

Conference on
Critique of Modernity

14–15 June 2018, Leipzig University
Humanities Centre for Advanced Studies (Kolleg-Forscherguppe, KFG)
„Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities“
Nikolaistraße 8-10, Room 5.55 (5th Floor)

Convenors: Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Said Arjomand

**Registration for Listeners: multiple-secularities@uni-leipzig.de, Subject: MODERNITY
Registration closes 3 June 2018!**

Ideas travel in time and space. The conference seeks to explore the transnational circulation of counter-enlightenment discourses, moods and motifs as well as those of their intellectual opponents. We will discuss the global phenomenon of anti-modern critique in its specific regional contexts in the Islamic world, but also its wider entanglements. The cases of Ahmad Fardid and Henry Corbin are revealing examples of such transnational traveling of ideas and traditions.

Critique of “Western” modernity is present outside and inside the West. We aim at discussing the similarities and differences between various types of such critique, including critical theory approaches and post-modern forms of critique.

The starting point of the conference is Ali Mirsepassi’s recently published book on Ahmad Fardid (*Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought: The Life and Times of Ahmad Fardid*, Cambridge University Press: 2017). Iranian public intellectuals were of great influence on the rise of political Islam in Iran on the eve of the revolution that eventually emerged as “Islamic”. Ahmad Fardid, the famed Iranian “oral philosopher” and devoted Heideggerian took from his years of study in Europe the philosophical resources to combat the global force of “Westoxification”, exalting the spiritual vitality of the Iranian and Islamic tradition against the truth-effacing forces of Western culture, including its secularism. This found resonance among European intellectuals, for instance Foucault, for a while. This resonance indicates a deeper and more complex interrelatedness beyond mere intellectual or national influence and reception.

Such interrelatedness is not only a matter of the past but also of the present. Since nativist movements have become influential in Europe as well as in the US, with political Islam – in itself essentially nativist – as their proclaimed antagonist, the conference will lead us not only into the Middle East, but also into the depths and shoals of current Western developments.

PROGRAMME

Thursday, 14 June 2018

4 – 4:30 p.m.

Introduction

Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (Director, KFG “Multiple Secularities”)

Said Arjomand (Senior Fellow, KFG “Multiple Secularities”; Stony Brook University)

4:30 – 5:15 p.m.

Mistaken Anti-modernity: Fardid After Fardid

Ali Mirsepassi (New York University)

5:15 – 6:45 p.m.

Podium Discussion (Conference Speakers)

6:45 p.m.

Small Reception

7:30 – 9 p.m.

The Fabolous Life and Thought of Ahmad Fardid

A Documentary Film by Ali Mirsepassi and Hamed Yousefi

Friday, 15 June 2018

9:30 – 11 a.m.

Modernity and critique of authenticity in contemporary Arab thought

Elizabeth Kassab (Doha Institute for Graduate Studies)

11 – 11:30 a.m. *Coffee Break*

11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Vindicating Postcolonial Obscurantism

Aziz Al-Azmeh, (CEU, Budapest)

1 – 2:30 p.m.

Lunch Break

2:30 – 4 p.m.

The Persistence of Enlightenment: Reflecting Modernity and Modernity in Reverse

Dan Diner (Hebrew University, Jerusalem; Leipzig University)

4 – 4:30 p.m.

Coffee Break

4:30 – 6 p.m.

From Beyond the Grave: Heidegger as Preceptor of the European New Right

Richard Wolin (City University of New York)

6:15 – 7:45 p.m.

Final Discussion (KFG-scholars and general audience)