philosopher of Christianity"⁵¹.

The influence of the religious perspective on the division of history into stages began to recede in Europe over time, making way for a new conception of history that also produced new terminology.

Fourth/ The secular tripartite periodisation:

Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers rejected the religious periodisation of history, believing that man plays a central role in the civilising movement of the universe. This rejection manifested itself in the establishment of a new tripartite division of history. However, the foundations of this tripartite division first appeared in the 15th century, when Italian humanists distinguished between two epochs: the ancient and the modern. In the second half of the century, the term "**Middle Ages**" emerged as a stage between the two. This tripartite division spread throughout Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries, and is evident in the works of the German philosopher Christoph Keller (1638-1707), who completed three studies bearing the titles of these periods in that order: Ancient History (*Historia Antiqua*, 1685), Medieval History (*Historia Medii Aevi*, 1688) and Modern History (*Historia Nova*, 1702). Some studies have focused on Keller's contribution to historical periodisation, suggesting that he was the originator of the terms 'Middle Ages', 'Modern History' and 'Ancient History'. The truth, however, is that these terms were in use before him, and he became known for them because he was the one who, unlike others, wrote extensively about them⁵².

This periodisation spread slowly and gradually across Europe, facilitated by several factors that influenced philosophers' views of time and historical events. These factors can be summarised as follows

1- The disappearance of the concept of circular time:

The Greeks believed in the concept of circular time, that time, like the planets, moved in a circular motion, causing events to take the form of recurring cycles. This view of time stemmed from their belief that things were finite and self-contained, leading them to see time as a closed circle in which events return to the starting point⁵³. Religion played a crucial role in the disappearance of this circular concept of time, transforming it into a straight line⁵⁴ with a beginning - Adam's

expulsion from Eden - and an end - the Day of Judgement. Between these two points lie “golden” events that cannot be repeated, such as the moment of creation and the incarnation of Christ. The Scriptures affirm that God created the world out of nothing, thus resolving the philosophical dilemma of whether time has a beginning⁵⁵.

2- The spread of rationalism:

This movement arose in the seventeenth century following scientific discoveries that overturned old beliefs. People began to trust and glorify the human mind, believing in its ability to arrive at truth. Faith was no longer seen as a source of knowledge, and progress became synonymous with the advancement of reason⁵⁶.

3 - The emergence of the idea of progress:

The Middle Ages had a negative view of each new period of time, seeing it as a departure from the original state of perfection. In the Renaissance, however, time became a manifestation of human progress, moving from lower to higher levels. The present was seen as a turning point between a previous period symbolising backwardness and a future period symbolising progress and prosperity. Time no longer followed a circular path, but a straight line towards a bright future, as each epoch added something new that developed “the true wealth, happiness and knowledge of the human race”⁵⁷.

By the 18th century, the concept of progress had become a preoccupation of Enlightenment thinkers and philosophers in Europe⁵⁸. They were known for their liberal tendencies, subjecting everything to criticism and scrutiny, rejecting the religious interpretation of history and rejecting the periodisation used by the clergy, which divided history into pagan and Christian era⁵⁹. They argued that some forms of primitive mental activity were destined to disappear to make way for the progress and maturation of reason, and that human beings were capable of achievements that could raise their standard of living and realise a secular, earthly paradise on a par with the heavenly paradises⁶⁰. They claimed that society, like nature, evolves in a regular and continuous manner, progressing from lower to higher stages, so that the previous era is no longer regarded as the golden age or the best of times, as was customary. Historical time is not only continuous and subject to the logic of accumulation, it is also constantly moving forward. Even civilisation moves from the simple to the complex⁶¹.

4 - The scientific revolution in Europe:

Europe witnessed this revolution from the 16th century, thanks to the adoption of the experimental method, which led to the demolition of the old astronomical axiom⁶². However, the powerful effects of this revolution did not become apparent until the following century, when natural phenomena began to be explained by the modern mathematical approach and the laws of modern physics. This development had a direct impact on all the sciences, including the humanities, and the concept of time in historical knowledge was not immune to this influence⁶³. This influence can be traced through the development of the physical sciences, which gave rise to what is known as mechanical philosophy, which believes that nature is not driven by hidden spirits, as previously thought, but is subject to mechanistic motion governed by mathematical laws, one of the principles of which is that a moving body continues in a straight line⁶⁴.

In the context of modern philosophy, the so-called principle of thermodynamics has emerged, which states that thermal phenomena are irreversible. This is explained by the fact that heat transfer occurs in a single direction in time and cannot be reversed - heat flows from a hotter body

to a cooler one, but not vice versa. This physical discovery was considered to be one of the most important factors that led to the demise of the idea of circular time, to be replaced by the concept of successive historical time moving in a single direction without regression⁶⁵. This discovery contributed to the emergence of what is known in the history of European thought as modernity - a new system of values reflecting the spirit of the age that Europe had entered since the 17th century, based on the belief in reason as an effective means of progress, which is a constant and unidirectional process⁶⁶.

In the nineteenth century, Darwin's theory of evolution⁶⁷ contributed to the decline of the idea of circular time by providing a historical conception of nature according to a biological evolution that follows an ascending, non-cyclical trajectory. This meaning was then projected onto time and history, which came to be divided into successive stages that followed a linear path, moving from the lower to the higher⁶⁸.

The conditions and factors mentioned above produced the so-called "rational historian", who adopted the secular tripartite division of history: ancient - medieval - modern. Parallel to these defined historical periods, another tripartite scheme of periodisation continued in the 19th century, for example in the work of Auguste Comte⁶⁹. This scheme did not represent a complete break with the influence of religious thought, although Comte is regarded as the founder of the positivist doctrine, which focused on the world of reality and experience and distanced itself from all metaphysical debates⁷⁰.

This tripartite periodisation is known as the "law of the three stages" and expresses the gradual evolution that humanity has undergone in its attempts to explain the world. The first stage is the theological state, in which myths and legends were used to explain natural phenomena, and there was a belief in supernatural causes and hidden forces underlying things. This is followed by the metaphysical state, where the prevailing belief was that the forces controlling things were innate, latent forces that were their primary cause. Finally, there is the positive state, in which human intelligence developed and its view of the world evolved so that it sought to understand the fixed relationships between phenomena through scientific observation, without seeking the primary causes of things, since the mind is incapable of reaching absolute truths and must be satisfied with the relative⁷¹.

Fifth/The emergence and generalisation of the quadripartite periodisation:

The contemporary period was initially included within the modern period, but was later separated from it, leading to the emergence of the quadripartite periodisation⁷² of history we know today. It seems that the term 'contemporary history' did not appear in all European countries at the same time, but was used at different intervals before becoming widespread across the continent and then the world. The term "contemporary history" appeared as early as 1826 with the French historian Jules Michelet⁷³, who established 1789 as the beginning of this period. It then appeared in an educational journal in 1842, and with this addition the periodisation became quadripartite⁷⁴.

As far as academic curricula were concerned, European educational institutions initially adopted the bipartite periodisation, with England being the pioneer, with the creation of professorships of ancient history at the universities of Oxford in 1622 and Cambridge in 1627, followed by modern history at both universities since 1724. In France, the bipartite periodisation was adopted at the end of the 18th century, and in the 19th century the French curriculum included subjects such as Ancient History, Roman History, Medieval History and Modern History at the secondary level (by decree of 4 September 1821). Contemporary history was later introduced in the final year of

secondary school by the decree of 24 March 1864. Furthermore, the decree of 28 February 1837 stipulated that candidates for the history and geography teaching certificate had to pass an examination in either ancient or Roman history and another in either medieval or modern history⁷⁵.

The dominance of the quadripartite periodisation was gradually established in Europe, with each period becoming an independent specialisation in the study of history. In the 1960s, associations of history professors specialising in specific periods were created in French universities, such as the Association of Historians of the Contemporary Era for Higher Education and Research (AHCESR), founded in 1965, followed by associations of specialists in ancient history in 1966, modern history in 1967 and medieval history in 1969⁷⁶.

On the fringes of the quadripartite periodisation, sub-periodisations emerged, such as the period of Late Antiquity. This term appeared among German historians and, since the 1960s, it has been proposed as a subject of discussion in several conferences and has been of interest to some historians⁷⁷. As for the term “Renaissance”, it is attributed to the French historian “Michelet”, who used it in the lectures he gave at the Collège de France in 1840 and then devoted a part of his book “History of France”, published in 1855, but some do not consider the Renaissance as an independent historical period between the Middle Ages and modern times, The French historian Jacques Le Goff went on to argue that the real transformation that ended the Middle Ages took place in the eighteenth century, a view previously held by Lucien Febvre⁷⁸.

Regarding the landmarks for the beginning and end of historical periods, Christoph Keller, the pioneer of European historical periodisation, had established temporal boundaries and divisions between the three main periods, considering the year 476 AD as the symbolic date of the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the dividing line between the ancient and medieval periods, and the fall of Constantinople in 1453 AD as the dividing line between the medieval and modern periods⁷⁹.

However, there was no consensus among European countries as to when historical periods began and ended. In France, for example, since 1874, secondary school programmes have adopted 1789 as the end of the modern era, rather than 1814 or 1815 as previously, but 1789 is not adopted by other countries because English and American historians consider the Industrial Revolution to be a transitional stage between recent and distant modern history. In the Soviet Union, the year 1917 is used as the dividing line between the modern and contemporary eras. In China, the Modern Era begins with the Opium War of 1839, the year in which the British Empire forced the Qing Dynasty to open up to foreign trade, while the Contemporary Era begins precisely on 4 May 1919, the date of the student uprising against Japanese control of Shandong Province.⁽⁸⁰⁾ In China, the Modern Era begins with the Opium War of 1839, the year in which the British Empire forced the Qing Dynasty to open up to foreign trade, while the Contemporary Era begins precisely on 4 May 1919, the date of the student uprising against Japanese control of Shandong Province.⁽⁸⁰⁾ In China, the Modern Era begins with the Opium War of 1839, the year in which the British Empire forced the Qing Dynasty to open up to foreign trade, while the Contemporary Era begins precisely on 4 May 1919, the date of the student uprising against Japanese control of Shandong Province.⁸ In China, the Modern Era begins with the Opium War of 1839, the year in which the British Empire forced the Qing Dynasty to open up

to foreign trade, while the Contemporary Era begins precisely on 4 May 1919, the date of the student uprising against Japanese control of Shandong Province⁸⁰.

But do these years really represent real boundaries separating two periods? This question leads us to consider the question of rupture and continuity in the process of periodisation. In order to understand this issue, it is helpful to use the concept of the “turning point”, which is one of the most important epistemological concepts produced by the historian, or more precisely, the philosopher of history. It is also a fundamental component of the production of periodisation. It is not a temporal break that separates two eras; thus, a new concept of an era can be established as a period of time confined between two turning points, characterised by features that distinguish it from the previous era, organised around a central general concept and highlighting a certain transformation. The characteristics of the era are derived from dominant events and occurrences.

For example, terms such as the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, Salafism and others are not necessarily given in historical documents, but historians always present them in a methodical, scientific form. This process is difficult and complex due to the nature of periodisation, which is a sophisticated and advanced concept of time. This concept varies from one civilisation to another and is also subject to the historical development experienced by an individual nation, reflecting its level of civilisation⁸¹.

It is also tied to the historical process of the environment to which the historian or philosopher belongs. Nevertheless, the use of Western periodisation has been generalised to different geographical and cultural areas. What justifies this generalisation? In truth, there are no convincing objective justifications for it. Despite claims about the pedagogical nature of the fourfold periodisation and that it is merely a procedural tool used by historians in response to technical and professional needs, its generalisation in fact reflects the idea of Eurocentrism.

This brings us to the delicate issue of the bias of the term towards its context of origin and its creator. The creator of the term places himself at the centre, arranging things around him according to his own vision, which enables him to control reality, to surpass the other, who is incapable of naming things⁸². This explains the attitude of superiority and arrogance that the West has had towards other cultures since the eighteenth century, with Islam as a civilisation being one of the main victims of this attitude⁸³. This is reason enough for the rational mind to reject the universality that Western philosophy imparts to its concepts, because they lack the human dimension that can only be achieved by abandoning the mentality of exclusion and contempt and opening up to the other, away from the logic of power and domination⁸⁴.

To be fair, it must be acknowledged that the Western mind is characterised by its critical nature and desire for renewal and change, and that it genuinely believes in the principle of constant correction as a fundamental condition for progress in all fields of knowledge, including historical knowledge. Many voices within the European intellectual framework have criticised the prevailing periodisation and called for its “four idols” to be dismantled.

Conclusion:

The question of periodisation is a complex one, reflecting the intersection of different branches of human knowledge. It has attracted the interest of thinkers, philosophers, sociologists, literary figures, economists and politicians, each of whom has developed their own periodisation and their own conception of time, guided by its fundamental markers to delineate the beginning and end of cultural, political, intellectual or social phases. Nevertheless, periodisation remains intrinsic to the

process of historiography and the core of historical knowledge, highlighting its importance and potential risks. The following conclusions can be drawn from this study:

- The periodisation of Western civilisation faithfully reflects the history of Western thought as it has evolved over time to its present state.
- Dividing history into phases is a complex task, requiring a specific awareness of time and the events it encompasses.
- There is a distinction between the horizontal view of the timeline adopted by modern historical knowledge and the vertical view found in classical historical knowledge, centred on the idea of eschatological salvation, in which the chronological sequence of events is seen merely as a prelude arranged by divine providence.
- The Western periodisation of history began with a religious perspective, persisted as such for centuries, and in the eighteenth century, with the spread of rationalism, gave way to a secular perspective that regarded human consciousness as the most reliable source of knowledge.
- The division of history into four epochs was the result of the joint efforts of philosophers from different European countries - Italy, Germany, France - reflecting the cumulative nature of Western scientific production.
- The generalisation and adoption of quadripartite periodisation in universities outside Europe expresses a cultural reality that has imposed itself and served as a source of its strength.
- The terminology of periodisation carries with it cultural and intellectual backgrounds that must be taken into account in order to determine our position in relation to others and to be sufficiently aware of ourselves and the responsibilities that await us.

Footnotes:

¹ - The first prehistoric features were discovered by the archaeologists Édouard Lartet (1801-1871) and Henry Christy. See:

- François Bon, *Prehistoric Times: The Crucible of Humanity*, translated by Sonia Mahmoud Nagaa, National Center for Translation, 1st edition, Cairo, 2013, pp. 33, 38.

- Goulven Laurent, "Édouard Lartet and Human Palaeontology", *Bulletin de la Société Préhistorique Française*, vol. 90, n° 1-2, 1993, pp. 22-23.

² - Mohamed El-Sayed Ghallab and Yousry El-Gohary, *Historical Geography: Prehistoric and Dawn Ages*, Anglo-Egyptian Library, 2nd edition, 1975, p. 18.

³ - This period follows the Pleistocene Epoch, which lasted from 1.8 million to 11 thousand years ago and during which *Homo sapiens* appeared. See: Abdel Fattah Mohamed Waheba, *Historical Geography: Between Theory and Application*, Lebanon, Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabia for Printing and Publishing, Beirut, Lebanon, 1980, p. 35.

⁴ - Abdel Razzaq Belakrouz, *Transformations in Contemporary Philosophical Thought: Questions of Concept, Meaning and Communication*, Al-Ikhtilaf Publications, 1st edition, Algeria, 2009, p. 30.

⁵ - A German philosopher (1844-1900) known for his criticism of common morals and values and his attack on Christianity, which he accused of promoting what he called slave morality. Among his most important works are "Man, All Too Human" in two parts (1876 and 1879), "The Gay Science" (1882) and "On the Genealogy of Morality" (1887). His thought passed through three stages: the romantic-artistic stage, the critical-positivist stage, and the mystical stage. See: Fouad Zakaria, *Nietzsche*, Dar Al-Maaref, 2nd edition, Egypt, n.d., pp. 23, 49.

⁶ - Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, translated and introduced by Fathi El-Meskini, Sinatara Publishing House - National Centre for Translation, Tunisia, 2010, p. 8.

⁷ - Abdessalam Benabdelali, *Foundations of Contemporary Philosophical Thought: Transcending Metaphysics*, Dar Toubkal Publishing, 1st edition, Casablanca, Morocco, 1991, p. 32.

⁸ - Ahmed Bouhassoun, "The Concept of Periodization and the History of Literature," in: Mohamed Miftah and Ahmed Bouhassoun (coordination), *The Problem of Periodization: Round Table*, Mohammed V University,

Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Series of Conferences and Seminars, No. 56, Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, 1996, p. 32.

⁹ - 1. Alain Rey (ed.), *Le Grand Robert de la langue française: Alphabetical and Analogical Dictionary of the French Language* by Paul Robert, vol. 5, 2nd edition, Paris, 2001, p. 496.

2. *Alphabetical and Analogical Dictionary of the French Language* by Paul Robert, vol. 5, 2nd edition, Paris, 2001, p. 496.

¹⁰ - See: Mohammed Miftah and Ahmed Bouhssine (coord.), *supra* note 9.

¹¹ - See: Ahmed Abushouk, "The Problem of Periodisation: Arab-Islamic History as a Model", in: Wajih Kawtharani (ed. and coord.), *Arab Historiography and the History of the Arabs: How It Was Written and How It Is Written? Possible Answers*, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 1st edition, Lebanon, 2017, p. 83.

¹² - See: Faisal Aslan, "The Problem of Literary Periodisation: The Ottoman Era as an Example," *Journal of Damascus University*. vol. 30, no. 1+2, 2014, p. 158.

¹³ - See: Mohammed Miftah, "A Proposal for a New Periodisation of Moroccan Culture," in: Mohammed Miftah and Ahmed Bouhssine (coord.), *The Problem of Periodization*, previous reference, pp. 67-68.

¹⁴ - The importance of periodisation lies not only in its relation to historical knowledge, but some researchers have discussed what is called periodical knowledge, which influences the work of the historian by virtue of its effectiveness. See: Khalid Shukravi, "Historical Periodisation in the Maghreb: An Attempt at Comparative Synthesis," in: Fatima Ben Slimane and Hisham Abdul Samad (eds.), *Periodisation in Maghreb Historiography: Proceedings of the Marrakesh and Tunis Conferences*, Maghreb Studies Laboratory, University of Tunis, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Mohammed V University, Agdal - Rabat, 2005, p. 50.

¹⁵ - Anatoli Rakitov, *Historical Knowledge*, translated by Hanna Abboud, Damascus Publishing, 1st edition, Syria, 1989, p. 11.

¹⁶ - Ideology, as defined by the German thinker Jakob Barion, is a set of beliefs and convictions that its adherents believe to be true and correspond to reality. It is therefore seen as a means by which its adherents maintain their status and power and overcome their opponents. See: Jakob Barion, "Ideology and the Truth of Human Action", in: Mohammed Sabila and Abdessalam Benabdelali, *Truth: Selected Philosophical Papers*, vol. 4, Dar Toubkal Publishing, 2nd edition, Casablanca, Morocco, 2005, p. 96.

¹⁷ - Pragmatics is a linguistic approach that deals with the relationship between linguistic activity and its users, and with the different contexts in which discourse is produced. It emerged in America in the 1950s as a philosophical trend initiated by John Dewey and Richard Rorty and developed by John Austin and John Searle. Pragmatics occupies an important place in the humanities, providing new research tools for analysing linguistic phenomena. See: Anne Reboul and Jacques Moeschler, *Pragmatics: A New Science in Communication*, translated by Saif Al-Din Dagfus and Mohammed Al-Shaybani, Arab Organisation for Translation, 1st edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 2003, pp. 28-29.

¹⁸ - Firas al-Sawah, *The Religion of Man: An Inquiry into the Nature of Religion and the Origin of Religious Motivation*, Alaa al-Din Publishing and Distribution House, vol. 4, Damascus, 2002, p. 19.

¹⁹ - Herodotus, *The History*, translated by Abdul Hamid al-Abbadi, Printing Press of the Compilation, Translation and Publishing Committee, Cairo, 1937, pp. 16, 38-39.

²⁰ - The books of the Old Testament are divided into three types: the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings (Ketuvim). The Book of Daniel belongs to the third type, also named after its author. It is thought to have been written in the sixth century BC and contains a collection of stories and visions. See: Zalman Shazar, *A History of Old Testament Criticism*, translated by Ahmed Mahmoud Hawidi, Supreme Council of Culture, Cairo, 2000, p. 3; Hamdi Qamar al-Dawla Sayyid Khattab, *Revolutions in the Books of the Old Testament: Between Truth and Claim*, Master's thesis submitted to obtain a degree in the Principles of Religion, Al-Azhar University, Faculty of Religious Fundamentals, 1437 AH - 2016 AD, pp. 25, 27; Samuel Youssef Khalil, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Dar al-Thaqafa, Cairo, 2nd edition, 1993, p. 326.

²¹ - The Median Kingdom was founded in the seventh century BC in what is now north-western Iran. See: *The Civilisation of the Medes*, the second chapter of the book: Al-Sabai Mohammed Al-Sabai et al, *History of Ancient Iran*, National Center for Translation, vol. 1, Cairo, Egypt, 2013, p. 139.

²² - Cf: Samuel Youssef, previous reference, pp. 336-337.

²³ - Born in the late 4th century AD, he wrote a book on world history at the behest of Augustine in order to defend Christianity from the ruin inflicted on the Roman Empire by the Western Goths in 410 AD, arguing that the misfortunes experienced by humanity throughout its history were due to the commission of original sin and were therefore a punishment from God. His book was widely read throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance. It was translated into Arabic from the 4th century AH / 10th century AD, during the reign of the

Abbasid Caliph al-Mustansir Billah, and was known among Arabs as “Hrushyush”. See: Orosius, *The History of the World*, edited and introduced by Abdel Rahman Badoi, Arab Institute for Studies and Publishing, vol. 1, Beirut, Lebanon, 1982, pp. 5-10.

²⁴ - Saint Augustine (354-430 AD) was born in Tagaste (modern Souk Ahras), and his family name, “Aurelius”, reflects the Roman politics of civil life. His father, Patricius, and mother, Monica, were Numidians. He received his initial education in Latin in his home town and then moved to Carthage to study rhetoric, where he became a professor. In Milan he embraced Christianity. He was ordained a priest in Hippo (Annaba) in 391 AD. He was interested in Roman history and supported Roman sovereignty over the Mediterranean. He left several famous works, including *The City of God*. See: Serge Lancel, *Between Africa and Rome*:

Augustine and His Path to Universality, Proceedings of the First International Symposium, Saint Augustine, the Algerian Philosopher Saint, in collaboration with the University of Fribourg, Algeria-Annaba, 1-7 April 2001, vol. 1, pp. 65-71.

²⁵ - Saint Augustine, *City of God*, Volume III, translated into Arabic by Bishop John El Helou, Dar Al-Machreq, 2nd edition, Beirut, 2007, Volume 3, p. 414.

²⁶ - Soheil Zakar (edited and introduced), *The Torah: An Arabic Translation Over a Thousand Years Old*, Qutaiba Printing, Publishing and Distribution House, 1st edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 1428 AH - 2007 AD, p. 105; The subject of the creation of the universe in six days is mentioned in the Qur’an on seven occasions, accompanied by a description of the divine attributes befitting His perfection and greatness. In one of these instances, there is a direct response to the distortion and mixing of truth and falsehood found in the Torah. It is mentioned in Surah Qaf: “And We certainly created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six days, and no weariness touched Us. (Quran 50:38)

²⁷ - Childhood, adolescence, youth, maturity, old age. See: Jacques Le Goff, *Should History Really Be Divided into Slices*, translated by El Hadi Timoumi, Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, 1st edition, Manama, Bahrain, 2018, p. 18.

²⁸ - Qasim Abdul Qasim, *The Civilisational Vision of History: A Reading in Arab Historical Heritage*, Dar Al-Maaref, 2nd edition, Cairo, n.d., p. 34.

²⁹ - Heraclitus and Aristotle denied it, while Plato affirmed it, but the debate continued between Candide, who said that time was finite, and Ibn Sina, who believed that time had no beginning and was therefore infinite. See: Colin Wilson and John Grant (Editors), *The Idea of Time Across History*, translated by Fouad Kamel, World of Knowledge Series No. 159, National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters - Kuwait, 1992, pp. 16-17, 32-33.

³⁰ - Abdul Hamid Haniyya, *On Historical Compilation*, Astor Magazine for Historical Studies, Issue 3, Arab Center for Research and Political Studies, January 2016, p. 225.

³¹ - Ahmed Mahmoud Sabhi, *On the Philosophy of History*, University Culture Foundation, Alexandria, Egypt, 1975, pp. 166-167.

³² - Saint Augustine, previous reference, p. 7.

³³ - Orosius, cited above, pp. 56, 168.

³⁴ - Mustafa al-Nashar, *Philosophy of History*, vol. 1, Hope Printing and Publishing Company, 2004, p. 79.

³⁵ - Jean-Baptiste Bossuet (1627-1704) spent most of his life during the reign of Louis XIV, known as the Sun King, working as the crown prince’s tutor and palace adviser. He devoted his efforts to demonstrating the eternal truth of Christianity as represented in Catholic doctrine and opposed any scientific, philosophical, literary or religious endeavour. Ordained a priest in 1652, he spread his reputation in Paris as a religious preacher who defended the authority of the Church. He attacked Protestantism for its rebellion against the Church. He wrote several books, including “*A Treatise on the Knowledge of God*” and “*History of Protestant Sects*”. See: Ahmed Mahmoud Sabhi, previous reference, p. 172; Hashem Saleh, *Introduction to European Enlightenment*, Dar Al-Tali’a for Printing and Publishing, 1st edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 2005, pp. 177-178.

³⁶ - Ahmed Mahmoud Sabhi, cited above, p. 172.

³⁷ - Mustafa al-Nashar, *supra*, p. 78.

³⁸ - Abdallah Laroui, *The Concept of History*, Vol. 1: Concepts and Schools, Arab Cultural Centre, 4th edition, 2005, p. 273.

³⁹ - *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ - Experimental scientists likened nature to a holy book because it was governed by divine law. This belief was translated by the Englishman Francis Bacon (d. 1626), who spoke of the “*Torah of nature*”; by the Italian philosopher and physicist Galileo (d. 1642), who spoke of the “*glorious book of nature*”, which he believed was

written in the language of mathematics; and by the physicist John Ray (d. 1705), who wrote a book in 1691 entitled *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation**. This close relationship between science and faith continued into the 19th century. See: Yumna Tarif al-Khouli, *The Problem of Human Sciences: Its Legislation and Possible Solutions*, New Book Printing and Publishing, 8th edition, Cairo, Egypt, 2018, pp. 179-180.

⁴¹- Italian philosopher and sociologist (1668-1744), born in Naples, where he taught rhetoric at the University and was a committed Catholic. He is one of the most important philosophers of history. He shared with Descartes (d. 1650) the philosophical principle that man can only know well what he himself has created, and considered this to be the supreme subject of knowledge. See: Faisal Abbas, *The Philosophical Encyclopaedia: Modern Philosophy of the Renaissance Era*, Middle East Cultural Center, 1st edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 2011, vol. 5, pp. 193-194.

⁴²- Atiyat Muhammad Abu Saud, *The Philosophy of History according to Vico*, Hindawi Foundation, United Kingdom, 2021, pp. 39, 48.

⁴³- Vico borrowed this division and its details from Egyptian civilisation, as he himself stated in the 28th axiom of his book *The New Science*. See: Sati' al-Husri, *Studies on Ibn Khaldun's Prolegomena*, Beirut, Lebanon, 1967, pp. 182-183; Atiyat Muhammad Abu Saud, previous reference, p. 48.

⁴⁴- Ahmed Mahmoud Sabhi, cited above, pp. 160, 163.

⁴⁵- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was a German philosopher of Austrian origin. He studied philosophy and theology at the Tübingen Seminary between 1787 and 1793, but did not work as a clergyman. He studied the life of Christ scientifically, relying solely on reason and excluding any miracles associated with it. He was interested in the philosophy of history and political studies. His works include: *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, and *Philosophy of Mind*. See: Abdel Rahman Badawi, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Arab Institution for Studies and Publishing, 1st edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 1984, pp. 570-576.

⁴⁶- Abdel Fattah al-Didi, **The Philosophy of Hegel**, Anglo-Egyptian Library, Cairo, 1970, p. 178.

⁴⁷- Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History, Reason in History, Volume I*, translated by Imam Abdel Fattah Imam, Dar al-Tanweer for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, 3rd edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 2007, pp. 41-43.

⁴⁸- Cf: Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History, Volume 1, Reason in History*, translated by Imam Abdel Fattah, Dar al-Tanweer for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, 3rd edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 2007, pp. 189-190; Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History, The Eastern World, Volume 2*, translated by Imam Abdel Fattah, Dar al-Tanweer for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, 3rd edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 2007, pp. 13, 16; Khaled Fouad Tahtah, *In the Philosophy of History*, Al-Ikhtilaf Publications, 1st edition, Algeria, 2009, p. 54.

⁴⁹- Such discourses spread in Germany at the beginning of the 19th century, expressed by many philosophers and poets, such as Friedrich von Schiller with his poem "German Greatness" and Fichte in his "Addresses to the German Nation", which inaugurated the new phase of thinking in Germany based on nationalism. See: Jean Edward Spengler, *German Thought*, translated by Taysir Sheikh Al-Ard, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 1st edition, Baghdad, Iraq, p. 90.

⁵⁰- Ibid, pp. 109, 111.

⁵¹- These include *The Popular Religion* (1793), *The Life of Jesus and the State of the Christian Religion* (1795), *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate** (1799). See: Hegel, *Reason in History*, previous source, pp. 22-23; René Séro, *Hegel and Hegelianism*, translated by Adonis Al-Akra, Dar Al-Taliah for Printing and Publishing, 1st edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 1993, pp. 44, 48.

⁵²- Jean Le Bihan and Florian Mazel, "La périodisation canonique de l'histoire, une exception française ?", *Revue Historique*, no. 680, 2016, p. 786.

⁵³- Abdel Rahman Badawi, *Existential Time*, Egyptian Renaissance Library, Cairo, Egypt, 1945, p. 83.

⁵⁴- It is noteworthy that those who claimed that history followed a linear path and belonged to the historicist movement are divided into two groups. One group adopted the idea of gradual progress from a primitive origin towards a perfect earthly end, as believed in positivist philosophy. The other group adopted the idea of regressive progress, starting from a transcendent model and moving towards an eschatological future. See: Mohammed Arkoun, *Islamic Thought: A Scientific Reading*, translated by Hashim Saleh, National Cultural Centre, 2nd edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 1996, p. 117.

⁵⁵- Heraclitus and Aristotle denied that it had a beginning, while Plato affirmed it. The debate continued in Islamic thought between Al-Kindi and Ibn Sina. See: Mona Tarif Al-Khouli, *Time in Philosophy and Science*, Egyptian General Book Organisation, Egypt, 1999, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁶- Faisal Abbas, previous reference, pp. 218-220.

⁵⁷- This is what the English historian Edward Gibbon called the "happy conclusion". See: Edward Carr, *What is History?* translated by Riham Abdul Maboud, Alam Al-Adab for Translation and Publishing, 1st edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 2018, p. 104.

⁵⁸- Notable figures of this school include: from France, Voltaire (d. 1778), author of *A Treatise on Tolerance*, which traces human history from barbarism to civilisation; Condorcet (d. 1794), Montesquieu (d. 1755), author of *The Spirit of the Laws*, Gustave Mounod, and Turgot (d. 1781), who believed that progress accelerates in proportion to the complexity of civilisation; and from Britain, Edward Gibbon (d. 1794). See: Raafat Ghoneimi Sheikh, *Philosophy of History*, Dar Al-Thaqafa Publishing and Distribution, Cairo, Egypt, n.d., pp. 97-98.

⁵⁹- See: Al-Hadi Al-Taimoumi, *Modern Historical Schools*, Dar Al-Tanweer for Printing and Publishing, 1st edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 2013, p. 62.

⁶⁰- Raafat Ghoneimi Sheikh, cited above, pp. 95-96.

⁶¹- Salem Yafout, *Historical Time*, Dar Al-Taliah for Printing and Publishing, Beirut, 1st edition, 1991, pp. 16-17.

⁶²- See: Friedler Weiner, *Copernicus, Darwin and Freud: Revolutions in the History and Philosophy of Science*, translated by Ahmed Shaki, Hindawi Foundation, United Kingdom, 2019, pp. 41, 43.

⁶³- Historically, the development of methodology and knowledge in the humanities has been influenced by advances in physics. See: Salah Qanswa, *Objectivity in the Humanities: A Critical Review of Research Methods*, Dar Al-Tanweer for Printing and Publishing, Beirut, Lebanon, 2007, pp. 44-46.

⁶⁴- Scientists such as astronomers, physicists and mathematicians played an important role in the development of this philosophy and the mathematisation of nature. Foremost among them were the German Johannes Kepler (d. 1630), the Italian Galileo Galilei (d. 1642), the French René Descartes (d. 1650), and the British Isaac Newton (d. 1727). See: Salem Yafout, *Epistemology of Modern Science*, Dar Toubkal Publishing, 2nd edition, Casablanca, Morocco, 2008, pp. 64-69.

⁶⁵- Yumna Tarif Al-Khouli, previous reference, p. 45.

⁶⁶- Modernity is the intellectual term for the modern historical era in Europe. Its pioneers included Descartes, Immanuel Kant (d. 1804) and Friedrich Hegel (d. 1831). See: Mohammed Sabila and Abdessalam Ben Abdelali, *Modernity, Philosophical Notebooks, Selected Texts 6*, Dar Toubkal Publishing, 3rd edition, Casablanca, Morocco, 2008, pp. 22, 32, 80; Ridwan Joudat Ziyada, *The Echo of Modernity: Postmodernism in Its Coming Time*, Arab Cultural Centre, 1st edition, Casablanca, Morocco, 2003, p. 33.

⁶⁷- The author of the theory is the naturalist Charles Darwin (d. 1882), who published his book *The Origin of Species* in 1859, which caused a great stir at the time. He based his theory on certain principles, such as the idea of natural selection. See: Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, translated by Magdi Mahmoud, Supreme Council of Culture, Cairo, 2004, p. 22.

⁶⁸- See: Zouheir Toufik, *Historicism and the Historian and Philosopher*, 5 March 2016, [madaratthakafia.com](http://www.madaratthakafia.com).

⁶⁹- Auguste Comte (1798-1857) believed in the idea of human religion. He met Saint-Simon in 1817 and was influenced by his ideas. Comte gave lectures in his home (1826) and published "*Cours de Philosophie Positive*" (1829). He divided sociology into (statica), which focused on stability, and (dynamica), which focused on development. He laid the foundations of modern sociology by classifying sciences according to their distance from theological thought. See: Lévy-Bruhl, *The Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, translated by Mahmoud Qassem, Anglo-Egyptian Library, Cairo, n.d., pp. xx-xx.

⁷⁰- This paradox may be resolved if we know that Comte held religion and its men in high esteem and defended Christianity. His positivist doctrine has been described as Catholicism without Christian dogma. See: Taher Moulif, *The Positivist Mind of Auguste Comte*, Master's thesis in Philosophy, supervised by Al-Zawawi Bagoura, University of Mentouri, Constantine, Algeria, 2007-2008, p. 137.

⁷¹- Gaston Bouthoul: *Histoire de la sociologie*, Presses Universitaire de France, Paris, 1956, pp. 57-58.

⁷²- The term canon means model in Latin and rule in Greek. In ecclesiastical terms, it refers to the hierarchical ranks of the priesthood (pope, bishop, archbishop, etc.) and to the set of divinely inspired books. In Western religious terminology, the Christian canon refers to the Gospel and the Jewish canon to the Torah. See: Alain Rey, T.1, op. cit. p. 1884.

⁷³- French historian (1798-1874). See: [histoire-pour-tous.fr, Jules Michelet, père de l'histoire de France, 16 May 2023](http://www.histoire-pour-tous.fr).

⁷⁴- The references currently available do not explicitly mention when and in which European country the term "contemporary history" first appeared. However, it is likely that it was used in the first half of the 19th century, with the French historian Michelet being one of the first to use it. See: Jean Le Bihan, Florian Mazel, op.cit., pp. 785-786.

⁷⁵- Jean Leduc, "La construction historique des cadres de la périodisation", *Atala. Cultures et science humaines*, Rennes, France, no. 17, 2014, pp. 38-40.

⁷⁶- *Idem*, p. 41.

⁷⁷- The Spoleto Conference (Italy) in 1961, the Chantilly Conference in 1972 and the Lyon Conference in 1986 (France) were important milestones in this period. Historians such as the American Peter Brown, author of *The World of Late Antiquity* (New York, 1971), and the Frenchman Henri-Irénée Marrou, author of *Décadence romaine ou Antiquité tardive?* (Paris, 1977), contributed to this field. Journals such as *La Revue de l'Antiquité tardive* (1995) and *La Revue des Etudes Tardo-Antiques* (2011) were created. René Martin defined Late Antiquity as the period from the beginning of the third century to the end of the sixth century. *Idem*, pp. 41-43.

⁷⁸- *Idem*, p. 42.

⁷⁹- Ahmed Abu Al-Shouk: previous reference, p. 86.

⁸⁰- Jean Leduc, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁸¹- Colin Wilson, cited above, p. 6.

⁸²- Abdelrazak Belakrouz: *Transformations of Contemporary Philosophical Thought*, previous reference, p. 37.

⁸³- Mohammed Arkoun: *From Faicel Al-Tafreeka to Fasl Al-Maqal. Where is Contemporary Islamic Thought*, translated and annotated by Hashem Saleh, Dar Al-Saqi, 2nd edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 1995, p. 80.

⁸⁴- In fact, the West is not solely responsible for this exclusion. The elites of other cultures, especially Islamic ones, also bear part of the responsibility. The backwardness of their people is not always due to external causes, but also and above all to internal ones. They are therefore called upon to undertake significant and courageous reviews, which will certainly not be smooth, quiet or consensual, but which remain necessary.