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Islam and Modernity: A Relationship Predicament or a Dilemma of Absence?

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Abstract- The writings and views on Islam and modernity varied. There are who believe that Islam has its modernity, which in some aspects corresponds to the modernity of the West, and there are those who argue that Islam is superior to Western modernity. In general, there are two trends, the separation of Islam from modernity, and the link between Islam and modernity. Modern Islamists argued that Islam and modernity are in agreement and emphasized the need to reinterpret and apply the principles of Islam to shape new responses to political, scientific, and cultural changes in modern life, and rejected the doctrine of taqlid (imitation). However, religious thinkers who separate Islam from modernity think that the first step in their path is to rise above modern societies, describing them as jahiliyya societies, asserting that Islam and modernity are at the crossroads of the road and that if they go along with modernity one step, they will lose the path.

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Islam and Modernity: A Relationship Predicament or a Dilemma of Absence?

Asmaa Ali [α] & Yasser Konsowa [σ]

Abstract- The writings and views on Islam and modernity varied. There are who believe that Islam has its modernity, which in some aspects corresponds to the modernity of the West, and there are those who argue that Islam is superior to Western modernity. In general, there are two trends, the separation of Islam from modernity, and the link between Islam and modernity. Modern Islamists argued that Islam and modernity are in agreement and emphasized the need to reinterpret and apply the principles of Islam to shape new responses to political, scientific, and cultural changes in modern life, and rejected the doctrine of *taqlid* (imitation). However, religious thinkers who separate Islam from modernity think that the first step in their path is to rise above modern societies, describing them as *jahiliyya* societies, asserting that Islam and modernity are at the crossroads of the road and that if they go along with modernity one step, they will lose the path.

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I. Introduction

Islam is a religion, while modernity refers to the set of great transformations that Western society has experienced, as it moved from an ancient era to another that differs from it in everything. Islam began with the mission of the Prophet and formed its concepts and knowledge system over the next 5 centuries. There were Arab and Islamic personalities who existed in the third century AH, the ninth century AD, they generated intellectual stances and produced creative stances of modernity. However, since the sixteenth century, Muslims have closed in the face of successive discoveries and innovations, and have remained isolated from every renewed thought, and thus a separation from modernity occurred. Therefore, the Islam we live today is the Qur'an and the Sunnah according to the understanding of the predecessors until the 5th century AH.

As for modernity, Western society began to establish it since the sixteen century AD. Western thinkers were able to discover what had been produced and composed in literature and arts in the era of the Romans and Greece after the Catholic theology imposed on them not to look at that period of history in culture and thought. In addition, Western civilization was able to create its own system that posed challenges to the Arab personality on all levels so that the Arab finds himself surrounded by the questions of his time and he must answer.

Consequently, Modern Muslims have attempted to provide Islamic answers to the challenges brought about by European colonial expansion. They emphasized that Islam and modernity are in agreement and tried to reconcile the Islamic faith with the values of modernity. However, religious thinkers have argued that modernity is an invitation to destroy language, tamper with heritage, and attack religion and values in the name of modernization and renewal.

Thus, the problem of Islam and modernity has emerged, and it is a complex intellectual problem that has sparked heated debate and discussion in the modern era and is still continuing in one way or another. In this paper, I will discuss the group that criticized the idea of modernity and stigmatized it with foreign thought or the infidel west and the other group that followed the conciliatory approach by dropping the concepts of modernity and searching in history for the origins of modernity and democracy.

II. Modernity in the Arab Mind

We often confuse the products of modernity with the concept of modernity itself. What is modernity?

Ibn Manzur said in *Lisan Al Arab* that the linguistic concept of modernity is the antithesis of the old. Modernity is linked to the new and everything that is not old, and therefore modernity is derived from the updated things and opinions that were neither known nor common. This term is used either for praise, which denotes the openness of thought, knowledge, and liberation from imitation; or used to indicate a mistake, as it denotes recklessness and drifting behind everything new without looking at the past. (1)

Regarding the term modernity, it is one of the most important terms that have raised a lot of controversies because it is a confusing and complex term; however, I will provide some definitions.

Modernity is the openness of all individual and social spaces to what is new and what is achieved through the rapid progress of sciences and technologies. And because it is linked to everything new, its time has been compared to the time of pioneering explorations. (2)

In terms of principles, Abdullah Al-Aroui believes that the concept of modernity was deduced from the development that took place in Europe, and it

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revolves around the following concepts: the authority of the individual, his freedom, his right, and his control over nature. And the components of the concept after modernity has occurred are individualism, rationality, freedom, democracy, and scientific or secularism in the sense of modern science. (3)

Muhammad Sabila talks about the term modernity, saying that it refers to a philosophical and intellectual structure represented in the West by the emergence of humanism with its philosophical connotation, which gives man a central value and a basic reference in the universe. As well as the emergence of a strict instrumental tendency in the field of knowledge and work together, as modern technical sciences and modern humanities arose based on strict rational criteria. (4)

a) Modernity as a shock

A vast mass of French historians and Egyptian modernist intellectuals argue that modernity in its western connotation did not blow its winds on the Arabs and Muslims until the nineteenth century and a little before it at the end of the eighteenth century during Napoleon's campaign against Egypt, where French artillery sounds woke Arabs from their long historical slumber to confirm their historical delay compared to the Christians. (5) The Islamic consciousness was subjected to a terrible psychological shock after the entry of modernity into the Arab and Islamic countries. After some elements of this modernity were transferred for the first time from its European context to our countries, a clash occurred with local cultures and traditional social structures, because the transfer took place suddenly and without preparation. (6)

The Egyptians were fascinated with Napoleon's modern army, which was the source of inspiration for Muhammad Ali, who in turn was inspired by culture and enlightenment to establish modern Egypt during the nineteenth century.

Muhammad Ali established European-style schools in Egypt, in which the sons of rulers and officials learned, and he sent to Europe many scientific missions that borrowed a lot of Western sciences, customs, and traditions. And it began to create a new scientific movement, where education went beyond *Kuttab al-Qarya* (the Village brochures) to Al-Azhar Al-Sharif. (7)

Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (1801_1873) went to France on one of these missions to receive modern sciences. He said that Islamic countries need Western countries to gain what they do not know and bring what they do not have. Moreover, the Franks saw that Muslim scholars knew only their Sharia and their language, that is, the Arabic language. But they admit to us that we were their teachers in all other sciences and that we were ahead of them. (8)

When al-Tahtawi returned home, he realized what the revival needed, so he made an organized translation movement, established Al-Alsun School, and gave a new life to education and journalism.

b) The story of the incomplete reform

The desire to reform Al-Azhar has existed since the days of Muhammad Ali and began to be realized during the era of Ismail, and Sheikh Muhammad al-Abbasi al-Mahdi, *the sheikh of al-Azhar* at that time helped him to reform. Thus, the reform movement had a presence in Egypt before it knew anything about Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and before he came into contact with its youth. And when Al-Afghani came to Egypt, young people thirsting for knowledge gathered around him. (9)

Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani (1838_ 1897) was an effective factor in the philosophical renaissance in Egypt through his call for religious and scientific reform in addition to the call for the upliftment and unification of the Islamic world in the face of the European invasion, within the framework of the religious renewal movement that restores religion to positive action in the reality of Egyptian life. This role is highlighted by Malik bin Nabi (1905 - 1973) by saying, Al-Afghani was a man with a unique culture, and perhaps this culture motivated the educated youth in Istanbul, Cairo, and Tehran, and they are the young people who will be among the leaders of the reform movement. (10)

Al-Afghani realized that the Islamic world needs to understand the reality of the Islamic religion as it needs to take from the civilization of the West in a way that fits with the spirit of the age. Consequently, his movement was an eastern Islamic movement with a tendency to the West, but with a belief in the East, its heritage, the unity of its peoples, and its traditions. (11)

Muhammad Abdo, after meeting with his teacher Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, contributed to the establishment of an Islamic renewal intellectual movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He is one of the advocates of reform and the modern Arab Islamic renaissance who contributed to liberating the Arab mind from the stagnation that afflicted it for centuries. Muhammad Abdo says that the nature of Islam rejects the persecution of science in its true sense and that the early Muslims did not torture, burn or hang the holders of cosmic sciences. However, aren't Muslim scholars today enemies of rational sciences and modern arts? (12)

Muhammad Abdo focused his efforts on reviving the Egyptian nation from its slumber and liberating it to work on spreading public enlightenment, spreading moral education, and reforming traditional social systems to keep pace with the demands of modern life. Moreover, Abdo attacked the tendency to take Western opinions superficially, devoid of insight. He indicated that the people of ideas among us who want our country to be the same as the countries of Europe do not succeed in their goals and harm themselves by making their efforts go to waste, and harm their country

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by making projects in it on an incorrect basis. The project will fail in a short period and it will be worse than it was before. He emphasized that those who want the real good of their country should direct their interests to perfect education and spreading it, as the reform of the country's educational systems makes other reform aspects easier. (13) He stated that Islam will never stand in the way of civilization, but it will purify it from its harm. (14)

However, after Muhammad Abdo, two currents emerged, one of which is a conciliation movement influenced by Muhammad Abdo, seeking to reconcile Islam and modernity. The other is the Salafi stream, which calls for breaking the connections completely with modernity that established Jahiliya (ignorant) societies. *Now, I will first address the group that separates Islam from modernity.*

c) *Western Modernity: Definite Jahiliya (ignorance) and clear infidelity*

Religious thinkers believe that modernity is a term that refers to the transformations that took place in the West in the last era of human history. And that this modernity revolves around the human being as opposed to the culture that revolves around God. They argue that modernity is the spirit of Western civilization that is compatible with it and which is different and contrasts with Islamic culture and the culture of the west in the medieval ages. (15) Thus, they think that the shift from the centrality of God to the centrality of man was the most prominent difference between Islamic culture and the cultural traditions of the West and its modern civilization.

Consequently, they claim that it is not possible to present a modernist reading of Islam because that contradicts the nature and texts of Islam. Therefore, they called for religious renewal and believed that this renewal is not like modernity, but rather rejects it.

The Islamic thinker Muhammad Emara (1931_2020) believes that Western modernity denies religious constants and declares a direct and severe break with them, or through interpretation that empties religion of its content. While the Islamic vision works to meet the needs of development, changes in reality through the path and mechanisms of renewal that protect the constants and restore vitality to the assets with change, renewal, development, and creativity in the branches that keep pace with the developments of reality and life. (16)

Amara criticizes the current of Westernization and Western modernity, saying that this current made the universe and worldly reality only, not *Al-Ghaib*, the source of true knowledge and true science, and made reason and experience alone without transfer and conscience the approved methods for obtaining knowledge. (17)

According to Emara, Islam has its unique philosophy in looking at the universe, the human position in this existence, and the scope of human freedom in this life. It is a philosophy that cannot be reconciled with the positivism on which the modern European Renaissance and its contemporary modern culture were based. Man in the Islamic vision is a creature of God, and in this, the Islamic vision may be consistent with the Western Religious position. However, Islam returns and separates from it when it decides that God is not just a creator but the creator, guide, and mastermind of this universe and this man. (18)

Therefore, Emara believes that reform is taking place through Islam and not through the secular Western civilizational model that broke into the world of Islam during the modern European invasion.

The Saudi Islamic thinker Awad Al-Qarni says that when modernity began to creep into some newspapers and between the lines, we sought early and before many and began to contemplate it and closely examined and studied it until we realized its background, so we do not get accused of rushing to confront it. We learned a lot about its dimensions and the ideologies hidden between its lines, the demolition of our heritage, and the isolation of our past from our present. If we had known that this modernity is authentic in its orientations and sublime in its aims, we would have been at the forefront of those who receive it and celebrate it. It would have taken precedence over other literary schools. But we found that the grave is what it deserves, so we dug a trench for it, erected a monument on it, and wrote on it the cemetery of modernity. (19)

Thus, according to religious thinkers, the Western secular vision liberates the homeland from religion, from slavery to God, and from adherence to the supremacy of divine law, claiming that religion is for God and the homeland is for all. This vision, which isolates the heavens from the earth and limits the divine action to a certain scope, is the modern and contemporary expression of the pagan *Jahiliya* (ignorant) vision (20)

Even though this *Jahiliya* vision does not deny the creation or the creator of this existence, they deserved descriptions that (they do not know), and (do not reason) because they saw that God's work stops at creation only. They made idols the masterminds they turn to if they want war or peace, travel or decision, and other measures of life. This is the Western philosophy that states that the world is self-sufficient and that man is self-sufficient and that the world is managed by self-causes. Man is the master of the universe and there is no authority over his mind except for the human mind alone. Human freedom has no ceiling or framework governed by revelation or a law brought by heaven (21)

Therefore, if Jahiliya is the concept that indicates the pre-Islamic era, religious thinkers and

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Islamists use this term to refer to modern societies that have the same ideas as the pre-Islamic era.

d) Al- Jahiliya of modernity according to Abu Al-Ala Mawdudi

The Islamic scholar Abu Al-Ala Mawdudi (d. 1979) the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan believed that in *Jahiliya*, corruption appears in the manifestations of sexual fanaticism, extreme patriotism, dictatorial nationalism, capitalism, and class conflict between the elements of the nation. And that in the *Jahiliya* society, the divinity of humans is imposed on humans, and the relationship of humans to humans is severed.

Mawdudi said that the Islamic nation has been dominated by a demon from the *Jahiliya*, and it was subjected to various kinds of harm, which appeared in many of its morals and actions, such as disregarding the provisions of al-Sharia, daring to disobey, the enslavement of God's servants, excessive desires and extravagance for the sake of pleasures, rushing vices, and fleeing from ethics, and virtues. (22)

Mawdudi criticized modern Western civilization, saying: Modern civilization has made people think that everything brought by religion, whether it is a belief in God, the Last Day, revelation, or the message is subject to doubt and there must be something to prove it true, otherwise it must be denied and discarded. On the contrary, everything that the professors of modern sciences and arts bring is worthy of acceptance and approval. This new style of thinking has had a profound and comprehensive impact on the system of thought, study, and research in Western countries. (23)

He argued that the hostility in the west to religion and its men did not stop at the Christian religion and its church, but rather religion itself became a target for their hostility. It became one of the prevailing ideas among the advocates of new sciences and those who raised the banner of modern civilizations that religion in itself is a kind of scam, which cannot be proven before the rational test, as its beliefs were built on blind submission and without argument or proof. They isolated religion from every branch of the new life system and narrowed it to the scope of personal belief and individual actions. Moreover, they made one of the basic principles of modern civilization that religion has no right to be exposed to politics, the economy, and other elements of social life because social life should not be led by religion. The *Jahiliya* civilization is based on the freedom of man and not being bound by religion or responsibility towards anyone. On the contrary, Islamic civilization is based on the belief in *Al-Hakimiyy* (governance) for God, the belief in the Last Day, and the acceptance that the human being is a slave and responsible in the hands of God. (24)

Mawdudi criticized the doctrine of renewal in his era, stressing that people, due to their naivety, believe that everyone who comes with a new path is *Mujaddid*, and they give this title, especially to those who take the initiative to reform the condition of the Muslim nation from the material point of view if they find it retreating. However, renewal is not about seeking material means of *Jahiliya* and confusing Islam with *Jahiliya* (25)

He stated that the correct renewal is the purification of Islam from every part of the *Jahiliya*, and then working on the revival of Islam free of *Jahiliya* as far as possible. Consequently, the *Mujaddid* is far from reconciling with *Jahiliya* and becomes unwilling to see any of its effects in any part of Islam, no matter how trivial. The *Mujaddid* must be at ease in his heart for the teachings of Islam and be a true Muslim in his viewpoint, understanding, and feeling, capable of distinguishing between Islam and *Jahiliya* even in the details of matters. (26)

Mawdudi claimed that the only system that can deal with the issues of human life and its practical problems, and can stand in the face of the torrent of communism, and at the same time bestows on man the peace of heart that communism is devoid of, is the system that can be established based on Islam alone.

He said that, since the dawn of its history, Islam has led man in his relationship with civilization, in addition to establishing for itself a specific and independent civilization. The instructions of the hadith and Quran were valid for implementation in the seventh century, and they are also valid for implementation in this twentieth century, and they will remain so for thousands of years, God willing. Additionally, no one can point out anything that makes Islam invalid or incapable of leading mankind in this sophisticated civilized age. Whoever sees that Islam is deficient in this regard, then he must specify for us something in which he found Islam incapable of directing. (27)

Al-Mawdudi points out that we have benefited greatly from the beneficial aspects of the new Western sciences, but he believes that the moral harms are much more than the benefits.

III. Caliphate and Modernity

According to Al- Mawdudi, the caliphate is a right for everyone who accepts *al-Hakimiyya* (governance) for God and believes in the supreme divine law that came to them from God through his messengers. This is what makes the Islamic caliphate democratic, in contrast to tsarism, papacy, or theocracy, as the West knows it. However, in the system that Western men express as democracy today, the public or the people hold the position of *al-Hakimiyya.* As for our democratic system, which we express by the caliphate, the public in it is only the bearers of the caliphate, not *al-Hakimiyya* itself. Just as the government is formed in their republic to manage the affairs of the country and it changes according to public opinion, so our democracy

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demand that the government is not formed and does not change except by public opinion. But the difference between us and them is that they think their democracy is absolutely free, and we believe the democratic caliphate is bound by the law of God. (28) According to Mawdudi, if the state is a caliphate from God Almighty and its legal sovereignty is recognized, then its validity must be limited within the limits that God Almighty has set for it. Therefore, it is not permissible for the state to go beyond these limits in any case. Likewise, the state's obedience is conditional on its obedience to God and His Messenger, and the state is not allowed to demand people to obey it if it is ceased from obedience to God and the Messenger. (29)

For Islamists, the Islamic State now has become a call for the establishment of a global state that seeks to rule the world through *Al-Dawah* and jihad. However, this state, which the Islamists aim to establish, represents nothing but a reaction to the attack of Western civilization. (30) Thus, we can see that the Islamists promote the existence of a separate, independent, and universal Islamic ideology attributed directly to God.

a) The shock of modernity for Sayyid Qutb

Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) had traveled in the thirties of the twentieth century to America on a training mission, not a study, and he took a negative attitude, rejecting all aspects of American life. He showed his respect for the material and scientific achievements of the West, but he saw that this civilization had failed because it destroyed everything that humanity had done in formulating spiritual ideals and human beliefs, it did not pay attention to the human aspect of man. Rather, it was based on matter alone and neglected the affairs of the soul. Thus, Qutb demanded that the Egyptians be proud of their traditions and heritage and not run after the rickety West. (31)

By 1959, Sayyid Qutb had crystallized a new strategy based on religion, he argued that the Islamic situation today is facing a situation similar to the situation that human societies were in when Islam came for the first time in terms of *Jahiliya* (ignorance) of the Islamic faith, and what is required, then, is to re-educate the Muslim Brotherhood on the basis of this new idea. (32)

Qutb stated in his book *in the shadows of the Qur'an* that *Jahiliya* is not a past period of history, but *Jahiliya* is every method in which human beings' slavery to humans is represented. This characteristic is represented today in all curricula of the earth without exception. In all the methods espoused by humanity today, humans take from people like them the concepts, principles, values, and laws, and this is *Jahiliya* with all its components. (33)

Therefore, Qutib said that the crossroads between Islam and the rest of the curriculum is that people in the Islamic system of life worship one God alone, and they receive concepts, values, regulations, and laws from him, while in all systems, they worship different gods and lords instead of the one God. They receive concepts, values, regulations, and laws from human beings like themselves, and by doing that, they make them lords and grant them the right of divinity while they are human beings like them, slaves like them. (34)

Qutb said that we call these systems in which people worship people "*Jahiliya* systems". No matter how numerous its forms, environments, and times, it is based on the same foundation that this religion came to destroy and to liberate human beings from, to establish on earth one divinity for people and to free them from the worship of servants to the worship of God alone. The Islamic approach that emanates from this religion is not a historical system for a period of history, nor is it a local system for a group of people in a certain generation, or a certain environment. Rather, it is the fixed approach that God has accepted for the renewed life of humankind, so that this life may revolve around the axis that God has accepted. (35) Moreover, there is no obedience in this approach to a human being unless he is an implementer of God's law, entrusted on behalf of the group to carry out this task, and he cannot legislate by himself because legislation is a matter of divinity alone. (36)

Consequently, Sayyid Qutb believed that people either live according to God's method completely and be Muslims, or they live by any other method of the human condition and be in *Jahiliya* that this religion does not know. He stated that when people are converted to Islam and when the Islamic method becomes a reality in their lives, they move from a low, misguided stage to another sublime and great stage, and they do not realize this shift until they become true Muslims, and establish their whole life on the Islamic path. All humanity is in a blind *Jahiliya* unless it is guided to this approach. (37)

We can note that the Qutbism belief does not place itself in the face of Christianity, Buddhism, or the Brahmins, but rather, in the face of political and economic systems, capitalism, and communism. He argued that Western civilization is no longer fit for human leadership because Western civilization was first based on the deification of the mind in the Age of Enlightenment, then the deification of matter, then the humanity of man was overthrown by Darwin, and turned into a sexual being according to Freud, and his history was traced back to the economy by Marx. (38) Qutb links these ideas with the manifestations of alienation in contemporary European society.

Therefore, we can realize that Islamists expounded Islamic ideology based on the supremacy of sharia and the sovereignty of God against secularism and democracy. Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb developed their respective theologies of the sovereignty (*al-*

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Hakimiyya). of God and supremacy of sharia to counter the idea of the sovereignty of the people and the nation-state. (39)

Now, we can notice that the problem of this current that rejects modernity in whole and in detail and then isolates it completely from Islam remains the problem of making the cognitive separation from the world a kind of practicing worship and rituals and ruling by the Quran in which modernity is not mentioned, and therefore modernity becomes a sign of infidelity and atheism. At the same time, another current is trying to present an approach or reconciliation between the origin of religion and its openness to the new (modernity) and presents its justifications for finding ways to reconcile. Thus, this current tries to mitigate the total rejection of modernity, and we have to read the views presented to realize what kind of struggle is still being practiced in the intellectual arena.

b) How do we modernize heritage?

Should we try to integrate and reconcile with Western modernity? Can modernity be accommodated within our Arab-Islamic model?

This team believes that Islam is not opposed to modernity, but the exegetical reading of the Qur'an is an obstacle to progress. Therefore, they argue that the clash is between the current civilization that we benefit from and our heritage.

Muhammad Arkoun an Algerian scholar (1928-2010) said that Islam in itself is not closed in the face of secularization, and in order for Muslims to reach the doors of secularization, they must get rid of the constraints and psychological, linguistic, and ideological restrictions that pressure them and burden them. They must restore the link with the historical reality of Islamic thought in the first four Hijri centuries. (40)

Arkoun refers to a movement of intellectuals known as the Mu'tazila, which existed between the second and third centuries AH; this group posed the problem of the creation of the Qur'an. He stated that their mere recognition that the Qur'an is a creature represents a unique attitude towards the phenomenon of revelation, that it represents a position of modernity in the second century AH or the eighth century AD. In addition, this innovative theological position taken by the Mu'tazila would have opened a new field of knowledge capable of generating critical rationality similar to the rationality witnessed in the European West starting from the thirteenth century, had it not been for the opposition of orthodoxy in the fifth century AH, especially at the hands of Al- Qadir Caliph. (41)

Accordingly, Arkoun believes that Arabs and Muslims, in general, suffer from a break from their creative heritage in the classical era, and European modernity more than two centuries ago, which makes the situation of Muslims difficult.

He suggested the importance of adopting the intellectual position in order to study Islam within the context of modernity. He said that we have to analyze heritage entirely critically, not to belittle its value and importance, but rather in order to dismantle it and explain the reason for its emergence and formation according to the way in which it was raised and formed, and why it played its role as it did in societies in which the Islamic phenomenon dominated. (42) Accordingly, Arkoun called for critical reviews of heritage, and believed that the first stage that should be accomplished is to re-read the exegetical reading of the Qur'an today, or rather define the conditions for the validity of such a re-reading today. (43)

He called for putting what was inherited in the interpretation of the Qur'an into question, in order to realize what the Qur'anic discourse really says. He said that my reading of Islam or my interpretation of it will not be a dogmatic reading that deletes everything else, as this traditional reading is the one that was imposed by force by the heritage, and focused on one space and obscured another space. On the contrary, we want to launch a dialectical reading of the historical social space. (44)

Therefore, Arkoun dismantles the traditional view that has been established for hundreds of years, to replace it with a new theory based on the latest findings in the human sciences of rationality, methodology, and deep understanding.

Abdul Majeed Al-Sharafi, a Tunisian thinker, believed that benefiting from modern curricula has become, in the current circumstance, an urgent necessity, and it is not a mental luxury, as some imagine.

Al-Sharafi says that the system established by successive generations of Muslims was valid for traditional societies and has its counterparts in other ancient non-Islamic societies. Its borders have now become apparent and they are unsuitable for the conditions developed in the West, first, and then in the rest of the world. Therefore, it is necessary to search boldly for a radical alternative to it that guarantees the dual fulfillment of the principles of religion, not its literal historical interpretations, and the values of modernity. (45)

Therefore, he said that instead of sticking to the literalism of the texts, we should search for their deep meanings in order to preserve their spirit and the goals they aim at. If most of the texts in our heritage had a jurisprudential approach, which is the approach that organized life in society, while life in our time is organized based on a situation that is subject to development, modification, and improvement, we no longer need the organizations of the predecessors because they were made for a time other than ours and circumstances other than ours. Then, at the end of the

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analysis, they are human jurisprudence (*ijtihaad*), even if holiness has been added to them when they have become old. In addition, nothing prevents us from turning away from its details and its subsidiary provisions, and from practicing jurisprudence appropriate to our conditions, with which we preserve the necessary social cohesion and at the same time preserve the freedom of individuals that cannot be compromised by any pretext. Thus, we bear our full responsibility and be worthy of the trust that was presented to the heavens and the earth, so they were apprehensive about it, and man carried it. (46)

Accordingly, Al-Sharafi believes that heritage is a commodity belonging to the past and must remain in the past.

While Muhammad Abed Al-Jabri a Moroccan philosopher (1935-2010) believes that modernity does not mean a rejection of heritage or a break with the past as much as it means rising in the way of dealing with heritage to the level of what we call contemporary, in the sense of keeping pace with progress at the global level. He said that when the prevailing culture is a heritage culture, the discourse of modernity in it must turn first and foremost to heritage, with the aim of re-reading it and presenting a modern vision of it. Thus, the trend of modernity with its discourse, methodology, and visions toward heritage, is, in this case, a trend to the wider sector of intellectuals, even to the general public, and thus achieves its mission. The path of modernity for us must start from the critical regularity in the Arab culture itself, to stimulate change in it from within, and therefore modernity means in this regard the modernity of the approach and the vision. The goal is to liberate our perception of heritage from the ideological and emotional lining that gives it a general and absolute character in our consciousness and strips it of its relativist and historical character. (47)

Thus, he says either we deal with our reality with Western concepts as they are and drop them as ready-made templates, and this is now rejected, or we deal with it only with heritage concepts and this is repetition, or we create another world of concepts and this is what we have not reached until now. Therefore, we must keep benefiting from the achievements of contemporary thought and trying to adapt and control it instead of falling under its control. (48)

Fadl El- Rahman a Pakistani scholar called for rediscovering the historical, methodological, and contextual message of the Qur'an so that contemporary Islam could respond to modernity with a vibrant and dynamic faith. He considered that although the development of contextual Quranic jurisprudence for the reconstruction of Islam involves risks, this task must be accomplished because the future of Islam in dealing with modernity depends on it. He said it is necessary to understand the meaning of a particular saying by studying its historical situation. Certainly, before reaching the study of certain texts in the light of certain situations, it will be necessary to develop studies that cover the comprehensive situation of society, religion, customs, and institutions, that is, to the whole of life as it was in the Arabian Peninsula on the eve of Islam, especially in and around Mecca, including the study of the Persian/Byzantine wars. (49) Moreover, He indicated that the historical interpretations, though they will help us greatly, should be judged by the understanding we have gained from studying the Qur'an itself. (50)

Fadl al-Rahman believes that Muslims have become to a large extent captives of their historical creatures, whether they are laws or institutions. Thus, he believes that in order to set the human race on the right path, we must transcend the greater part of historical Islam and rediscover the true Islam that is always present and tangible in the Qur'an. It is the challenge that Muslims must face for the benefit of the entire human race. (51)

Mustafa Akyol a Turkish writer says that the term Islamic enlightenment does not mean a comprehensive adoption of the Western enlightenment, which has its dark sides such as Eurocentrism, racism, the burden of the white man, or the illiberal secularism that has developed in France in particular. Rather, I am talking about finding the enlightenment values, which are reason, freedom, and tolerance in the Islamic traditions themselves. Fortunately, those values do exist in Islamic traditions, but they are often just unsown seeds, forgotten tracks, or even muffled voices. The great paradox of history is that these muffled voices were more influential in another civilization, the Western world. (52)

Thus, Akyol believes that the values of modernity already exist in Islam and that they only need to be rediscovered.

The Moroccan thinker Taha Abdel Rahman criticized the various philosophical visions that raised the issue of modernity in contemporary Arab thought, and at the same time, unlike religious scholars, he was not satisfied with demolishing and undermining the views calling for modernity, but rather presented the alternative to it, which he called Islamic modernity.

He saw the necessity of establishing local modernity which is Islamic modernity as an alternative to European modernity. He said that we must search for modernity as values, not for modernity as reality. The reality of modernity exists and we do not deny it, we relate to it, imitate it, copy it, and so on. But it is not the imitation of this reality that will lead us to the desired modernity, as we must search for those values that reality is a realization of. Moreover, in order to deal with Western modernity, we have to start from what we can share with its people, and the first common thing between us and them is the possibility of creativity, as they have proven that modernity is creativity, so we should be creative like them. We have to get our

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creativity back from our ancestors, as they did from the Greeks and the Athenians, to be modern. (53)

However, Taha Abd al-Rahman's call to establish an Islamic modernity makes us ask a question: Do you want to be part of the world or do you want to be a world on your own?

At the end of the discussion on how to reconcile Islam and modernity, it may seem that many of the advocates of modernity have called for its reception as it has existed in Europe, but most of them criticize its transmission and application completely in our Arab Islamic society. They talk about special modernity and reject the universality of European modernity. They emphasized the need to take into account the Western historical context of modernity and to distinguish it from the Arab context in order to avoid the local rejection of what is external. In general, they suggest new paths other than the ancient understanding mechanisms to reconstruct religious thinking.

c) Are we ready to accept modernity?

I would like to point out that just as opinions differed about the relationship of Islam with modernity, so did predictions about the extent of Arab readiness to accept modernity.

The Algerian thinker Malik Bennabi indicated that Civilization is not the accumulation of products, but rather the thought, ideals, and values that must be produced. Our mistakes mustn't stop us from marching toward the original civilization. (54)

Bennabi said that the renaissance of the Islamic world is not in the separation of values, but in the combination of science and conscience, between nature and metaphysics so that it can build its world according to the requirements of its goals. In addition, we can notice that the Islamic world is on its way to modernizing itself thanks to the modern values that it has acquired. This mixing between spirit and matter that is now slowly taking place will undoubtedly be accelerated. (55)

Mohammed Arkoun says that today, Muslims are content with saying that the Qur'an exists and it contains everything and tells us everything, and by citing and reciting the verses of the Qur'an they imagine that they have solved all problems. Therefore, we are immersed in a complete ideological environment and there is no serious or sound thinking in such an atmosphere that dominates the Islamic world, and therefore secularization seems completely impossible in such an atmosphere. (56)

The writer Nabil Odeh says that in the East, we are still living in our past. All our shouting about our heritage and civilization is a disguise of the truth and deception of the soul. We are still stuck in the inherited correctness, and the picture seems dark, but the picture was no less dark in ancient Europe before the beginning of the Enlightenment. (57)

Finally, for answering this question, we can say that modernity is not a field of action that we can accept or reject; it is a process of participation in one world that discusses a general problem.

We stand outside the boundaries of modernity and think twice: do we accept or reject? As usual, those standing outside are only spectators, without taking part in expressing an opinion on the problems that are being raised. The question is whether we are ready to participate first, regardless of the different points of view.

IV. Conclusion

Muslim thinkers have sought to prove the negation of the relationship between civilizational backwardness and the Islamic faith, presenting evidence from history that indicates civilizational progress with the Islamic faith, as was the case in the Abbasid civilization. Where the Christians, Jews, and Sabians contributed to this civilizational renaissance, and great scholars, writers, and philosophers emerged from them.

Due to the absence of knowledge and new thought, it was believed that the Islamic mind is unable to open up to modernity, and even Muslims thought that modernity and the sciences it produced were the product of the West and suitable for them only, and considered it an alien thought.

Moreover, religious thinkers believed and argued that everything that the West brings is *haram* (forbidden), and therefore they completely rejected modernity accusing it of *Al-jahiliyya*. However, beginning in the seventies of the twentieth century, and to achieve the dream of achieving an Islamic state, Islamists began to engage in political action, justifying their dealing with democracy with the idea of *shura* in Islam.

Finally, the debate between Islam and modernity still exists. There is a call for getting rid of the fear that prevents us from possessing modernity in the sense of engaging in it as a cosmic experience that represents the outcome of the common human experience, not just a European adventure that we must stop at its borders and watch.

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