

The Reality of Modernity and Its Impact on Contemporary Arab Thought

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Received: 01/2024

Published: 06/2024

Abstract:

Modernity is not just a call or a message that we preach. Rather, it is a set of successive and accumulated transformations that work to develop society through the development of its economy, ways of thinking, ways of living and ways of expression. Thus, it is not limited to the mastery of the technological application of science or the possession of material products for a society to become modern, because this feature may be found even in societies described as backward, and this type of modernity is superficial and does not rise to the level of true modernity, which includes the intellectual and cultural aspect and is not limited to the material aspect, as modernity has features of individuality, rationality and relativism and levels of political, economic, social, moral and intellectual levels.

Keywords: Modernity, Arab Thought, Contemporary, Characteristics of Modernity.

Introduction:

The researcher on the subject of modernity faces many difficulties and issues that make his research an adventure, making it difficult for him to come up with ready-made solutions and final positions, given that modernity is a concept subject to multiple perspectives and divergent approaches, which may be historical, as achievements associated with a distinct and specific era ontologically, or may be structural, as it is a set of values and concepts that have shaped Western civilization 'as a pattern of life and civilization that embodies the level of society's consciousness.¹ This is what makes us in this place try to briefly monitor the concept of modernity in a way that serves the goal and purpose and not to present an integrated theoretical treatment of the modernity thesis, or a general historical monitoring of the development of the concept, because that exceeds the limits of the framework of this article and its methodological requirements.

On the one hand, and on the other hand, although modernity has become one of the most important and widespread terms among philosophers and thinkers, many scholars complain about the ambiguity of its meaning, its multiplicity and the indeterminacy of its meanings and its entry 'among the concepts that are difficult to define and define, rejecting every model, and classified as incapable and unable to grasp a ready-made and complete concept of it.² 'It is "a comprehensive civilizational concept that encompasses all levels of human existence, including technical modernity, economic modernity, political, administrative, social, cultural, philosophical, etc."³

In order to clarify the initial basic concepts of modernity in its historical and philosophical context and to identify the issues involved, we try to answer these two questions: What is meant by modernity? What are its main characteristics and levels?

The concept of "Modernity"

The Arabic word for "modernity" has its etymological roots in the trilateral root [ح . د . ث], which signifies the occurrence of an event, leading to its novelty and modernity. "Muḥdath" is the one who brings forth something new, thus being described as innovative and modern.⁴ In Arabic, "ḥadīth" is the antithesis of "qadīm" (old) and synonymous with "jadīd" (new).⁵ This suggests that in Arabic, modernity implies both antiquity and renewal. It denotes an additional proposition, signifying something that has preceded it yet encompasses the passage of time within its conceptual framework. Arabic carries the concept of modernity as synonymous with novelty ("nouveau") without providing us with the full conceptual scope of the term itself.⁶

In French, the adjective "moderne" (modern) has a longer historical lineage than the term "modernité" (modernity). The word "moderne" finds its Latin counterpart in "modernus."⁷ The term "modern" in its Latin form "modernus" was first used in the late 5th century to distinguish the Christian present from the pagan Roman past officially. "Modern" expresses an awareness of an era that connects to the past and is the result of transitioning from the old to the new, symbolizing a moment of departure from the Roman past and an affiliation with the Christian realm representing the new.⁸

The term "modernité" began to be extensively used from the 10th century in philosophical or religious debates, either implicitly to denote openness and intellectual freedom or colloquially to signify lightness and a penchant for change for the sake of change.⁹ However, the semantic meaning of the term "modernité" (modernity) only became defined and crystallized in the 19th century. According to Habermas, even though "modernité" (modernity), as a

noun and a contradictory pair of terms (ancient/modern), was used in a temporal sense in the late ancient period, the adjective "moderne" (modern) did not take on a nominal form in modern European languages until a much later time, almost in the mid-19th century.¹⁰

Some scholars define it as the work of Charles Baudelaire (1821-1861), where the spirit and system of aesthetic modernism took specific and clear lines in his works, and then modernism appeared in various creative movements. Baudelaire believes: 'Modernism is the presence of the eternal in the fleeting moment, in what is temporary. It is the beauty in the fad (fashion) that changes every season.'¹¹ If Baudelaire's connotation is specific to art and literature, what is the philosophical concept of modernity?

The multiplicity of concepts by which modernity is defined, and the strong divergence between different thinkers and philosophers on the nature and components of modernity, makes it difficult to reach a precise and accurate definition of its concept. It is one of the concepts that are difficult to define and identify, rejecting all modelling and categorized as undefinable and incapable of being captured by a ready-made concept.¹² This is why we try to rely on the basic concepts and general features in dealing with the concept and reaching a conclusion and extracting the terminological meanings it has taken, which were the subject of consensus among the various streams of modernity that included all areas of life, thought, doctrine, culture, literature, art, behavior and values. We will rely on examples of definitions and concepts, which we take as a starting point to reach the goal, which is to take a general and comprehensive conceptualization that embodies the meanings of modernity as it has been used and employed.

Modernity as defined by the French sociologist and philosopher **Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007)** in its simplest sense is 'not a sociological concept, not a political concept, not a historical concept, but a civilizational pattern ... as opposed to the world of tradition'.¹³

Susantha Goonatilake defined it as 'a racial-centred view arising from a certain period of history and from a certain geographical region.'¹⁴

On the other hand, Mohammed Arkoun, in differentiating between modernization and modernity, argues that modernity is 'a position of the soul before the problem of knowledge, it is a position of the soul before all the methods used by the mind to reach a concrete knowledge of reality.'¹⁵

These concepts and definitions of modernity can be summarized as follows:

The holistic character of modernity as a pattern of civilization that embodies various forms of progress in various fields and at all levels, 'characterized by a

radical transformation at all levels; in knowledge, in the perception of nature, and in the meaning of history. It is a total intellectual structure.'¹⁶ It expresses a transition from one state of thought to another in which the various dimensions of human life overlapped, leading to successive revolutions that led to a radical change that affected all patterns of human life.

Modernity opposes and contradicts tradition, as it 'represents the new awareness of life's changes, civilizational developments, breaking free from the shackles of the past, and emancipation from the domination of ancestors.'¹⁷

The age of modernity is the age in which the balance between the past and the future is disrupted; it is the age that lives in the signifier of the future and opens up to the new that is coming. This is achieved by achieving a radical break with heritage and tradition.'¹⁸ Modernity is linked to European history in its origins and development, 'it is a special Western concept that we do not find in any other civilization.'¹⁹

Modernity is the pattern of civilization and the associated consciousness that Western societies have reached as a result of successive developments on all levels, and the consciousness that accompanied this development, as some consider that 'Western Europe is the birthplace of European modernity, which gradually acquired a cosmopolitan dimension and thus took the form of a referential modernity.'²⁰

The critical nature of modernity is a process of constant transgression and separation, 'signalling a new era, an era of unlimited progress and gradual emancipation of man from the gains of heritage and tradition.'²¹ If the principle of modernity is constant rupture, it is an 'unfinished project' in the words of Jürgen Habermas. Mohammed Arkoun defines it as 'the revitalisation of history, it means movement, explosion and departure.'²² In this sense, modernity 'is first and foremost an act of separation, it is a departure and a rupture, it is not so much a departure from the other as it is a departure from the self, it is constantly denying itself and separating from it.'²³ This is what makes it impossible to define a definitive concept of modernity as long as its process remains unfinished and unfinished. This is what Abdallah Laroui expressed in his book (*Islam et modernité*) in his approach to modernity, which he summarises as 'If modernity is precisely an endless process, how can it be defined?'²⁴ Alain Tauran, in his book *Critique of Modernity*, in which he discusses the crisis of modernity and the legitimacy of its end and the establishment of what has been termed 'postmodernism', calls for 'a new definition of modernity and a new interpretation of its history'.²⁵ From the above, we can say that modernity 'is not just a call or a message that we preach, nor is it just a review of what modern thought has achieved. It is

according to what we think and make.’²⁶ This is what makes ‘any definition of it falls behind it or before it or constitutes a coup against it ... It is an unfinished experiment and a project that is always under construction.’²⁷

Characteristics of modernity:

By dealing with the concept of modernity, and identifying the meanings it contains, it is possible to extract some of the basic philosophical components and features that characterised its path and represented constants in the pattern of its formation, as the structural perception of modernity informs us of the initial and basic concepts that formed the dimensions on which it was founded and the concepts that represented the ground for its growth, and can be summarised as follows:

A- Subjectivity or individuality: Subjectivity is the first of the concepts that represented the ground for the project of Western modernity, but what is meant by subjectivity?

The answer can be found in the philosophies that inaugurated the modern era, in which the subjective vision triumphed. Religious life, the state, society, science, ethics and art are transformed into manifestations of the principle of subjectivity, and its structure as such is realised in philosophy as an abstract self in the phrase ‘I think, therefore I exist’ in Descartes’ *Cogito Ergo Sum*, and in Kant's form of an image of absolute self-consciousness.’²⁸

Modernity is associated with the principle of subjectivity, which is a multifaceted concept. It constitutes the content of what has been called humanism, and therefore it means the centrality and reference of the human self, its effectiveness, freedom, transparency, and rationality.’²⁹ This principle was imposed by major historical events in Europe, such as the Reformation, an anti-Catholic movement historically associated with the German religious reformer Martin Luther, which raised the value of an individual's inner personal faith above the external manifestations of religion, and reduced the value of the church and its interference in personal life.

The Enlightenment movement, which refers to an era that established new rules of knowledge based on the belief in reason and the call to think and judge things subjectively, says the German philosopher ‘Emmanuel Kant in his answer to the question “What is the Enlightenment?” It is the emergence of man from his own deficiency for which he himself is responsible, a deficiency that means his inability to use his mind without the supervision of others, a deficiency for which he himself is responsible because its cause lies not in a defect in the mind, but in the lack of a courageous decision to use it without the supervision of others. Dare to use your own mind: this is the slogan of the

Enlightenment.³⁰ The modern Kantian mind freed the self from any external authority and gave it the ability to think for itself.

The French Revolution; the founder of the democratic state based on the constitution, human rights and secularism.

B. Rationality: The idea of modernity is closely linked to the idea of rationality. The idea of modernity is closely linked to the idea of rationality, and the abandonment of one idea rejects the other.³¹ Modernity is based on the effectiveness of reason in the production of knowledge, and the belief in its ability to establish the truth and discover laws that allow man to control nature and himself as well. On the other hand, the rejection of knowledge based on inherited religious and traditional beliefs as it conflicts with the rules and methods of modern science founded by reason, as the Enlightenment philosophy as one of the tributaries of modernity 'argues that man can control the entire universe through reason and rejects judgments, ideas and even values that are not consistent with the judgment of reason. It also argues that rational scientific thinking is the only way to unlimited progress.'³² This orientation was reflected and appeared in various discourses and different types of thinking and resulted in:

The rationalization of scientific thought: It began with the epistemological revolution of the classical era with Galilei, Descartes, Leibniz and Newton³³, in which scientific thought was separated from religious, ideological and political thinking and adopted reason and the empirical method as a reference for any thinking that seeks scientificity, and mathematics and mathematical thinking emerged as a model for science, thus breaking with the ways of thinking that prevailed in the Middle Ages, and developing 'new ways and methods of knowledge based on the gradual transition from speculative to technical knowledge'³⁴ that characterized the modern era as the age of technology.

The rationalization of political discourse: 'It means dealing with the political phenomenon as an independent subject in its own right.'³⁵ The natural consequence of this is the de-sanctification of the political sphere as a worldly sphere of conflict over goods and power.' This is embodied in the modern secular and democratic state³⁶, as envisioned by the philosophers of the social contract, and represented by the values of freedom, equality, and human rights, as well as by the modern secular and democratic state.

The rationalization of religious discourse was manifested in the re-reading of religious texts, their rational understanding and interpretation through the data of contemporary science, the separation of religious affairs from state

affairs, and the predominance of the worldly orientation in calling people to the path of science and reason that can lead to the establishment of a form of paradise on earth.³⁷

The rationalization of historical thought, through which the classical understanding of history based on the religious view, which makes the becoming of history a predetermined and predestined matter beyond human will, has been overcome to another view based on 'the reasonableness of the historical event that is determined by the stages of its growth and development, and history has become an inevitable path governed, determined and explained by concrete factors such as the climate and economic needs of people, or their wars and struggles for gain, such as ethnic, tribal, sectarian or other conflicts. In other words, historical teleology began to disappear³⁸ and was replaced by the determinism of internal causes and reasons related to the historical event itself.

C - Nihilism or the absence of meaning:

This characteristic is summed up in the absence of absolutes and the replacement of relativism in everything, which is the result of the adoption of subjectivity as a criterion for judgment and the unlimited transgression and separation characteristic of modernity 'by conducting a critique of the highest values in civilization, which leads to the disappearance of the concept of truth and the absence of all foundations for believing in foundations.'³⁹ Truth has become relative and values have become a private point of view based on the judgments made by the self as a result of the absence of absolute standards after separation from the Christian community, and because modernity has its source in separation 'it is faithful to its source, it is a continuous break and permanent separation from the self,⁴⁰ and this represents the revolutionary and dynamic character that manifested itself in the philosophies of modernity, especially by Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud.

The philosophy of modernity is based on a subjective vision of existence that reflects a break with the traditional vision based on metaphysics and establishes a worldly orientation, on rationalism as a trend of knowledge, of which Descartes is the first founder, and on nihilism or the absence of meaning in the field of values, which is reflected in the critical trend that represents a break with absolutes. These characteristics were reflected in two levels of modernity, so what is the nature and content of these levels?

Modernity emerged and developed through gradual transformations that eliminated the old traditional structures and ideas, broke with them, and established a new perception of the world that is different and completely

transcends the previous perceptions. It was a comprehensive civilizational concept that encompassed all levels of human existence, politically, economically and socially. To talk about the achievements of modernity, we are looking for the changes that occurred in these levels and patterns. What were these changes manifested?

Political modernity: It is mainly related to the separation between the social public sphere and personal private life and the emergence of the secular democratic state, in which the political and religious spheres are distinguished⁴¹, and the sovereignty of the people through the exercise of their freedom within the state. Modernity within Europe is a free individual whose reference point is reason, a society of mutual interests between free individuals, and a state of positive law that represents the realization of absolute reason.⁴² This is the essence of secularism, which sought to rationalize political affairs. Habermas's modernity project, from the Age of Enlightenment to the present, is linked to the question of the institutional organization of society and the position of the modern state in the process of regulation and rationalization.⁴³

Economic modernity: The emergence of private property, the independence of the economic institution, the division of labour, as well as the laws of the market, as well as the vast movement of inventions and scientific discoveries,⁴⁴ which led to the emergence of tools, means and technical devices that had a great impact on the expansion and increase of production and this is a reflection of the industrial revolution in Europe, which created new patterns and methods in the management of production systems based on capitalization and rationalization as two main pillars of the European modernity project.⁴⁵ Anthony Giddens presents a highly integrated picture of modernity as a holistic effort of production and supervision whose four main dimensions are industrialism, capitalism, the industrialization of war, and the control of all aspects of social life.⁴⁶

Social and ethical modernity: This is manifested in the set of values and social relations that emerged as a reflection of the dynamic nature of modernity. 'If the traditional society is a closed society governed by strict morals, a single belief system and a single value system,⁴⁷ the modern society is dominated by a set of open values based on pluralism, changeability, relativism and freedom. It is a society more concerned with the future than with the past and a society that values materialism over honesty and intentionality.' It is a society where positivist values prevail over religious values, where the worldly orientation is

based on legal responsibility rather than moral responsibility, and where the individual is elevated at the expense of the group.

Intellectual modernity: ‘Intellectual modernity is the soul of all these modernizations.’ Intellectual modernity is a reflection of all previous levels of modernity. Intellectual modernity is the radical transformations that occurred in the various concepts of the universe, time, space, movement, man, society, history, psychology and the state based on the development of various sciences, especially the social and psychological sciences. Mohammed Sibila summarizes the characteristics and features of intellectual modernity in his statement: ‘We can summarize the features of intellectual modernity in relation to four elements that include knowledge, man, the world and history’.⁴⁸

In knowledge, there has been a transition from philosophical speculative thought to scientific and technical thought. ‘Modernity is the resort to science and quantification in the knowledge of reality, and the consideration of the exact and human sciences as means of expressing this reality.’⁴⁹

As for the human being, with modernity, the view of him shifted from being a spiritual, tribally determined essence to seeing him as an actor with natural motives, desire and will, the idea of modernity in its most ambitious form was to emphasize that man is what he does.’⁵⁰ The world’s perspective has fundamentally shifted from viewing its essential forms to perceiving it through the lens of mechanical and mathematical relationships.⁵¹

In history, there has been a shift in the understanding of history from a fatalistic teleology to a historicist view that sees history as the process of the human being as a rational, free and creative being.⁵²

Based on the above, modernity is not just a call or a message to be preached. Rather, it is a set of profound transformations at the level of thinking and consciousness,⁵³ sequential and cumulative, that work to develop society by developing its economy, ways of thinking, and ways of living and expressing, and therefore it is wrong to reduce it to mastering the technological application of science or possessing material products for society to become modern, because this type of modernity is superficial and does not rise to the level of true modernity that includes the intellectual aspect and is not limited to the material aspect.

Modernity in Contemporary Arab Thought:

The state of backwardness and civilizational decay that characterizes the reality of the Arab and Islamic world has been a topic on which the most renowned contemporary Arab thinkers have worked and engaged by questioning the causes of the nation's decadence and backwardness, and the way to rectify the deep chasm that separates us from the progress achieved by Western civilization in its current phase, and by formulating a coherent modernist reformist discourse that achieves a civilizational take-off that restores the nation's historical existence. In order to identify how contemporary Arab thinkers dealt with the challenges of modernity, the solutions that confronted the state of backwardness, and the pattern of dealing with Western modernity, we return to the history of the modern Arab renaissance to identify the intellectual references and theoretical premises that established a single discourse in terms of the goal of catching up with civilization and overcoming historical backwardness. However, our purpose here is not to recount the facts of the historical development of the discourses of renaissance and reform in contemporary Arab thought, as this is beyond the scope of the article. Rather, we are trying to identify the prominent discourses of modernity, which laid the intellectual foundation for the discourses that came after them, and to identify their currents and characteristics.

Opinions differ on the beginning of the modern Arab renaissance ontologically, but the consensus is almost unanimous on the theoretical beginning, which was determined by the pioneers of renaissance and reform thought 'who were influenced by direct cultural contact with the West at the beginning of the nineteenth century and influenced by the intellectual movements prevailing there' ⁵⁴and access through various channels to some aspects of the social, political and philosophical ideas prevailing there. However, this call did not appear as an organized formula in the form of a clearly defined reformist and renewal discourse, except for some of them. We recall examples of them to help us achieve the purpose of this article, which is to identify what characterized the discourse of modernity in contemporary Arab thought, from which this article will be brief and will not accommodate all the names that led the reform and renewal movement.

Instead, we will limit ourselves to referring to ideas that respond to the nature of the topic and are dictated by the context of the article.

The most appropriate way to trace the development of the call for modernity in Arab thought is to return to the birth of two foundational modernist projects and the ideas they carried, namely Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (1801-1899) and Khair al-Din al-Tunisi (1810-1873), whose early contact as Muslims with the West prompted them to justify the adoption of modern European ideas and call for

the opening of the door of *ijtihad*, believing in the idea of change and renewal within the framework of Islamic values They justified the adoption of modern European ideas and called for the opening of the door of *ijtihad*, believing in the idea of change and renewal within the framework of Islamic values 'The issue that occupied both of them, although expressed differently, revolved around this question: How can Muslims become part of the modern world without abandoning their religion?' ⁵⁵

Al-Tahtawi and Khair al-Din al-Tunisi's conception of reform and renewal was based on the idea of reconciling the new ideas they had been exposed to while in France, which left a lasting impact on their thinking and generated a sense of the need for reform, with their own Islamic ideas. This is what made them, as Hourani says, 'try to justify with Islamic concepts the adoption of [Western] institutions, not to introduce something new to it,'⁵⁶ and their call to 'use the mental sciences as the secret of the greatness of modern Europe and the secret of the greatness of Muslims in the past.'⁵⁷ However, al-Tahtawi and Khair al-Din al-Tunisi did not leave a complete and clear theory of modernity, as they did not delve into the philosophical foundations of European modernity, as they did not delve deeply into the philosophical foundations of European modernity. Instead, we will limit ourselves to referring to ideas that respond to the nature of the topic and are dictated by the context of the article.

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mental sciences as the secret of the greatness of modern Europe and the secret of the greatness of Muslims in the past.' However, Al-Tahtawi and Khair Al-Din Al-Tunisi did not leave a complete and clear theory of modernity, as they did not delve into the philosophical foundations of European modernity, as they did not delve deeply into the philosophical foundations of European modernity. In addition to their negative attitude towards the moral consequences of the successive European revolutions, however, this does not prevent us from saying that they were characterised by a special outlook through which they realised the importance of reform and renewal as a necessity for progress, and represented the seeds of the calls for modernity that followed them, both in their heritage orientation and their secular orientation.

The heritage orientation was represented by the religious and political reform movement with Jamal al-Din (1837 - 1897) and Muhammad Abduh (1849 - 1905) in their vision of the need to adapt Islamic thought to the issues and developments of the time by 'rationally interpreting religious texts from the Qur'an and Hadith in accordance with the requirements of the age and the interests of the servants in various political, economic and general life issues.'

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They considered 'the need to study the elements of Western civilization and the elements that Muslims can borrow from Europe without compromising religious beliefs and Islamic civilization, and to distinguish between Islam as a religion and Islam as a civilization, as politics, according to them, has an important role in the backwardness of Muslims.'⁵⁹ The thought of the two men paved the way for the emergence of a reformist intellectual current that adopts renewal within the framework of Islamic values, parallel to the secular nationalist current that was inspired by Western liberal thought in general, and the ideas of the French Revolution in particular. The secular trend, which sees the separation of religion from the state and the adoption of the ideas of the French Revolution as a way to achieve modernity and get out of the circle of backwardness, was represented by Shibli Shumayyil (1840-1917) and Farah Antoine (1874-1922). He believed that the greatest of all things, and the foundation of all things, is science.'⁶⁰

According to Albert Hourani, 'To understand Shibli Shumayyil's thought, we have to place it in the context of the debate that was going on at the time about science and religion.'⁶¹ 'As for Farah Antoine, he believed that progress in all its manifestations can only be achieved by separating the religious authority from the civil authority, "The state must be based on freedom and equality,

and its laws and policies must seek happiness in this world, national strength and peace between nations, and it cannot achieve this unless the secular authority is independent from any other authority.”⁶² What is noticeable in this discourse is that it does not start from Islamic specificity as in the case of al-Afghani and Abdullah, and this made his proposal oriented towards the separation of religious authority from any other authority. This is what made his proposal tend to converge with the Western experience. This secular discourse continued and extended among contemporary thinkers, and their attention focused on the intellectual and cultural aspect, as Mahmoud Amin al-Alam says that it is a current ‘almost focuses its diligence on changing and renewing the intellectual and cultural structure as a basis for comprehensive modernization, which is mostly truly modern, linked to the basic concepts of modern civilization. ‘

⁶³He classifies it as a current of cultural modernity, because it focuses on the basic concepts and values of contemporary civilization. Contemporary thinkers of this current approach modernity from the dualism of heritage, modernity, the ego and the other. On the basis of this brief presentation of the nature of the argument adopted by both the religious reformist and secular-liberal discourses, it is possible to draw a common feature between them, namely the characteristic of reconciliation, i.e. addressing the issue of modernity from the perspective of the duality of originality and modernity, but the religious current is characterized by seeking cultural differentiation from the Western modernizations experience, unlike the secular-liberal current that seeks to converge with the Western experience.

These two currents were the nucleus for the emergence of several projects and discourses in modernity, which agreed on the goal of developing a theoretical vision for the modernizations of Arab and Islamic societies, but differed in their approaches and perceptions to achieve this goal. For example, Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri and Mohammed Arkoun used Western methods to re-read the heritage.’ The former used structuralism and some other methods and concepts of Bachelarian epistemology, such as the concept of rupture, and the latter used linguistics, semiology and philosophy to break the traditional authority in reading the heritage’, all for the purpose of breaking the collar of the traditional authority in reading the heritage.⁶⁴

Their conceptualization was based on a common principle of rereading the heritage, but the ideological carrier of each differed from the other, while the former was religious, the latter was secular. In contrast to these two projects, we find two other projects, each of which represents an antithesis and polarization in opposition to the other, according to Mahmoud Amin al-Alam,

the project of Hassan Hanafi 'raising the flag of fundamentalist thought, taking the religious heritage as a civilizational reference point that stands on its own in the face of the Western other and ⁶⁵the project of Abdallah Laroui, which is based on 'blowing up both sides of the dualism and syncretism between originality and contemporaneity and seeking absolute and unconditional integration into the Western side, i.e. moving from ambiguous dualism to modernist polarization.⁶⁶ 'Mokhtar Benabdellaoui categorizes the latter project as part of the third wave of contemporary Arab thought, which he calls the critical wave.

The work of Professor Abdallah Laroui in his critique of a set of concepts that he believed constituted a false awareness of the Arab reality, made all his works a critique and transcendence of the Arab discourse. The first seeds of his project appeared before the defeat of 1967 in his first book *Contemporary Arab Ideology*, in which he tried to study contemporary Arab thought and its different currents, which he categorised into the religious reform current represented by the sheikh and the religious institution, the secular scientific current represented by the technician, the scientific and educational institution, and the liberal nationalist current represented by the Effendi and the state apparatus' and deepened his project with subsequent publications. All of them dealt with the topic of modernity, as evidenced by Laroui's statement in his book *The Concept of Reason: An Essay on Paradoxes*, which concluded his series of books on concepts, 'I have written so far only chapters of one book on the concept of modernity.'⁶⁷

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