

# The impact of power in the Arab cultural discourse

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## Abstract

We conclude from the foregoing that the authority has contributed throughout its long history to influencing the structure and foundations of the Arab cultural discourse a great deal, and this contributed to the production of false, distorted or interpreted religious, literary and historical texts that contribute to the service of the authority in the first place, and the aim behind this was to present a false image of the sole leader. Who is unlike Him, and to establish the monopoly of a certain group for glory over others! On the other hand, persuading the masses that they are subject to the will of the divine decree, and that they are helpless in the face of this will, which is not limited to those in authority alone, but was shared by some opposition political parties, whose discourse does not differ in content from the essence of the authoritarian discourse. The practices include a large number of different texts, which can be included under the title of the authoritarian cultural discourse that claims to possess the absolute truth, and that its opponent is misguided. We say with regret that this discourse that was marketed through paid or neglected pens has not ended to this day, and its clear evidence is that most of our peoples still live under the domination of tyranny and dictatorships, and the misleading media of the authority. Many poets and artists glorify tyrannical leaders and sing their false glories, at a time when their people live under the weight of poverty, ignorance and backwardness!

**Keywords:** Arab cultural, foundations of the Arab, glory over, ignorance and backwardness.

## Introduction and Background

One of the most important characteristics of cultural studies is that it relies in its approach on texts and discourses on different sciences and cognitive trends, and it is possible to see signs and effects of a number of different intellectual trends. Such as structuralism, gender studies, feminist criticism, social studies and schools of psychoanalysis, etc.

A number of historians point out that the actual beginning of cultural studies in the Western world began in the early 60s of the 20th Century. It was mentioned that (Arthur Berger) has introduced the term cultural studies, which began with the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in 1970, when the first work was published in Cultural Studies, which studied media, diverse popular cultures, and issues related to ideology, literature, geology, signs, a various number of gender matters, social activism, daily life, and more.

Some historians associate the birth of cultural studies to four main schools, which represent special and diverse trends in the study of culture. These schools concerned themselves with questions of meaning, symbolism, language, and discourse; which are: Phenomenology, Cultural Anthropology, Constructivism, and Critical Theory that appeared in Germany. These four schools played different roles and contributed to presenting their own visions in analyzing the structure of culture, relying on different schools of knowledge. Perhaps the study of cultural discourse was among the most important commonalities between them. This is what justifies our reliance on the method of cultural studies in studying the Arab cultural discourse, and trying to identify some of the effects left by the authority in its structure and formations.

## SOCIAL MENTALITY AND CULTURAL DISCOURSE

Talking about the Arab cultural discourse calls first to talk about the Arab cultural mind, because the cultural mind, according to the vision on which this research is based, is the founder of the cultural discourse, so the research will begin to review a number of opinions and studies on the concept of the mind and its various uses, and then review examples of the

opinions of a number of researchers who studied the cultural phenomena in society, whether under the title of the mind in its cultural and social dimensions, or under another title. It also attempts to identify the cultural foundations of this social mind, especially what is related to authoritarian discourse.

The social mind is defined as: (The total of combined feelings, beliefs, opinions, and perceptions that make up the collective mental unity of the group)( Musleh., 1999). This definition was a development of the studies which begun by the French philosopher and sociologist Emile Durkheim in 1893, especially those related to the collective conscience, which Durkheim defined as: (the set of beliefs and feelings shared by the average members of one society, constituting a system that has its own life) (Emile., 1982). However, before delving into the formative foundations of this mind, we must first stop at the connotations of the term mind, and the main associated concepts, which means approaching a number of researchers' opinions in this field.

## REASON IN PHILOSOPHY

The concept of reason in philosophy is related to the theory of knowledge; one of the definitions of knowledge is: (It is the image of the external world in the head of the knowledgeable person) (Zaki., 1956). Also, with the large number of philosophical schools and their differing views on this issue, the famous classification on this issue divides these trends into two main parts: the idealistic trend that saw in the mind the source of realization of the truth; And the sophist trend, which confirmed his conviction of the relativity of truth (Hussam., 2005). There is a third Islamic trend that tried to combine proof and experience, so it established a theory called (extraction theory) that the human mind has primary perceptions related to the senses, and secondary perceptions related to the ability to innovate (Muhammad al-sadr, 2010). It can be sought from the great Muslim philosophers, such as Al-Kindi (260 AH), Al-Farabi (339 AH), Ibn Sina (370 AH), Ibn Tufail (580 AH), and Al-Suhrawardi Al-Qatil (581 AH) (George Tarabishi., 2006). Especially in the philosophical story Hayy bin Yaqzan by (Ibn Sina et al., 2005).

The Greek idealist philosophy found its way to cultural institutions during the Abbasid state, particularly the religious institution, and was employed in political struggles over the right to rule. Al-Jahiz described Reason as "God's agent in man", as for Al-

Mawardi, he said: "You shall know that the realities of matters are known through Reason, and it separates between the good and the bad" (Abu al-Hasan Ali., 1987).

## REASON AND CULTURE

In his book (Mind and Standards), the French thinker André Lalande believes that there are two types of reason: (the creating reason), that is, the influential one, and the (created reason); which is the influenced (Andre., 1979). Dr. Muhammad Abed Al-Jabri based his theory on Lalande's theory in his study of the Arab cultural reason (Muhammad Abed, 2009), defining it as: (the set of principles and rules offered by the Arab culture to its adherents, as a basis for acquiring knowledge (George Tarabishi., 1998).

Al-Jabri concluded that there are three cognitive systems for this mind, which are: (the graphic system), (the mystical system), and (the demonstrative system) (Muhammad Abed, 2009). Al-Jabri's theory has met with opposition from some researchers, especially with regard to his classification of cognitive systems. It is, according to the words of George Tarabishi: (It places each cognitive system in isolation from the other within concrete boundaries, and it is a classification based on a descending formula) (George Tarabishi., 1998).

However, Al-Jabri is not the first to link reason and culture; He was preceded by Dr. Taha Hussein, in his book (The Future of Culture in Egypt) (Taha Hussein 1996), the first edition of which was issued - according to the date of the introduction - in 1938. In it, the author discussed the issue of comparison between the Egyptian mind and the Western mind, and he also compared the Islamic and European minds, and saw that the Islamic mind is no different from its European counterpart, both of which are affected by three elements, namely: Greek civilization, Roman civilization, and religion, refusing to differentiate between them on the basis of trade-offs, as some Western writers do.

On this basis, Taha Hussein's writings were also advanced - from a historical point of view - on what Edward Said wrote later, regarding the stereotypical view that shrouded the Orientalists' vision of the East. As for Dr. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, he saw that the main problems in the Arab backwardness lie in its submission to the authority of the religious text and the political authority that holds power (Nasr Hamed, 2008).

Abu Zayd found in theology and the thought of the Mu'tazilites what supports his arguments in diagnosing the cause and searching for solutions (Nasr Hamed., 1992). We find that Al-Jabri's theory has influenced a number of researchers, including the Iraqi researcher (Alaa Al-Din Al-Araji), who is a student of Dr. Ali Al-Wardi. Al-Araji associated between the views of Al-Jabri and Al-Wardi, presenting his own vision in (The Social Mind) (Alaa Al-Din Al-Araji., 2015). Al-Araji emphasized that the social mind, is an unconscious mind, that is formed in any society as a result of historical accumulation and social development, and that: (every society carries within its entity (or its mind) distinct values, norms, rules, and standards, which constitute the characteristics of that society) (Alaa Al-Din Al-Araji., 2015).

## THE HUMAN MIND AND SOCIAL CULTURE

Dr. Ali Al-Wardi went behind the vision of the sociologist Carl Mannheim that: (the truth exists outside the human mind, and it is not the creation of this mind, as well as it has multiple aspects) (Ali.,

2005). Therefore, the mind does not have absolute freedom in its choices and its understanding of reality, as it is constrained by the constraints of self, society and civilization. Dr. Al-Wardi considered that what is meant by culture is: (a set of traditions, rules, and ideas that exist in any nation. It includes the various matters of life in it, such as religious, moral, legal, artistic, industrial, linguistic, superstitious, and others) (Al-Wardi., 2005). And he believed that man is subject to heritage influences that paralyze his freedom of thought and make him subject to what is called (social hypnosis) (Ali., 2005). Concluding that the historical conflict between Bedouin and civilization in Iraq is what led to the dual personality of the Iraqi individual (Al-Wardi, 2005).

The Public Mind in his book (The Reason in Iraqi Society between Myth and History / Kufa Project); Dr. Shaker Shaheen defined the popular mind as: (a cultural formation of consciousness and the subconscious, from which legend occupies the unconscious side, while history occupies the conscious side) (Ali Al-Wardi, 2012). Based on (Carl Jung) theory of the unconscious, and his vision of the influence of myths in building the (unconscious) side of the popular mind.

With the multiplicity of scholastic trends in the study of society, mind and culture, and despite the differences in opinions between them, there are a significant number of general commonalities included in these opinions (Al-Wardi, 2005); The most notable are:

Going-back to history, especially to the influential aspects that can be considered historical and cultural joints that affected the life of society, and this confirms the consensus that the cultural discourse rests in its main foundations on history.

The clarity of the effects left by the authority, especially the political authority that uses religion as a mask, in its work to confirm certain ideas in society, in which the focus has been on beliefs and intellectual trends capable of subjugating society.

There are common and inherited tributaries that contributed to the process of laying the first foundational building blocks of the social mentality and cultural discourse, and they are diverse and different tributaries in terms of time and space.

## SPEECHES OF POWER

In the above, we have seen the influence of Greek philosophy on religious discourse, and how that philosophy was employed to serve the political conflict with its religious conviction, which indicates the processes pursued by the authoritarian discourse to adopt various cultural weapons to serve its political goals. The historicity of this authoritarian discourse goes back to the cultural systems in which it arose, specifically the first and active texts and (founding events), which represent important references for the cultural system, and therefore influential foundations in the emergence of authoritarian discourse. Perhaps we can identify two main pillars for the birth of this discourse, which are:

First: Mesopotamian Methodologies: (The Legendary Speech): What we mean by them is the myths that arose in the Mesopotamian civilization in the ancient Iraqi history.

Second: Bedouin Values (Tribal Speech): What we are concerned with is the values and ideas that remained active after the advent of Islam, and then dominated the scene after the establishment of the Umayyad state, disguised under the umbrella of religion.

These two pillars constitute the common basis in the formation of

the Arab cultural discourse, especially if the common constants between them are considered. They are constants related to the production of an authoritarian discourse that does not believe in pluralism, nor in human efficacy and ability to change. As a result, the intellectual perspectives of the Arab cultural discourse are based on a patriarchal (or parental) culture, as well as its attachment to the inflation of this male self, which means its extreme narcissism on the other hand.

The research, along this division, is based on Erich Fromm's views on narcissism; Narcissism, according to Fromm, is divided into two cases: (individual narcissism)(Erich Fromm, 2009) and (group narcissism). The importance of the second case of narcissism - in Fromm's study - comes from its impact on the production of violence.

**Myth and Power:** A number of researchers have argued that there is a close relationship between myth and the ruling authority; They emphasized that many myths have effectively contributed to the process of granting legitimacy to the ruling authority, as well as giving it a kind of sanctity for the purpose of making society submit to it (Ali al-Shami, 1991).

If we go back to the Sumerian Genesis epics (Firas Al-Sawah, 1987) and the Babylonian (Enuma Elish), we will find a common idea that refers to the divine origin of the creation process, in its mention of the conflict that took place between (the gods), through which the reins of power were transferred from fathers to sons, and these legends mentioned that Judgment has passed from (female deity) to (male deity); And that is in (The Sumerian epic of Genesis). Also, in the (Babylonian epic of Genesis).

The researcher Firas Al-Sawah believes that (Enuma Elish) contains poor memories of the transformation that humanity witnessed in its transition from the stage of matriarchal culture to the stage of patriarchal culture. That the biography of Marduk in this epic is nothing but a reflection of the biography of Hammurabi himself, and that one of the goals of this epic is to consolidate the power of this king (Firas Al-Sawah, 1996).

In the Epic of Gilgamesh, we find the patriarchal model that symbolizes knowledge, power and authority embodied in the character of the main hero (Gilgamesh), in contrast to the negative position of women that links her to sexual seduction and betrayal, as in the character (Ishtar) who tried to seduce (Gilgamesh) but could not, and he reminded her of her treachery By Shepherd (Demozi / July). This stereotype, with clear bias, is based on an implicit process of preferring the man over the woman, and undermining the latter in an extreme way.

The Epic of Gilgamesh provided an example of a patriarchal image of the dominant male:

(After he created Gilgamesh, and the great god made him perfect. The heavenly "Shamash" endowed him with beauty, and "Adad" singled him out for heroism... The great gods made the perfect image of Gilgamesh) (Taha Baqer).

In addition to what this epic shows of a biased preference for men over women, it also showed great interest in the role of the hero in the life of the community. Gilgamesh - according to tourists - is the first person in recorded history, and at the beginning of the second millennium BC, his personality was able to express the uniqueness and difference from the group (Firas Al-Sawah, 1987). This figure, the first influential in the life of the group, carried with it the image of tyranny and power:

(Gilgamesh did not leave a virgin to her lover, nor the daughter of a warrior, nor the fiancée of a hero...and Gilgamesh did not leave a son to his father. He has been persecuting people day and night) (Taha Baqer, 2010).

We can say - according to these indicators - that this epic is the first written text that was able to clearly express an authoritarian discourse, and presented us with a stereotypical image of the dominant male individual, a symbol of power and knowledge, and also expressed the subordination of society to the authority of the gods and the pre-written destiny:

(Oh, Aruru, you created this man by the command of Enlil, so now create an adversary for him that will match him in strength of heart and determination, and let them be in a constant struggle so that Uruk may obtain peace and comfort)(Taha Baqer, 2010).

As for the Bedouin values, with the Umayyads seizing power, a new political era began that bears a relative difference from the era of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the caliphs after him, an era in which the condition of inheritance was established through lineage in the process of devolution of power, in the Umayyad era and after it the Abbasid, major operations were carried out to employ religion in the service of the authority and the ruler, and Dr. Ali Al-Wardi mentioned various models of writers who served the court, in conjunction with a number of preachers of the sultans whose work was limited to legitimizing the ruler until he made him the status of the Prophet, and described him as:

(The shadow of God which is widespread between Him and His people)( Ali Al-Wardi, 1995).

(Izz al-Din al-'Allam) mentioned a large number of jurists and writers in the Umayyad and Abbasid eras, who followed this path, and spread the idea of (divine delegation) and spread among the people that the existence of the ruler is only (divine wisdom), and (without him, God would not have created the people of the earth)! (Izz Al-Din, 2006). In this way, society was marginalized and its role in building the state was frozen, and a hypocritical cultural discourse spread, whose goal is limited to the process of glorifying the authority and the ruler. History has conveyed to us the attempts made by the Umayyads to mislead the public opinion after the Karbala incident, by spreading the idea that (God is the one who killed the opponents of the authority) (Abu al-Faraj, 2005).

It is also worth noting a number of religious ideas that were published in the Umayyad and Abbasid eras, regarding the idea of (algebra), and that man is guided in his actions and does not have the freedom to do them. They are ideas that do not differ in terms of the result from the idea of (divine delegation); It contributes to abolishing the role of reason and free creative thinking, destroying the sense of the value of free and active human will, and making society idle and drugged. Al-Jabri says: (Muawiya ruled in the name of the tribe and not in the name of creed, so the "emir" was separated from the "scholar" in his person, and this extended to the state agencies, so the "emirs" became one group, and the "scientists" another group) (Andre Laland, 1979).

With the return of the tribe to rule as a general system that includes politics and society; On the other hand, its cultural values returned as a counterpart to the values of religious belief. So Muawiya patronized poetry and poets and encouraged people to do so (Muhammad, 2009). It is narrated from him that he said: "Make poetry your greatest concern, and the most persistent of you, for it is the exploits of your ancestors and the places of your guidance)( Ali



Al-Wardi, 1994).

It is also narrated that Muawiya ordered the narrators of news to choose poems for him to narrate to his son; They chose twelve poems for him, among them the seven long poems (Suleiman Al-Shatti, 2011). Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan came to power and followed the path of Muawiya and exaggerated it until (many people began to spend most of their time arguing about poets and poets, and the comparison between them) (Ali Al-Wardi, 1994).

Among the results of this intended process of polluting the cultural discourse and making it at the service of the authority, the poetic art known as (the antiquities) was born at the hands of Jarir and Al-Farazdaq, and they are poems full of insults, insults to honor, and Bedouin bragging (Abu Ubaidah, 1998). The royal court of these sultans was full of genealogists, narrators of proverbs and the days of Arabs in the pre-Islamic era.

Ibn al-Nadim mentioned a number of names that contributed to this process and were close to the Sultan's court (Abu Al-Faraj, 1971). Many of them were well-known for their liars, and (Ibn al-Nadim) mentioned the saying of Hammad: (I used to sing the newborn good poetry, so he would ask me for the poor, and he would sing it, and he would be happy, then I knew that the matter was planned, then the Mahdi would sing the poor, and he would ask me for the good stallion, so I know that their affair is coming). Therefore, it is not possible to be assured of what these hijackers transmit, including Hammad, about whom Ibn Salam al-Jumahi said: (The first to collect Arab poetry and narrate its hadiths was Hammad al-Rawia, and he was unreliable) (Abu Abdullah, 1997).

It is very probable that a number of narrations about the likes of the Arabs and their days do not have a basis in reality, or - at least - their narrated events were manipulated in order to serve the ruling authority, or to serve some of its opponents. Dr. Taha Hussein has adopted to such skepticism (Taha Hussein, 2017).

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