Mapping the Role of Intellectuals in Iranian Modern and Contemporary History

edited by RAMIN JAHANBEGLOO

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Introduction

The book that you hold in hands gathers fifteen essays which were practically all presented at two conferences hosted respectively by the School of Oriental and African Studies in London and the Tirgan Cultural Festival in Toronto.[1] The major theme discussed in both conferences was the role of intellectuals in modern and contemporary Iranian history. As a result, most of the essays presented in this volume try to examine how modern Iranian intellectualism was born out of Iran's encounters with the West, while embracing modernity and visualizing their identity and Iran's destiny in terms of multiple engagements with Iranian traditions, European modernity, religion, and science. The reason is that the way Iranian intellectuals lived, thought, and debated and the culture they animated shaped the destiny of Iranian society. The contributions here present, therefore, concentrate primarily on the Iranian intellectual debates on nation-building, democracy making, women emancipation, radical thinking, and religious reformism. This book perhaps allows for a shift in attention from a stereotypical consideration of Iranian intellectuals as only oppositional figures with forward-looking visions to a discussion of Iranian intellectuals as sociological actors who experienced and promoted transformations in the context of the rise and collapse of the Iranian secular nation-state and the formation of nationalist, socialist, and Islamist ideological paradigms in Iran.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the intellectual history of Iran, reflecting perhaps the failure of purely political and economic explanations for the process of change in the Iranian society. Iranian intellectuals have been questioning the essence of Iranian society for nearly 150 years. However, they have been themselves questions seeking historical responses. Some searched these responses in supporting and preserving political orders. Others found their answers in diverse ideologies, either Marxist or Islamist,

and dedicated themselves to revolutionary activities in order to champion the interests of all oppressed groups. Some died on their feet, others lived on their knees. Yet, it is difficult to say who among these will be considered as having injured their self-esteem and their ideals. For over a century, Iranian intellectuals tried to introduce cultural renewals in their homeland through making sense of modernity and its universal project. For a long time, the West with its modern Enlightenment experience became a reference point for all those intellectuals who wanted to rescue themselves and their nation from the darkness of ignorance. The nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century intellectuals were firm believers in the efficacy of Western ideas, including modern science and modern philosophy as a cure against religious obscurantism and political authoritarianism. But that was not the whole story. We should not forget that their affinities with scientism and positivism did not prevent many of them from using religious sources for their social and political agendas. Ultimately, the Sisyphean quest of Iranian intellectuals for constitutionalism, liberalism, and socialism ended with unreal hopes. And unrealized dreams. With the revolution of 1979 and the creation of a theological state they came to face disappointment, exile, and even death. Their visions of a radiant future for Iran and Iranians remained unfulfilled and as the saying goes, "the more things changed, the more they stayed the same." Today, despite all the frustrations and failures, we need to fully examine and analyze the outcomes of the successes and failures of four generations of intellectuals in Iran.

Iranian intellectualism manifested itself through the efforts of these four generations, starting with the reforms of Abbas Mīrzā, the Qajar prince, in the post-Russo-Persian War of 1826–1828, and ending with the post-revolutionary intellectuals of 1980–2020, in a dazzling array of writings, translations, and artistic creations discussing themes such as Westernization, republicanism, social justice, women's rights, class struggle, and finally a nativist vision of Iranian national identity. But, while in many ways reaffirming the superiority of their own culture, Iranian intellectuals remained deeply indebted to European thought, which served as the cultural matrix through which they continued to struggle with issues of selfhood and otherness. As such, the emergence of a group of educated individuals entertaining a critical life of mind and seeking social and political change, who could be seen as the custodians of the creed of modernity in Iran, is one of the most important aspects of the encounter with the Western mode of thinking. It is, therefore, not surprising that these men and women of pen referred to themselves as modernists and innovators (*mutajaddedin*). Most of these intellectuals, either man or woman, left behind a legacy that served as a vehicle for the transformation of Iranian society. Thus, their lives and their ideas deserve attention, because to some degree they played an important role in the making of the

twentieth-century Iran and they will continue to be pertinent to the future generations to come.

Consequently, the odyssey of the Iranian intellectuals in the twentieth century began by searching for ways to best incorporate philo- scientific rationality and political modernity in the Iranian culture and society. Nowhere can this incorporation be more clearly seen than in the intellectual work of Muhammad Ali Foroughi, who in his writings reflected the first genuine attempt by an Iranian intellectual-statesman to articulate a systematic understanding of modern politics and modern philosophical tradition. It is worth mentioning here that Foroughi had a special interest in Western philosophy, in particular with the teachings of Plato and Descartes. In 1918 he published his first philosophical work, entitled *The Philosophy of Socrates by Plato* (*Hekmat-e soqrat be Qalam-e Aflatoon*). Later he translated *Le Discours de la Méthode* by Descartes and added a long introduction to it entitled *The Course of Philosophy in Europe* (*Sayr-e Hekmat Dar Urupa*) in which he briefly discussed the historical development of philosophy in the West. This book could be considered as a philosophical foundation for Furughi's modern and rationalistic principles in Iranian politics. If the Persian translations of Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger are considered today as herculean tasks of shifting from one culture to another, we need to imagine Foroughi's deep sense of Descartes' text and his proximity with the French culture, when he translated *Le Discours de la Méthode* in 1922. Sometimes the greatest and most powerful revolutions start very quietly with a philosophical pamphlet, an artistic creation, or simply a translation.

It is clear that Foroughi's main goal in translating Descartes was to introduce the Iranian youth to modern rationality and to make them think about their own peripheral destiny. In fact, it seems that intellectuals such as Foroughi hoped to bring about the necessary reforms in Iran by educating Iranian youth to the philosophical outlook of modernity founded on a wide range of knowledge on politics, economics, science, and culture. Foroughi knew perfectly that modernity began with the emphasis on reason and the philosophical self-assertion of the subject. His emphasis on Descartes' famous dictum *cogito ergo sum* was a way for him to bring the concept of reason to the center stage of Iranian society, to such a degree that anything beyond the reach of reason be declared irrelevant. Thus, Foroughi's faith in modern values and scientific rationality was absolute. Yet, he was one of the rare Iranian intellectuals of his time who worked openly to gain a satisfactory balance between Iranian nationalism and modern humanism.

We need to admit that intellectuals like Foroughi, who had one foot in the Iranian culture and the other in the universal ideas, have been quite rare in modern Iranian history. Actually, the changing political climates in Iran, due to the two World Wars and the Coup d'état of 1953 against the national

government of Mossadeq, ended with the radicalization of intellectual discourse and the emergence of third-worldist and nativist intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s. These were the intellectuals who stood against the Shah's regime in 1979 and some of them even supported for years the theocratic regime of ayatollah Khomeini. One of their characteristics was to oppose the modernism of the technocratic intellectuals of the 1950s, who were inspired by the generation of Iranian intellectuals of the 1930s and 1940s. Surprisingly, today the younger generation of Iranians are returning to those intellectuals who, under the authoritarian measures of Reza Shah, applied modern ideas to the art of nation-building. Undoubtedly, these intellectuals were the prime mediators between the forces of tradition and the modern institutions of the Iranian state, but they also contributed to the formation of the modern Iranian self-image. Having said this, one needs also to add that though the intellectual trends of modernity in Iran started their trajectories a long time ago, the country's eventful history and disturbed present have caused deviations in that trail, producing a radically different experience of modernity from that of Europe.

All this leaves us with one central question: where do the Iranian intellectuals stand today? The answer to this question depends on the answer to a second question: who are the intellectuals in Iran today? Truly speaking, in today's Iran, critical intellectuals are an endangered species. On the one hand, those who can think critically are either in exile, in prison, or taking their distance from the public sphere because of their fear of the political. On the other hand, it seems as if the Iranian regime has also a terrible indifference to what could be called "intellectual." Certainly, this absence of a Voltarian or a Zola type of intellectual in the Iranian community in general could be described as a process of distancing from the public sphere toward an increasingly professionalized and journalistic world. In other words, Iranian intellectuals have lost their public authority and their moral legitimacy of speaking truth to power, while becoming incapable of carrying on their independent and critical functions as thinkers and animators of ideas. The best proof for such a situation is that Iranian intellectual trends have no solutions for Iran's future, and unlike the intellectuals of the 1930s–1960s they have become more inward-looking and increasingly turned toward the private sphere. As a matter of fact, if there was a time when Iranian intellectuals spoke in universal terms, and were expected to provide a strong judgment about general social and political issues in Iran, today, on the contrary, they have become followers of the conventional pragmatism and even some have made their peace with the Iranian autocrats. One may also interpret the silence of the younger generation of Iranian intellectuals as a deliberate response to the hollow revolutionary rhetoric of the previous generation. Nevertheless, this is also a tacit admission that, despite all their bravado and protests and their

continuous persecution, Iranian intellectuals are no more considered as animators of serious civil disturbance in today's Iran. Last but not least, maybe it's time for us to judge Iranian intellectuals, not only by their institutional affiliations but also by the quality of their ideas. After all, an intellectual with no dangerous ideas is unworthy of being called an intellectual. But while insisting on the responsibility to generate dissenting ideas, we also need to be constantly aware of our own shortcomings which may cause harm to the future of the Iranian society.

Today, Iran faces a moral crisis, as a country and as a people. Unlike what many think, this crisis cannot be met with violent action. But it also cannot be left in the hands of those who believe in an unjust and oppressive future. So, once again, as in the case of the last 150 years of Iranian history, a great change is at hand. Therefore, the task of Iranian intellectuals is to comprehend and analyze this change, while making it as peaceful and nonviolent as possible. Maybe, this is the best way to recognize the realities of the Iranian society without forgetting that the task of intellectuals is not to go where the path may lead, but to go instead where there is no path and leave a trail. To paraphrase Mahatma Gandhi, it is time for the Iranian intellectuals to be the change that they want to see in Iran.

Ramin Jahanbegloo
New Delhi, October 2, 2019

NOTE

1. Since some of the chapters had bibliographies in Persian which would have confused the non-Persian readers, we decided to omit the bibliographies at the end of the chapters.

Part I

IRANIAN INTELLECTUALS, NATIONALISM, AND STATE: FROM QAJAR TO EARLY PAHLAVI

Amir Kabir

A Reformist and Pioneer of Modernization in the Traditional State

Saeed Paivandi

INTRODUCTION

Research on the Qajar period in Iran shows the existence of two simultaneous elite movements that marked the process of modernization of Iran in the nineteenth century. The first movement was represented by reformist statesmen, who attempted to modernize the Iranian society. In a historical context marked by the absence of civil society and modern structures, reformism in Iran began with statesmen who sought to change and modernize the economy, state administration, army, education, and the judicial system. The most important concern of the first group was to change the society from the top. As such, the participation of society seemed to have been secondary, depending on the effectiveness of the reforms. The prominent politicians of this movement were worried about the colonial competition where Russia and Great Britain struggled to increase their influence in the region. It was in fact in response to the colonial competition and influence that the modern form of state nationalism gradually emerged in Iran at the time. Abbas Mirza (1789–1830) was the first eminent figure of state-led reforms at the beginning of the nineteenth century, followed by Amir Kabir (Mirza Taqi Khan) (1808–1852) who became the most important reformist politician at the turn of the century in Iran. With over twenty years of political practice within the state apparatus including three years as the chief minister, Amir Kabir founded a model of modernization in the country.

The second movement includes intellectuals,[1] who largely contributed to spreading the ideas of modernity. The most important figures of this movement—initiated from 1870—started critical debates on the modernization

that influenced the emergent public opinion. These intellectuals often had international experience in countries such as Russia (Caucasus), Turkey, England, France, Germany, Egypt, and India, and European modernity was their primary reference.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF IRAN IN
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The entry into the nineteenth century was a critical moment for Iran (Persia[2]) that suddenly found itself in a geopolitical trap set by the great colonial powers. Despite its glorious past, the country remained almost entirely on the margins of the socioeconomic and technological changes generated by the Industrial Revolution in the West. The region had become the epicenter of geopolitical competitions between the great powers of the time. Even though Persia was semicolonized, the country nevertheless remained coveted by Great Britain, Russia, and France. The two wars against the Russians, followed by a conflict with the British over sovereignty of Herat (in today's Afghanistan), not only inflicted significant costs onto the country, but it also imposed signings the treaties of Golestan (1813) and Torkmantchai (1828) in their favor forcing Iran to abandon Caucasian territories. The consequent humiliation and trauma are argued to have contributed to an awareness of Iran's powerlessness in a changing world, as if the country awakening to a new and different world only discovered her lack of ability to accommodate or follow the transformations of that time.[3]

The first half of the nineteenth century was marked by the reign of Fath-Ali Shah (1797–1834) and Mohammad Shah (1834–1848). Iran was ruled by "greedy and narrow-minded kings amidst the neglect of the ruling class and the despair of the people";[4] there was no trace of the health system and public education.[5] Except for the military which was modernized by force under the threat of foreign countries.[6] Iran of the nineteenth century was significantly distant from European countries that emerged from the Renaissance and had entered a new stage of civilization with economic, cultural, and social growth.[7]

The beginning of the nineteenth century was also marked by the birth of a new trend in the Persian political life where reformist statesmen tried to change the way of governing. Abbas Mirza (1789–1833), a crown prince and a reputable military commander, is particularly known as an early modernizer of the army and military institutions following the defeat against Russia as well as for his reformist policies.[8] It was in this context that diplomatic and cultural relationships between Iran and the world expanded and the translation of European books began. The modern European medicine arrived in

Iran during the first decades of the nineteenth century.[9] The crown prince, Abbas Mirza, decided to develop modern education: One of his first initiatives was sending students to Europe to learn the "new sciences."[10] Despite the limited number, this initiative allowed Iranian elites to discover modern institutions and the virtues of the European school.[11] Although the initiative did not involve a significant number of students, it yet played an important symbolic role for the Iranian students to discover modern institutions and the educational system in Europe. After these first pioneering groups, dozens of young Iranians chose to pursue their higher studies in France, England, or other European countries throughout the nineteenth century. Upon return to Iran, some of these young and newly trained Iranians were directly involved in developing the network of new schools.[12] One of these students, Mirza Saleh-e Shirazi, on his return, created a modern printing press for the publication of books and the country's first newspaper.[13] In his journal written during his trip, Mirza Saleh provoked thinking about the functioning of modern institutions such as judiciary, parliament, media, and educational system of this country.[14] Mirza Saleh believed that modern Russia was inspired by the European education system, which, he thought, would explain the socioeconomic progress.[15]

AN ATYPICAL PATH OF A YOUNG SELF-TAUGHT AND AMBITIOUS POLITICIAN

Amir Kabir was not a usual "inheritor" of the political elite system; he had an atypical trajectory within the royal administration. His outstanding promotion as a Grand Vizir (chief minister) was due to his talent and intelligence as a politician, not family merits. He had a humble beginning having been born into a family with limited means, and his father worked for Mirza Bozorg Qaʾem-maqam (1772–1830) as a cook. When Mirza Bozorg was appointed chief minister to Abbas Mirza in Tabriz, he went with him to this northwestern province where the crown prince lived.[16] He followed his father and settled with the family in Tabriz. Despite his modest origin, he was raised among the princes and notables because of his father's job. Mirza Bozorg, who saw in him signs of considerable talent, allowed Amir Kabir to study with his children.[17] He thus had access to a good level of private education only available to aristocratic families and was trained and was mainly influenced by two reformist statesmen, that is, Mirza Bozorg Qaʾem-maqam and his son Abu'l-Qasem Qaʾem-maqam who worked in the service of the crown prince.[18] Amir Kabir was also a brilliant autodidact and learned a lot from experience and observation. Reading foreign books about political and social systems and the Industrial Revolution in the West,

translated into Persian, was one of the other sources of Amir Kabir's ongoing learning.[19] He entered government service when he was very young and acquired considerable experience in the military and financial affairs in Azerbaijan. His professional posts allowed him to meet politicians and military experts and other European specialists who were present in Tabriz at that time.

THREE POLITICAL MISSIONS ABROAD

Amir Kabir's political career was built in and through three foreign missions when he was in Tabriz in the service of the crown prince. The first mission was to Saint Petersburg in 1829–1830 in the delegation that was to present official apologies for the death of Griboyedov,[20] the Russian ambassador in Tehran.[21] As the youngest employee, he served as the secretary in the delegation and stayed ten months in Tiflis, Moscow, and Saint Petersburg. This long journey allowed him to see the Russian society and learn about their modern progress. He had the opportunity to visit public, private, technical, and military schools, military and civil factories, observatory, banks, theaters, and various ministries and divisions of the Russian bureaucracy.[22]

The second mission was in 1837 when he accompanied Naser-al-din Mirza, then the crown prince, on an official trip to Erevan during which he met Tsar Nicholas and could communicate in Russian with him.[23]

Finally, he represented Iran at the Erzurum Conference hold to resolve border disputes between two neighboring countries, Iran and Ottoman Empire (1843–1846). The mission in Erzurum was undoubtedly Amir Kabir's most important experience. The mission lasted four years, and he participated in the work of a commission to delineate the Ottoman–Iranian frontier and settle certain other disputes between the two states.[24] Appreciated by the delegations present, he was able to play an active and effective role in defending the interests of his country. His mission in the Ottoman Empire also coincided with the Ottoman military and administrative reforms.[25] Four years of diplomatic mission in the Ottoman Empire gave him a better understanding of the process of reform and modernization known as the *Tanzimat* in this country. According to Adamiyyat,[26] he followed the ongoing political and administrative reforms that led him to reflect on the Iranian context.

These missions abroad as well as other state functions, as noted, allowed him to prove his talents and skills in politics. At the same time, these missions were opportunities to understand the world in fast and permanent transformation.

AT THE SUMMIT OF POWER

Amir Kabir's work in the Iranian delegation in Erzurum was greatly appreciated by Moḥammad Shah and the royal court. Through his diplomatic success, he proved his undeniable diplomatic talent and became a key figure in the state apparatus.[27] While retaining the post and title of *Wazir-e neẓam* (military chief), he was appointed *lala-bashi* (chief tutor) to Naṣer-al-Din, the crown prince, who was still only fifteen years old. In 1848, Moḥammad Shah, the third king of the Qajar dynasty, died, and young prince Naṣer-al-Din had to move to Tehran to assume the throne.[28] Given his central role in preparing for the advent of the new king, and shortly after leaving Tabriz, the young Shah awarded him the rank of *Amir-e Neẓam* (military chief), with full responsibility for the army. After arriving in Tehran, he was also appointed chief minister, with the supplementary titles of Amir Kabir and entitled *Ataback-e Azam* (chief minister) in October 1848. According to Amanat, the Shah found in Amir Kabir the ferocity of an army commander, the meticulousness of a divan accountant, and the political skills of a statesman.[29]

THREE YEARS OF REFORMS

Amir Kabir came to power at a time when the country was bankrupt and ruined, and the sociopolitical system was torn down. He was up against an underdeveloped economy and society with limited human and material resources. The central government was weak and unable to control the provinces caught up in different rebel movements.[30] A detailed review of the reforms initiated by Amir Kabir reveals the existence of a global project aiming at the rapid transformation of state apparatus, economic system, and education.[31] Amir Kabir was already known as a modern, rigorous, and reformist politician during his official practices in Tabriz with the crown prince. Through the reforms initiated, there was a political ideal that he sought: a legal and well-ordered administration and prosperous country, with undisputed authority exercised by the central government.[32]

To unpack his implementation of reforms and the choice of priority actions, one primarily should understand the context of the country at that time.[33] He had obtained his legitimacy from an absolutist monarchical system in a country without elective bodies and civic organizations. This centrality of power enabled him to introduce his reforms quickly from the top. However, before all, he had to establish order, security, and state authority in the provinces to begin his reforms.[34]

Amir Kabir was determined to make a wide range of social and economic reforms. For the first time, the state tried to set up an industrial and

commercial policy for economic development in the country. The first eco-
nomic reforms were about balancing the state treasury through attempting to
increase the public financial resources and reducing state expenditure.[35] The
system of taxes and customs duties was reorganized. He redefined the struc-
ture of a real national economy and introduced the increase of international
exchanges. Several innovative economic projects and modern factories were
quickly put in place. To modernize local production, craftsmen were sent to
Russia and the Ottoman Empire. For the first time, a trade policy was put in
place to support domestic production of the newly founded industries against
imported goods from foreign countries through increasing import taxes.[36]

FIRST IRANIAN INSTITUTION OF MODERN EDUCATION

The creation of the first Iranian institution of modern education can be
regarded as one of the primary and essential attempts at modernizing Iran. In
a historical perspective, despite a rich educational tradition, the old institu-
tions (*maktab* and *madrasa*) were unable to adapt themselves to the scientific
and educational changes of modern time. Before the development of modern
education in Iran, children received their early education in the *maktab*.[37]
Madrasa[38] was another traditional type of establishment institutionalized in
the late eleventh century.[39] Despite notable presence, the traditional education
of this period suffered from as a result of successive political crises particu-
larly from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. The exchanges between
Iran and neighboring as well as European countries gave birth to increasing
awareness about the importance of modern education.[40] In the nineteenth cen-
tury, reformists began to talk about new education or new school (*madrasa
djadid*), to distinguish it from the "old school."[41] The new education was at
the center of Iran's discourse of modernism and became the symbol of prog-
ress during this critical phase of the country's history.[42]

Historically, the first reformers thought to send students and craftsmen
abroad to learn the new science and production techniques. The emergence
of missionary schools since the 1830s[43] was yet another crucial educational
movement initiated by religious minorities.[44] Missionary schools became a
new experience in the cultural and educational environment of the time in
Iran, allowing many to understand the organizational structure of modern
education.[45] Compared to the traditional education, the curriculum of mis-
sionary schools introduced several major innovations: the introduction of new
and secular subjects such as foreign languages, science, or geography; a new
temporality, that is, the organization of the day, week, and school year; dis-
tribution of pupils in level classes; implementation of new teaching methods;

and use of modern teaching materials.[46] Despite their religious aims, missionary schools proposed an essentially secular curriculum. Their composition and content show the dominant place of nonreligious courses, namely foreign languages, geography, sciences, and mathematics. Missionary schools began rapidly to accept students from Muslim families, often at their request.[47] They were rather an unusual experience in the cultural and educational environment of Iran. According to Kardan,[48] Iranians had before their eyes a number of modern schools which, despite their religious aims, did not fail to inculcate in the Persians the mode of the modern organization of the teaching. Ravandi emphasizes the undeniable impact of these schools on the familiarization of Iranians with Western culture and the birth of innovative ideas about education.[49]

Familiar with the Western models, Amir Kabir followed the evolution of European educational systems and sought to start a project that went beyond initiatives like sending students abroad.[50] He aimed at building and funding modern Iranian schools in Iran. The discourse of modern school in Iran has always been associated with the socioeconomic progress.[51] Referring to the educational model developed in Europe in the nineteenth century, proponents of such thinking looked for a school whose mission was primarily to train the new elite and promote modern culture.[52] Amir Kabir thought that the European teachers should teach "Western sciences" and Iranians "Iranian sciences."

He launched the modern educational institution soon after his appointment as chief minister. He closely pursued the construction of the building and the recruitment of the first European teachers. Amir Kabir wrote about the director of this institution: "We need someone who knows both Iran and the West."[53] In a letter to Jane Dawud, the first secretary at the Persian legation in Saint Petersburg as early as of August 1850, Amir Kabir underlined the military and technical nature of the subjects to be taught at the new school. In his correspondence, several expressions were used to talk about this new institution: *Madrasa-ye jaded* (New school), *Madrasa-ye Neẓamiya* (School of Nezamiya*), and *Maktab-ḵanaye padšahi* (Royal School).[54] Jane Dawud, who had traveled to Europe on a recruitment mission, managed to employ a group of teachers mainly from Austria and Italy.[55]

In the first year of following its establishment, there were 105 students,[56] often between fourteen and nineteen years of age and who came from aristocracy families.[57] Iran at that time did not yet have a primary school system to prepare students at the secondary level, so they did not have the same educational backgrounds. Some had received a private education within their family, and others had attended traditional institutions or missionary schools. The school program lasted six years, and the first students graduated in

1858.[58] *Dar-al-Fonun* was founded with the main objective of training a new elite, especially in the technical, administrative, and military fields. The fact that a total of 71 out of 105 (70 percent) students were enrolled in the military streams—and 30 percent in the applied disciplines—clearly showed Amir Kabir's initial intention for the first phase of his project. This orientation was also explained by the most important needs of the government at that time.[59]

As correctly pointed out by,[60] *Dar-al-Fonun* influenced the society from the second half of the nineteenth century in three different but interrelated ways. First, it marked the official start of modern education and the introduction of a pedagogy based on an alternative body of knowledge, beyond religious studies. In spite of the limited enrollment, *Dar-al-Fonun* was a historic turning point in the secularization of education and provoked critical debates on the continuity and rupture between "old" and "new" sciences, "old school" and "new school," religious knowledge and scientific knowledge. *Dar-al-Fonun* proposed a type of knowledge that no longer had its origin in the religious institution and its discourse.[61] Second, it created and later helped expand dynamic intellectualism beginning with the translation of a large number of books and scientific or literary texts written by teachers and others. The graduates of *Dar-al-Fonun* then played vital roles in transforming the society and the development of science and modern education.[62]

THE MINORITIES AND REPRESSION OF BAB'S MOVEMENT

In reviewing Amir Kabir's legacy, many stress his policy of tolerance toward religious minorities, that is, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, with the exception of the Babis,[63] a rebel religious movement born before his arrival to power.[64] The Babi movement, which began in 1844, posed a major threat to the position of the Shi'a *Ulama*.[65] In order to suppress the movement and to contain its progression, the *Ulama* began to press the state to put an end to the movement, while seeking at the same time to heighten religious conservatism.[66] The Babis were not a religious minority like the others, and they were accused of heresy by the Shi'a *Ulama*. The severe military repression of this movement has been the subject of contradictory analyses in Iran. Those who study the military repression from the religious point of view seem to positively interpret Amir Kabir's policy.[67] For them, this movement was heretic and illegitimate; thus, its military repression was not only "justified" but also a mandate. Arguing against this position, many have sought to critically Amir Kabir's policy toward Babi movement. Despite significant differences, the danger of Babism to the orthodox Shi'a belief,[68] argues for instance, brought the *Ulama* and the chief minister closer. If for Amir Kabir the execution of

the Bab was made necessary by reasons of state, for the *Ulama* the issue was more serious.[69]

Amir Kabir's reaction to a rebel movement that was able to destabilize the country was consistent with his view of a strong and authoritarian central power. Amanat agrees that the Babi movement threatened the very survival of the Qajar throne.[70] However, the conflict with Babis was not the only source of instability since "during 1848–49, most of Khorasan was in the hands of the rebellious Hasan Khan Salar and his allies."[71] Amir Kabir's vision differed from that of the Bab in that it was reformist, not revolutionary. However, the burgeoning Babi movement had other ideas, the mood in many places on the Persian plateau was pregnant with menace and zealotry, and arms were hidden in anticipation of a general jihad against non-Babis.[72]

As pointed out by many, in its initial phase, the Babis were at the origin of a vast social movement strengthened with widespread support and the poor mullahs. Beyond the religious message, there were some radical reformist elements in this movement.[73] The place of women in society through the emblematic figure of this movement *Qorrat-al-ʿAyn*[74] was an important example of the social significance of initial Babism. According to Lambton, in Qajar times as earlier, movements of social revolt tended to take on a religious coloring because orthodoxy was associated with the ruling institution.

THE DOWNFALL OF MIRZA TAQI KHAN AMIR KABIR

The political career of Amir Kabir came to a sudden end in November 1851, when Naṣer-al-Din Shah removed him from power and ordered his assassination in January 1852. The relationship between the Shah and the chief minister had gradually deteriorated. Tensions seemed inevitable in an authoritarian monarchical system between a king who had all the power at the formal and symbolic levels and an ambitious chief minister who was allowed to hold expanding power to advance his reforms. The reforms instructed by Amir Kabir provoked resentment among relatives of royal court, *Ulama*, and anti-reformists who had to submit to the new *Amir Taqi Khani order* and see their benefits considerably diminished. In his letters to the Shah, he emphasized the mobilization of his detractors and opponents of the reforms.[75] The negative role of Amir Kabir's adversaries, especially within the royal court, has often pointed out by historians. According to Watson, the enemies of the Amir had never abandoned their efforts to shake the Shah's confidence in his minister. It was indeed a matter of surprise, Watson notes, "that a boy should have for so long a time been able to resist the oft-repeated solicitations of his mother and others for the dismissal of a plebeian *Vizeer*."[76]

Amir Kabir should be seen primarily, however, as an unusually loyal and effective servant of the traditional state whose primary objective was the strengthening of the central government.[77] In fact, there was a grave contradiction in Amir Kabir's conception of the royal system.[78] In his last letters to the Shah, he defended the legal regulation of affairs while emphasizing the absolute power of the king as the only political authority.[79] This ambivalence seemed to be a permanent trap and led to a political impasse because Naser-al-Din Shah could at any time decide to put an end to the reform process.

Amir Kabir's experience revealed the permanent fragility of reforms and reformist men within an authoritarian system. Amir Kabir attempted to institutionalize a system based on legality within a structure based on an absolutist monarchy. He was thus the victim of a contradiction at the top of the political power. His execution in the Bagh-i Fin near Kashan in 1852 based on the Shah's order ended the promise of social and political change.[80] The vested interests of those who influenced the young Shah against his chief minister meant they had to stop him from ever getting power again, and they effectively did so. With the dismissal and death of Amir Kabir, an important part of his reforms fell into abeyance; courtiers and *Ulama* regained their former pensions and privileges.[81]

Many scholars such as Amanat[82] and Keddie[83] have also pointed to the contradictions in the project of Amir Kabir's reform process. Amanat[84] argues that the confrontation between this reformist element and the Qajar establishment—the court functionaries, the nobility, and the army—seemed inevitable. According to him,[85] the downfall of Amir Kabir thus demonstrated the inherent weaknesses of ministerial power, even in its authoritarian and reform-oriented context, to emancipate the government from the arbitrary power of the Shah and the vested interests of the ruling elite. The combination of the three offices of a premiership, the commander-in-chief of the army, and the guardianship of the Shah concentrated enormous powers in the hand of Amir Kabir.

AMIR KABIR'S HERITAGE

Amir Kabir was a historical figure unanimously appreciated in the publications on the nineteenth century of Iran. Despite criticisms of his repression of the Babis, his political, economic, and social reforms are often considered highly positive or even exceptional. He is seen as the figure of modernization of the country or as a pioneer of Iranian nationalism,[86] "the founding father of reformism,"[87] or "Iran's Great Reformer of the Nineteenth Century."[88] There are four reasons for the historical importance of Amir Kabir: innovative initiatives to spread culture, knowledge, and applied sciences; primary

attempts at modernizations of the economic sectors; strengthening Iran's national identity and political independence from colonizing countries; and political and administrative reforms and the fight against corruption.[89] For Watson, Amir Kabir was a man who did so much to regenerate Iran: the only man who possessed at the same time the ability, the patriotism, the energy, and the integrity required to enable a Persian minister to conduct the vessel of state in safety past the shoals and rocks which lay in her course.[90] Watson sees Amir Kabir as a remarkable man, such as Caesar, Charlemagne, or Napoleon, a unique instrument in the hands of Providence for tracing out to the people the path they ought to follow. He had accomplished in a few years the labor of centuries and stamped with the seal of his genius a new era for his country.[91] The reforms that were implemented by Amir Kabir left their imprint on the history of Iran in the course of the nineteenth to twentieth century.[92] The three crucial years that followed Nasir al-Din's coronation (1948–1851) were enough to lay a viable foundation for the next forty-five years of his reign and gave him a much-needed chance to learn the art of government from his premier.[93]

The fact that these reforms were introduced in Iran gave a very important historical place to him. Through his project, Amir Kabir founded a conception of modernization. According to Amjad,[94] Nasir al-Din Shah's reign was the most important transforming period, mainly because of his reformist chief minister, Amir Kabir. For Amjad,[95] he was among a group of reformist politicians who favored reforms in the structure of the state and society.

But, beyond the reforms, Adamiyyat[96] correctly notes that Amir Kabir was the representative of the emerging Iranian nationalism. This nationalism was manifested above all in his strong attachment to the independence of the country, his foreign policy, and the constant aim of reducing foreign interference and defending national interests. The foreign policy of Amir Kabir was based on "negative equilibrium," refusing concessions with the rival colonial powers and avoiding alignment with either of them.[97] This conception had become an essential reference for foreign policy in Iran, a marker of politicians independence. To fight for the independence, he had to also reduce the influence of royalties within the court and administration, who enjoyed rather proximity with the colonial powers, especially the Russians and British. When he sought to recruit European teachers for Dar-al-Fonun, Amir Kabir was attentive to their origin since he did not wish to compromise his educational project to the geopolitical games of the great powers present in the region.[98] It was for this reason that he was interested in Austria or Italy instead of Russia, Great Britain, or France.

This nationalism, in its modern conception, was embryonic and was rooted more in political practices than in theoretical conceptualization. Amir Kabir, who had traveled to Russia and the Ottoman Empire, became acquainted

with modern institutions and used the new terms of "the zeal of nation and homeland" and "patriotism" (*gayrat-e mellat o ḵak o waṭanparasti*). He was primarily concerned with the infrastructural development of the government to safeguard Iran's integrity and self-determination.[99] Modernization of the army was another revealing example. In order not to reproduce the bitter experience of military cooperation with France and Great Britain at the time of Abbas Mirza, he avoided the great colonial countries and worked with countries such as Italy or Austria that were less involved in regional conflicts.[100]

SECULARIZATION OF THE IRANIAN SOCIETY

Amir Kabir was also a pioneer in the secularization of Iranian society. His correspondence with the Shah and other politicians shows clearly his attachment to the Shi'a orthodoxy. However, he was an active actor in the separation between the religious institution and *Ulama*—omnipresent in the public sphere at this time—and the state. His approach was sometimes silent when, through the modernization of institutions, he tried in practice to mark the boundary between the religious institution and political and civic affairs. He also occasionally opted for a more direct confrontation with the *Ulama* in certain fields, particularly concerning their interference in judicial matters. This conviction of the separation of the religious institution and the state was inspired by the reforms in Ottoman Empire. When explaining to the British consul at Tabriz in 1849 his determination to make the authority of the state paramount, he said, "The Ottoman government was able to begin reviving its power only after breaking the power of the mullahs."[101]

The modernization entailed attempts to secularize the educational curriculum and the judicial system.[102] The most significant step was the founding of the first educational institution outside the traditional power of the Shia clergy. Expressions such as "Western sciences" or "new sciences" used in the debates meant secular knowledge, excluded from traditional schools. *Dar-al-Fonun* was a frontal attack on the *Ulama*'s educational power and the Shah worried about the *Ulama*'s negative reaction. In his correspondence with the Shah, he tried to reassure the young king: "They will accept this school and send their children to study there."[103] But, in fact, *Dar-al-Fonun* meant a major break in education because the *Ulama* did not know this new science and could not teach it. They felt dispossessed of a traditional field of intervention in the society, and their mistrust toward the new institution was expressed by a clear loss of power. Indeed, neither the sending of students to Europe in 1811 nor the development of missionary schools since the 1830s directly challenged the absolute power of the *Ulama* on education.

Amir Kabir's attempts helped the birth of the first regular newspaper—*Ruz-nama-ye waqayeʿ-e ettefaqiya*—in Iran after the newspaper published by Mirza Saleh Shirazi.[104] The foundation of the first official newspaper was another important initiative to keep the society informed and communicate differently with public opinion in a country where the clergy largely dominated the direct and daily contact with the people.[105] The newspaper aimed to educate and inform the people in a new way about a country's political affairs and that of the world and the information on the progress of sciences and technology.[106] In its first issue, the objectives of the newspaper published under the direct responsibility of Amir Kabir have clearly announced: "It is the will of the monarchy to improve the knowledge of the people, to educate the Iranians and inform them about national and foreigner affairs. The reference of the newspaper was 'Gazette' and in other countries."[107] As such the *Ulama* as the main reference of knowledge lost their historical monopoly. Especially since the nature of the information provided by this new media was fundamentally different from religious knowledge.

The most fierce confrontation with religious institution was in the judicial field with Islamic law. Amir Kabir's challenge was not simple since in the complete absence of secular legal codes in the sphere of law, Shari's (Islamic) law was the only reference for the traditional courts. To replace the sheatʿ courts, he set up the divan-ḵana as the highest instance of civic jurisdiction, which had a more prominent role. Amir Kabir also attempted to reduce the *Ulama*'s power by putting a stop to an old-age practice of grant refuge (*bast neshini*) in their residences and the mosques.[108] Other demonstrations of such tensions between Amir Kabir and the *Ulama* were numerous. For example, the *Ulama* demanded of Amir Kabir that he prohibit the sale of alcohol; he agreed only to punish open drunkenness.[109]

CONCLUSION

Amir Kabir was the major figure of the reform movement within the monarchical institution in the nineteenth century. His reforms during the nineteenth century mainly targeted the centralized state with an effective army, efficient bureaucracy, regulated finance, efficient foreign policy, education, and economic development. He mainly focused on building a modern and robust state and an economic policy paving the way for the progress. He was one of the advocates of the idea of the "modern state," although no progress was made in changing the patrimonial structures of the state during the nineteenth century.[110] Through his projects, Amir Kabir founded a model of modernization, shared by the other reformists within the monarchical system in the nineteenth century. For him, the Shah had absolute power, but at the same time,

this power remained rather symbolic because it was the executive system that required the real power to manage the country. It was then, according to Amir Kabir, up to the chief minister to exercise real power in the name of the Shah. This ambiguous separation of power at the top of the state was a fragile and unstable equilibrium since it was not built on a legal basis, but on the good will of the royal court. He was aware of the fragility of this conception of power and stressed in a letter to the ambassador of the United Kingdom and Russia: "In the absence of a parliament, all laws are conditioned by the royal will."[111] It was for this reason that Amir Kabir, despite his reforms, did not change the nature of the authoritarian monarchical order.

What was called the *Mirza Taqi Khani*'s order can be taken as a conception of the political system implemented by Amir Kabir: a model of modernization, founded on an authoritarian approach from top to down. According to Amanat, his method of controlling the state's machinery, his treatment of political dissent, and his militaristic ethos owed as much to the Qajar political culture as to Amir Kabir's vision of a centralized state with a powerful monarch at its head.[112] For Amir Kabir, an efficient political system was founded on a central and strong state and a vertical organization led by a chief minister whose powers were granted by the king. For Amanat, this conception could result from the chaotic situation of Iran in the middle of the nineteenth century grappling with regional revolts and foreign countries' threats. Amir Kabir relied on the good wishes of the Shah as the key to realizing his vision of reforms—although the young Shah did not seem at the outset to share his premier's vision.[113]

Several authors like Lorentz,[114] Adamiyyat,[115] or Algar[116] think that Amir Kabir was a pioneer of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 since he was the progenitor of various political and social changes that came about half a century later. For Lorentz, "it is not uncommon, for Amir Kabir to be reckoned among the precursors of the Constitutional Revolution, but the effect of his policies contributed to the development of revolutionary factors primarily by their failure."[117] One of the rare documents directly mentioning Amir Kabir and his wish to put in place a constitutional system is a text written by Mirza Yaghoub according to which Amir Kabir had said, "They did not let me do it, otherwise I intended to make a constitution."[118] Insofar as Amir Kabir's writings and notes were not found,[119] it is unclear whether he in fact considered adopting a constitutional system. However, the analysis of his practices of power and conception of modernization has led to thinking of him as an "enlightened despotism." Adamiyyat[120] also referred to Watson[121] (1866) to characterizing the system put in place by Amir Kabir as an "enlightened despotism."[122] This reference to enlightened despotism seems to be particularly true in the Iranian context marked by the absence of democratic organizations and debates or the critical analysis of the absolute monarchy.[123]

Abrahamian[124] considers the structure of the state in Qajar as a "prototypical oriental despotism." Amir Arjomand[125] also agrees that the nature of the government during Qajar was "patrimonial" according to Weber's typology.

Amir Kabir was a central figure in emerging nationalism without being anti-Western. His conception of Iran's modernization and independence from the industrialized countries was also sometimes perceived as "paradoxical." For Ringer, there was a "modernization dilemma,"[126] a paradigm that would shape all subsequent conceptions of Iranian modernity. The modernization dilemma was the attempt to use European models for Iranian modernization and to adopt European technology and knowledge while at the same time guarding against a loss of cultural agency and authenticity.

The downfall of Amir Kabir was a severe defeat for the reforms even though his experience remained a reference and a source of instigation influencing the events of the following decades and the emergence of new reformist generations within the state. The story of Amir Kabir, Amanat notes, did not end with his death. The collapse of his regime represented something greater than the tragic fall of a grand V*izier*.[127] In the collective imaginary of Iranian society, Amir Kabir is often seen as an exemplary statesman. Seeing in him a unique embodiment of honesty, patriotism, and efficiency, Amir Kabir represents an exceptional figure in the Iranian collective memory. Amir Kabir is a unanimously idolized personality, and it can be said that his exceptional life history and how he was removed from power and subsequently assassinated contributed to a very positive image of him. He was one of the most capable and innovative figures to appear in the whole Qajar period[128] and has become the symbol of a competent, strong, honest, courageous, progressive, independent, and noncorrupt statesman. These distinctive features made it possible for him to become the ideal personality of the Iranian collective imagination. The courage to defend the national interest and the permanent concern for independence vis-à-vis the great powers made him a central figure in the development of Iranian nationalism. For Amanat,[129] the dismissal—and later execution—of Amir Kabir was a turning point in Nasir al-Din Shah's reign, as it was in the history of modern Iran. In the Iranian collective psyche, the period of Amir Kabir is seen as Iran's precious chance to break away from the inertia of her past and come to terms with the modern world.

NOTES

1. An intellectual is a person whose activity refers to the exercise of the mind often in a critical perspective. Another trait of the intellectual relies on his involvement in the public sphere to share his analyses, his points of view on societal issues or to defend values. An intellectual usually does not assume direct responsibility in the

political field to adopt a distorted perspective. The intellectual is a different personality from the philosopher or scientist who worked in a particular conceptual field (see Johnson, 1974; Ory and Sirinelli, 2002).

2. Since 1935, the name of Persia is replaced by its native name, Iran.

3. See Farmanfarmian, 2008; Katouzian, 2000; Keddie, 2002; Kelly, 2006; Shamim, 1993; Yarshater, 2005.

4. M. A. Kardan, *L'organisation scolaire en Iran (histoire et perspective)*, Thèse de doctorat, Université de Genève, 1957.

5. M. Piri, The Extension of Cultural Dominance in Iran with the Establishment of New Schools in Ghajar Period, *International Education Studies*, 9(5), (2016), 173–82.

6. The first innovation in military training was introduced into the Iranian army in 1807: it was then a military engineering training led by a French officer, Lamy. See Kardan, 1957; Naraghi, 1992.

7. See Adamiyyat, 1982; Amanat, 1997; Eqbal Ashtiani, 1961.

8. See Cronin, 2008; Farmanfarmian, 2008.

9. See Ekhtiar, 1999; Maḥbubi-Ardakani, 1999.

10. S. Paivandi, *Religion et éducation en Iran, l'échec de l'islamisation de l'école* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006).

11. The first group, consisting of two people, was sent to London in 1811 to study medicine and painting followed by five more in 1815 (engineering, medicine, and military technology).

12. See Cronin, 2008; Ekhtiar, 1999; Kardan, 1957; Naraghi, 1992; Paivandi, 2006.

13. Y. Arienpour, *Az Saba ta Nima. Tarikh 150 saal adab Farsi* [*From Saba to Nima. The 150-year history of Persian literature*] (Téhéran: Zavar, 1372 (Persian), 1993).

14. Paivandi, 2006, *op.cit.*

15. M. M. Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2001).

16. See Adamiyyat, 1982; Eqbal Ashtiani, 1961.

17. See F. Adamiyya, *Amir Kabir wa Irān* [*Amir Kabir and Iran*] (Tehran: Kharazmi (Persian), 1982).

18. See Algar, 1989; Eqbal Ashtiani, 1961.

19. See Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*

20. Alexander Sergeevich Griboedov (1794–1829), Russian writer, poet, and playwright, joined the Russian administration in Transcaucasia in 1819 and was sent to Tehran to establish the Russian Mission. He was appointed ambassador (*wazir-e moktar*) to Persia in 1828 and killed during a riot in Tehran on February 11, 1829. Fatḥ-Ali Shah and Abbas Mirza, being scared of that the Russians may use Griboedov's death as a pretext for beginning of a new armed conflict, sent a delegation, headed by prince Ḵosrow Mirza, a son of ʿAbbas Mirza, to Russia to apologize (see Kelly, 2002; Bournoutian, 2002).

21. L. Kelly, *Diplomacy and Murder in Tehran: Alexander Griboydov and Imperial Russia's Mission to the Shah of Persia* (London: Tauris Parke Paperback, 2006).

22. See Adamiyyat, 1982; Bournoutian, 2002; Makki, 1994; Shamim, 1993.

23. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*, pp. 60–61.

24. See Adamiyyat, 1982; Eʿtemad-al-Salṭana, 1988; Shamim, 1993.

25. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*

26. Ibid.

27. Algar, 1989; Sheil, 1856; Watson, 1866.

28. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*, pp. 192–93.

29. A. Amanat, The Downfall of Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir and the Problem of Ministerial Authority in Qajar Iran, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 23(4), (1991), 577–99, p. 108.

30. See Bakhash, 1971; Katouzian, 2000; Lorentz, 1971; Shamim, 1993.

31. Mirza Mostafa Afchar, one of the members of the Iranian delegation who went to Russia in 1829, described three factors that allowed Russia to catch up with Europe and enter the modern-day "asr jadid": a powerful army, the development of modern education, and a strong centralized state (Ringer, 2001, *op.cit.*, p. 59).

32. H. Algar, Amir Kabir, Mirza Taqi Khan, *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I(9), (1989), 959–63, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/amir-e-kabir-mirza-taqi-khan (accessed on 30 December 2018).

33. See Adamiyyat, 1982; Amanat, 1991.

34. A. Eqbal Ashtiani, *Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir* (Tehran: University of Tehran (Persian), 1961).

35. See Adamiyyat, 1982; Keddie, 2002.

36. See Adamiyyat, 1982; Eqbal Ashtiani, 1961.

37. Over the centuries, the *maktab* became a widespread institution that provided basic education to a large number of children (girls and boys). Under the tutelage of a *mulla* (clergy or his wife) or an educated person, pupils learned the Koran (Quran) and sacred texts, religious and moral lessons, and sometimes literature.

38. Between eleventh and thirteenth centuries, several *madrasas* (school) were created in major Persian cities (Shiʿite and Sunnis). The Safavids (1501–1722) declared Shiʿism as the official religion of Persia in the early sixteenth century, and from that time the number of Shiʿite madrasas increased rapidly. Compared to *Maktab*, *Madrasa* was like a theological school at a higher level. Madrasa became the main training center of the Shiite clergy (Naraghi, 1992). The core of the *madrasa* curriculum is the religious sciences (ʿolūm-e naqlī), based on the Koran and traditions from the Prophet and the imams, Islamic law (*feqh*), and theology (*kalām*) (see Makdisi, 1981).

39. See Kardan, 1956; Naraghi, 1992; Paivandi, 2006.

40. Arienpour, 1993; Bayat, 1982; De Bellaigue, 2017; Ekhtiar, 1999; Ringer, 2001.

41. S. Paivandi, The Meaning of the Islamization of the School in Iran, in *Education in West Asia*, ed. M. Ahmed (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 79–102.

42. See Kardan, 1957; Paivandi, 2006.

43. The first modern school (American Boy's School) was established in 1834 in Urmia (Azerbaijan Province, Northwest) by Justin Perkins (1805–1865), an American Lutheran. This school graduated seven students the first year and thirty

the following year. The first school for girls, under the direction of Mrs. Grant, was opened in 1838 with only four pupils, increasing to forty several months later (see Kardan, 1957). American schools offered a five-year curriculum with the following subjects: English, Persian, Turkish, mathematics, history, and geography. After the first American school, Eugène Boré (1809–1878) created the first French school in Tabriz (Azerbaijan) in 1839 (see Boré, 1879). The Lazarists founded two schools in Tehran, Saint Louis and Jeanne d'Arc, which enrolled both Christian and Muslim children (see Paivandi, 2006). According to Nategh, the number of pupils in these schools (girls and boys) was 516 in 1841 and 1143 in 1842 (see Nategh, 2014).

44. See Kardan, 1957; Nategh, 2014; Paivandi, 2006.

45. Kardan, 1957, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

46. Paivandi, 2006, *op.cit.*

47. Baron de Bode, the Russian traveler who had visited the school of Boré, writes, "Boré introduced me to his school, although it has only been inaugurated for five months, 31 students study there including 5 Muslims. Progress in reading and geography by these students is remarkable" (see Nategh, 1996, p. 162). In his diary of October 19, 1840, Boré wrote, "Today, Mohamed Hassan brought his son to my school. It is the first Muslim child who, in Isfahan, had the courage, for the sake of learning, to come and sit on the same benches as the Armenians" (see Boré, 1879, p. 57).

48. Kardan, 1957, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

49. M. Ravandi, *Tahavolat Farhangi va tarikh amouzesh dar Iran va dar Europe* [*The Evolution of Culture and History of Education in Iran and Europe*] (Tehran: Gooya, 1364 (Persian), 1985), p. 93.

50. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*

51. See Ekhtiar, 1999; Maḥbubi-Ardakani, 1999; Naraghi, 1992; Navabi, 1990; Piri, 2016; Ringer, 2001.

52. See Navabi, 1990; Paivandi, 2006.

53. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*, p. 362.

54. Ibid., pp. 357–58.

55. The group comprised Alfred Baron de Gumoëns (infantry); Johann von Nemiro (cavalry); Captain Zatti (engineering); Captain Joseph Czarnotta (mineralogy); Lieutenant August Kržiž (artillery); and Dr. Jacob Eduard Polak (medicine). See Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*

56. The 105 students were enrolled in the seven main fields: infantry (30), cavalry (5), artillery (26), engineering (12), medicine (20), pharmacy, (7) and mining (5). The program offered such subjects as chemistry, physics, biology, mathematics, painting, music, and foreign languages (French, English, Russian) (see Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*).

57. Jane Dawud and the group of teachers reached Tehran on November 24, 1851, but Amir Kabir had been dismissed two days earlier. Despite the unexpected departure of Amir Kabir, *Dar-al-Funon* formally started its activities on December 29, 1951.

58. See Gurney and Nabavi, 1993; Navabi, 1990; Shahvar, 2009.

59. The percentage of students in military sciences has been sharply reduced from 70 percent in 1851 to under 30 percent in late 1880s. Military training has been progressively separated from other study programs. See Shahvar, 2009, *op.cit.*

60. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*

61. See Algar, 1989; Gurney and Nabavi, 1993; Navabi, 1990.

62. J. Gurney and N. Nabavi, Dar-Al-Fonun, *Encyclopædia Iranica*, VI(6), (1993), 662–68.

63. Babism was a messianic movement triggered by Sayyed ʿAli-Moḥammad Shirazi (1819–1850) (Bab) who claimed to be the gate (hence the origin of Bab's name) preparing the way for the return of the hidden Imam. The young *mullah* who had become popular claimed to be the promised imam in person and the abrogation of the Islamic law. The authorities, both *Ulama* and governmental, found themselves in a dilemma, for while the threat posed by Bab was reel, persecuting or killing him might simply increase his popularity. A theological debate was organized in 1448, in the presence of the young Nasser al-Din, crown prince. Finally under the pressure of the *Ulama*, he was arrested and his claim denounced as heretical. The believers of this new religion organized armed resistance in several cities (Zanján, Babol, Neyríz) during the period of transition between Mohammad Shah and Naser al-Din Shah. After several bloody battles in 1848, the Bábí insurrections were defeated and their leaders executed. Bab was sentenced to death too and executed in Tabriz in 1850 (see Amanat, 1981, 1989; Sanasarian, 2000; Smith, 1982).

64. See Amanat, 1989; Bayat, 1982; Fischel, 1950; Ringer, 2001; Sanasarian, 2000; Yeroushalmi, 2009.

65. See Amanat, 1981, 1989; De Bellaigue, 2017; Momen, 1981; Smith, 1982.

66. S. Shahvar, *The Forgotten Schools: The Baha'is and Modern Education in Iran, 1899–1934* (London: I.B. Tauris (International Library of Iranian Studies), 2009), p. 29.

67. See Adamiyyat, 1981; Eqbal Ashtiani, 1961; Eʿtemad-al-Salṭana, 1988; Hašemi Rafsenjani, 1967; Makki, 1994; Shamim, 1993.

68. Algor, 1989, *op.cit.*, p. 136.

69. Eqbal Ashtiani, *Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir*, p. 164.

70. A. Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir Al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), p. 109.

71. Ibid., p. 114.

72. See De Bellaigue, 2017; Sanasarian, 2000.

73. See Fadaee, 2012; Ringer, 2001; Smith, 1982.

74. Qorrat-al-ʿAyn (Tahereh) (1814–1852) was an influential poet and theologian of Babis' movement. Through his participation in political and military battles, she became an emblematic figure and the first women's right activist of nineteenth century in Iran (see Amanat, 1981; Momen, 1981; Smith, 1982).

75. See Adamiyyat, 1982; Eqbal Ashtiani, 1961; Keddie, 2002.

76. R. G. Watson, *A History of Persia* (London: Watson, 1866), p. 398.

77. N. Nabavi, *Dar-al-Fonun. The First Modern College in Iran*, M.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1990.

78. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*, pp. 684–89.

79. F. Adamiyyat mentions a letter sent to the embassies of Russia and Great Britain in which Amir Kabir stressed, "Since there is no parliament in Iran, the laws are legitimized by the royal decision" (1982, p. 653).

80. R. N. Keddie and M. Amanat, Iran under the Later Qajars 1848–1922, in *The Cambridge History of Iran. From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, eds. P. Avery, G. R. Hambly, and C. Melville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 174–212, p. 181.

81. Ibid., p. 182.

82. Amanat, The Downfall of Mirza Taqi Khan, 577–99.

83. R. N. Keddie, *Qajar Iran, and the Rise of Reza Khan 1796–1925* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2002).

84. Amanat, 1991, *op.cit.*, p. 578.

85. Ibid., p. 596.

86. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*

87. Algar, 1989, *op.cit.*

88. J. H. Lorentz, Iran's Great Reformer of the Nineteenth Century: An analysis of Amir Kabir's Reforms, *Iranian Studies*, 4(2–3), (1971), 85–103, p. 85.

89. See Adamiyyat, 1982; Amanat, 1991; Ekhtiar, 1999; Keddie, 2002; Lambton, 1987; Lorentz, 1987.

90. Watson, 1866, *op.cit.*, p. 404.

91. Ibid., p. 404.

92. D. Yeroushalmi, *The Jews of Iran in the Nineteenth Century: Aspects of History. Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

93. Amanat, 1997, *op.cit.*, p. 109.

94. M. Amjad, *Iran: from Royal Dictatorship to Theocracy. Contributions in Political Science* (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1989).

95. Ibid.

96. Adamiyyat, 1982, o*p.cit.*

97. See Algar, 1989, o*p.cit.*

98. Paivandi, 2006, *op.cit.*

99. Algar, 1989, *op.cit.*

100. S. Cronin, Importing Modernity: European Military Missions to Qajar Iran, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 50(1), (2008), 197–226.

101. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*, p. l84.

102. Ringer, 2001, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

103. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*, p. 367.

104. The first (monthly) Iranian newspaper was founded by Mirza Saleh Shirazi in 1837 (see Adamiyyat, 1982; Arienpour, 1993), one of the first students sent to London to study. The publication of this pioneering journal lasted only a few years.

105. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*, pp. 371–74.

106. Among the items reported in the first year of publication were the struggles of Mazzini against the Habsburg Empire, the drawing up of the Suez Canal project, the invention of the balloon, a census of England, and the doings of cannibals in Borneo.

107. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*, p. 372.

108. See Eqbal Ashtiani, 1961; Keddie, 1971; Makki, 1994.

109. Algar, 1989, *op.cit.*, p. 136.

110. S. Fadaee, *Social Movements in Iran: Environmentalism and Civil Society* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), p. 38.

111. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*, p. 653.
112. Amanat, 1997, *op.cit.*, p. 200.
113. Ibid., p. 108.
114. Lorentz, 1971, *op.cit.*, p. 85.
115. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*
116. Algar, 1989, *op.cit.*
117. Lorentz, 1971, *op.cit.*, p. 136.
118. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*, p. 223.
119. Apart from *preserved* Amir Kabir's correspondences, the two supposedly texts of him were not found because it seems they were destroyed by his political opponents. Adamiyyat (*op. cit.*, 1982) asserts that Amir Kabir wrote his ideas in a text called *Atabak's Ideas*. It seems also that there was also a journal of personal notes.
120. Adamiyyat, 1982, *op.cit.*
121. Watson, 1866, *op.cit.*
122. The Amir's system of government was that which experience has proved to be the most beneficial for an Oriental nation—an enlightened despotism. He made no pretense of wishing to educate the people, or of consulting their inclinations. He professed to endeavor to secure their material well-being and to restrain their evil propensities. But the minister aimed at far more than this; and had his measures been permanently effected, their adoption would have indicated nothing less than a radical change in Persian morality and Persian manners (see Watson, 1866, *op.cit.*, p. 370).
123. See Amanat, 1997; Amjad, 1989; Bakhash, 1971; Katouzian, 2000; Keddie, 1971.
124. E. Abrahamian, Oriental Despotism: The Case of Qajar Iran, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 5(1), (1974), 3–31, p. 33.
125. S. Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown. The Islamic revolution in Iran* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 24.
126. Ringer, 2001, *op.cit.*, p. 41.
127. Amanat, 1997, *op.cit.*, p. 200.
128. Gurney and Nabavi, 1993, *op.cit.*
129. Amant, 1991, *op.cit.*, p. 577.

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Crafting Iranian National Imaginary

The Interwar Period (1918–1935)

Ali Mirsepassi

INTRODUCTION

The interwar years were the period when the critical elements of Iranian national imaginary (nationalism) were crafted, or more precisely it began but remained unfinished. Important ideas on the nature of the modern Iranian nation-state received articulation, while its self-image was established against "cultural others," principally the threats of pan-Turkish (neo-Ottoman) ideology. This essay documents how the Iranian self-imaginary was partially formed in reaction to the racialized discourse of new neo-Ottoman national identity. I argue that an intellectual and political struggle occurred to write *The Discovery of Iran*, starting in the early 1900s and extending to the 1930s. Important Iranian intellectuals who contributed to this struggle for national articulation were many, including the following: Hasan Taghizadeh, Mohammad Ali Foroughi, Ali Akbar Davar, Isa Sadigh, Ali Asghar Hekmat, Nosratoddoleh Firuz, Mohammad Taghi Bahar, Mohammad Mosaddegh, Ahmad Kasravi, and Shari'at Sangelaji. In this chapter, I will focus on Taghi Arani's writings on Iranian national imaginary. I will argue that Arani's thought was part of a far larger intellectual and political wave, which also figures in the story of thinking about the modern Iran. Each of these individuals contributed significantly in shaping the debates which generated the beginnings of *The Discovery of Iran*, which was never completed, and it is still an *unfinished project*.

THE IDEA OF COSMOPOLITAN NATIONALISM

The late-nineteenth-century Iranian intellectuals faced the decline of a constellation of older imaginings of Iran as a nation. They were therefore obliged

to craft the idea of a "new Iran," while defining its place in the modern world. Although a "nationalist" project, the Iranian imagining was an outward-looking, progressive, and modern vision. This new Iranian imagining was the adjunct of several historically pivotal Iranian revolution. Combining intellectual and political transformations in the tandem of anti-colonial struggle, the revolution defined Iran's *Mashruteh* (constitutional) tradition. Upon the intellectual plane, the "new Iran" corresponded to the "civic nationalist" tradition of democratic cosmopolitanism. It did not belong to the then more widespread "cultural nationalism," whose narrowly identarian politics dominated the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rather than an insular "nationalism" designed to fragment and disperse, the Iranian national imaginings were multidimensional, conceived for cultural boundary crossing and embrace of difference. The "civic nationalist" idea describes a "political identity built around shared citizenship," as opposed to nations based on cultural or ethnic identity.[1] As we will see, Taghi Arani (1903–1940) and many other Berlin-based Iranian intellectuals began writing about Iran as a nation with a unified language, racial identity, and history in the post–World War I era (1919–1930). Arani, however, in his mature 1930s work, came to explicitly reject his earlier "ethnic nationalist" stance. He articulates an idea-complex conceiving Iran as a cosmopolitan and modern nation, embracing civic virtues and social justice. Arani's Iran is open to scientific and intellectual ideas from every part of the world.[2]

Arani's radical secularism represented the idea of "civic nationalism" as combining transnationalism and cosmopolitan while articulating Iran as a nation related to the multiple dimensions of its past and future. Arani, in contrast to many of his contemporaries, especially *Gharbzadegi* intellectual pioneers from the 1950s to the 1970s, articulated a balanced and thoughtful conception of Iran as a nation. He detailed Iran's relations to its past history (both pre- and post-Islamic), while relating these to the modern West in its complex and conflicting facets. Arani presented a new and original idea of Iran, transcending the cultural nationalism of the secularists and the Westoxification discourse dominating the second half of Iran's twentieth century.

This research examines a new approach to studying the nation as an imagined idea. In some cases, "transnational" encounters function as the prior condition for thinking about the nation. This is particularly the case with intellectuals and political figures involved in the struggle to debate and resist "outside" forces against their "homelands," as well as "local" political leaders and rulers. Nationalism is often reduced to a limited and exclusivist intolerance of others. Intellectuals in anti-colonial struggles were frequently fewer agents of the national state, instead operating as guardians "caring for the nation." In the interwar Iranian context, intellectuals such as Arani,

as reflected in his mature works, were not nationalists embracing narrow-minded assumptions of cultural superiority, but politically committed to Iran and its people while fearing its collapse under double British-Russian occupation, as well as new Ottoman expansionism. Iranian intellectuals of this milieu, committed to the "care of the people," sought to materially transform Iran into a modern and just society. The corollary of "care of the nation" was open-minded acceptance of ideas and practices from elsewhere in the world. This cosmopolitan vision included criticism of selected Iranian values, ideas, or practices. Yet it did not fit a dichotomous universal/local pattern, a caricature that would fail to explain its genuine complexity.

The idea of "caring for the nation" is essential to understanding the Iranian historical interval under discussion. It permits engagement with both regional and world cultural traditions, as well as the more radical traditions of modern Iranian history. It explains serious attempts by citizens to reshape the Iranian nation in new ways, transcending the self-defining limits of conventional "nationalist" terminology.

THE IRANIAN INTERWAR EXPERIENCE (1919–1934)

In the Iranian context, World War I (1914–1918) followed the Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911. The interwar years saw political transition and nation-building, combined with a major evolution in the intellectual history of modern Iranian nationalism. This chapter will document the crafting of critical elements of Iranian nationalism during this revolutionary time. A detailed and serious examination of core intellectual debates is required to fully understand the specificities of the twentieth-century Iranian national trajectory. As critical ideas emerged to variously define the modern Iranian state, its self-image was set against its "cultural others," in Arab and Turkish cultures. It should be also noted that the Iranian self-imaginary,[3] at least partially, was formed in reaction to the racialized discourse of Turkish (Ottoman) national identity.

During this interwar period, intellectual writings on modern Iranian national identity were inspired initially by the European Orientalist influence, then subsequently by the Iranian intellectuals' reaction to Turkish nationalism (in its Pan-Turkish incarnation). The Orientalist reading of Iranian cultural history helped Iranian nationalists to develop a distinctly anti-Arab sense of Iranian identity. Meanwhile, the Turkish nationalist encouragement of Iranian Azeris to join the new Republic encouraged an articulation of racialized Iranian national identity. This partially explains why many social movements resisting Iranian state organization, from this period to present, emerge from among ethnic minorities. This important issue has remained unresolved in the Iranian national context.

The interwar period was shaped by critical intellectual debates, on the nature and cultural identity of the modern Iranian nation. Essential and intellectually searching ideas on Iran's historical predicaments were articulated. These concerned Iran's relations with the West and other Islamic communities, religion and secularism, and gender relations. Debates reflected an especially tumultuous but also deeply creative period. Unfortunately, the interwar years have become overshadowed by the attention given to the prewar period, the Mashruteh period of the World War II, and its aftermath. There is a pressing need for deeper scholarly investigation of this neglected historical period, defined by tragic circumstances but path-breaking intellectual creativity.

The Iranian government's early reaction to the World War I outbreak was to declare Iran's neutrality with a royal decree on November 1914. However, despite its official neutrality, Iran became a front for a concert of imperial powers. It therefore endured British and Russian invasions, with Ottoman and German states also intervening in Iranian political affairs:

> The Ottomans, allied to the Germans, in their drive to the Caucasus and Baku, first occupied Urumiyeh where they armed Isma'il Khan Simku, a Kurdish chief, against Iranian authorities, as well as against local Assyrians and Armenians. The Ottomans then moved into Azerbaijan which they claimed as part of their Turkic world. In their brief occupation of Tabriz, they deported Sheykh [Mohammad] Khiyabani, the popular leader of the local Democrats, because he was helping Armenian insurgents against the Caliphate.[4]

The war increased foreign pressure on Iranian internal politics, triggering a widening of a long-standing Iranian political rift. The central government was conflict-ridden, besieged with internal and factional divisions. Ervand Abrahamian argues,

> By 1920 Iran was a classic "failed state"—to use modern terminology. The ministries had little presence outside the capital. The government was immobilized not only by rivalries between the traditional magnates and between the new political parties, but also by the Anglo-Persian Agreement. Some provinces were in the hands of "warlords," others in the hands of armed rebels. The Red Army had taken over Gilan and was threatening to move on to Tehran.[5]

IRANIANS IN INTERWAR BERLIN

The interwar period in German history, 1918–1933, is referred to as the Weimar Republic. Berlin experienced a politically vibrant period, as the culturally tolerant city became the center of flowering artistic, political, and

cultural activities. Emerging as the intellectual and creative center of Europe, Berlin was the scene of pioneering work in modern literature, theater, and the arts, as well as revolutionizing the fields of psychoanalysis, sociology, and science. Germany's economy and political affairs were suffering gravely, but cultural and intellectual life flourished. This period in German history is often referred to as the "Weimar Renaissance."

Before the outbreak of World War I, very few Iranians lived in Germany. The journal *Iranshahr*, published in Berlin, in a report on "The Oriental Students in Germany," lists the number of students in Germany. The report expressed concerns that Iranian students included only 70 individuals, whereas there were 200 students from Egypt and 400 from China.[6] The same journal subsequently reported:

> We are delighted to see that, lately, the number of Iranian students in Germany is growing. As we reported in the Issue number 3 of this Journal, there were only 70 students in Germany then. Now, there are more than 120 students.[7]

This period was also very important in the histories of Germany and Iran. Within this political context, Berlin became an important center of both political and intellectual activities for Iranians:

> In the period between 1915 to 1930, a group of Iranian thinkers and freedom seeking activists resided in Berlin. They published several journals and newspapers, while discussing ideas and issues which have been critical in the historical development of modern Iranian thought.[8]

Two generations of Iranians resided in Berlin during this period:

> The first generation [of Iranians in Berlin] were those who, after "the lesser autocracy" [*estebdad-e saghir*],[9] occupation of Azerbaijan, and the defeat of the interim Government, left Iran for Istanbul. They subsequently founded the Committee of Iranian Nationalists assisted by the German government.[10]

These individuals were well-known political or literary figures, older than the second generation of Iranians. Arani belonged to the second generation of Iranians to arrive in Berlin. He moved to Berlin for study:

> The second generation were the young [Iranians] who left Iran between 1921 and 22, coming to Berlin to study. They established the journal, *Nameh-e Farangestan* and *Peykar* newspaper.[11]

Iranian intellectuals and activists, who were either interested in nationalism or Marxism, made Berlin a "cultural" center of debates. Their journals, and

intellectual and political activities, influenced the broader world of Iranian national politics and culture:

> The Iranians in Berlin during World War I and in the interwar period did not try to make a new "home" in the adopted country. Rather, they focused mostly on reconstructing their sense of Iran's social and political course. The home-land should follow a course reflecting its long and rich history, as well as its traditions.[12]

THE RUŞENI (BARKIN) AFFAIRS

In the following, I will discuss this transnational discursive conjuncture by focusing on the infamous talk by Ruşeni (Barkın), or Roshani Beyg as is known in Iran,[13] delivered on July 21, 1923, at the Society of Turk Ojaghi (Turkish Hearth) in Istanbul. Ruşeni was a mysterious person at the time. We are still not altogether clear on who he was. We do know that he was an agent of the *Union and Progress Party* for the Caucasus, a party that propa-gated Young Turk racialist ideology. It may also be that he was a member of Ottoman secret service, *Teshkilat-e Mahsusa*. Ruşeni engaged in activities to foster Turkish influence in the region, spending several years in Iran. He served as a deputy in the Turkish parliament after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire as Ruşeni (Barkın), authoring the famous pamphlet "There is no reli-gion just Nationality" (*Din Yok Milliyet Var*).[14]

Ruşeni (Barkın) opens his talk with a mapping of the Iranian ethnic geog-raphy, stressing the abundance of people of so-called Turkish ethnicity in the country. He even characterizes "all boats" in the Caspian Sea as "Turkish":

> Azerbaijan, with Khamseh and Kurdistan, are completely Turkish and their population is about 3.5 million. Gilan, meanwhile, is inhabited by Persians. Extending from Estakhrabad to the Pamir plains, there is another Turkmen area. These Turkmen—in their beliefs, habits and influences—are just like us. Northern Iran is Turkish in its entirety. In the Khazar Sea [Caspian Sea], all boats, boatmen and captains are Turkish. A bit to the south lies Kurdistan and Kermanshah. To the south of Savojbolagh, there is a Turkish area. Slightly further to the south lies Lorestan, inhabited by Kurds who number 2.5 million.[15]

Ruşeni explains to his audience how the most productive and attractive parts of Iran are either inhabited by people of Turkish ethnicity or strongly shaped by Turkish history and culture. He stresses that these areas have the highest-quality land and natural resources in the country. He recognizes that central and parts of northern Iran contain people of Persian background, with other

small minorities including Arabs and Jews. Ruşeni (Barkın) also describes the original Turkish migration to Iran through the lens of his nationalist narrative. He correctly cites Turkish tribes and frontier people having migrated to Iran during the Saljuk Dynasty (tenth and eleventh centuries), and a separate episode of Turkish incursion from central Asia. However, Ruşeni describes them as forming Turkish nations:

> What is the Turk doing here, and from where has he come? To answer this question, we require recourse to history. Since the earliest of times, Seljuks, and other Turkish nomads, have settled their nations in military hubs. This explains why Turks reside there.[16]

Ruşeni (Barkın) even suggests that the most valuable cultural qualities of what is known as Iran are in its Turkish parts:

> Turks live in the most beautiful and important territory of the country [Iran]. The people of the land are mostly engaged in farming, gardening, and cultivating fruit trees, where they harvest abundant fruit. Iranian animals are of superior quality to those of Anatolia. Fruits are important in Isfahan, but they are more plentiful in Azerbaijan. Tabriz counts 15 varieties of grapes. There is a cultivation of mulberry trees and, from them, silk products as well as cotton. Wool is used inside the country to make carpets, robes and thick fabric. Zoroastrians of Yazd and Kerman are mostly employed in farming cotton.[17]

Ruşeni's overall argument is less that of a Turkish person advocating all-Turkish unity, or even Iranian-Turkish separation. His argument embodies a civilizational discourse. Engaging in a sociological and cultural exploration of Iran, he describes Persians as "primitive" and devoid of cultural refinement or civil tradition:

> We are told that a Persian civilization [*Madaniyat*] exists! But it is not so. This civilization is more Turkish than Persian. Persians are mostly employed in delicate and small tasks that rely on eyes and fingers, like wood carving and miniatures. But the eye-catching tiles are made by Turkish genius.[18]

Ruşeni (Barkın) follows with an extreme statement, using the harshest possible words to describe the moral and political traits of ethnic Persians. He targets the supposed lack of patriotism among Persians, accusing them of being sellouts: "The Turks have shed so much of their blood for the glory of the Ottoman state. Those carrying the Iranian flag, meanwhile, have never shed a single drop of blood for their flag."[19] He also suggests:

The Persian government does possess large powers, but these are mostly nega-
tive and lethal. These powers are only effective when the Persian kills. Immoral
behavior cloaked as religion has made the Persian wretched. Doing what goes
against the religion of Mohammad and the Qur'an, they call it religion. Drugs,
opium and other poison, inducing lethargy and death, have turned the people of
this land into a mass of moving skeletons.[20]

Ruşeni (Barkın) persistently intimates that Iranians have no genuine commit-
ment to their nation while lacking patriotism: "The biggest 'business' [*teja-
rat*] of the Persian people is the selling of their motherland [*vatanforushi*]."[21]
Ruşeni is less than complimentary about ordinary Persians, deeming them to
be devoid of basic human qualities. Iranians are presented as immoral and
deviant, and inept in caring for their own personal well-being:

Tehran has a population of 200,000. Based on the statistics of foreign doctors
and those of municipal hospitals, 30,000 people in Tehran suffer from syphilis
and half of the city's population have contracted infectious diseases. Many are
caused by immorality. Persians are known to be liars and thieves. A father steals
from his sons, the sons from the father, and the wife from the husband. Even the
American who the Persians hired to reform Iranian finances said the following
to a journalist upon returning to the US: "How can you reform a country with
10 million thieves?"[22]

Ruşeni (Barkın) further appraises the state of women and gender relations in
Iran, in a harsh and appalling assessment:

Girls are cloaked in the Chador from the age of three, married off to forty-year old
men at the age of eight, and divorced more than once before they reach woman-
hood. Finally, they consume opium at the age of twenty and twenty-five and die.[23]

Ruşeni portrays a very dire situation for Iranian women, from childhood to
early death:

Women give birth at eleven, smoke opium in the house, drink hard spirits and
come to resemble a skeleton before the age of twenty. Husbands obtain wives
who are mere eight-year-old girls, primarily as toys.[24]

ARANI AND THE QUESTION OF AZERBAIJAN

Taghi Arani wrote two seminal essays on the Persian language. He argued
that it functioned critically as the principle unifying element of the modern

Iranian nation-state in the interwar period. The Persian language, he argued, embodied the Iranian cultural system. It projected the authentic purity of national tradition while providing a vehicle of modern social becoming. First, there was "The Persian Language," published in Berlin-based *Iranshahr* in February 1924, and, second, "Azerbaijan: An Existential Issue in Iran," published in a second Berlin-based Iranian journal, *Farangestan*, on August 30, 1924.[25] Both pieces investigate the relationship between language, race, and national identity. They present a staunch nationalist discourse with a strongly emotional defense of the Persian language as the sole official language of Iran.

The confrontation between Iranian and Turkish intellectuals was formative in the imaginative crystalizing of Iranian nationalism. Scholars of Iranian nationalism commonly discuss modern Iranian nationalism as the reaction to Arab/Islamic hostilities. Elsewhere, it is portrayed as directly influenced by Iranians having either lived in Europe or drawing inspiration from modern European and Orientalist ideas. These tendencies, while important, give only a partial explanation, more representative of the late-nineteenth-century intellectual articulation of Iranian nationalism. The crucial interwar period has been undertheorized, where debates penetrated to a greater depth. At the very moment when Iranian national identity underwent serious debate and definition, Iran's modern national imaginary was defined in relation to the new Turkish nationalism.

An astonishing revolution had occurred in the early-twentieth-century Turkish nationalism. It was the outcome of multiple state-civil society tensions riveting Ottoman society under the geopolitical pressures of empire. The late-nineteenth-century top-down statist modernism of the Tanzimat experiment, modeled on Metternich and "Enlightened despotism," clashed with the aborted Young Ottoman revolution—committed to a multicultural democratic and social politics of the grassroots. The 1882 Russo-Turkish War, and the ensuing "Islamic revivalist" dictatorship of Abdulhamid II (i.e., the universal Caliph as an anti-colonial beacon), established the ground for the Young Turk embrace of a politically authoritarian and ideologically racialist agenda of state power seizure, geopolitical national self-protection, and anti-minority cultural discourse. In many ways, this crucial and neglected interval in the Iranian nation-making imaginary bounced back ideologically and politically against this new and aggressive Young Turk politics—the wave that empowered Kemal Ataturk, betraying the multicultural grassroots modernism of Namik Kemal and other major nineteenth-century figures.

There is little doubt that Arani's nationalism was acutely forged through his encounter with the racialist identity politics of Turkish activists claiming that Azeris in Iran were not Iranian, and "racially" different from Persians. We see the ascendency of a new racialist discourse—alien to prior Ottoman

political discourses, religious or secular—in the new Turkish nationalist claim that Azeris should join the newly emerging republic of Turkey, envisioned as their own racially pure nation. This kind of rhetoric was very hard to accept, for Arani was himself an Azeri. This is, of course, not to justify Arani's extreme nationalism, nor his offensive commentaries about Turkish people, history, and culture. It is, however, important to remember that the Pan-Turkish writings were also callous and demeaning to many Iranians, as the following section will examine.

Donya Monthly

Arani returned to Iran in 1929, following a six-year stay in Berlin, Germany. Arani's most important achievement, after his return to Iran, was to publish the first Iranian Marxist magazine, *Donya Monthly*. Arani began to work on the monthly periodical, with Bozorg Alavi and Iraj Eskandari, in February 1934. *Donya* was published for two years, after which it was no longer granted a printing license by the government. Its publication was subsequently banned. There is also some indication that *Donya* finances may have impinged upon its ability to continue publication.[26] The experience of participation in civil society, the publishing of *Donya* as a kind of social activism, made Arani grow considerably as an intellectual and a person.

The *Donya Monthly* mission aimed to promote a secular, modern, and sociological thought mode among Iranian readers. Many articles provided a materialist interpretation of Iranian history and culture. Arani devoted several articles to criticism of the Iranian *Erfan* (mysticism) in the East, and, particularly, its more modern expression in the writings of Henri Bergson.

A careful study of Arani's writings, published in *Donya* monthly, illuminates his humanist and cosmopolitan vision for Iran. Despite the centrality of Marxism and Leftism in *Donya*, its language and discourse endeavor to introduce a scientific thought mode, cosmopolitanism, and the recognition of a wider humanity through a social scientific methodological optic. Arani's first important article in *Donya* was a critique of "mysticism," from the Marxist and social science perspective. Arani's cosmopolitanism within the *Donya* context requires a more precise investigation.

Radical Cosmopolitanism

On the opening editorial page of *Donya*'s first issue, Arani, in clear and forthright fashion, articulated the journal's "progressive" mission. For Arani and his colleagues, this meant understanding Iran within an ongoing global movement for change, interactively with other world cultures. Arani and his

colleagues understood being "progressive" as undertaking a social change in Iran within a wider global movement for modernity, involving an ongoing exchange of ideas and political experiences. This progressive global vision underpinned Arani's ideal of Iranian cosmopolitanism. A cultural and ethical principle based on a global attitude, informed by contemporary scientific and cultural developments, yet, fashioned within Iranian national settings (i.e., ongoing debates and critiques among Iranians). The pages of *Donya* embody this global vision. While publishing essays and reports on the world of science and innovation, and global art and culture, it covered international political affairs. It also published articles critical of Iranian culture and political affairs:

> Arani and his colleagues were crafty and astute in introducing progressive and forward-looking scientific, philosophical, and social ideas in unpretentiously accessible language. They succeeded in accomplishing this against the backward and closed conditions of their time. This was the era where political tyranny was choking everyone, and journals such as "*Vahid*" and "*Armaghan*" made any healthy person cough. Even the elementary school students were drawn to these ideas.[27]

Arani, in the first short editorial in *Donya*, outlines an overall view of a modern and cosmopolitan Iran. This was in 1934, when Arani was still a relatively young thirty-one-year-old. However, he had become a Marxist intellectual and a greatly more "learned" man than ten years before, when he had written the two essays in Berlin on Persian language and Iranian national identity.

The editorial and other writings in *Donya*'s first issues represent the beginning of Arani's more mature and thoughtful works on Iranian modernity, its place in history (Islam and Arab culture), and its relations to the modern West. As we will discuss shortly, there are sparks of interesting and worthy ideas in this editorial piece. However, Arani still tends to a generalization without thoroughly developing his vision. It seems the experience of publishing and writing for *Donya* was a challenging learning experience for him. This enabled Arani to develop his ideas with far more sophistication, as we will see in his later writings.

Perhaps Arani's fully mature writing is reflected in the editorial he wrote for issue number 6 of *Donya*. In this piece, celebrating the six-month anniversary of the journal, a more sophisticated writer appears. Arani's thinking is much more balanced and thorough, if still radical and staunchly modernist.

In this inaugural issue of *Donya*, Arani wrote the lead editorial piece. He clarifies that *Donya*'s aim is to launch a new journal, intending to cover all important contemporary issues, national as well as global, through a social and scientific optic:

Donya will feature a systematic series of scientific, industrial, social, economic and artistic articles. It aims to seriously familiarize the reader's mind with the progress taking place in contemporary human civilization. The journal aspires to show this civilization's continuity and evolution.[28]

The brief editorial formulates numerous important points, all critical for understanding Arani's vision for Iran:

1. The imperative role of social change according to the European model of modernity. It is abundantly evident that, for Arani, social change in Iran was part of the global process of world development. Iran's only pathway to progress and the good life was to actively participate as a member of this global movement:

> The world, including Iran, which is part of it, are in a state of permanent change and civilizational evolution. In this journey of progress, Iran follows Europe (and the U.S.). This itself is a historical necessity. It must be, and it is.[29]

Arani, in a rather deterministic fashion, argues that, to fully welcome this global social change, Iranians must be open to new ways of life. They must fear neither new ideas nor social change:

> Whether we like it or not, we can see that, on the one hand, there are those who want to reform or popularize music and theater in Iran. They say our music is boring. Then another group says this script and language are inadequate for quick writing, learning or production of scientific books, and thus Iranians should imitate Europeans.[30]

Arani also argues that modernity is both a material and creative social project. If it is achieved, it will bring a superior economic and moral society, as well as life experience, for all Iranians. He believes it is Iran's inescapable destiny, asserting the futility of defying the natural course of history:

> Concerts of such figures as Beethoven, the perfume of Coty Inc., the scientific greenhouses, books like those of [Erich Maria] Remarque, the Latin script and the typewriter, new sciences and theories such as relativity, the principles of dialectics, and, finally, the automobile, radio, airplanes, and the like, will enter this land, to drive all the traditionalists' sanctities behind museum displays.[31]

Arani is aware of the cultural and moral resistance to the modernization process in Iran. Even those accepting economic modernization in Iran strongly

rejected cultural modernity. This was the subject of Arani's later writings, where he never underestimated the power of those tireless publications opposing the realization of a modern Iran. In fact, Arani's understanding of the anti-modern intellectual currents was far more sophisticated than many other Iranian intellectuals. Ahmad Kasravi, for instance, also desired major reform and change in Iran, but was too hasty in uncritically superimposing Western ideas upon Iranian identity. Arani insightfully grasped that no nation can cherry pick from the garden of modernity, as if it were a boutique of ideas and values. The pages of *Donya* were devoted to introducing new forms of literary and artistic works, together with a radical critique of the anti-modern conservatives:

> On the other hand, another group advocate a revival of ancient religions. Another group pleads for the Persian of the current masters to be kept and preserved just the way it is. Some others claim that, because science ended with Molla Sadra, it should, therefore, go not a step further; to do so is ignorance and heresy.[32]

At times, Arani's arguments appear unrefined and perhaps naive. He resorts to occasional generalization and shallow arguments. However, Arani is careful to reflect broadly on his meanings of modernity and a progressive polity, allying himself with everyone seeking social change in Iran. We see little, if any, sectarian dogmatism or ideological rhetoric, which became a feature of certain Marxist intellectuals later in Iranian political history:

> All those belonging to the first group favor progress and materialism, even if unconsciously. Those in the second group are the dregs of the old order and worshippers of superstition, who use mysticism and poetry to safeguard decrepit "idealism" from certain demise.[33]

It is noteworthy that Arani is no categorical champion of the modern West. He does not advance the idea that every Iranian must follow Western-style modernity:

> We often see our youth unable to quench their curiosity, with either the words of the old masters or the banalities of pretenders to modernity; they are thus left confused. The historical role of our magazine, *Donya*, is to guide this youth to the true path of evolution.[34]

Arani's idea of the West is rather complicated. He seems to imagine the West as part of a global movement for social change, but still an incomplete project. For him, the path that modern Europe is undertaking is global and

world-history making, yet still in the making and evolving. Arani strongly believes that Iran should join this global movement to participate in developing a transnational modernity. In the editorial piece, he clearly notes that modern Western societies are also struggling to achieve an unrealized ideal, and Iranians should realize this:

> European civilization itself is grappling with crisis and contradictions. The materialist principle in Europe aims to give harmony to sciences, industries, societies and arts. It is only natural that this dynamic thought process, like other fruits of European civilization, will also enter Iran.[35]

This is a topic which Arani discusses later in his writings. He criticizes the trivial and frivolous imitation of the West. We will discuss this later in the section. However, Arani is always attentive to the hazards of his criticism of the West drifting into anti-modernism. He avoids this tendency.

2. Radical critique of Traditionalism: One of the most important tasks of *Donya* and Arani's writing in this period is the relentless critique of traditionalist ideologies. On this subject, Arani is contemptuous neither of Iran's history nor culture. He offers no critique of tradition as hollow, or a set of cultural and moral norms to be merely abolished. Arani is critical primarily of those Iranians who, in the name of "Iranian tradition," whether religious or cultural, reject modernity and the need to create a modern Iranian nation. His radicalism targets cultural conservatism. Arani is acutely aware of the importance of the Persian language and the power of Persian literature in Iranian culture. He proposes to adapt them to the conditions of the contemporary world. Arani also recognizes the power of conservative traditionalists in appropriating cultural norms in the service of anti-modernity. Arani's writings on Henri Bergson and Persian "Erfan" are important for precisely this reason:

    > A load of opium addicts or worshipers of the old and dead might cry that they want nothing to do with European civilization. "We want to go back in time," they say. "The old civilizations of India and Iran were the highest possible civilizations," they say. They long after the song of the nightingale, the smell of the flower, the water of Roknabad and Sa'di's *Rose Garden,* the *Nasta'ligh* script of Avicenna's *Book of Healing,* traveling by caravan, etc. They regard all these precious experiences as superior to all civilization. Yet, [their desires], don't matter.[36]

Arani specifically reminds the *Donya* reader of the journal's role as an agent of change, publishing its materials to assist social reform, new modes of action, and the decentering of blind followers of old ways. Arani specifically

argues that reform and change is required in content and form. Arani calls this the dialectics of social change:

> It follows that *Donya* won't feature long-winded articles about the conquest of Joshghan, the love-making of Joseph and Zuleika, new research about the aunt of Abolmozaffar Abdoljabbar, [Alphonse de] Lamartine, the rich words of Gustave Le Bon, or the begging games of tasteless poets of flattery and the like. The pages of *Donya* do not belong to the pen battles of Heydari and Nemati factions, who settle scores with one another.[37]

3. A pragmatic and locally rooted cosmopolitanism Iran. As we discussed earlier, and will discuss in greater detail later, Arani was a radical cosmopolitan. He always considered himself a scientist, had spent eight years in the highly cosmopolitan cultural center of Berlin, and, of course, was a Marxist. He understood that social change and the making of modern Iran were incompatible with the insistence on preserving old cultural ways. Arani suggested that one cannot desire change and new possibilities, while adhering to rigid cultural conservatism:

> In language, writing style and orthography, this magazine is not bound by any conservative principles. It will use European and Arabic words when necessary, while avoiding becoming Europeanized and Westernized. It will attempt to write in as simple and ordinary a style as possible. *Donya* aims to write so that the broad masses find the magazine accessible.[38]

However, Arani believed that, for those aspiring to create a modern and progressive Iran, the national culture and traditions were potential resources, for both critiques and positively nurturing contemporary life experience. In fact, *Donya*'s pages are the best example of Arani's approach to modernizing Iran. *Donya* paid substantial attention to world affairs, introduced advances in science and technology, as well as ideas and the arts, and invited Iranians to view themselves within the ongoing global process. The journal also undertook a critical examination of Iranian history and culture. *Donya* published many essays on Iranian art and literature, while reporting regularly on new literary and aesthetic productions in Iran.

COSMOPOLITANISM AND CARE OF THE NATION

Arani's important essay, "Change in the Persian Language," published in the last issue of *Donya* magazine in 1935, is perhaps the most noteworthy piece of writing he ever authored.[39] Arani's major argument concerns the relationship

between cultural production in the Persian language and the social development of everyday life in contemporary Iran. Arani traces a close connection between the national cultural imaginary and the organization and development of popular everyday life. He suggests that, in the Iranian case, the cultural space-defining and contesting the national imaginary is the Persian language. This was so in the post-Islamic period, where the Persian language was the cultural and creative space for resistance to, or acceptance of, Arab/ Islamic culture. It is equally the case in contemporary Iran, with the rise of modern Iranian nationalism, involving various movements to reconstruct Iranian national identity including ancient revivalism and the purification of Persian. Arani's view suggests a cosmopolitan dynamic, multiple interacting cultural parts, in a dialectical process focused on mutations in the Persian language. This is a notion of nationalism quite ahead of its time. Arani argues that the historical formation of Iranian national identity and its modern predicaments are all embodied in the historical mutations of the Persian language. He, therefore, suggests that the future articulation of Iranian cosmopolitanism will entail a critical analysis of the past, combined with a modern and progressive attitude toward the Persian language in its present situation.

Arani's ideas about the West, Islam, and modernity are far more complex than the prevalent ideas expressed by most Iranian intellectuals of the time. Arani's understanding of materialism is, we must concede, at times one-dimensional. His faith in science sometimes has a naive ring. However, he ingeniously explains the critical role of the Persian language in relation to existing political and power relation at the elite as well as popular everyday levels of Iranian social life. Arani's insightful analysis of the Persian language as the site of every struggle among Iranians for a better life distinguishes his conception of an urgent and radical cosmopolitanism. This is defined in his proposal for the development of the Persian language. In this aspect of Arani's thought, the Persian language is both symbolically a cultural system in the Geertzian approach and a material translation into the modern Iranian imaginary.

Arani carefully assesses the worth of different modes of nationalist thought. He defines two distinct approaches in displaying a passion for one's nation. A national commitment may be rooted in a real and material (*in-jahani*) founding in the nation, its people, and culture. This nationalist mode may be embedded in cosmopolitan ethics and intellectual optic that leaves space to love and be committed to the nation. However, there is also a narrow-minded worship of one's nation. This ideological nationalism is hostile to all other cultures and nations, merely focusing on blind worship of one's nation, its past culture providing a road map for its future. The first notion of nationalism is clearly materialist; it explains any human being's natural affinity with their physical environment as a nourishing, community, and sentimental

experience, including everyday traditions from cuisine to festivals to natural beauty. Arani identifies the latter approach with ideological chauvinism, an indoctrinated dogma, which he sharply rejects:

> Chauvinism can't be translated as *vatanparasti* (patriotism). Material patriotism, under specific conditions and in specific cases, is in total agreement with *Donya*'s approach. That is when a people's livelihood is based on a land's territory, water, sun, and mines. When that people live in the said land, it harbors material affection for it.[40]

This provides a plausible explanation for the spontaneous desire of populations to protect their homes from invading insiders. Arani's critique of Persian nationalism is ingrained in his social scientific and materialist outlook. In this context, he analyzes the underlying reasons for those who have actively participated in reforming the Persian language since the late nineteenth century. He argues that two different rationales underlie the desire for change in the Persian language. These are, again, analyzed dialectically:

> The variegated movement to change the Persian language has two contradictory causes. We shouldn't confuse them: 1) the chauvinistic movement; 2) the movement to translate the science of Western nations to Persian.[41]

Arani is politically mindful that, in the context of colonial experience, because of the imperial desire to dominate Iran, it is legitimate and positive to be patriotic. This expresses what he calls real and material affection for the well-being of Iran as a nation:

> If the foreigners want to forcefully take the products of this land, which is the result of the efforts of its people, patriots will fight the foreigners. This affection is material patriotism, i.e. genuine patriotism.[42]

To make his point and discuss it in historical context, Arani offers his own understanding of the role of the Persian language in post-Islamic Iran. His analysis of changes in the Persian language is less ideological than pragmatic. He favors change when it is materially required while contesting it when it merely flaunts one's national or cultural purity and authenticity:

> The first post-Arab movement in the Persian language was during the Saffarids when Mohammad bin Vasef was forced to write Persian poetry for Ya'ghub Leyth (despite a lot of Arabic words mixed in his poetry). The material cause behind this movement will be immediately clear to a logical mind. Ya'ghub had rose in revolt in practice, i.e. with a sword in hands, to keep the chieftainship to

himself and his family against the central power of the Caliphate. This was also his ideological uprising; it was the first step.[43]

Arani then argues that this first movement for cleansing the Persian language was principally in the interest of the Iranian political elite, while not necessarily of the people:

> This also makes the material causes behind the pure Persian uprising[44] of Daghighi and Ferdowsi clear. The uprising worked and the *Book of Kings (Shahnameh)* came to being, mostly free from Arabic. But why is it that people did not subsequently speak the Persian of the *Book of Kings*? The words that were common before then and had not became extinct (used by Rudaki and others) remained common afterwards. But Dari words like *Ghal'eh, Zubin, Khesht* or the like did not become popular.[45]

Arani likewise contends that with the rise of local autonomy in different regions of Iran, the political rational for holding to pure Persian, while being against the use of Arabic language, died out in Iranian daily life: "The material reason behind this is clear to the materialist thinker. With the central power of the caliphs gone, there was no reason left to oppose the Arabs."[46] He also notes that the "center was not bringing pressure upon the oppressed nation for it to be forced to show a reaction."[47]

Arani also offers a materialist analysis of Islam and its function in this period:

> The religion of Islam was also suitable to the social conditions of the medieval age. The local prince needs the masses to have a religion, the masses are Muslims and there is no material pressure from the center of Islam; why would the local prince therefore rise in revolt?[48]

Arani writes critically on the dominant intellectual current of his time in radical nationalism. In the context of his critique of these ideological movements, Arani acknowledges the dogmatic nationalism of his youth:

> I, myself, based on my age and limits of my knowledge, followed this movement, as can be seen from the articles I wrote for *Iranshahr* and *Farangestan* magazines. I corresponded with my friends in the Special Persian language. I have kept those letters as souvenirs of my young years.[49]

LANGUAGE AGAINST LIVED EXPERIENCE

In the broad and global historical contexts for achieving a new national identity for Iran, Arani discusses the strong desire by some Iranian intellectuals and politicians to reform the Persian language. He argues that some are interested in the purification of Persian of all Arabic words, and with the revival

of pre-Islamic Persian culture. Some even go as far as to suggest a change in the Persian script from the current Arabic to Latin (similar to what Ataturk did in Turkey): "In the new period, after European civilization found influence in Iran, once more a new movement came into being around the Persian language."[50] Arani points out two possible rationales which can potentially explain such a cultural movement.

First, there is the rise of modern nation-states: "In the early years of the 20th century, patriotism was still the major slogan of European nations and it also found its way into Iran."[51] Here, Arani discusses the influence of European Orientalism in convicting the Iranian nationalists that Islam is to blame for the Iranian cultural and social decline. Therefore, the construction of a modern nation requires a movement for de-Islamicizing Iranian culture:

> We should note that some people wrongly considered the religion of Islam to be the only obstacle to Iran's progress. Among this small number of people, who can be partially considered to be temporary progressive intellectuals, patriotic sentiments were rising. Alexander was damned and cursed. All blame was put on Arabs. They said that if the Arabs hadn't burnt our libraries, people could see that all the discoveries of today had been written about in the books of Darius's time. Such sentiments are easily found in the statements and writings of this group, but it is obvious that they were few. The majority, zealot in their religion, rejected all this talk.[52]

Arani applies historical analysis to the movements for ridding the Persian language of Arabic words, within the political and cultural elite context. He interprets the first pro-Persian language movement after Islam as a Safavid attempt to seek independence from the Arab caliphate. He calls Ya'ghub Leyth's attempt to spread the Persian language, and separate it from Arabic, an "ideological uprising."[53]

Arani's next dialectical step is to examine tensions between elite and popular political mobilizations manifested in language imaginings. He evaluates subsequent efforts and recalls them as changes limited to the power and cultural elite level. In replying, Arani argues that Iranians, under the Abbasids, enjoyed some degree of independence and prosperity:

> The material reasons for this are clear to the materialist thinker. Since the Caliphs' centralized power was no longer functional, there was no more need to oppose the Arabs.[54]

Arani does not reject this extremist movement entirely. Although he recognizes its limits, he sees the movement as influenced by modern European thought, and the cause of doubt in religious beliefs. Arani confesses to having been influenced similarly in his youth.

Arani then discusses the idea of a second movement for change in the Persian language during his time, "Today we are in a new stage of the movement to reform the Persian language which, once again, differs from previous periods."[55] Here Arani's focus of discussion is the rise of sciences and modernity in European countries. He suggests, "Today we know one thing well. We must learn the European civilization and arm ourselves like a civilized nation."[56] It is important to understand clearly what Arani means by European civilization: "Let's see what the European civilization is? It means European science, European industry and European art."[57] Arani means this very specifically, his interest being in how the scientific discoveries and communities publish and communicate. He grasps the dialogic dynamic driving modern scientific advance and technological revolutions:

> Is one of the European countries the center of European science and industry? Are Europe, US and Japan all agents of civilization's progress? When a scientific or industrial research is published in this or that corner of the world, it is immediately published everywhere. What accounts for this ease of scientific connection despite the linguistic differences between the civilized nations?[58]

Arani concludes his argument by saying that the new movement to reform the Persian language concerns the development of science in Europe:

> It thus is clear that the major agent behind the contemporary movement to reform the Persian language is the influence of European civilization in Iran, especially feeling the need for scientific words and terms and for saving time.[59]

For Arani, this is an acceptable and effective approach to cultural reform, believing deeply that Iran has no other options. It must introduce scientific thinking into the country while developing the nation into a modern and progressive one.

Arani's concerns are from his radical cosmopolitan outlook. He neither wants to import outdated Arabic words and concepts nor to engage in purifying Persian of Arabic words for the ideological reasons of conservative traditionalism or national chauvinism. He is above all interested in the Persian language, enabling its speakers to connect with Iranian history and culture, but in a flexible mode permitting the achievement of modern social change.

CONCLUSION

Taghi Arani was a unique and a special person in many ways, to a large extent due to the time and places he lived. We openly acknowledge his unique personal and intellectual qualities; to whitewash his idiosyncrasies would be unfair to him and analytically unwise and without value. However, Arani's

personal and intellectual formation was motivated by and shaped by his living in the interwar period, where the various places he experienced inspired his different reflections. No one, even very special individuals, grow up or live within an intellectual or political vacuum.

This essay offers a new perspective on the intellectual contribution of the Iranian Left to debates on Iranian national identity and modernity. In our discussion, the Left is defined as both politically and culturally a force for cosmopolitan, while being politically and intellectually engaged in a critical reconstruction of Iranian history and culture. Our understanding of "cosmopolitanism" differs from conventional uses of the term "universalist" as a detached cultural elite class. This is a study of the idea of "new cosmopolitanism," as discussed by Joan Cocks' *Passion and Paradox: Intellectuals Confront the National Question*.[60] We should not, she argues, place ourselves under conditions that demand that we make a stark choice between a nationalist bond and a cosmopolitan *zeitgeist* beyond national borders. She illustrates how, in recent decades, evidence exists of a new model of the intellectual that reconciles these two conditions to show the dichotomy is not intrinsic. She offers the examples of Edward Said and V. S. Naipaul as prototypical neo-cosmopolitan intellectuals, both of whom provide broad and extensive international analysis while simultaneously paying special attention to their own specific cultures and geographic regions. This latter sense of specific cultural attachment, however, is accompanied by a critical view and an objective distancing. This intellectual self-image presents us with a new imagining of the possibilities of cosmopolitanism as well as modernity. It permits the important concepts of democracy, human rights, and secularism to retain their central place within the cosmopolitan framework, while avoiding the all-encompassing metaphysical universalism which insists upon the transcendence of particular societies and their related realms of historical experience and culture.

NOTES

1. Anna Stilz, "Civic Nationalism and Language Policy," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 37.3 (2009): pp. 257–92.

2. "*Donya* Opening Editorial" [Sarmaghaleh-e *Donya*], *Donya*, issue no. 1 (January 21, 1934), p. 1.

3. According to Mohammed Arkoun, "The 'imaginary' of an individual, a social group, or a nation is the collection of images carried by that culture about itself or another culture-once a product of epic poetry, and religious discourse, today a product primarily of the media and secondarily of the schools." Mohammed Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers*, trans. and ed. Robert D. Lee (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994), p. 6.

4. Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 59.

5. Ibid., p. 62.

6. "The Oriental Students in Germany" [Mohasselin-e Sharghi dar Alman], *Iranshahr*, issue no. 3, Berlin (August 22, 1922), p. 55. (All translations from Persian are the author's work.)

7. "Sending Iranian Students to Europe" [Ferestadan-e Mohasselin be Farang], *Iranshahr*, issue no. 7, Berlin (December 20, 1922), p. 153.

8. Jamshid Behnam, *Berliners: Iranian Thinkers in Berlin in 1915–1930* [Berlaniha: Andishmandan-e Irani dar Berlin, 1915–1930] (Tehran: Farzan Ruz, 2007), p. 1.

9. This is a reference to a short defeat of the conceptualists in 1909 and Mohamad Ali Sha's rule.

10. Ibid., p. 10.

11. Ibid., pp. 1–2.

12. Mohammed Alsulami, "Iranian Journals in Berlin during the Interwar Period," in *Transnational Islam in Interwar Europe: Muslim Activists and Thinkers*, eds. Götz Nordbruch and Umar Ryad (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 158.

13. In Persian texts, he is known as Roshani Beyg (روشنی بیگ).

14. Ruşeni (Barkın), *There is No Religion, Just Nationality: My Turkishness is My Religion* [Din Yok, Milliyet Var: Benim Dinim, Benim Türklüğümdür] (Istanbul, 1926).

15. Roshani Beyg [Ruşeni (Barkın)], "What Ottomans think of Iranians" [Aghideh-e Osmaniha darbareh-e Iranian], trans. Turkish *Yengi Collection* into Persian, *Iranshahr*, issue no. 2, Year 2, Berlin (October 18, 1923), p. 88.

16. Ibid., p. 88.

17. Ibid., p. 89.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., p. 90.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., p. 91.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Taghi Arani, "The Persian Language" [Zaban-e Farsi], *Iranshahr*, issue no. 5–6, Year 2, Berlin (February 6, 1924), pp. 355–65; Taghi Arani, "Azerbaijan and the Existential Question for Iran" [Azerbaijan Yek Mas'aleh-e Hayati va Mamati bara-ye Iran], *Farangestan Magazine*, issue no. 5, Berlin (August 30, 1924), pp. 247–54.

26. Bagher Momeni, *Arani's World* [Donya-ye Arani] (Tehran: Khojasteh, 2006), p. 10.

27. Momeni, *Arani's World*, p. 9.

28. "*Donya* Opening Editorial," p. 1.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., pp. 1–2.

35. Ibid., p. 1.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., p. 2.

38. Ibid.

39. Taghi Arani, "Change in the Persian Language" [Taghyir-e Zaban-e Farsi], *Donya*, issue no. 10–12, (June 1935), pp. 18–27.

40. Ibid., p. 18.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., p. 19.

44. Arani uses the word "uprising" symbolically here to compare the poetic efforts of Daghighi and Ferdowsi to the military uprisings with which they were ideologically linked in his analysis.

45. Ibid., p. 19.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., p. 21.

50. Ibid., p. 19.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., p. 20.

53. Ibid., p. 19.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid., p. 21.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid., p. 22.

60. Joan Cocks, *Passion and Paradox: Intellectuals Confront the National Question* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

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Chapter 3

British Whiggism and the Iranian Enlightenment in the Nineteenth Century

Ali M. Ansari

It is a common misconception that Iran's encounter with the forces of European modernity was initiated, managed, and articulated through the French experience. The popularity of the motifs of the French Revolution among many intellectuals and activists from the Constitutional Revolution onward, many of whom had been educated in the Francophone world, has given a flavor to Iranian political thought that is decidedly French. Even those who drew their ideas from Russian intellectuals found that this was often mediated through the French language. French influence has certainly been powerful in the conception and development of the modern state, and the centralizing tendencies that have come to characterize. The French Revolutionary, or more accurately the Napoleonic state, became the template for many non-European states seeking to modernize their political systems, in no small part due to the fact that the French system was avowedly secular and thus adaptable. It also provided a model for relatively rapid state building after the turmoil of revolution, although the rapidity of this transformation, as Iranian intellectuals were to discover, depended not only on the emergence of extraordinary leadership but also on an environment that was culturally, socially, and economically ready to embrace it. The transferability of the French model had its limits, not least of course because more conservative intellectuals regarded the French Revolution as "godless," and in its execution of the monarch, a recipe for anarchy.[1]

An alternative model existed, and that was that of Great Britain, forged from several constituent nations and united in 1801 with the Kingdom of Ireland, providing a model of political development that was at once consensual, managed, and of course successful. This relied on a particular reading of British history, but in the nineteenth century, as Iranian travelers and

intellectuals became acquainted with the West, this reading—an essentially Whig history—was not only dominant within Britain but also accepted far beyond its borders. Quite apart from providing a model of development and modernization that relied on "evolution" rather than "revolution," the British template was attractive because of its plurality and diversity—if the authority of the state was undisputed, power remained unusually diffuse—with a constitutional monarchy subject to the rule of law.[2] Moreover, in seemingly being able to manage change over the long durée, a perception enhanced by the growth of the British state (and empire) in the eighteenth century and its triumph in the Napoleonic Wars, British statesmen had apparently unlocked the secret of harmonious politics, at once balanced and extremely productive, and escaped the turbulence of earlier times. Above all, the attraction of the British model lay in the fact that it was deemed eminently transferable, not beholden to race or ethnicity, but as we shall see, to the adoption of particular ideas. There were of course other practical reasons: principally the geopolitical realities of the day. As Britain and Russia competed for influence, Britain actively sought not only to contrast itself with the autocracy of the Russian Empire but also to deny, as far as possible, access to other liberal models, though one should not exaggerate the difficulty of doing this in the nineteenth century. The power of ideas was to be of greater influence than the pressures of politics.[3]

Iranian contact, if not engagement with the world beyond its borders, was never as limited as some would like to believe. Connections, largely trade, with European powers existed throughout the later Safavid period. But it would be fair to say that interest in the wider world was largely limited to what might be defined as the Persianate sphere, that is, India, the Ottoman Empire, and Central Asia.[4] Russia was needless to say an increasing danger but up until the nineteenth century it was rarely viewed with anything more than condescension, although Nader Shah at one stage offered the prospect of a marriage alliance between himself and the Tsarina.[5] By the turn of the nineteenth century however, the realities of European power were making themselves felt and Iranian officials began to sit up and take notice. Agha Mohammad Khan was perhaps more realistic than his successors in taking note of the very real disparity in strength between his own forces and those of Russia, berating his chief minister for an unusual act of sycophancy in lauding Iran's comparative martial qualities. Indeed, his successor Fath Ali Shah was to swiftly be acquainted with the changing balance of power in the first Russo-Persian War (1804–1813), which led to the first of two humiliating treaties, that of Golestan in 1813.[6] An all too brief encounter with the French envoy following the Treaty of Finkenstein in 1807 was quickly supplanted by a much more substantive British delegation. Napoleon, having defeated the Russians at Friedland, was quick to abandon his new allies. The British were

only too eager to fill the vacuum and to cultivate a relationship, which they regarded as essential for the security of their emerging India empire.

In 1809, Iran reciprocated with an embassy to Britain led by Abol Hasan Khan Shirazi, a versatile diplomat generously equipped for the vagaries of European diplomacy by his experiences of domestic Iranian politics. He was by all accounts an open-minded and charming individual, much admired if occasionally ridiculed for his preoccupation with status and lapses of conceit by the British Orientalist James Morier who drew an intriguing pen portrait of him in his memoirs[7] and later immortalized in the satire, Haji Baba of Isfahan. Morier was entertained by the fact that Abol Hasan Khan had little good to say about the Ottomans and resisted the temptation at all costs to complement them, noting when he had viewed some Ottoman ships, "I have seen English ships much finer than anything you can show me." "Yet," added Morier, "in cases where no national jealousy intervened, whenever hospitality and kind-ness were shewn [*sic*] the Persian, I must do the justice to add, that he never omitted to make the strongest acknowledgements of them; and, I believe, the fullest returns in his power. The most trifling attention never appeared, from the general conversation and temper of him or his people to be thrown away upon them. The Envoy always spoke in raptures of the kindnesses which he had received in India, mentioning the names of his friends every time with an increased delight, and apparently with an unfeigned sincerity."[8]

Indeed, for Morier, it was the wonder with which Abol Hasan Khan greeted all that was new and innovative, which struck him most deeply. Intriguingly, Abol Hasan Khan showed himself to be open to European society and cul-tural norms, not flinching at the presence of women in the balls he attended (in stark contrast it might be added to the reaction of his servants who were apparently dumbfounded by the sight, not least the dances which followed, particularly the waltz). Abol Hasan Khan too it all in his stride prompting Morier to note perceptively, "In the national character of the Persian, the most striking difference from that of the Turk is perhaps the facility with which he adopts foreign manners and customs."[9] Morier would surely have been aware of Herodotus' comment to the same effect and may have been stressing this to show a measure of continuity but at the same time he did provide examples of remarkable cultural accommodation and inquisitiveness, along with a quickness to learn and a recognition, seemingly sincerely held, of British achievements. "Unlike the Turks, they never scruple to acknowledge our superiority; always however reserving to themselves the second place after the English in the list of nations: whereas the Turk, too proud, too obstinate, and too ignorant to confess his own inferiority, spurns at the introduction of any improvement with equal disdain from any nation."[10]

While Morier may have exaggerated for effect, writing as he was for an English readership, there is little doubt that a succession of Iranian travelers

were impressed by the British achievements they witnessed. Acknowledging British material and ideological progress was no doubt made easier by the fact that Britain was not perceived as a regional rival. The growing British presence in India was viewed with interest rather than apprehension, while both the Russians and the Ottomans were regarded as competitors and in the Russian case at least, as an immediate military threat. Britain on the other hand was viewed as sympathetic and the first embassies took great care in cultivating this image even if at the same time and to the great frustration of the Iranians, they sought to limit their liabilities and treaty obligations. The atmosphere was thus one of mutual receptiveness, and this would continue in Abol Hasan Khan's visit to Britain in 1809–1810, accompanied of course by the ever perceptive Morier. Abol Hasan Khan's account of his visit ranks among the earliest accounts of Britain by an Iranian, the title, *Heyratnameh* (Book of Wonder), accurately depicting the sense and structure of the diary, which is replete with observations of curiosities, as well as barely concealed awe at some of the engineering achievements witnessed. Abol Hasan Khan was immediately struck by the science associated with ocean-going vessels, the use of signals—Morier noted that he was constantly noting things down in his book, and ever exclaiming, "God grant that all such things may take place in my country too"[11]—and on arrival in Plymouth, the necessity of quarantine.[12] He was remarkably unjudgmental, and seemingly envious, at the arrival of local women invited on board to "entertain" the sailors. "Amazed by the scene, I asked Captain Fayerman to explain what was happening. He said it was simply a matter of prudent foresight—these harlots were not allowed to relieve the crew of their money, to empty their pockets as clean as a glutton his plate, the shipowners might be faced with a severe shortage of labor for the next voyage!"[13]

Abol Hasan Khan's diary is far from being an acute assessment of the causes of British success, and the exaggerated manner in which he greets even the most modest technological achievements—comparing Staines Bridge with the Taq-e Khosrow for example[14]—elicits more mirth than insight, but his diary does shed light on social manners that the Iranians at once found strange but curiously attractive. The speed of communications be they road, signals, or indeed newspapers[15] was a development that clearly impressed him and a theme that recurred but perhaps more useful was his social insights. As Morier noted Abol Hasan Khan was not at all averse to engaging with Regency society and while he repeatedly complained of the delay of a formal audience with the king—an *esteqbal*[16]—to say nothing of the weather, his diary clearly indicates an individual at ease and indeed enjoying London society. He was well received and his attempts to learn English were remarked on favorably as was his general demeanor and charm, not least with the ladies.[17] Asked to provide his impressions of English society,

he even managed a letter for the Morning Post commenting favorably on British liberty, "all very happy—do what they like, say what they like, write in Newspaper what like," but reserved his greatest praise for English women whom he added were "very handsome; very beautiful . . . nothing not so beautiful as English ladies—very clever . . . very glad for me if Persian ladies like them."[18]

His social calendar was rarely lacked for things to do, and at one stage he was even invited to visit Lord Elgin and view the "marbles" he had acquired from Greece. Told Elgin had spent 25,000 tomans on them. Abol Hasan Khan was characteristically dismissive remarking that he would not have spent five tomans for the lot of them![19] As an exercise in diplomatic confidence building between the two countries, the mission was an undoubted success not least because the wonder with which Abol Hasan Khan viewed Britain was reciprocated. Indeed, as Sohrabi has argued, the "wonder" of the title related as much if not more to his own impact on English society as that of English society on him.[20]

Quite what the impact of Abol Hasan Khan's diary might have been remained unclear. There was no print culture in Iran at the time and his notes and observations would have been reproduced in modest qualities for circulation among interested—literate—parties at court. As such its interest lies less in the impact it may have had on Iranian political ideas, and more as an indication of the receptiveness of Iranians to these ideas. Abol Hasan Khan returned to Iran in 1810 but his embassy inaugurated a comparatively fruitful period of intercultural relations. It is worth remembering that British expansion into India was effectively a British penetration of and foray into one aspect of the Persianate world. Consequently, Britons who sought advancement in the growing Indian empire were quick to acquire not only a fluency in the Persian language but also an acute understanding of its cultural context. The noted British soldier, administrator, and diplomat Sir John Malcolm is a case in point. Not only was Malcolm at pains to learn the intricacies of the Persian language, he went out of his way, often to the consternation of his Iranian interlocutors, to understand the cultural context of the language and its folklore.[21] The means by which ideas might be transferred was therefore much assisted by the striking fact that many cultured and ambitious Britons were well versed in Persian, and Abol Hasan Khan, like subsequent travelers, found an intellectual milieu that was engaging and welcoming.

Indeed, such were the demands for an efficient "Indian Civil Service" to administer the new territories shorn from the Mughal Empire that Britain is probably the first country were Persian was taught systematically in colleges for examination. The East India College at Haileybury (founded in 1804) boasted among its faculty, one Mirza Muhammad Ibrahim, who joined the college from Iran in 1824, remaining for eighteen years till 1844. Mirza

Ibrahim remains one of the great curiosities of British-Iranian cultural relations in this period—or indeed any other. Given the historical context, it was remarkable that an Iranian would depart his native land and situate himself firmly within British literary and cultural life so much so that he "adopted European costume for the avowed purpose of acquiring knowledge and rendering himself useful in this Country without attracting public observation which might interfere with those objects."[22] Moreover, he learnt to speak English without an accent, acquired the "deportment and dress" of a Briton, and proved to be an uncompromising if respected teacher of Persian.[23] Colleagues noted his charming demeanor, his ready wit in banter with other faculty, but perhaps above all his willingness to engage with new ideas going so far to translate sections of the Bible into Persian and to engage in metaphysical discussions about the relative merits of Islam and Christianity—attitudes that were regarded as quite out of step with the dogmatism of Indian and Ottoman Muslims.[24]

Such openness, and a willingness to learn English, had of course been noticed by Morier, as well as Malcolm, in his tours of Iran and this willingness to engage in dialogue, in the truest meaning of the term,[25] ensured that these earliest travelers were by and large (though by no means always) able to call on the support and help of receptive Britons, not least individuals like Malcolm and Morier, but also the doyen of Persian studies in the United Kingdom at the time Sir Gore Ouseley. Ouseley was also the means by which Abol Hasan Khan gained entry to the radical intellectual fraternity that was the freemasons, joining in 1810. Such was Abol Hasan Khan's enthusiasm for the masons that he acquired in time the title of "Past Grand Master."[26] There is no evidence that Mirza Ibrahim joined the masons, though he would have been unusual had he not, and some new initiates proved a good deal more discrete than others over their membership. But the importance of membership lay less in the fascination for a secret society as the access such membership gave to the Iranians that joined and the engagement in an international intellectual fraternity which in its British guise at least, espoused, in this crucial period, what may best be described as radical whiggism.[27] Constitutionalism, education (moral as well as practical), and the rule of law, all within a religiously liberal, indeed iconoclastic milieu in which belief in the Creator—the architect of the universe—did not require belief in the Christian idea of the Trinity. Indeed, the critical engagement with Christian ideas, along with the interest shown in Eastern philosophies and religions, not least Zoroastrianism, made for a highly attractive environment for the curious Iranian inductees.

Another person who was able to enlist the support of Sir Gore Ouseley[28] and who likewise came in time to join the freemasons was the diarist and intellectual Mirza Saleh Shirazi.[29] Mirza Saleh was among a handful of

students dispatched by Abbas Mirza to Britain to acquire knowledge of the West, and Mirza Saleh's specific instructions were to learn the English language and to study natural philosophy.[30] His account of his travels to Britain, or "England" to be more precise, remains one of the most interesting accounts of English life in the Regency period, not least on account of its author, but also in large measure because of the details Mirza Saleh chose to include. In stark contrast to Abol Hasan Khan, Mirza Saleh interrogated both his environment and his interlocutors drawing out details that would have been missed by most travelers, including for good measure a precise description of Salisbury Cathedral, complete with the date of foundation and length of the spire (410').[31] When visiting Plymouth for example, he noted the existence of a lighthouse to guide the ships in as well as a *berek vater* (break water).[32] His account is particularly famous for its thoroughly Whig reading of British (English) history from the Roman invasion to the present (1815), noting particular scientific advances and aspects of political, social, and economic progress. It is unclear what the main source for Mirza Saleh might have been, whether textual or oral—in all likelihood a mixture of both—and while the history provided is comparatively detailed, including references to Aethelstan,[33] and the Union of Crowns under "James VI" (not one might add "James I" as English histories would normally describe the Stuart King) in 1603, and adds for good measure that Edward I had bound Wales to England in 1286, he had little competition and the history remains, by necessity, an abridgment.[34] Magna Carta (*makna charter*), needless to say, makes a profound impression in this narrative with it being described as having freed the people—although he significantly adds that King John proceeded to ignore it.[35] As impressive as the detail is, it does not compare in breadth, depth, and rigor with Sir John Malcolm's contemporaneous "History of Persia."[36]

Mirza Saleh's chief task as noted above was to acquire proficiency in the English language so that on his return he could be engaged profitably as a translator and interpreter. He clearly took to his task with some enthusiasm, offering like many subsequent Iranian students, to teach Persian in lieu of English lessons,[37] and so good did his English become that he was quick to discern the difficulties posed by regional accents. Mirza Saleh writes as he heard, and spells out names and place names literally, not always it might be added correctly, but for example he uses *englund* throughout for England, rather the later rendition *Inglis*, although it is interesting perhaps to note that the term for Scotland—*escotland*—remains current to this day. Similarly, when discussing parliament, he transliterates that term as well as *manbar-e parlemant*, for member of parliament.[38] Traveling through the south and west of England, Mirza Saleh notes that on entering "Devonshire," the accents are so difficult as to render the speech almost

foreign to his ears, noting that this probably because he learnt his English in London.[39]

As noted above, he peppered his rendition of English history with the progress afforded by science, noting the achievements of Harvey's study of the circulation of the blood[40] and the significance of the foundation of the Royal Society in the reign of Charles II.[41] Unsurprisingly, he also spent a considerable time on the nature of governance not only looking at the parliamentary nature of constitutional government but more intriguingly at the details of local governance, in terms of mayors and lord mayors,[42] as well as the regulation of the rule of law, with the note that watchmen were assigned to the streets of London in 1705.[43] He notes the organization and regulation of life in London, the discipline required to manage a large city, the management of water resources (in a country where it rains six months in every year), and of lighting where fog is a perennial problem. He was also impressed by the quality of the building and engineering throughout the city, noting that houses in London were frequently six or seven floors.[44] Noting the consumption of food, Mirza Saleh adds that all people, including the poor, have access to good quality food and adds that according to his sources London consumes 110,000 cows per year, 210,000 calves, 280,000 large and small pigs, and 800,000 sheep and other animals.[45] It followed from this that trade and commercial life was buoyant with particular attention paid to the activities of the East India Company.[46]

Among the many achievements of his hosts, one that apparently stood out, as with Abol Hasan Khan, was the newspaper—*kaghaz-akhbar*—which Mirza Saleh noted was a means not only of maintaining communication, as far afield as India, but also a source of government revenue and a means of promoting commerce. Characteristically, Mirza Saleh spells out the term "advertisement" for the commercial ads he witnesses along with the expense incurred—six and a half shillings, which he added was not a significant amount of money in order to reach the entire country.[47] According to his sources, some 25 million newspapers are printed each year, which, as Green points out, "must have been a staggering sum for someone from a country that had never printed a single page."[48] Mirza Saleh was so impressed by the printing press that he sought to bring one to Iran on his return in 1819, only to find that the Crown Prince Abbas Mirza had already acquired one from Russia and Mirza Saleh found his ambition to bring the first printer to Iran thwarted.[49] He did nevertheless achieve one very important "first" in the history of Iran with the production of the first newspaper in 1837.

By then, interest in British ideas and ideals was gathering pace among the Qajar elite, and the diary of three princes (who thought it prudent to go into a period of self-imposed exile following the death of Fath Ali Shah in 1834) made up in enthusiasm what it might have lacked in intellectual rigor[50]. Mirza

Saleh was a bureaucrat on a mission; the three princes, Reza-Qoli Mirza, Najaf Qoli Mirza, and Teimour Mirza, were princes of the royal house and the account of their travels, written by Najaf Qoli, was less intellectual interrogation and more catalog of curiosities. Yet if anything the message was enhanced by a delivery that was at once straightforward and impassioned. There were to be sure interesting details and the occasional criticism, but the broad canvas was one of admiration for the political and economic achievements of the British state. Above all it was quite clear from this account that progress was a matter of application, in particular of good governance and the rule of law, and that all nations could apply themselves irrespective of race or ethnicity. Indeed, the princes were informed:

> In fine, in former times, the Franks, especially those of England, were like animals and quadrupeds, and had no arts of any description. They dwelt in forest, mountains, and the extreme coasts of the sea, dressed in the skins of animals, eating the natural productions of the earth, and if they had a king, they sometimes killed him; and likewise their kings killed many of the people. These oppressions, outrages and violations caused always quarrels between the kings and their subjects. Many people, during the height of oppression, had no rest, and were obliged to abandon the country, and go to the New World and other parts. It appears that at different times, according to the wisdom of the Lord the Omnipotent, oppression falls upon the people in different kingdoms, according to the state of their hearts. These horrible outrages which at this time are practised in their extreme in the Asiatic kingdoms, are entirely banished from Europe, where there is no oppression, and cannot be. In all parts and cities of England which we visited, the inhabitants are a very high-minded people, and conduct their affairs with perfect prudence, so much so, that they have no governors, nor do they require civil power. All of them know the law, and what is justice: they obey their laws, which are founded on liberty. Every person enjoys this liberty and acts according to its laws. Vizirs, princes, and even the king himself, has no power, has no power to kill a bird. For instance, should the king fire at a bird during the prohibited season, he must stand before the law and receive the decision thereof; in short, every person is under the law.[51]

The journal itself is stronger on the politics than the history of Britain, and certainly cannot compare to Mirza Saleh's travelogue on that account but there are interesting digressions on the history of Britain, which deal more explicitly with the Glorious Revolution and the accession of the Hanoverians. "Charles the First, of the house of Stuart, was a sanguinary and arbitrary prince. He wished to subvert the constitution, and to reign despotically. The English, however, put an end to his career by decapitating him . . . James the Second . . . attempted like his grandfather, to reign despotically. But he

was obliged to abdicate, and the nation invited his son in law, the Prince of
Orange to the throne. This last king, dying without issue, Anne, daughter of
James the Second reigned, and was succeeded by George the First, prince of
the line of Hanover, whose line is now upon the throne."[52]

Indeed, the entire narrative is robustly whiggish, and one suspects that the
main informant of the journal was a Whig politician,[53] as the following pas-
sage, which reiterated the themes of progress outlined above, albeit with a
distinctly whig bias. Having outlined the party system—Whigs and Tories—
and noted that a majority is required in the House of Commons to enable
one or other party to form an administration, the journal informs the reader:
"The tories in ancient days have always been in office, and thereby they have
established to themselves some privileges by which everyone is now a pos-
sessor of millions of money." As to their policy and their views, they say this:

> Three hundred years ago, we were wild people, and our kingdom then was
> worse and lower than any other. But through mind, wisdom, and learning, which
> we have now, we have brought our kingdom to its present height of honour; and
> as our empire grew larger by our management, why should we now reform and
> give up our policy which has done all this good?

As to the whigs, they say this:

> We know it is more prudent to go according to the changes of time and cir-
> cumstances; moreover, by the old policy, only a few were profited, and as our
> government is a general one, therefore we must observe that which is best for
> the whole nation and that all should be profited, and every person should enjoy
> the same privileges. It will never do that some should grow rich beyond measure
> and others should be left poor.[54]

The account adds for good measure that the whigs govern for the good of the
general public and the welfare of all and are currently the most powerful party
and hence make up the administration. There is good detail provided on the
composition of the government, the various ministerial posts, as well as the
means by which government proceeds with the cabinet presenting legislation
to the House of Commons and House of Lords. The journal notes that the
House of Lords can reject legislation passed by the Commons but that this
would place them "against the public" (a clear indication once again that the
source is a whig sympathizer) while all the time concluding that no legisla-
tion be approved by the king until both houses have passed it.[55] But more than
that there are strongly whiggish representations of colonial expansion noting,
"They have no desire of gaining possession of other countries, nor of rais-
ing money by their civil power. They say, 'If we take possession of foreign

countries, and wish to keep them in good condition, and have the natives satisfied, we must then spend in that country whatever income we may raise; if not the people will not be satisfied, and the country will never advance'."[56] There is also a passing if almost incidental, if glowing, reference to the abolition of the slave trade. "But when the English at home began to think that all these production of the colonies . . . were cultivated by the forced labour of the slaves, and that if they compelled their masters to free them, the colonies would greatly suffer; at last, after discussing this matter for a month, the nation at home liberally granted the enormous sum of twenty millions of pounds sterling to the colonies to free the slaves. Thus they were liberated, and the trade was abolished, and those people who were once slaves, will now grow up as independent men, seeking after knowledge and fame."[57]

Education and scientific achievement features heavily throughout the journal and one of their earliest visits is to Kings College (presumably newly founded in London), with a startling account of some "10,000" students attending what must have been their graduation ceremony.[58] As with the previous visitors, the princes are struck by the particular ingenuities of politics, government, and communication, noting the development of the postal system, the standardization of postage costs, and the startling reality that "every morning and evening 500 coaches leave London with letters to all parts of the world."[59] Similarly, there is a fascination with newspapers and the journalists who fill their pages. "These papers are written by some very clever editors and authors, who are very learned and poets. They enjoy the confidence of the people."[60] Be that as it may, the princes revel in the breadth of the journalistic endeavor with writers dispatched to cover a variety of different subjects from the activities of the court to those of ministers—"perhaps before the representative has finished his speech, half of it is already published and given to the public to read"[61]—as well as reporting on both foreign and domestic news.

Like Abol Hasan Khan, the princes are duly impressed by the engineering feats that they witnessed, though by this stage they are considerably more advanced than the bridges that the erstwhile ambassador was describing. Thus, the princes were commenting in some detail on the development of gaslighting, piped into every home, the construction of canals,[62] railroads,[63] as well as the development at the time, which perhaps was the most impressive engineering feat they witnessed, of the Thames Tunnel.[64] The princes, like their diplomatic predecessor, socialized widely, were received by numerous luminaries,[65] as well as paying a visit to Mirza Ibrahim,[66] and were in time inducted into the Freemasons, providing a limited insight into the ceremony before deciding that discretion was the better part of valor.[67] It is clear that this induction is of some importance to them. But they also observed other aspects of social life that reflect a degree of penetrating inquiry, including the role of women, the use of "Christian" and surnames,[68] as well as a visit to

a lunatic asylum,[69] are not given to praise when none is to their mind called for—they are especially critical of the tendency to engage in duels[70] and note the interesting development in time management, a critical if overlooked aspect of the onward march of modernity: "They divide their time, both day and night, in regular hours of business, and they are exact to a minute. They are very particular in their time, which they value highly. When a person has an engagement or an appointment at such an hour, either on business, a dinner party, or whatever it may be, the person always puts into his mind the fear of not being in time; therefore, he is always on the alert to be at the exact moment."[71] All in all, however, the theme of the journal is evident: "In short, wherever liberty and justice prevail, there, civilisation advances, the population increases and the arts flourish."[72]

One should not exaggerate the impact the observations of these early travelers to Britain will have had on Iranian society, given the low levels of literacy and the absence of a meaningful political culture. But as Mirza Saleh's launch of the first Iranian newspaper indicates, neither should we dismiss the influence that these visits held for the Iranians who traveled and for those who would ultimately engage with them within Iran. By the middle of the century, Amir Kabir was launching the first of numerous attempts at reform while by the later part of the century agitation was increasing and becoming more voluble. Jamal Al Din al Afghani, generally regarded as the father of political Islamism, was far more a creature of the Enlightenment than many appreciate and whole like successive political activists and agitators, he berated the British for failing to live up to the standards they set for themselves, he was himself more wedded to those standards than generally assumed. The themes outlined by these writers, the importance of liberty, the rule of law, and good governance, were to find powerful echoes in the proclamations of Afghani and the constitutionalists that would follow him, and if the state that was to be built was molded by the French experience the politics that shaped and defined it was undeniably British in its designs.[73] This reflected less on the reality of British "hard power" but its successful deployment of soft power—the careful cultivation of ties and an investment in engagement that was to bear fruit. The British were expanding their grip on that part of the Persianate world known as India. To do so successfully, they had to immerse themselves in the broader historical political culture of the Persian world, gaining fluency not only in the Persian language but also its cultural hinterland. This facilitated an access into the hearts and minds of Iranians that few other countries could begin to attempt. Even Russian influence, while extensive in the nineteenth century, and exercised by expert Orientalists, was hindered in many ways by the realization that their influence was always backed by the threat of immediate force. Britain, unable or unwilling to avail herself of such resources, was obliged to invest in other means, cultivating

friendships, building networks, and engaging in ideas. These ideas proved attractive because in the early nineteenth century at least, they were not tied to nation or race and could be appropriated and applied by all who chose. The "whig" idea that one might cultivate progress and civilization through the application of good governance, education, and discipline was one that was eagerly absorbed by Iranian travelers who showed themselves more open to new ideas than many of their regional rivals. As the three princes noted, Lord Palmerston's kindness was "a striking proof of the friendship and union of the two empires."[74] It was in many ways an auspicious start to what was to prove a turbulent relationship.

NOTES

1. N. Keddie, 'The French Revolution and the Middle East', in *Iran and the Muslim World: Resistance and Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 239.

2. J. Malcolm, *Sketches of Persia* (London: Longman, 1827), p. 215.

3. For a broader discussion of the influence of British ideas, see A. Ansari, 'Britain, Iran, and the Idea of Reform', in *Iran, Islam and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change*, 3rd Edition (London: Gingko, 2019), pp. 543–65.

4. See for example, R. Matthee, 'Between Aloofness and Fascination: Safavid Views of the West', *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Spring 1998), pp. 219–46.

5. M. Ekhtiar, 'An Encounter with the Russian Czar: The Image of Peter the Great in Early Qajar Historical Writings', *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1/2 (Winter/Spring 1996), p. 60.

6. The second confirmatory and more punitive treaty being that of Turkmenchai in 1828.

7. For a brief biography see J. Morier, *A Journey through Persia, Armenia and Asia Minor to Constantinople in the Year 1808 and 1809* (Elibron Classics, 2004, first published in London by Longmans, 1812), pp. 220–23. See also, N. Sohrabi, *Taken for Wonder: Nineteenth Century Travel Accounts from Iran to Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 25–28. See also D. Wright, *The Persians among the English* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1985), pp. 53–69.

8. Morier, *A Journey through Persia*, *op cit.*, pp. 364–65.

9. Ibid., p. 365.

10. Ibid., p. 366.

11. Ibid., p. 367.

12. Wright, *The Persians among the English*, *op cit.*, p. 54.

13. M. A. Hasan Khan, *A Persian ant the Court of King George* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1988), p. 25.

14. Ibid., p. 33. It was not unknown for Morier to challenge his exaggerations, which occasionally led to friction between the two, though not it would seem any permanent rift in relations. See p. 230.

15. Ibid., p. 26.

16. Ibid., p. 41; also, Wright, *The Persians among the English*, *op cit.*, p. 55.

17. Ibid., p. 273. See also H. Javadi, 'Abul Hasan Khan Ilci', *Encyclopædia Iranica*, Vol. I, No. 3, pp. 308–10, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abul-hasan-khan-ilci-mirza-persian-diplomat-b.

18. Wright, *The Persians among the English*, *op cit.*, p. 59.

19. Ibid., p. 192.

20. Sohrabi, *Taken for Wonder*, *op cit.*, p. 44.

21. Malcolm, *Sketches of Persia*, pp. 190–91.

22. Edmonstone and Baillie, Memorandum, ff. 279–85 and Reports of the Committee College 1826, J/2/5 ff. 279–85, BL, quoted in M. H. Fisher, 'Persian Professor in Britain: Mirza Muhammad Ibrahim at the East India Company's College, 1826–44', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 21, No. 1 & 2 (2001), p. 28.

23. Ibid. His harsh approach appears to have been imitated by subsequent teachers of Persian.

24. Ibid., p. 29. He is also reported to have become close with Lord Palmerston, the archetypal whig.

25. See J. Malcolm, *History of Persia*, Vol. II (London: Longman, 1829), p. 462, footnote 'e'.

26. Javadi, 'Abul Hasan Khan Ilci', *op cit.*

27. M. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (Lafayette, LA: Cornerstone, 2006 [first published 1981]), especially pp. 80–111.

28. He had come to know both Gore and William Ouseley in Iran. He also enlisted the help of Sir John Malcolm; see Wright, *The Persians among the English*, *op cit.*, p. 80.

29. Nile Green's study, *The Love of Strangers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), remains the most comprehensive account of the visit by Mirza Saleh and his colleagues. On freemasonry, see p. 173.

30. F. Zivyar, 'Baztab gharb va modernite dar safarnamehye mirz saleh-ye Shirazi' (The Image of the West and Modernity in the Travelogue of Mirza Salah Shirazi), *Faslnameh-ye pazhohesh-haye siyasi-e jahan-e Islam* (The Journal of Political Research of the Islamic World), Vol. 7, No. 3 (Autumn 1396/2017), p. 62.

31. S. S. Mirza, *Safarnameh* (Travelogue), ed. E. Rain (Tehran: Davar, 1347/1968), p. 192. He gives the date as 1219, though it is now generally considered to have been founded in 1220.

32. Mirza, *Safarnameh*, *op cit.*, p. 201.

33. Mirza, *Safarnameh*, *op cit.*, p. 215.

34. Mirza, *Safarnameh*, *op cit.*, p. 208; there is, however, no mention of the Act of Union, p. 257.

35. Mirza, *Safarnameh*, *op cit.*, p. 235.

36. Green, *The Love of Strangers*, *op cit.*, p. 75, suggests that the source may have been David Hume's *History of England*, which was widely read at the time. See also p. 109. The use of the appellation by James VI may indeed point in that direction.

37. Green, *The Love of Strangers*, *op cit.*, p. 34.

38. Mirza, *Safarnameh*, *op cit.*, p. 195.

39. Mirza, *Safarnameh*, *op cit.*, p. 191.

40. Mirza, *Safarnameh*, *op cit.*, p. 253; he makes reference to Dr. Harvey's discovery of the circulation of blood in the human body.

41. Ibid., p. 255; also p. 299.

42. Ibid., pp. 290–95.

43. Ibid., p. 285.

44. Ibid., p. 286.

45. Ibid., p. 288.

46. Ibid., p. 289.

47. Ibid., pp. 301–2.

48. Green, *The Love of Strangers*, *op cit.*, p. 116.

49. Ibid., p. 305.

50. For background see Wright, *The Persians among the English*, *op cit.*, pp. 87–101.

51. K. M. Najaf, *Journal of a Residence in England*, Vol. II, 1839, reprinted by Elibron Classics, 2005, pp. 28–29. For good measure, they also note, p. 63, that liberty "is carried to a greater extent in France and to its utmost point in America."

52. Ibid., pp. 91–92.

53. A possible candidate being Palmerston (or a member of his office), with whom they were acquainted. See also note 24. Palmerston acted as their host and was among the first officials they met on their arrival in London; ibid., p. 2 and p. 88. See also Wright, *The Persians among the English*, *op cit.*, p. 91.

54. Ibid., pp. 51–52. See also p. 32, where they note, "All these institutions have taken their rise within a period of two hundred and ninety years."

55. Ibid., pp. 45–50.

56. Ibid., pp. 33–34.

57. Ibid., pp. 30–31.

58. Ibid., pp. 6–7; see also pp. 73–79.

59. Ibid., p. 55.

60. Ibid., p. 52.

61. Ibid., p. 53.

62. Ibid., pp. 56–59.

63. Ibid., pp. 10–12.

64. Ibid., pp. 9–10.

65. Including the ill-fated Lord Elphinstone, Ibid., p. 84.

66. Ibid., pp. 138–39.

67. Ibid., pp. 123–24.

68. Ibid., p. 70.

69. Ibid., pp. 131–35.

70. Ibid., pp. 25–28.

71. Ibid., pp. 58–59.

72. Ibid., pp. 63–64; interestingly, the princes note the veracity of the Prophet's saying, "The kingdom will endure though infidelity be in it, but it will perish if there be oppression."

73. For details see A. Ansari, 'Taqizadeh and European Civilisation', *IRAN*, LIV.I 2016, pp. 47–58.

74. Najaf, *Journal of a Residence in England*, *op cit.*, p. 88.

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IRANIAN INTELLECTUALS: BETWEEN TRADITIONAL VALUES AND MODERN STATE

Chapter 4

Third-Worldist Iranian Intellectuals

Shariati and Ale-Ahmad

Farhad Khosrokhavar

Ale-Ahmad and Shariati were two major Iranian intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s.[1] The first was a secular, Marxist (at least influenced by Marxism); the second was a "religious" individual who thought of Shiism as a worldview that was revolutionary in its essence and did not need Marxism to mobilize Iran against the Shah regime, marked by secularism, authoritarianism, and anti-communism. Shariati was religious, Ale-Ahmad was secular, but both shared a common view: Islam would be the ideology that might overthrow the Pahlavi regime and put an end to Western imperialism in the region.

Jalal Ale-Ahmad was born in Tehran into a religious family—his father was a cleric—originally from the village of Aurazan in Taligan, close to Mazandaran in northern Iran. He was a cousin of ayatollah Mahmoud Taleghani who became one of the leaders of the 1979 Revolution in Iran. After elementary school, Ale-Ahmad was sent to earn a living in the Tehran bazaar, but also attended Marvi Madreseh for religious education and, without his father's permission, night classes at the secular Dar ul-Fonun. He went to Seminary of Najaf in Iraq in 1944 but returned home very quickly. He turned to Ahmad Kasravi's writings, one of the most polemical secular intellectuals, dead set against the clergy and those who propounded a religious view of life. He broke off the ties with his father and his brother who had pushed him toward a clerical career.

In 1946 he earned a master degree in Persian literature from Tehran Teachers College[2] and became a teacher, at the same time making a sharp break with his religious family that left him without resources, forcing him to make an earning through teaching. In 1950, he married Simin Daneshvar, a famous secular Persian novelist.

Ale-Ahmad joined the communist party Tudeh with his friend and mentor Khalil Maleki, after World War II, when that party again could act freely after

the forced departure of Reza Shah. After a while, both resigned in protest over the lack of democracy and the pro-Soviet stance of the Tudeh.

He later helped found the Toilers Party, one of the components of the National Front, a coalition of pro-Mossadegh parties, and then in 1952, a new party called the Third Force. After the overthrow of Mossadegh by a military coup in which the United States and Great Britain played a major role, Ale-Ahmad was imprisoned for several years. In spite of his secular ties and thought, Ale-Ahmad became sympathetic to a religious leadership after the rise of ayatollah Khomeini in 1963 as the main opposition figure to the Shah.

He died in Asalem, a rural region in the north of Iran.

Ali Shariati was born in 1933 in a village close to Sabzevar, a northeastern town in Iran, in a clerical family. His father, a teacher, opened in 1947 the Center for the Propagation of Islamic Truths in Mashad, the capital of Khorasan province, in order to fight against atheism and communism. He became involved in the oil nationalization movement during the Mossadegh era in the 1950s. Ali Shariati became a schoolteacher and founded in 1952 the Islamic Students' Association that resulted in his arrest in 1953 after the overthrow of Mossadegh. He became involved in political activism and was arrested in 1957 for his participation in the National Resistance Movement. He received a scholarship from France and prepared a PhD in La Sorbonne in Paris, defending his PhD in 1964. While in France, he became embroiled in the Algerian independence movement and was arrested in Paris during a demonstration in favor of Patrice Lumumba. He began to read Franz Fanon and Jean-Paul Sartre. He translated the first in Persian and, seemingly, helped publish Ale-Ahmad's book *Westtoxication* in Iran. After his PhD defense, he returned in 1964 to Iran where he was arrested for his political activities in Paris. He became closely involved in a series of conferences in a newly opened Islamic cultural center in northern, residential part of Tehran, Hoseyniye Ershad. His conferences were highly successful among the new modernized youth and his views on Islam disturbed as much the government as the traditionalist clergy. He died in 1977 in Southampton, Britain.

Ale-Ahmad and Shariati were both Third-Wordlist in the sense that they were looking for a third way, neither communism nor capitalism, to change the Iranian situation and fight against social injustice and oppression. Their common point with Third-Worldist intellectuals in other parts of the world (Latin America, India, and so on) was their utter rejection of capitalism but there was a major difference with many of them, and one was their understanding of religion as a prime mover of revolutionary ideas. Shariati, in letters to Franz Fanon, criticized the latter's view on religion and explicitly asserted that religion (Islam in his view) was revolutionary in its substance and therefore people had to endorse its potential rather than reject it in the name of a supposedly secular revolutionary mindset. The fact that many

Third-Worldist intellectuals distanced themselves from communism (much less than they did toward capitalism) pointed to the fact that revolutionary attitudes were not automatically supported by them. Shariati was a revolutionary. He idealized the Shiite Imams as revolutionaries: Ali, the first Imam, Hussein, the third Imam, or the twelfth Imam, occulted. He transformed them into modern revolutionaries through the eschatological view of Shiism that he so much contributed to formulate and to conceptualize. As for Ale-Ahmad, his major work on Westtoxication pointed to the idea that the West is looking forward not only to colonize the others (and particularly the Muslim world) but also to deny cultural autonomy to them in order to subjugate them not only materially but also mentally. In his view, the alienation caused by the West was not only political or economic but also symbolic, based on the denial of an Islamic culture. To end any resistance on the part of the Muslims, the West intended to break and neutralize their religious culture by declaring war against Islam. In that respect, Ale-Ahmad, a secular intellectual, became a pro-Islamic revolutionary, in order to fight against Western imperialism.

The paradox is that Islam was not a significant topic in his major critical essay, "Westtoxication" (gharbzadeghi), whereas Shariati based his entire vision on a revisited Islam. Ale-Ahmad had strong Marxist leanings but in the end concluded that mobilization against the Shah's regime could only be achieved through Islam and, in particular, the charismatic leadership of ayatollah Khomeyni.

It is noteworthy that while social and literary thinkers (Ale-Ahmad) and social theologians (Shariati) in Iran were mobilizing against imperialism and the Pahlavi regime through their hasty theorizing, in Latin America the Liberation theologians on the one hand, the Dependency theorists on the other, and in Europe thinkers like Herbert Marcuse criticized the capitalist world system from different perspectives. Dependency theory in Latin America found through Cepal (The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, in Spanish and Portuguese, Cepal) the institution that proposed a global view on the underdevelopment of this continent due to the transfer of wealth from the "Periphery" to the "Center," impoverishing the former (former colonial countries, mainly in Latin America and Africa) and enriching the latter (Western Europe and the United States). Seminal figures like Paul A. Baran who published *The Political Economy of Growth* (1957) and André Gunder Franck with his notable book *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (published in 1967) propounded a theory with Celso Furtado and Anibal Pinto that was applied to Africa by Walter Rodney in his book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972). These major tendencies were ignored by Ale-Ahmad who published his *Westtoxication* in this period, without any reference to this type of groundbreaking analysis, contested nowadays, but opening a perspective beyond the shaky theoretical

background of Ale-Ahmad's book. In another perspective, the epoch was ripe with a critic of capitalism opened up by the Frankfort School, in the person of Herbert Marcuse whose *One Dimensional Man* (published in 1964) proposed a sociological-anthropological framework that was by far more complex and theoretically more elaborately constructed than the poorly conceived Ale-Ahmad's *Westoxication*. Still, the epoch was characterized in the so-called Third World by attempts at understanding their underdevelopment in front of an arrogant West who proposed, particularly through the neoliberal theories of laissez-faire, a framework for the poorer countries to join the rich ones. In the Muslim world, the attempts at the explanation of underdevelopment were arguably the least grounded in sociological and economic theories. What was mobilized was, besides "vulgar Marxism" among some intellectuals, a revisited Islam to which was imputed the capacity to create revolutionary conditions that would put in question capitalism and the backward situation of Muslim countries. Shariati and Ale-Ahmad played a major role in this new type of awareness in which Islamization of revolution was paramount.

SHARIATI AND ALE-AHMAD'S COMMON BACKGROUND

Ale-Ahmad and Shariati shared many ideas, but they also had commonalities in regard to their social and institutional background.

Ale-Ahmad (born in 1923) was ten years older than Shariati (born in 1933). Both were the legacy of modernization by Pahlavi's education system. They came from traditional clerical families, but they went to modern schools and universities and this changed their views on society. Both spent some time in the West (Ale-Ahmad in the United State, as a visiting scholar at Harvard University, Shariati as a PhD student in Sorbonne, Paris). The commonalities were:

- The association between literary writing and political activity: Shariati closely intertwined them and his works underlined his political-theological tenets that were closely tied to each other; Ale-Ahmad wrote anthropological, critical essays and novels in which the revolt against social injustice went hand in hand with an anti-Shah political stance. In both cases, political activity and literary accomplishment became indissociable.
- The influence of anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist writers, Fanon, Sartre, and so on, on both of them was decisive in their perception of social reality.
- Their being teachers and in touch with the indigence and identity problems of the lower- and lower-middle-class youth undergoing a painful modernization, suffering from poverty, and a widening class gap with the "nouveau

riche" generation of upper bourgeoisie made them sensitive to social ills. Ale-Ahmad and Shariati obtained diplomas to teach from the modern institutions of education in Iran and the job of teacher at school and university (Shariati in Ferdowsi University in Mashad) pushed them to a kind of self-proclaimed moral leadership of Iranian youth.

- Their becoming convinced that religion could not be treated in Iran in the same way as in the secular West where it was privatized. In their perspective, religion had to play a major role in mobilizing society against the modernist, authoritarian, and pro-Western Shah's rule; in Shairati's case, this idea was paramount from the beginning (he joined Islamic institutions and parties like the God-believing Socialists, socialist haye khoda parast), but in Ale-Ahmad's case, after his failure to push for change through secular parties (Tudeh, Toilers, Third Force, and so on), he espoused the activist view of religion, in particular under the leadership of ayatollah Khomeyni. One can compare their role with that of Seyed Qotb in Egypt who intended to promote Islamic Revolution against Nasser.[3]

- Their combining Marxism and Islam, Ale-Ahmad in a less explicit manner, Shariati, explicitly. For the latter, Islam was revolutionary in its essence and its quietist version was the result of the collusion between the clergy and the power holders. They had as an ideal the Marxist view of a classless, anti-imperialist society. Shariati put it into Islamic words, talking about the "Islamic classless society" (more accurately the Unitary-classless-society, Unicity of God being the hallmark of Islam in denial of class differences, jame'eye bi tabaqeye towhidi). He denounced the domination of the West in terms of "gold, violence and sycophancy" (zar o zur o tazvir), aiming at dominating the Third World through capitalism. Ale-Ahmad asserted that the West sought to intoxicate the Third World through cultural Westtoxication in order to crush any resistance to its domination, based on the use of modern technology and machinery. Both believed in revolution as a final and definitive solution to social ills.

- Their pilgrimage to Mecca: Ale-Ahmad and Shariati made it and their respective books detailed their views and their subjective attitude toward a religion that had to be the same time spiritual and activist. Their attitude was not only contrary to the dominant tradition in Shiism, in which until the advent of the occulted twelfth Imam (a Shiite Messiah), politics were impure and a devout Shiite should not get involved in it, but also contrary to the forthcoming view in the next generation among the so-called "new reformist thinkers" (now-andishmandane dini) like Abolkarim Soroush and Mojtahed Shabestari, for whom religion should be extricated from political involvement and restituted to the spiritual realm in the subjectivity of the faithful. Shariati was not always consequential in his attitude—in some of his writings, Prayers (niyaayesh), the Fall in the Desert (hoboot dar kavir),

or Solitary dialogues (goftegu haye tanhaee) or his poems (the "candle of the prison," the candle personifying himself and others he published under the pseudonym Candle), he proclaimed the spiritual role of religion and his subjective quest for intimate truth through religion. But on the whole, he viewed Islam as utterly political (revolutionary), denouncing "Black Shiism" as a fake version of Allah's religion, in contrast to "Red Shiism," promoting martyrdom in order to accelerate the advent of the twelfth Imam and the end of time.

- Their being influenced by the Tudeh Party. Ale-Ahmad joined it, then resigned membership out of disappointment. Shariati was influenced by Marxism but became an Islamic Marxist: like his father and many people of his generation (Mehdi Bazargan among others), he thought that Islam did not need Marxism to be revitalized. Contrary to his father and Bazargan, he strongly identified Islam and class issues, defining it in terms of classless society in an eschatological manner, combining Marxism and end of times worldview. Shariati did not become a member of the Tudeh, but his views converged with the Iranian communist party on revolution for the sake of the abolition of a class society. He shared the communist eschatology (the end of history and the advent of a classless society) by islamicizing it (the end of time witnessed the twelfth Imam establishing the "unitary" Islamic society in which there would be no class distinction). Both Shariati and Ale-Ahmad integrated into their intellectual frame Marxist ideas, the former believing that genuine Islam already was revolutionary, the latter becoming convinced in his later life, after the disappointment of his political experience with Tudeh and Third Force parties, that revolution in Iran was possible only under the aegis of Islamic ideology.

- Their relationship to their respective fathers who were clerics: Shariati remained somehow faithful to his father (who did not always dress the clerical garb), although ambiguously, whereas Ale-Ahmad broke off ties with his father by renouncing to become a clergyman and by marrying Simin Daneshvar, a secular woman and writer. From a religious background, they acted in a secularizing manner, although in different ways.

- Their death as relatively young men (Ale-Ahmad at the age of forty-five, Shariati at the age of forty-three); their death being attributed to the Shah's Intelligence service (Savak), although people very close to them denied it. Both were chain smokers, and Ale-Ahmad heavily drank vodka. Their death, as middle-aged intellectuals, contributed to their becoming "martyrs," or precocious thinkers with a tragic destiny in the Iranian public opinion, although the prevailing evidence shows that their death was related to their hectic way of life rather than the Shah's regime.

- Ale-Ahmad translated literary works from Gide, Camus, Sartre, Ionesco, Jünger, and so on, whereas Shariati translated from the writer Jawdat al

Sahar, Sartre, and quoted profusely Fanon. Both closely combined translation with their literary and political activities.

• Both were politicized, with extreme-left leanings, opposing radically the Shah's regime in the name of radicalized leftist views.

• Their prose was close to the daily oral language: Shariati was a charismatic speaker and many of his published works were his conferences that were close to daily life's language; Ale-Ahmad had a prose that was simple but "nervous" and aggressive and that pleased the young new middle-class Iranian youth, in search of a new principle for their social existence as a class in gestation, distinct from the poor and downtrodden (many of rural origin) and from the new rich exhibitionist Shah's "bourgeoisie." Their prose became the literary identification of the new middle class in Iran, neither pro-Soviet nor pro-Capitalist in its Western style, in quest of an identity. This was built in protest, not in finding a compromise. The Shah's regime also did not accept any compromise and therefore both succeeded in radicalizing the political system in Iran.

• Both had a prophetic attitude toward society, being among the "high-brow" intellectuals (roshan fekrane boland-parvaz[4]) who were far from modest and viewed their conception of social life as the best and the prevailing political system, as the worst.

Within this framework, Ale-Ahmad and Shariati had each their thematics.

WESTTOXICATION

According to Ale-Ahmad, "Westernized" men and women in the Third World were alienated and dispossessed of their true identity, their new subservient identity-making Western domination all the easier.

Ale-Ahmad went on to caricature the Westtoxicated man in his book[5]:

> Westtoxication (occidentosis) is a pestilence that comes from the West, and we are suffering from the Third World countries . . . The Westtoxicted has no root, he hasn't remained eastern, hasn't become western; he is an opportunist and follows uncritically the customs, traditions and culture of the West.

What is noteworthy is the situation of neither/nor that Ale-Ahmad ferociously criticized: the Westtoxicated had no identity, he had ceased to be an Easterner, yet he was not a Westerner, being in-between. If this is so, either the Westtoxicated does it intentionally (in which case he is an agent, demonic and immoral) or unintentionally (in which case he is a victim and therefore cannot be humiliatingly criticized as does Ale-Ahmad). The next quote

clarifies the situation, the Westtoxicated being a victim rather than a self-conscious agent, and in this case, his ridiculing becoming inconsequential (since he suffered from an illness):

> I say that *Westtoxication* is like cholera or frostbite. But no. It's at least as bad as sawflies in the wheat fields. Have you ever seen how they infest wheat? From within. There's a healthy skin in places, but it's only skin, just like the shell of a cicada on a tree.[6]

Here, the interpretation goes toward a kind of irreparable disease. The Westtoxicated has to be destroyed, he cannot find any salvation, he cannot change, since he has been deeply rotten, like a field of wheat by sawflies. In this case, elimination is the only solution, Westtoxication being an illness that contaminates, like sawflies, the others. It is a deadly, contagious disease.

Not content with his diagnosis, he goes on:

> A Westtoxicated man is a religious opportunist, he does not believe in anything, but he does not totally disbelieve everything either. He is an eclectic person, he changes side and does not care, he just wants his success.[7]

In this new description, the Westtoxicated is someone who is an utter ego-centric who is exclusively interested in his own success to the detriment of the others, ignoring them, being neither a believer nor a disbeliever, being an opportunist, changing sides with no consideration for the principles. This description, unduly critical, points to the fact that the Westtoxicated neither is a believer nor a disbeliever, which is the case of many modern people in the world, independently of their origin or social class. Why should this characteristic be so ferociously criticized? Being a selfish man could be a negative characteristic, but not to the point of dehumanizing the Westtoxicated, as does Ale-Ahmad. If so, the Westtoxicated cannot be said to be attained by a disease, he is a full agent of social change in a derogatory sense, and there should be no trace of illness that would whitewash him of the ills attributed to him. Ale-Ahmad goes on:

> The westtoxicated man is queer (gherti), he is effeminate, he is very much concerned with his look, he cares very much about his dress and his general adornment, and sometimes even (like women) he trims his eyebrows, changing his car every year, his home looking differently each day, one day looking like a villa by the sea and another day, like a cabaret.[8]

The Westtoxicated becomes, in this depiction, a man who has the characteristics of those people considered as passive homosexuals (being gherti, queer,

being effeminate, and so on), or features of unstable people who change their villa's decoration or their cars, dressing in fancy manners, differently each day. Thorstein Veblen called this hallmark "conspicuous consumption"[9] and he did not characterize it as an incurable disease; on the contrary, he found the underlying logic beneath it, namely the display of one's distinction from other groups, or superiority in terms of a publicized capacity to do what the others are unable to perform to show social distinction toward other groups. All these qualifications lack any grounds for absolute condemnation or ridicule as Ale-Ahmad does. Variation in dressing and behaving in a queer manner are not major problems and even if the description of Ale-Ahmad were close to the truth in the 1960s Iran (besides a tiny minority of new higher classes before the increase in oil price in the 1970s), that would not be worth condemnation at all as a social calamity. This would have been the hallmark of what we might call the "Nouveau riche," those who became affluent under the Shah by creating new industries or building houses (besaaz-befrush, "build and sell") or speculating. The new economic elite intended to gain identity through conspicuous consumption. This attitude was rather trivial since the early twentieth century.

In another fashion, Ale-Ahmad tied Westtoxication to the machines and the Iranians' inability to produce them, and so, he deplored the Third World's dependence on the West in the technological realm. One can criticize the West because of its domination through technology, colonization, and imperialism, but to believe in a demonic project of Western domination through the utter destruction of the Third World's culture is based on a conspiracy theory rather than on any objective basis. Many non-Western societies have been, since then, able to acquire Western technology and know-how, and surpass many Western countries (Japan, China, South Korea, and so on). There is no evidence of the West as a civilization, motivated by a project of total annihilation of the Third World through destruction of their native culture since the 1960s (in Latin America, colonization in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries destroyed culture and society among Indians, but it was the outcome of domination, disease, and a logic of empire, and more importantly, it happened centuries ago, not in the 1960s). Western cultural domination does not aim at dispossessing the Third World of their indigenous culture; its domination is rooted in the fascination exerted by the Western cultural industries through a hedonistic worldview that brings a leisure civilization to the fore and destroys cultural traditions as much as it creates new ones, not only in the East but also in the West. Ale-Ahmad proposed a paranoid picture of the West and a totally inconsiderate view of the Westtoxicated, victim and executioner at the same time. The contempt toward the Westtoxicated was in fact the contempt toward the Self of the intellectual who felt alone in his society, who needed to take the place of the traditional elites, and who was utterly unable

to depict a clear-sighted picture of the people exposed to cultural and social modernization because he could not get rid of his prejudices and his all too narcissistic view of himself and his role that he magnified disproportionately in following Western radical intellectuals. This paranoid picture of the West was also Shariati's who believed that the erection of the Safavid facing the Ottoman Empire was a conspiracy to weaken the Muslim world in the face of the Western powers.[10] The period (1960–1980) was propitious to paranoid views of the Self and the Other, due to the rapid modernization that broke down traditional cultural lifestyles, and the trauma resulting in the failure of the democratic movement of oil nationalization in the early 1950s and a modernity, a modernity inducing huge expectations in the soul of the new middle classes that did not find the opportunity to match their dreams of affluence and freedom with a reality made of corruption and slow progress, class gaps widening in the same movement as their traditional moral justification through destiny or fate (qesmat, "khoda khasteh," "God has willed it") faded. Ale-Ahmad and Shariati shared both this dream and the disappointment caused by a political system that became stiffer and more inflexible instead of showing signs of openness in a rapidly changing society where education and access to the West made the dream of modernity the more pressing. Ale-Ahmad, a chain smoker and an abusive Vodka drinker, was himself unable to adopt a balanced attitude toward modernity: he developed a distorted view of the West and Islam. He was himself influenced by the West and the modern education system imported from there (he became a teacher after earning a diploma); he condemned those who belonged mostly to the upper classes and who acted arrogantly by displaying their wealth and realizing their whims in a society squashed by extreme poverty. The indecent display of selfishness of the "nouveau riche" should not be epitomized as an exclusively Western plague. At most it was the ridicule behavior of a tiny elite, unable to moderate their whims, having earned their wealth through an imperfect political regime that did not distribute in a balanced manner wealth through an adequate tax system.

For Ale-Ahmad, the single institution that escaped Westtoxication was the Shiite clergy in Iran. This was the first major step toward that part of the clergy that harbored revolutionary ideas, in particular, ayatollah Khomeini.

THE ROLE OF THE CLERGY AND THE INTELLECTUALS

Ale-Ahmad had a peculiar view on intellectuals and the twists and turns of their mind. He wrote, *On the Service and Betrayal of Intellectuals* (published in 1979, after the Islamic Revolution, but written in 1964), reminiscent of the French writer Julien Benda's book *The Betrayal of Intellectuals* (1927). In

this book, he pointed out that whenever the intellectual and the clergyman acted hand in hand, they achieved victory. Ale-Ahmad referred to ayatollah Khomeini's speech in the year 1963 after the protest movement in Qom against the Land Reform in Iran. His main goal in writing that book was to pay homage to the blood of the people in Tehran, spilled on June 15, 1962, during their protest movement. Ale-Ahmad believed (the idea that later Shariati, in his contradictory manner, shared with him) that the alliance of the clergy and intellectuals was necessary to put an end to the Pahlavi regime. He became close to Islam as a revolutionary ideology. He did not ask himself about the type of revolution that could be achieved in this way. What he aspired to was the end of the Pahlavi regime; what would be the end result did not move him. Shariati was less coherent in this respect than Ale-Ahmad. He sometimes rejected the clergy as being the paragon of Black Shiism (he did it in the name of Red Shiism, revolutionary and against the dominant classes). But sometimes, he praised the clergy, or at least the young clerical students (talabeh) as being closer to a simple and sober life than the students in secular institutions like the universities. In his book *Eschatological Awaiting* (entezar), quoting the French Islamologist and translator Vincent Monteil, Shariati compared the theological students (talabeh) to "intellectual proletarians" (proletere fekri), since they lived on tiny financial means and sacrificed their youth in order to attain religious knowledge, renouncing any comfortable future in terms of earning, choosing spirituality over material life. In his book *Ijtihad and the Theory of Permanent Revolution*, Shariati made a comparison between secular intellectuals and clergymen, pointing out that many intellectuals betrayed their country and signed colonial treaties, whereas nowhere even a signature of a clergyman can be found in such treacherous treaties.

Many clergymen wrote religious advices (fatwa) against Shariati, declaring his ideas contrary to Islam, condemning his views, and asking his banning. Morteza Ansari Qomi, Nasser Makarem Shirazi, ayatollah Mar'ashi Nadjafi, Morteza Motahhari, Abol Hoseyn Qazvini, Allameh Seyd Mohammad Hoseyn Tabatabaee, and so on, denounced Shariati's vision of Shiism as being a major distortion. On the other hand, the Shah's regime was more than suspicious toward Shariati and his capacity to mobilize the youth against it. His major idea was blending religion and revolution. It had already appeared in Catholic circles in Latin America within Liberation Theology in the 1950s, Ale-Ahmad moving also in that direction, Shariati being the intellectual who accomplished the synthesis of Islam and Revolution in a new fashion. Both joined in part Sayed Qotb who had promoted few decades earlier the idea of revolutionary Islam against Nasser's secularism and pan-Arabism (he was hanged in 1966 in Egypt under Nasser).

DEMOCRACY

Shariati and Ale-Ahmad were both eager to fight against the authoritarian rule of the Shah but not in the name of democracy. Both rejected the West, Shariati because the latter was a domineering power structure that supported class-based society, the second because the West alienated the mind and soul of the Third World, in particular Iran, through what he called Westtoxication. Both were undemocratic, even anti-democratic if we accept that democracy is the rule of law and majority, and tolerance toward otherness, including some degree of social class differences, but both paid lip service to democracy as an ideal.

For Ale-Ahmad, Western democracy was fake because, according to his Marxist view, it was the dominant class hegemony dressed up as the sovereign vote of the people. Western democracy could not be genuine; it was in disguise the bourgeoisie power imposed on the people. Westtoxicated Iranians who adopted Western habitus destroyed their own culture and prepared the way for an entrenched Western domination, therefore betraying their society and culture. Authenticity resided in rejecting Westtoxication and returning to the genuine culture of society. The Shah's regime was rejected because it was an accomplice of the West in its demonic enterprise of total domination over the Iranian society.

Shariati criticized Western liberal democracy from a Marxist view (inequality, domination by the rich, demagogy, colonialism, and imperialism) and from an Islamic eschatological view (the advent of the twelfth Imam who would restore justice and equality before the end of time) that shared many features with Marxist chiliastic view (the end being the classless society). For him, liberal democracy was the enemy of humankind, much in the same way as the major theologians of liberation like Gustavo Guttierez and Leonardo Boff in Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s. Liberal democracy is also based on a secular worldview, whereas peoples in the Muslim world are religiously minded and their mobilization has to go through religious interpretation of the world. Freedom and equality, two basic countervalues to liberal democracy, can be justified on the spiritual level and were part of the tenets of premodern societies that were destroyed by the West (in that respect Shariati joined Ale-Ahmad and his view of Westtoxication).

For Shariati, the government of Imam Ali (the first Shiite Imam and the fourth caliph among the so-called "well-guided," *rashidun*) could be considered the best form of democracy. He called it commitment democracy. This notion appeared in his conference in Hoseyniyeh Ershad, and was later entitled "Ummah and Imamate." According to him, Imam is one who intends to guide humans not only in political, social, and economic sense but also in all its existential dimensions. He believed that Imam was alive everywhere

and every time. In one word, Imamate is not a metaphysical belief but a revolutionary guide. He added that Imam had to guide people not according to his desires like a dictator but in conformity to Islamic ideology and its authentic values.

For him, a religious government was the "democratic" right of Muslims. In this way, he disconnected democracy and secular tenets. One basic problem of Western democracy was in his view demagogy. Through advertisement and financial means, the vote of the people would be channeled toward the wishes of the ruling class. Commitment democracy, by providing leadership to the religiously responsible leaders, would avoid this pitfall. For Shariati, Western democracy based on gold, violence, and hypocrisy (Zar o Zour o Tazvir) was anti-revolutionary and anti-democratic in the genuine sense of the word.

The utterly negative view of the West among Iranian intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s was the historical outcome of the most important social movement in Iran, the Nationalist movement under the leadership of Mossadegh, prime minister between 1951 and 1953, overthrown by an American-English coup. This resulted in a deep and dark change of mind among Iranian intellectuals toward the West: the latter pretended to defend democracy, but had toppled the first major democratic government in Iran under the leadership of Mossadegh; it pretended to embody moral values, but it had colonized the world and exploited the resources of the underdeveloped world to its profit. Not only the West was illegitimate, but all its creations, democracy included, were fake and were to be rejected.

In Shariati and Ale-Ahmad cases, the rejection of the West (Ale-Ahmad) and secular capitalism (Shariati) entailed the dismissal of democracy as the instrument of the Western ruling class, a ploy to mislead the Third World and in particular Iran and to swindle it of its culture and identity (Ale-Ahmad) or to impose a sham religion (Safavid version of Shiism according to Shariati) to perpetuate the domination on Muslims. For him, only through attaining a classless society true religion could reign, but on the other hand, through Red Shiism, fighting for justice and equality, this end state could be achieved:

> True socialism, which builds up a classless society, is not possible without religion. Because a human society cannot be equalized if it does not attain to a stage of moral development and spiritual perfection, which allows them to renounce their rights for the sake of equality by reaching the supra-material level of "sacrifice." Because the rights are never equal, and materialism by necessity leads to individualism, and vice versa, religion cannot find its accomplishment until a society is freed from the shackles of materialist accumulation, exploitation and class antagonism . . . (in such a society) human beings develop their perfection and adopt God's image, becoming thus God's representative in nature. This is

the ultimate invitation of religion, which can be accomplished only on a class-less society.[11]

The utopia of classless society being consonant with Alid Shiism was one of the leitmotivs of Shariati who, in this fashion, tried to square Marxism and Islam in a utopian synthesis. Spirituality and political activism could thus be reconciled in a mythical manner. True democracy would emerge by this reconciliation. The danger of this type of wild utopia is that instead of paradise it establishes hell on earth, once put in practice.

THE ANTI-SHAH STANCE OF
SHARIATI AND ALE-AHMAD

Shariati and Ale-Ahmad were both "inconsequential," that is, they did not possess a coherent framework and a systematic view of society; their attitudes were dominated by passions and feelings of humiliation and malaise rather than on cogent ideas of social systems.

Both had multifaceted ideas, in many respects contradictory and marked by lack of coherence.

Shariati's eschatology was based on a mythical view of religion and society; history did not play any major role in his construction of "Alavid Shiism" (the revolutionary eschatology of Shiism that Ali, the first Shiite Imam and the fourth caliph, was supposed to represent). The dichotomy between Alavid Shiism and Safavid Shiism was at best artificial and had no roots in any historical event nor any specific social or protest movement in Shiism. The fact that Shariati focused on mythologized individuals (the Imams, Fatimah, the Prophet in a rather colorless manner, in contrast to the Imams, Abu Zar, the companion of the Prophet and the first socialist according to Shariati) showed that no single social movement or social event could bolster his vision of Islam. The Manichean dichotomy between two types of religiosity, the revolutionary (Alid Shiism) versus the fake one (the Safavid Shiism), was not supported by any historical reality and the only event that could have bolstered his view, namely the period when the Prophet reigned in Medina, was not considered by him as a major moment for his analysis of Alid Shiism. The reign of Ali was not analyzed rigorously either. He was "utopianized" and some of his words were given undue weight in order to vindicate the kind of religious view attributed to him.

Shariati's incapacity to formulate a rational or even a balanced view of Islam (and Shiism in particular) paradoxically increased his attractiveness to a new generation of modernized youth who felt ill at ease in a society in transition, in which they were frustrated in their attempts to express politically

their newborn citizenship claims, given the crescendo authoritarianism of the Shah. The Pahlavi regime, mainly in its last decade, was beset by a major contradiction: it greatly contributed to the birth and expansion of the new middle classes and, simultaneously, it closed down the political arena. The more society modernized and was aspiring to political freedom, the more authoritarian the regime became. This was its swansong. Shariati's mythical view of religion offered a mental framework to many young people to justify their fight against the Pahlavi regime. They did not see the advantages they had acquired and they saw in a magnified manner the negative sides of autocracy and modernization from above. The Shah helped them to develop this utterly negative view of his regime through a pathologically personalized power structure in which he was supposed not only to rule but also to decide on almost everything, society being reduced to a passive receptacle of his diktats.

DISCOURSE ON AUTHENTICITY: ALE-AHMAD AND SHARIATI

Both Shariati and Ale-Ahmad had a discourse on authenticity. Shariati believed in authentic Shiism, Ale-Ahmad on authentic Iranian culture. Shariati thought that genuine Shiism had been distorted by a fake religion, namely the Safavid Shiism that gave a quietist interpretation of Islam and made revolution impossible in the name of it. Passive view of Islam made the advent of the occulted Imam problematic due to the fact that believers did not prepare his advent by revolting against illegitimate powers. For Shariati, the end of time was possible only if Muslims revolted against the domineering powers that be and initiated the dawn of the times of the twelfth Imam. Safavid Shiism proclaimed the passive awaiting of him, Alid Shiism on the contrary promoting an active expectation based on revolt and insurrection against the unjust powers that promoted fake Shiism (Safavid Shiism).

The discourse of authenticity in Ale-Ahmad was based on the denunciation of the fake identity promoted by Westtoxication. He built up a view of authenticity marked by the rejection of the pseudo-identity of fake modernity spread by Westtoxication. Ale-Ahmad did not have a coherent view of Westtoxication. His theory was based on a conspiracy view of the West, attributing to the latter a substantive nature that made it "diabolic" in its essence: to dominate economically, politically, and culturally the other cultures became the hallmark of the Western identity. The West could not stop at sheer economic supremacy; it needed cultural hegemony and the destruction of the others' culture in order to assert its total dominance. This view was in its essence the secularization of God's omnipotence, the West

becoming somehow God on earth. The agent of this cultural destruction was the Westtoxicated individual: he had become alien to his own culture, being the embodiment of a fake identity that denied legitimacy to his own cultural past and proclaimed the artificial new identity, disembodied and alienated, based on the servile imitation of the West in its cultural habitus. Ale-Ahmad found not only illegitimate but also fake and indecent the imitation of the West. For him there was no reconciling between the Western culture and the "indigenous" culture. This incompatibility meant that whatever came from the West had to be rejected.

Ale-Ahmad defined authenticity as a counter-Western posturing, a mixture of primary Marxism and a cultural anti-Westernism. For him modernization process was counterfeit, the "nature" of the West being domination. This view made impossible social change under Western influence, the Western impact being destructive, no positive outcome being possible through it. The mixture of Marxism and reactionary culturalism making social change synonymous with cultural degeneracy.

One major change in Iran after half a century has been the rejection of this substantive view of the Self: the young people who shouted "Where is my vote?" in the 2009 protest movement in Iran were not anymore dominated by this view: they were not ashamed of claiming democracy not as a Western by-product, but as their aspiration toward freedom. The "shame" that Ale-Ahmad expressed by this type of claim (asking for democracy would be the result of Westtoxication and therefore the expression of a Westtoxicated Self) was surmounted by the young people who had "indigenized" democracy and the aspiration toward autonomy and individual dignity.

Paradoxically, Westtoxication meant giving credit to tradition even in its most backward and least defensible dimensions. To refer to the human right issues, to gender equality, to individual rights, or to modern hedonistic aspirations could be regarded as a Westtoxicated attitude and therefore rejected for lack of authenticity. Westtoxication was not only loss of traditional identity but also acquiring a Western one that was synonymous with loss of roots and denigrating the Iranian past. Pushed to its upper limit, Westtoxication meant modernization, Westernization, adopting an attitude toward the world and the Self—based on individualism in its different shapes. Westtoxication induced rejection of modernization and denigrating entry to the modern world in the name of its fakeness. The fact that opposition toward Western domination mainly came from Westernized groups escaped Ale-Ahmad's attention. He advocated the return to genuine tradition and at the end of his life, he identified with ayatollah Khomeyni who, in his eyes, embodied the genuine Self, noncontaminated by Westtoxication and strongly motivated by the fight against the Shah, the epitome of Westtoxication. The major problem of intellectuals like him was the disparagement of modernization

and adherence to the myth of authenticity that would preserve society from the ills of Westernization. For him, as for many people of his generation, Westernization meant succumbing to the fascination of the West and becoming economically and mentally colonized by it. Nothing but domination or hegemony was the outcome of Westernization. The fact that the latter could breed opposition to the Western domination was lost view of.

Ale-Ahmad was concerned with the discourse of authenticity alongside Shariati.[12] He extended his critiques of the hegemonic power of the West to the secular intellectuals. According to him, they were unable to build up a genuine Iranian modernity, due to their rejection of Islam. Returning to Islam in a manner reminiscent of the liberation theology in Latin America was the only way to save the genuineness of Iranian civilization. But rejection of secularization in the name of its lack of authenticity did not solve the problem of modernity. Being secular did not mean being un-Iranian or nongenuine. On the contrary, "Iranian-ness" could only be saved if secular values were infused into the new identity. In different ways, Shariati and Ale-Ahmad were unable to accept secularism as a necessary ingredient of the modern Iranian identity. It is true that they belonged to the generation witnessing the failure of secular nationalism in the Muslim world (Nasser's catastrophic Six Days War with Israel in 1967, Iran's nationalism that evolved toward more authoritarianism after the Agrarian Reform of the early 1960s, and so on). Their return to Islam was in reaction to the inability of the autocratic secular governments in the region to promote economic development and social justice. After half a century of intense secularization (from the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 to the 1960s), Iran witnessed a "secularization fatigue" and intellectuals like Shariati and Ale-Ahmad were the initiators of this movement. In Egypt Qotb, the promoter of revolutionary Islam, deeply influenced some major intellectuals and young clergymen (the late ayatollah Khamenei translated his major polemical work the Milestones in Persian).

Shariati belonged almost to the same generation as Ale-Ahmad, being a decade younger than him. He was not anti-Western, but anti-capitalist. He was also against Western secularism, his belief in Islam entertaining in him the hope of overthrowing Western imperialism (he was much more neutral toward the Soviet Union), the Islamic utopia kindling the flame of the end of times, accelerated in his view by Islamic protest movements. He denounced all types of political regimes based on the exploitation of the people, ranging from the Pharaoh's and the pyramids they built to the modern-day Pahlavi regime. They all meant oppressing people in the name of Safavid religiosity, which is a religion based on the repression of people in the name of a fake interpretation of Islam. True Islam, according to the Alid version, was the one that put aside the "Taqut," that is, the illegitimate governments, and restored Ali's version of politics. The latter pushed toward what could be entirely

achieved by the occulted twelfth Imam, namely a "classless society in accordance to God's unicity" (jame'eye bi tabaqeye towhidi): in the same way as God is unique, society should be unified as classless, without differences of class, in accordance with Tawhid. The religious Islamic society would be the one in which no class divide would divide society. Once division was introduced into the society in terms of class gaps, the society would become heretical (shirk), since it did not reflect any more God's unicity. Islam in its true sense would entail lack of class difference and this should be achieved through a revolutionary movement that would be a prelude to the end of time. Revolutionary upheaval and eschatology would go hand in hand. Shariati's fight against the Pahlavi regime was deeply influenced by Marxism, although his aim was to show that Islam was revolutionary in its terms and did not need Marxism for its accomplishment.

For Shariati, "Awaiting" (entezar) had a dynamic content within the genuine version of religion; it meant that the believer should actively promote his religious views, act instead of adopting a submissive attitude toward the authorities. The occulted Imam had become, in traditional Shiism, a wretched attitude of bowing to illegitimate authorities in the name of "awaiting the 12th Imam." This attitude made politics impure in the eyes of traditional believers. According to this nongenuine Islam, believers should avoid politics until the advent of the occulted Imam. During this period, social fence-sitting was prompted, and lack of action by the believers made life the easier for authoritarian governments who asserted their legitimacy through the inertness of the faithful. Shariati thought that awaiting the end of time meant acting vigorously to promote it, protest movements in the name of God accelerating the advent of the Imam of Time (the twelfth imam), putting an end to the Black religion and opening new vistas toward the Red version of Islam. This activated eschatology was in dire contradiction to the passive chiliasm of quietist Shiism. Shariati had integrated modern ingredients of social protest into his framework of "Alid" religion, modernizing in the name of Shiite Golden Age what was supposed to be Islam in its golden age.

In his enterprise of erecting a revolutionary Shiism, Shariati promoted the figure of the martyr (shahid) in contrast to the combatant of Jihad (mujahid) in his book *Hoseyn, the Heir to Adam*. The mujahid (like Hamzeh, uncle of the Prophet) is ready to fight and to die for his ideals but he does not intend to die for the sake of dying.[13] The martyr dies, knowing fully well that he'll die, in order to spread his message beyond his death, his martyrdom becoming the cornerstone for his genuineness. Shariati in this way displaced the center of gravity on death in a new manner that will be imitated by Jihadism few decades later. He gives a picture of the individual who would not only die for his lofty ideals but also die for the sake of dying, death becoming a kind of justification for what could be called "death-fascinated individuality."

The "Umma" this individual wants to build is projected unto the future in a radical and violent manner. In a sense, Shariati is the promoter of a new type of individual, the one for whom death plays a major role for accomplishing individuality. Jihadism and radical Islam have insisted on this dimension, dying and killing becoming a benchmark of authenticity.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ALE-AHMAD AND SHARIATI

Shariati and Ale-Ahmad had also differences. Shariati was more sensitive to the "sacred" dimensions of domination. For him, the dominating world-view within Shiism displayed a deviant form of religiosity he called "Black Shiism," whereas genuine Shiism, inspired by Ali (tashayyo'e alavi), had been marginalized after the period of the four rightly guided caliphs and the constitution of empires, which was based on a kind of quietist religiosity. In the case of Shiism, it was the "Red Shiism" or "Alid Shiism" that was revolutionary in essence that was abandoned to the benefit of a fake religiosity. In a sense, the worm was in the fruit and the domination by the West was the replica of the domination of a false version of religion, on Muslims that had disfigured the original message of Islam, epitomized by the revolutionary version of Shiism, represented by Ali. Imperialism was somehow in continuity with this view of Shiism that exerted hegemony through the denial of the revolutionary message of Shiite Islam. Safavid version of Shiism succeeded in making Muslims passive individuals, submitted to the powerful elite at the top who dominated the state and denied legitimacy to genuine Muslims like Abouzar who denounced the degeneracy of Islam and the building of an empire and class differences between Muslims (he was the first socialist in Shariati's view). In a way, Safavid Shiism (that predated historically the Safavid empire) prepared Western domination by proposing a state-oriented religiosity for which domination was "natural," and passivity "normal" to the believers. Shariati used indifferently the dichotomy Alid Shiism versus Safavid Shiism or Red Shiism versus Black Shiism (a title of one of his books, *Red Shi'ism (the Religion of Martyrdom) vs. Black Shi'ism (the Religion of Mourning)*. Red Shiism was revolutionary, not afraid of martyrdom and blood spilling, whereas Black Shiism referred to passive mourning and subservience to the illegitimate governments in relation to alienation and manipulation by powers that be.

Western hegemony and state autocracy (the Pahlavi regime in Iran) went hand in hand, each of them facilitating the task of the other, both legitimizing each other through denial of the revolutionary nature of Shiism, based on the revolt against domination and an eschatology that supposed a revolutionary attitude toward the powers that be.

Shariati's main analysis was focused on Shiism but his major concern was Islam, the ambivalence between Shiism and Islam being implicitly surmounted by his idea that the two were identical and differences between Sunnism and Shiism were artificial and based on a fake version of Islam, based on quietism and submission to an oppressive political order. His main concern still was Iran and therefore the revolutionary eschatology he conceived through the idealized pictures of Ali, Hussein, and the twelfth Imam was almost exclusively focused on Shiite figures but elsewhere, he developed ideas regarding Islam at large, especially in his book on Islamology that made the identification between Shiism and Islam explicit. His revolutionary ideas influenced the extreme-left groups like the Mujahideen of the People.[14]

Ale-Ahmad, married to a secular renowned novelist Simin Daneshvar, did not directly focus on women and feminism, although in his novels he referred to their subaltern situation. Shariati devoted an entire book to a prominent feminine Islamic figure, Fatima, Ali's wife and Prophet's daughter. In his book *Fatima Is Fatima*, he displayed a picture of Fatima as being neither traditionalist as were the overwhelming part of Muslim women in his time nor modernized in the Western sense as secularized Iranian women became from his point of view, under the Pahlavi regime. This book shows the interest he took on women, putting into question the traditional Islamic silence on them. Still, the picture he depicts is neither/nor, Fatima is not "modern" without being "traditional," the end result being a double question mark rather than any clear description of women and their role in society.

CONCLUSION

Jalal Ale-Ahmad and Ali Shariati belong to the emerging middle classes in Iran. They had lost faith in tradition, but the Shah's modernity antagonized them, and they rejected it outright. Caught between a disorganized tradition (especially after the Agrarian Reform of the early 1960s) and a modernity that gave much less than what they expected, the new middle-class intellectuals became inclined toward socialist and communist ideas, a countervision to capitalism as imposed by the authoritarian regime of Shah.

In search of an alternative identity, the new middle classes had no coherent view of the Self and the Others, and their grasp of modernity was anti-capitalist and anti-reformist in reaction to the Shah's increasing autocracy. Most of them became revolutionaries in their mind, and their credo was based on the Marxist vulgate and a mythological view of an idealized Islam.

The Shah's regime modernized society at high speed but instead of opening up political vistas for this new middle class, it closed down even those traditional ones (first, an imposed two-party system, then a unique party, and

so on). In the 1960–1970s, intellectuals opted for two major venues: either a new version of Islam, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist, or identification with socialism in its different shapes. Shariati chose Islam as a revolutionary ideological corpus and proposed an image of Islam that was neither grounded in history nor in any concrete contemporary Islamic reality. It was purely imaginary, Shariati inventing a new type of Islamic religiosity that promoted sacred death (martyrdom) as its central value and subordinated to it all the other dimensions of religion. His Islam, revisited and revolutionized, enthused the new modernized youth, mainly of the lower-middle classes, who had acceded the large cities and who looked for a modern identity, distinct from tradition as well as the Shah's version of modernity.

Shariati's utopianized Shiism was the idealized picture of a fancied modernity that would reconcile religion in its golden-age version with life in the modern world based on a mythologized classless society. Ale-Ahmad's work, a decade earlier, focused on a critic of the Americanized modernity epitomized in his view by Westtoxication. His task was denunciation, whereas Shariati's calling was imagining a new utopia. Both were anti-democratically minded, although they paid lip service to democracy. But Shariati believed in an Imam that went beyond democracy in his relationship with the Ummat (the Islamic community), whereas Ale-Ahmad believed that Western democracy was a fake one. Both were influenced by the Marxist view on bourgeois democracy, defending in opposition to it a political conception that was even more authoritarian.

Intellectuals were newcomers in the public sphere in Iran. They had problems of identity of their own. They did not belong to the past, although many belonged to religious, even clerical families, as was the case of Ale-Ahmad and Shariati; still they did not have an identity of their own, as was the case in the West where it had been consolidated since the Enlightenment (Rousseau and Voltaire as paragons, Zola and then Sartre as a crowning of the "engaged" intellectual). Radicalization by these intellectuals was a way of coining a new identity, as secular prophets in a society where they felt alone and suffered from the lack of calling and vocation (Ale-Ahmad's book *The Suffering We Are Enduring* can be read from this perspective). They became a new type of prophet, largely unnoticed by society, only recognized by a youth that had acceded the middle-class status in the Shah's regime. They looked for new fathers: their fathers had been discredited by the Shah who had dethroned them. These intellectuals promised a bright future if society followed in their footsteps, repudiated the modernizing but authoritarian Pahlavi regime, and opted for an imaginary Islam, close to the Marxist view of a classless society, where religion would become a cement of togetherness. In this fashion, they proposed a social bond to bring society under the same roof and surmount anomie. They also built up their vocation

as moral leaders of a new society in which they would endorse a noble identity, replacing traditional authorities (the clergy) as well as the totally delegitimized Shah's political elites.

Iranian middle classes were economically thriving under the Shah, but they were politically alienated by his government and his style of ruling in a more and more dictatorial manner.[15] The new ideology of revisited Islam became the motto for many intellectuals who identified with it as a salvation not only from the shah's regime but also from the sclerotic customary elites, in particular, the traditional clergy. A decade earlier, Ale-Ahmad, Samad Behrangi, and others had tried to intellectually destroy the legitimacy of the Shah (Westtoxicated people were the Shah's model of society according to these intellectuals). Shariati proposed a new version of Islam, unanimist and utopian.[16] Denunciation of authoritarian but modernizing Pahlavi regime as well as fancying of a mythologized Islam attracted the Iranian youth in the cities where modernization had taken place. Not only in spite of its incoherence, but precisely because of it, this imaginary view of Islam attracted younger generations who were prompt to adhere to it, its inconsistency being regarded as a tribute to their capacity of dreaming a new modernity, devoid of the pains of the real one. The Shah contributed to his demise and the prestige of this new imaginary Islam through his more and more authoritarian ruling and his erratic behavior toward a social movement that became a revolution, in a large part because of his rambling attitude in the last years of his reign.

Ale-Ahmad and Shariati were two major intellectual figures in Iran and, more generally, in the Muslim world, in transition from secular intellectuals (like Sadeq Hedayat and many others from the previous generation) to religious ones. They come after the first secularization process in the first half of the twentieth century and its setbacks, in particular, due to the failure of nationalism in the Arab and Iranian worlds. Among these intellectuals arose the idea that secularism was not the best way to achieve social change, Islam being endowed with that potential. Their return to religious was not the reproduction of the traditional religiosity of the grandfathers. They revisited religion in a revolutionary manner. With Shariati we are witnessing the emergence of a new type of intellectual: the one who makes Islam the center of his "universe of discourse" in a modern manner, not traditional, introducing the major components of modernity, namely class dimension, subjectivity, tension between politics and individuality, gender problems (Fatemeh, the daughter of the Prophet and Ali's wife being neither traditional nor modern secular in Shariati's view), politicization of the youth in the name of religion, and, particularly, sacrifice: "either die or kill, every day is Ashura (the day Hoseyn and his companions were put to death by Yazid's army), everywhere is Kerbala (where Hoseyn and his disciples were slain by Yazid's army)," denoting the tragic destiny of the individual in the Muslim world.

This type of intellectual, totally "religious" and totally "revolutionary," will be put into question a few decades later by a new figure of social thinker, the "reformist religious thinker" (now-andishmandane dini) who rejects the politicization of Islam in the name of spirituality. The new generation rejects the political Islam approach and proposes a democracy-friendly religiosity, far from Shariati's views on Islam.

In the end, one can criticize Ale-Ahmad and Shariati for their monolithic views and their anti-democratic stance, their intellectual position has contributed to the advent of a theocracy that robbed Iran of its development and caused the backward trend in Iranian society and the departure of few millions of middle-class migrants that impoverished the country. But one should not neglect what can be called the spirit of the times (Zeitgeist). In the 1960s, it was difficult not to be leftist and anti-Shah in Iran, being "liberal" meaning siding with the rich and being devoid of social fairness and even intelligence. One should criticize Ale-Ahmad and Shariati in order not to repeat the mistakes of the past, but one should not lose sight of the fact that they were children of their own time and very few people from the so-called Third World were at that time able to resist Marxist tenets that sacrificed freedom to social justice. The problem is that lack of freedom can deepen social injustice as has happened under the Islamic theocracy in Iran, which has combined regressive economic development and repressive policies, making perhaps the worst blending of social injustice and lack of political freedom.

NOTES

1. See for a general review of intellectuals' ideas, Mohsen Mottaghi, *La Pensée Chiite Contemporaine à l'Epreuve de la Révolution Iranienne* (L'Harmattan Publishers, 2012); Ali Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals in the Twentieth Century* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998).

2. Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996).

3. Elizabeth F. Thompson, *Justice Interrupted: The Struggle for Constitutional Government in the Middle East* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

4. See (in Persian) Farhad Khosrokhavar and Mohsen Mottaghi, *The Secular Intellectuals in Contemporary Iran* (roshanfekrane laeek dar irane mo'asser) (Iran: The Association for Freedom of Thought, (anjomane azadie andisheh), March 19, 2017; in French). Farhad Khosrokhavar and Mohsen Mottaghi, Les intellectuels laïques et la sécularisation en Iran après la Révolution de 1979, *RAISON-PUBLIQUE. fr*, June 2015.

5. Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West* (Mizan Press, 1984).

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class – An Economic Study of Institutions* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1899).

10. This view has been proposed by Ahmad Achraf, in Gogtegou, *The Illusion of Conspiracy (tavahhome tote'eh)*, Tehran, 7: (8), up to 46, Summer 1374 (1995).

11. Ali Shariati, *Religion against Religion* (mazhab zedde mazhab), the article "If the Pope and Marx Did Not Exist" (agar pap va marx nabudand), Collective works, 22 (my translation).

12. Ali Mirsepasi, *Intellectual Discourse* and the *Politics* of *Modernization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2000).

13. See Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Inside Jihadism* (Paradigm Publishers, 2008).

14. Ervand Abrahamian, *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojahedin* (I. B. Tauris, 1989).

15. See Farhad Khosrokhavar, *The Iranian Middle Classes Between Political Failure and Cultural Supremacy* (Amsterdam: Sadighi Annual Lectures, 2015).

16. See Ali Rahnema, An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shariati (I. B. Tauris, 2000). He shows the utopian dimension of Shariati's thought, but his view that Shariati was democratically minded is, from my perspective, contradicted by the latter's Manichean, eschatological, and mythologically Marxist stance.

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Chapter 5

Sadeq Hedayat

Iranian Fiction and the Experience of Modernity

Homa Katouzian

Modern Persian fiction began to emerge in the twilight of the nineteenth century. It was bound up with the growing movement for the establishment of constitutional monarchy (as opposed to the arbitrary rule or estebdad), which had slowly begun almost fifty years before. This was the objective that brought all the constitutionalists together, be they merchants, shopkeepers, clerics, princes, landlords, tribal leaders, and so on, including public intellectuals of successive generations like Malkam Khan, Talebof, Taqizadeh, and Dehkhoda whose vision went beyond the establishment of the rule of law and rather unrealistically included democracy and modernization within a short space of time. Like similar situations everywhere, it looked as if collective human will move mountains. And this was the main motive force for the explosion of modern writing—more at first in poetry than fiction—in books, newspapers, and journals.[1]

The poetry was visibly modern, though not yet modernist; the fiction almost entirely new, since up to a couple of decades before, European-style stories and drama had very seldom been written or translated. Hedayat was born in 1903, in the midst of the political and cultural upheaval, which had gripped the country. Yet, by the time he was fifteen the country was in chaos and on its knees, even in danger of disintegration, despite the fact that some modernity in culture and politics had been achieved. Most people, not least modern intellectuals, had lost complete hope in constitutionalism and the very revolution that brought it about, and that included many of the young and modern intellectuals who themselves had enthusiastically fought for it. Thus, Seyyed Mohammadreza Mosavat was to write to Seyyed Hasan

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Taqizadeh (two of the most radical and most effective younger leaders of the revolution) in 1920:

> The greatest pain, which burns my heart, is lack of success. In addition to that, our actions were responsible for the damage to the country and its people . . . I am constantly burning in the thought as to how it would be possible for us to remove this blot of shame which today has darkened the beautiful face of Iran, and which will be registered in our names. Or will this collar of damnation hang around the necks of Taqizadeh and Mosavat till the Day of Judgement and, until the end of time Iranians will remember them like they do Shimr of Kufa and Yazid of Syria.[2]

The cruel loss of the ideal of democracy opened the space for a new idealism, that is, romantic nationalism. The seeds of this new ideology had been planted in the latter half of the previous century, particularly by two authors, Mirza Ftah'ali Akhunzadeh and Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani. They had idealized pre-Islamic Persia beyond historical fact and rational imagination. It was perfect from every point of view—powerful, prosperous, just, civilized, peaceful, harmonious, and more of the same. And it was all lost within a short space of time in consequence of the onslaught of Muslim Arabs, which was totally responsible for Iran's contemporary backwardness, especially as compared to Europe. Iranians were Aryan and fallen behind their European brethren due to the looting and massacres of the Arabs and conversion to Islam thirteen centuries before.[3]

At the time, this ideology was very little known and it hardly made a significant impact during the Constitutional Revolution. But, come the end of World War I and the loss of faith in that revolution, it began to explode in the intellectual sphere and catch on fast among the younger and young modern intellectuals.[4] There was apparently a paradox in the belief of romantic nationalists. In one breath they glorified ancient history beyond recognition and in another, they condemned the present without qualification. There were two Irans, the ancient paradise and the present hell. What apparently resolved the paradox was once again a belief in the omnipotence of the collective will, that is, the hope to Europeanize the country (the modern counterpart of the ancient paradise) by means of a centralist dictatorship. There were only some moderate constitutionalists and very few modern poets and intellectuals who disagreed. A prominent figure was Mirzadeh Eshqi, the fiery nationalist who nevertheless opposed the establishment of a dictatorial system. He wrote in prose in his newspaper: "All those who during the constitutional revolution were energetically shouting 'revolution, revolution, liberty, liberty,' today are sadly nostalgic for the age of Naser al-Din Shah. They say the [constitutional] revolution was a mistake."[5] And he added: Those who are no longer

revolutionary "are the ones who wish for a strong dictatorial government. They are those who support governments by Vosuq al-Dowleh and Qavam al-Saltaneh."[6] He advocated another revolution from below. He wrote in verse:

آزادی انقلاب اول گم شد
بار دگر انقلاب می باید کرد

The first revolution's liberty was lost.
Another revolution must be launched.

The majority of others did not share this view and believed that the modernizing vision of the constitutionalists would be realized virtually overnight by the use of dictatorial powers. Neither Vosuq nor Qavam were dictators; they tried to control license and chaos via relatively strong governments. However, with Reza Khan appearing on the scene in 1921, not only establishment figures like Abdolhossein Teymourtash, Ali Akbar Davar, and Farajollah Bahrami (Dabir-e A'azam) but even Aref Qazvini, the poet and leading songwriter of the constitutional revolution, were won over by the idea of dictatorship to the extent that within a couple of years they were openly advocating "Diktatori." Aref wrote in a verse:

باد سردار سپه زنده به ایران عارف
دولت رو به فنا را به بقا خواهد برد

Long live Sardar-e Sepah (Reza Khan), Aref!
He will save the country from annihilation.[7]

It is at this time that, quite independently of direct politics, modern Persian fiction comes of age with the publication of Seyyed Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh's *Yeki Bud va Yeki Nabud* (or Once Upon a Time). We noted earlier that modern fiction had slowly emerged toward the end of the nineteenth century, but it was at this time, 1921, that it reached a certain level of maturity. The book was a collection of six short stories, involving social and cultural rather than political criticism, but that did not stop a public outcry against it by reactionaries, although it was also highly praised by progressive intellectuals.[8] It is interesting to note that there is no trace of the romantic nationalist ideology in it despite the fact that it had been first published in Berlin (where Jamalzadeh lived), at the time being a hotbed of Iranian romantic nationalists, many of them students. Earlier, Jamalzadeh and his mentor Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh together with a number of leading Iranian scholars had published the high-quality journal *Kaveh*, which, though patriotic and modernizing, did not advocate the ideology of romantic nationalism.

However, the new ideology deeply affected the thoughts and psyche of the younger middle- and uppers-class generations such that despite later disillusionments with Reza Shah, and long after him and his son, Mohammad Reza Shah, and the rise of leftist, seemingly anti-nationalist, movements and ideas, it is still a powerful force in Iranian thinking.

In 1921, Hedayat was eighteen. In the same year, he published two books, one, an edition of Omar Khayyam's quatrains with a long interpretive introduction,[9] and another, a short and passionate book on animal rights.[10] In 1926, the year Reza Shah was crowned, Hedayat won a state scholarship to study in Europe. He tried several subjects in Belgium and France none of which ended in an academic degree, and eventually in 1930, he gave up his studies and went back to Iran.[11] Meanwhile, he had written another essay on animal rights, a short story, another one satirizing Muslim clerics, and a short historical drama, Parvin Dokhtar-e Sasan (Parvin the Sasanian Girl). This is the first manifestation of Hedayat's firm commitment to the ideology of romantic nationalism. The play is set in the ancient city of Ray under siege by Arab armies. The Iranians defending the town are all angels and the Arabs attacking it are all devils. The last scene opens in the presence of the Arab army chief who gives Parvin the news of her fiancé's death in action. He then begins to make advances to the girl. She pulls out his dagger and kills herself.[12]

The intellectuals' romantic nationalist fever continued unabated despite increasing dissatisfaction with the growing dictatorship of Reza Shah. The year 1931 saw the publication of a slim volume made up of three short stories entitled *Aniran* (non-Iranian). They were on the three most eventful foreign invasions of Iran in its long history. One, entitled "the night of drunkenness," was written by Sheen Partaw on the presumed burning of the Persepolis by Alexander the Great; another was written by Bozorg Alavi entitled "Div, Div" (demon, demon), which describes horrific stories of the conquering Arabs' behavior, "camel grazers" and "lizard eaters" with "dirty blood," unlike the Iranians who look like contemporary Iranian nationalists. Hedayat wrote the third short story, "Sayeh-ye Moghol" (shadow of the Mongol), which also contains romantic sentiments and anachronisms, the Iran of the thirteenth century CE, being described almost as an Aryan motherland. A man watches her fiancé being raped by two Mongols and sets out to revenge but does not succeed.[13]

Hedayat wrote his other play, Maziyar (with a historical introduction by Mojtaba Minovi), once again denigrating Arabs and elevating Iranians in 1934,[14] at the same time as his short story "Akharin Labkhand" (the last smile) once again on the familiar theme of Arabs and Islam, it being the best of his romantic fiction.[15] As indicated, by that time the wind was fast being taken out of the sales of popular dictatorship, which had already reverted

to the traditional arbitrary rule (estebdad). Indeed, Mokhber al-Saltaneh Hedayat, then prime minister, says that in 1930, the Shah had said in the cabinet: "Every country has one type of regime; ours is one-person rule."[16] In 1935, Hedayat was banned from publishing and next year he went to Mumbai or Bombay (as it was then called) as a guest of his friend and coauthor, Sheen Partaw, who was a diplomat in that city.[17]

Long before that, Hedayat had formed a fraternity of four young modern intellectuals called Rab'eh or group of four, headed by himself and including Bozorg Alavi, writer; Mojtaba Minovi, classical literary critic; and Mas'ud Farzad, poet. The circle also had an outer belt, which included Sheen Partaw; Abdolhossein Nushin, dramatist; Mohammad Moqaddam, linguist; and a couple of others. Decades later, when Hedayat was dead, Farzad was to write on the fate of Rab'eh:

هدایت مرد و فرزاد مردار شد
علوی زد به کوچه چپ و گرفتار شد
مینوی رفت به راه راست و پولدار شد.

Hedayat died and Farzad was wasted.
Alavi went leftwards and was arrested.
Minovi took to the right path and was rewarded.[18]

The Rab'eh was physically broken up in the late 1930s, with Hedayat in India, Minovi in London, and Alavi in jail. It is at that moment that, though still remaining deep in the unconscious of modern Iranians, romantic nationalist ideology began to give way to leftist ideas. It was in 1937 that fifty-three young men who were more or less in contact with Taqi Arani, a younger German-educated chemist and Marxist, were arrested on suspicion of having set up a communist organization. In fact, there was no such organization, and only a handful of the fifty-three had Marxist and socialist ideas; but almost all of them turned Marxist in jail.[19]

Hedayat wrote *The Blind Owl* in Bombay. Already in Iran, he had written a number of short stories, some of them quite impressive, in the style of critical realism. He had also written other short stories, which fell into the category of his psycho-fictions—stories that were often dark and explored psychological moods, although none may be described as psychological literature, applying a well-known psychoanalytical model such as Freud's oedipal complex, or Jung's collective unconscious. These include "Buried alive," "The man who killed his ego," "Davud the hunchback," "The three drops of blood," and others. The last short story anticipated the modernist style of *The Blind Owl*. With these two works, Hedayat introduced modernism, including techniques of late-nineteenth-century *symbolisme* and early-twentieth-century surrealism into

modern Persian fiction. A characteristic of the psycho-fictions is that none of them is ideological of any kind. They do not even contain any social message.[20]

Hedayat's psycho-fictional stories are macabre —sometimes, as in *The Blind Owl*, reflecting the primeval chaos—and, when the story ends, at least a man or a woman, or even a cat or a dog dies, commits suicide, is killed, or otherwise disappears from existence. But there is much more to them than a simple plot of abject failure. There is crushing, insufferable, fear without clear reason; there is determinism of the hardest, least tractable variety; there is sin without Sinai, guilt without transgression; there is fall with no hope of redemption; there is punishment without crime; there is vehement condemnation of the mighty of the earth and the heavens.

Most human beings are no better than *rajjaleh* (rabble), and the very few who are better fail miserably to rise up to reach perfection or redemption. Even the man who tries to "kill" his *nafs*, to mortify his flesh, or destroy his ego, in the short story "The man who killed his ego" ends up by killing himself—that is, not by liberating but by annihilating his soul. Women are either *lakkateh* (harlot) or *Fereshteh*, that is, angelic apparitions who or which wilt and disintegrate upon appearance, as in the case of "the ethereal woman" in *The Blind Owl* and "the puppet" in "Puppet behind the Curtain"—although this is only true of women in the psycho-fictions, women of similar cultural background to the author, not those of lower classes in his critical realist stories.[21] There is the almighty fear of "an inherited burden." There are hints—never quite open—at incest and/or incestuous desires. There is the alienation of the man from women, whom he does not know at all and has never loved in any successful contact of the flesh; women whom the psycho-fictional anti-heroes despise for what they believe they are, and long to love and cherish for what they think they ought to be. "The rabble," both man and woman, are filthy—treacherous, hypocritical, disloyal, superficial, profit-seeking, money-grubbing, slavish, undignified, and ignorant—because they are far from perfect.[22]

Yet the effect is by no means entirely negative. There may not be any hope through the pages of these fascinating, absorbing, and gripping stories. But there is an ideal which reconstructs itself through the destruction. Death may be offered as a way out, but it is offered in a plea for unrealized love, warmth, friendship, fellow feeling, faithfulness, honor, authenticity, integrity, decency, knowledge, art, beauty; for whatever humans have eagerly and hopefully striven for and never quite realized. The large and seemingly unbridgeable gap between appearance and reality, between the real and the reasonable, between what there is and what there ought to be, between man and God, wears out the man and leads him to death as the only honest way out. Yet, it is precisely that gap which he wishes to close, and that honesty which leaves him no choice.

In 1941, war came to Iran; the Shah-abdicated and political prisoners were released. This was the start of a new era, apparently opening roads to freedom for modern intellectuals, including writers and poets, despite the county's suffering from invasion, occupation, poverty, and famine. It was shortly after the country's surrender to the Allies that the Tudeh party was formed by the majority of the fifty-three, without any obstacle from the occupying forces. This was an anti-Fascist, democratic front led by Marxists, much in the style of the resistance movements in Nazi-occupied Europe. It brought hope to many younger and young modern intellectuals, including writers, poets, dramatists, actors, as well as political thinkers and journalists. It is probably no exaggeration to say that most educated young men and some women either joined the party or became its well-wishers and fellow travelers. This was a fresh air after years of oppression, and time for leftist and liberal ideologies. The state's romantic nationalist ideology remained more or less as before, but it was no longer dominating the intellectuals' minds, though at the risk of repetition, deep down its anti-Arab and anti-Islam prejudices survived.

Hedayat became a fellow traveler of the new party, though he was never a political activist. His old friends Alavi and Nushin were leading figures in the party, and he would soon find new friends such as Khalil Maleki, political intellectual; Fereydun Tavalloli, poet and satirist; and Jalal Al-e Ahmad, fiction writer and critic, all of whom belonged to the internal party opposition, wishing to reform its leadership and its submissive attitude toward the Soviet embassy in Tehran. Sadeq Chubak and Al-e Ahmad were among the first young authors who were generally influenced by Hedayat's group of critical realist stories, though not his psycho-fictions, and least of all *The Blind Owl*. Indeed, in the First Congress of Iranian Writers held in 1946, Ehsan Tabari, the young upward-moving Zhdanovite lawgiver of the Tudeh literary criticism, compared it with the works of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, which he described as black literature.[23] On the other hand, Parviz Khanlari speaking at the same meeting said of Hedayat's prose in his critical realist stories:

> In his prose, Hedayat is a follower of the style of which Jamalzadeh is regarded as the standard-bearer. He has used this style in his extensive works . . . Although Hedayat is not the inventor and originator of this prose style, he has developed it so well that it has now found large numbers of followers, and has become fashionable in modern Persian literature.[24]

Meanwhile, Hedayat wrote other works, one of which was apparently to the Tudeh liking, but, in fact, reflected his long-held anti-establishment beliefs. Hajji Aqa is a satirical novel, which pours fun on the political establishment, but in a guise that makes it look like a critique of the Iranian bourgeoisie,

hence the title of its anti-hero. In fact, he is a reactionary landlord and politi-
cian who tries to use Islam as an instrument for his political ends.[25] As indi-
cated, the title is deliberately misleading, but there were two real-life models
for it among important landlord-politicians.

At this point, mention must be made of Ahmad Kasravi, intellectual, his-
torian, linguist, religious campaigner, and social critic, whose strong views
virtually about everything had made him deadly enemies in every social
sphere, religious, literary, political, and so on. Kasravi, an Azerbaijani Turk,
though not a fiction writer, proposed a radical reform of Persian prose with
two basic characteristics: one, a virtual return to the best of classical Persian
prose, for example, that of Beyhaqi's *Tarikh*; two, a radical attempt to cleans
it of Arabic loan words. Something like this latter objective had been, not so
successfully, attempted by the Iranian Academy under Reza Shah, but it was
neither as radical and comprehensive nor as learned.[26] His invention did not
catch on as it was, but still made a huge impact on the refinement of modern
Persian prose.

Having come from a clerical background later turned lawyer, he launched
a relentless campaign against Shiism and Shia clerics, which eventually cost
him his life.[27] He also led a deadly opposition to literature, almost any litera-
ture, and believed it had to be banned since it weakened public morals and
was an unproductive activity. From a scholarly viewpoint, his best achieve-
ments were in historiography, not just through the publication of voluminous
works such as his *History of the Constitutional Revolution*, *Eighteen-Year
History of Azerbaijan*, and *The Five-Hundred Year History of Khuzistan*,
but more especially in acute historical research, including his earth-shaking
discovery that despite centuries of belief by friend and foe, Iranian and non-
Iranian, alike, the Safavids were not descendants of Shia Imams. On the other
hand, his opposition to all literature and, more especially, his denigration
of great Persian poets made him many enemies, not just within the literary
circles but also among the public at large.[28]

Although Kasravi had managed to attract a group of followers, many of
them young, calling it the "party of the free" (Bahamad-e Azadegan), he
could not compete with the pull of the Tudeh party for modern educated
people. Like the Tudeh, he too opposed the political establishment, but he did
not quite manage to offer a framework for political activity. Many a young
person, like Jalal Al-e Ahmad, after one or two years of being his disciple,
drifted away and joined the Tudeh party. He was assassinated early in 1946
and his group withered away within a couple of years.

Kasravi might have made a public intellectual had it not been for his
attempt to offer a universal system of thought, usually involving heavy
preaching, such that Hedayat was to refer to him in a letter sarcastically
as "a recent prophet." Still, there can be little doubt that he was a great

scholar even though he did not always apply for his scholarship in the most useful way.

Jamalzadeh had not published fictional work almost in the whole of Reza Shah's rule, but he published a novel in 1942, shortly after the Allied invasion. This was *Dar al-Majanin* or *Lunatic Asylum*, different from *Once Upon a Time* in that it is a novel, not a collection of short stories. It is also different from all Jamalzadeh's works since it is a more subjective and psychological story than a critique of the social framework, portraying characters rather than social types as its leading figures.[29] It was published six years after the first fifty hand-printed copies of Hedayat's *The Blind Owl*, which he had sent from Bombay to Europe, most of them to Jamalzadeh to distribute among friends in the West; and it has influenced *Lunatic Asylum* in a number of ways, although not in its modernist technique. Apart from that, and despite the misery, depression, madness, and tragedy that unfold through it, it is not a dark and depressing story and retains the typical fun, joviality, and entertaining quality of Jamalzadeh's narrative, sometimes to the point of being killingly funny.

Lunatic Asylum did not make an impact remotely comparable to *Persian Is Sweet*, although like some of his later fictions it was well received by the literary establishment. Indeed, it soon became a standard view of the younger critics and intellectuals, virtually all of them leftist or left sympathizers, that although *Persian Is Sweet* was a masterpiece, the rest of Jamalzadeh's works were not worth much. From the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941 until the revolution of 1979, the modern Iranian literary scene was dominated by revolutionary, usually Marxist, creeds of one description or another, and writers and poets who were not approved by leftist critics were not taken seriously. Much of what Jamalzadeh wrote in the 1940s and 1950s were in the critical realist style of his first work, but his social criticism reflected a liberal democratic, not leftist, view, and the intellectuals saw him as a member of the establishment even though he lived in Geneva and earned his living in the employment of the International Labour Office.

His later novels and stories did not quite rise up to the first two, but four of them were interesting and worthwhile, and in parts brilliant: *Amu Hoseyn'ali* or *Shahkar* (Amu Hoseyn'ali or Masterpiece); *Sar o Tah Yek Karbas* or *Isfahan-Nameh* (All of the Same Cloth or Isfahan-Nameh); *Qoltashan Divan* (Squire Bully); *Rahab-Nameh* (The Drains Saga).[30]

Meanwhile, Bozrog Alavi had published a book of his short stories, *The Scrap Notes of Prison* (varaq-pareh-ha-ye zendan), which he had written in jail and published upon release from it. He also published a short memoir of his years in jail, *The Fifty-Three* (panjah-o-seh nafar), followed by the short stories, *The Letters* (nameh-ha, 1951), and the novel, *Her Eyes* (cheshm-ha-yash 1952), both of them after Hedayat was no longer alive. *Her Eyes*, mixing love and politics, was the best piece he ever wrote.

However, writers of fiction were many more than the few who wrote for the elite. There were many others, their works being more or less commercial, including Moshfeq Kazemi, San'ati-zadeh Kermani, Hossein Masrur, Javad Fazel, Jahangir Jalili, and so on, topped in terms of prolific publications by Hosseinqoli Most'an. From the late thirties, he began to publish a series of short novels each with a single-word title under the pseudonym H. M. Hamid, and later serialized other popular novels in weekly magazines under various pen names such as Habib and Anusheh, many of which contained soft porn material.

This brings us back to Hedayat in the mid-to-late-forties when Azerbaijan had revolted under Pishevari's leadership and there was conflict within the Tudeh party regarding its policy toward the Azerbaijan revolt. Predictably, the leaders decided to back the revolt since the Soviet ambassador had told them that Comrade Stalin had ordered it.[31] The internal party opposition, led by Maleki, Nushin, Eprime Eshag, and so on, were outraged, and they used to hold their meetings at Hedayat's home because he was sympathetic to them, and his home was safe from the intrusion of the party bosses. The Azerbaijan saga is long and complex and need not keep us within the present compass. However, it failed miserably in which, inevitably, the Tudeh shared.[32]

Hedayat was disgusted. He turned against the party and led a verbal and written campaign against it. For example, he wrote to Fereydun Tavalloli, notable poet and satirist, who belonged to the Tudeh internal opposition:

> After the great test, which we took—and which was apparently for the sake of freedom, but in fact for its destruction no one can do anything anymore. As Obeyd Zakani has it, "a rent boy saw a sleeping snake and said, I wish there was a man and a stone here." This filth-land has neither a man nor a stone. And, truly one must be a descendent of Darius by a gap of six-thousand years to be deceived by these silly antics. The story is long and puzzling, but the betrayal had many sides to it. And, now the Tudeh are wallowing in their own shit in order to cover up the truth. Anyway, we must eat our own shitty glories spoon by spoon, and say how nice it is too.[33]

The party and their well-wishers retaliated by verbally smearing him, calling him a petty bourgeois demoralizer, and publishing articles and short books against him.[34] When in a thinly disguised attack on Kafka, Tabari denigrated Hedayat's works, Hedayat decided not to mince his words:

> The reason why some people show their teeth to Kafka, and suggest the burning of his books is that Kafka has not offered any false hope to people. On the contrary, he has destroyed many a deceitful idea, and has blocked the way to the false paradise on earth . . . those who raise the cane of excommunication against

Kafka are stinking beauticians who rob cosmetics on the face of the great idol of the twentieth century. This is the function of the organisers and chorus boys of "the gold-plated" era.[35]

He went even further, and attacked communist totalitarianism in general:

Bigotry and demagogy are the age-old methods of liars and charlatans . . . These people are upholders of the stock, the chain, the whip, jail and torture, the gag and the blindfold. They try to present the world not as it is, but as it suits them; and they demand literature in praise of their own filthy work, which would make black appear as white, falsehood as truth, and theft as honesty.[36]

Small wonder that he wrote to Jamalzadeh in the same year that "in our life, environment and everything else there's come a terrifying rift such that we cannot understand each other's language."[37] Perhaps it should be noted here that the long-lasting belief that Hedayat had written under the influence of Kafka is not true. He discovered Kafka in his mid-forties, long after he had written *The Blind Owl*.

In January 1948, the Tudeh internal opposition finally split with the party, in the hope of taking the bulk of the membership to their own side, but the Soviet condemnation stopped them from organizing a rival party, because the Soviet Union was extremely popular with the educated young people and intellectuals: after all, it was only a few years after the battles of Stalingrad and Berlin. Still, the Tudeh monopoly of modern intellectuals was broken while many of them, notably Maleki, Al-e Ahmad, Tavalloli, Anvar Khameh'i, Ahmad Aram, Hossein Malek, the Parham brothers, Nader Naderpur, Mohammad Ali Khonji, and upward of eighty intellectuals and cadres, turned their back on it.

Thus, Hedayat was now out of the circle but not yet out of the scene. He wrote his last known works, the *Morvari Cannon* and *The Message of Kafka*, one after the other. The first one being a satirical marathon, and the second, a purported sober review of Kafka and his works, look worlds apart on the surface. In fact, they are two sides of the same coin in that they both reflect the author's mood of despair, in one seemingly through laughter, and in the other by passing his message of hopelessness in the name of Kafka. In *The Morvari Cannon*, Iran, Europe, America, and all religions, creeds, and belief are targeted, whereas in his earlier satires the focus was on Iran and then only one or two things were made the subject of ridicule. In the *Message of Kafka*, the message is also global, though—except for the short biographical—no particular country or region is mentioned at all. To quote only a couple of passages that capture the mood of the whole message:

Man is lonely and helpless. He lives in a hostile world, which is not his [true or natural] home. He cannot have genuine ties with, or be committed to, anyone. He himself knows this too, because you can read it off his face. He tries to hide it and pretend that he fits [in this world]. But, he gets caught out, because he himself knows that he is superfluous.[38]

Again:

Man is not even free to determine his thoughts and actions. He is mindful of the others, tries to justify his own existence, concocts pretexts and runs from one excuse to another. But, he is a prisoner of his own preferences, and is caught in a vicious circle out of which he cannot break. . . . The minute we are born we are put to judgement, and the whole of our life is a roll of nightmare . . . Eventually, we are convicted, and, in a close and suffocating high noon, he who has arrested us in the name of the law, slips a kitchen knife into our heart and kills us like a dog.[39]

This is evidence of total isolation, crying out the fact that Hedayat, always an outcast among the traditionals, had now been abandoned by the moderns as well. That is why he was longing to move to and stay in Europe. The opportunity came when his close friend Hasan Shahid Nura'i, then Iran's commercial attaché in Paris, persuaded him to go there. Hedayat managed to obtain a four-month sick leave from the College of Fine Arts where he was employed as a translator, and flew to Paris via Geneva where he spent the night with the Jamalzadehs. However, as fate would dire, Shahid Nura'i was in bed with an illness that proved to be fatal, and was unable to help him in any way. Not only was there not a job and work permit, but it was difficult to obtain permit of stay from one month to the next. Come March 1951, the four months' leave had passed, and it was now even difficult to remain in France any longer. In the midst of all this, his brother-in-law, General Razmara, the prime minister, was assassinated in Tehran amid public rejoicing. This meant that even his family was in no mood to try and help him. There was no choice but to return to his old situation, and perhaps even worse than that, in Tehran. He committed suicide.[40]

As a man born into an extended family of social and intellectual distinction, a modern as well as modernist intellectual, a gifted writer steeped in the most advanced Persian as well as European culture, and with a psyche which demanded the highest standards of moral and intellectual excellence, Hedayat was bound to carry, as he did, an enormous burden which very few individuals could suffer equanimity, especially as he bore the effects of the clash of the old and the new, and the Persian and the European, such that few Iranians have experienced. He lived an unhappy life, and died an unhappy death. It

was perhaps the inevitable cost of the literature, which he bequeathed to humanity.

NOTES

1. Persian and English sources on the Constitutional Revolution are almost innumerable. See, for example, Ahmad Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh-ye Iran* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1974) (=*History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, trans. Even Siegel (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2006); Vanessa Martin, *Iran between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism: The Constitutional Revolution of 1906* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013); H. E. Chehabi and Vanessa Marin, eds., *Iran's Constitutional Revolution: Popular Politics, Cultural Transformations and Transnational Connections* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010); Homa Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran: The Eclipse of the Qajars and the Emergence of the Pahlavis*, paperback edition (London and New York, NY: I. B. Tauris, 2006).

2. *Nameh-ha-ye Tehran*, ed. Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Farzan, 2006), 111.

3. See Fereydun Adamiyat, *Andisheh-ha-ye Mirza Fath'ali Akhndzadeh* (Tehran: Kharazmi, 1970) and *Andisheh-ha-ye Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani* (Tehran: Tahuri, 1967). For a highly critical account and analysis of Akhundzadeh, Kermani, as well as Adamiyat, see Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2016). See also, Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran.*

4. See further, Homa Katouzian, 'Literature and Politics in Iran', *Iran Nameh, A Quarterly Journal of Iranian Studies*, 30:2 (2015): XX–XLVII.

5. Mohammadreza (Mirzadeh) Eshqi, *Kolliyat-e Mosavvar-e Eshqi*, ed. Ali Akbar (Tehran: Moshir-Salimi, 1943), 119. For a study of Ehsqi's life and works, see the entry in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, http://www.iranica.com/articles/esqi-mohammad-reza-mirzada. For further and more recent studies of Eshqi and his works, see Mohammad Qaʾed, *Eshqi, Sima-ye Najib-e Yek Anarshist* (Tehran: Virast-e Dovvom, 2001); Solmaz Naraqi, *Mirzade-ye Eshqi* (Tehran: Nashr-e Thaleth, 2009).

6. Eshqi, *Kolliyat-e Mosavvar-e Eshqi*, 123.

7. *Kolliyat-e Divan-e Shadravan Aref-e Qazvini*, ed. Abdorrahman Sef-e Azad (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1977), 418.

8. Homa Katouzian, *Darbareh-ye Jamalzadeh va Jamalzadeh Shenasi* (Tehran: Sokhan, 2011).

9. Sadeq Hedayat, *Roba'iyat-e Omar Khayyam* (Tehran: Berukhim, 1921).

10. Sadeq Hedayat, *Ensan o Heyvan* (Tehran: Berukhim, 1921).

11. See Homa Katouzian, *Sadeq Hedayat: The Life and Legend of an Iranian Writer*, paperback edition (London and New York, NY: I. B. Tauris, 2002).

12. *Parvin Dokhtar-e Sasan* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1963).

13. Sadeq Hedayat et al., *Anyran* (Tehran, 1931).

14. *Maziyar* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1963).

15. "Akharin Labkhand," in *Sayeh Roshan* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1963).

16. Mokhber al-Saltaneh (Mehdiqoli Hedayat), *Khaterat o Khatarat* (Tehran: Zavvar, 1984), 386.

17. See Homa Katouzian, "Sadeq Hedayat dar Hend," in *Sadeq Hedayat va Marg-e Nevisandeh* (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 2017).

18. See Katouzian, *Sadeq Hedayat*, 53.

19. See Homa Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki, The Human Face of Iranian Solecism* (London: Oneworld, 2018), chapter, 1. See also, *Khaterat-e Bozorg Alavi*, ed. Hamid Ahmadi (Sweden: Nashr-e Baran, 1997).

20. See Homa Katouzian, "The Wondrous World of Sadeq Hedayat," in *Sadeq Hedayat: His Work and His Wondrous World*, ed. Homa Katouzian, paperback edition (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2008).

21. See "Zan dar Asar-e Sadeq Hedayat," in Katouzian, *Sadeq Hedayat va Marg*.

22. See further, Homa Katouzian, *Darbareh-ye Buf-e Kur-e Hedayat* (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 2018).

23. See *Nokhostin Kongreh-ye Nevisandegan-e Iran* (Tehran, 1947, reprinted, 1978), 243–47.

24. Ibid., 160–61.

25. Sadeq Hedayat, *Hjji Aqa*, translated into English by G. N. Wickens (Austin, TX: University of Texas at Austin, 1979).

26. See, for a sample, Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh ye Iran*; see also the editor's introduction to Ahmad Kasravi, *Qiyam-e Sheykh Mohammad Khiyabani*, ed. Homa Katouzian (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 2014).

27. See, for example, Ahmad Kasravi, *Bekhanand o Davari Konand* (later published as *Shi'i-gari*, Tehran, 1944), http://www.bidari.org/books/shiie_gari.pdf, *On Islam and Shi'ism*, trans. Mohammad R. Ghanoonparvar, intro. and bibl. Mohammad Ali Jazayeri (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1990).

28. See Homa Katouzian, "Kasravi va Adabiyat," *Iran Nameh*, special issue on Ahmad Kasravi, Spring and Summer 2002, reprinted in *Hasht Maqaleh dar Tarikh va Adabiyat-e Mo'aser* (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 2018).

29. See *Dar al-Majanin* (Tehran: Bongah Parvin, 1942).

30. See "Jamalzadeh's fiction," in Homa Katouzian, *IRAN: Politics, History and Literature* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2013). See further, Homa Katouzian, *Darbareh-ye Jamalzadeh va Jamalzadeh-shenasi*, second edition (Tehran: Sokhan, 2011).

31. See, for example, *Khaterat-e Iraj Eskandari* (interview by Babak Amir Khosravi and Fereydun Azarnur) (Tehran: Mo'asseseh-ye Motale'at va Pazhuhesh-ha-ye Siyasi, 1993), 174.

32. See, for example, Louise L'Estrange Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War: The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Homa Katouzian, Khalil Maleki, *The Human Face of Iranian Solecism* (London: Oneworld, 2018).

33. See, form the full text of the letter, Hasan Qa'miyan, *Darbareh-ye Zohur va Alaem-e Zohur* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1962). Hedayat was in Tehran and Tavalloli in Shiraz.

34. For a significant amount of evidence, see Sadeq Hedayat, *Hashtad o Do Nameh beh Hasan Shahid Nura'i*, ed. Naser Pakdaman (Paris: Ketab-e Cheshmandaz, 2001); and its review by Homa Katouzian, *Tanz o Tanzineh-ye Hedayat*, second edition (Tehran: Iran Namag, 2018).

35. See "Payam-e Kafka," in *Goruh-e Mahkumin* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1963), 15–16.

36. Ibid., 16.

37. For the full letter, see *Iran-e Ma*, May 24, 1951.

38. "Payam-e Kafka," 12.

39. Ibid., 12–13.

40. See, Katouzian, *Sadeq Hedayat*, chapter 13.

Chapter 6

Rethinking the Legacy of Intellectual-Statesmen in Iran

Mehrzad Boroujerdi

One seminal shortcoming of the historiography of Iranian intellectual thought has been its utter inability to objectively assess the legacy of those individuals who can be called "intellectual-statesmen" (*dowltmardan-e Rowshanfekr*). Iran's intellectual milieu both before and after the revolution has generally frowned upon the notion of "intellectual-statesmen," and instead has embraced a heroic view of "intellectuals" as those "speaking truth to power." This chapter argues that this narrow definition (a) has led to a distorted view of the landscape of intellectual life, (b) suffers from selection bias, and (c) has done an enormous disservice to those individuals who decided to join the machinery of the state for the betterment of society.

In 1955, a renowned forty-one-year-old scholar, poet, and professor of Persian literature delivered the following speech to students at Tehran University's faculty of literature:

> Your congratulatory messages are a slander. A slander implying that I chose the lure of this office over being a teacher. All who know me recognize that this is not the case. I have been an academic for more than twenty years and have gone from being a teacher to a professor and have devoted the best years of my youth to this profession . . . A few months ago, I encountered one of your friends who had graduated from the university a year ago and was ready to serve his country. I found out that he was unemployed because [an official] had asked for a bribe to hire him. . . . I left him in distress, but my sorrowfulness did not make me lose hope. It only made me hold a grudge. Frustration is tantamount to death, whereas resentment is a sign of life.
>
> I have never been involved in politics, but I have a friend who is honest and an able statesman. I have frequently shared the secrets of my heart with

him and always found him to be compassionate. One day he asked for my help and said that this is a testing time for Iran and you too need to be involved. I said that my occupation is as a teacher, but he said you need to do more . . . He asked me to be his undersecretary at the ministry of interior. I accepted so that others would not say that I was only a man of words and no action. He took me to see the Shah who said to me: "The time for service is now. The onus is on all who can perform a service." I obeyed since I have never had any wish but to serve Iran . . . I realized that the Shah understood how the internal enemy—endemic corruption—can annihilate Iran and was asking all of Iran's children to help destroy that enemy. This was my wish as well. For Iran to remain free and prosper, there is no other option than the efforts of its children. It is an act of cowardliness to see the danger but refrain from doing something about it . . .

In countries where things are tidy, the duty of each person, each youth, is to properly render their ordinary service. Nothing more is required of them. However, in the case of Iran's youth, the duty does not end there. One must try more and work as much as one can. One has to make sacrifices. Working for a wage is not bad, but you are not doing anyone a favor by carrying out your job. Iran's youth, if they have any patriotic zeal, should work for more than mere pay. They should know that there is a colossal burden hanging on their shoulders. We have been sluggish for two or three centuries. Our fathers did not perform their duties as they should have had. What are we, the sons, going to do? Will we accept the shame and revulsion directed toward our fathers? There is no pride in doing that. Should we not try to compensate for their failures? . . . This is why I have accepted this position. If I manage to render Iran any service by doing it, then this will be nothing but an honor for me. Moreover, if I fail in the task, at least I have tried. I will then return to full-time teaching and discussion. Either way, I will be proud of the fact that I had no other intentions than serving Iran and that I gave it my best.[1]

That professor was Parviz Natel Khanlari (1914–1990), and he went on to become a senator (1957–1978), minister of education (1962–1964), executive director of Iran Culture Foundation (1964), and secretary-general of the National Committee on Combatting Illiteracy (1967–1970). He is credited with introducing educational reforms including developing the idea of the Literacy Corps[2] and appreciated for having lived a modest and honest life. The friend that Natel Khanlari referenced was no other than Amir-Assadollah Alam (1919–1978) who served as a powerful interior minister, prime minister (1962–1964), and court minister (1966–1978). The timing of the speech was exactly two years after the 1953 coup that had overthrown Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq. As Abbas Milani has pointed out, Natel Khanlari was trying to explain his political foray to a critical audience.[3]

Natel Khanlari's case is emblematic of the choice that has confronted countless Iranian intellectuals. Should they play any official role in the political machinery of the state in a developing society like Iran? Is it beneath their dignity as intellectuals to dirty their hands with the affairs of statecraft no matter what the state of the country's politics or the condition of the masses? What are the ethical considerations when they decide to join states that are not democratic? Natel Khanlari's insistence that what motivated him was not the lure of high office but rather the obligation to serve reminds one of what Plato had written centuries ago:

> The greatest punishment, if one is not willing to rule, is to be ruled by someone worse than oneself. And I think it's fear of this that makes decent people rule when they do. They approach ruling not as something good or something to be enjoyed, but as something necessary, since it can't be entrusted to anyone better than—or even as good as—themselves.[4]

So why is it that modern Iranian intellectual history is so infertile when one looks for thoughtful answers to the above set of questions? We do know that intellectuals fall into two grand clusters. There are "socially engaged visionaries" who use critical discourse to echo and instigate demands, to question and criticize social problems, and, finally, to lead and represent the discontented masses. However, there is also a second cluster of intellectuals, the "techno-bureaucratic functionaries." Since the ruling elites have an ever-present need to obtain the services and, more importantly, the approbation of intellectuals—as the masterminds of social and political reforms, shapers of public opinion, and as such enhancers of the legitimacy of the state—they often turn to this second strata. These intellectual stage managers use their administrative talents and pragmatic realism to oversee the process of gradual and orderly change and in the process lend legitimacy to the authority of those above them.

Iran's intellectual milieu both before and after the 1979 revolution has generally frowned upon this second stratum of intellectuals by embracing a heroic view of "intellectuals" as those "speaking truth to power." Indeed, those intellectuals who join the government are often referred to with derogatory terms such as *ajir* (hired hand), *amel-eh zolm* (servile agent of cruelty), *forsat-talab* (opportunist), *gholam-e halq-e bekosh-e estebdad* (bondslave of dictatorship), *kha'en* (traitor), *khod foroush* (sellout), *mozdor* (mercenary), and *tojihgar* (justifier). When did this negative assessment become so prevalent and why? Surely, all the way until the end of Qajar rule (1789–1925) this view was not hegemonic. I believe that to a great extent this negative attitude was a handiwork of leftist forces in the twentieth century who exaggerated both the political despotism and reliance on foreign powers of Pahlavi rulers

(1925–1979), embraced the normative vocabulary of armed struggle and martyrdom, and abandoned the project of social engineering in favor of regime change. Disgruntled Islamists and nationalists also tagged along.

Yet, this selectively narrow and romantic definition of intellectuals' role has led to a distorted view of the landscape of intellectual life and has done enormous disservice to those individuals who have decided to join the machinery of the state for the betterment of their society. This discourse is incapable of answering the following type of questions: Is it not true that intellectuals can have a restraining effect on power or influence the direction of public policy? Does not "freedom" for the intellectual classes also mean the freedom to take part in the governing of the country?[5] Don't intellectuals need the power of the state machinery to push through their reform agendas and advance society? Is it not immoral, for example, for a competent economist to refuse to lead the ministry of the economy or the Central Bank and thereby allow these vital institutions to flounder and people to suffer?

Ironically, the modern advocacy of separation of intellectuals from power holders has become entrenched in a country whose famed viziers and counselors saw it as their obligation to tutor rulers.[6] For centuries, the Persian advice treatise (*Nasihat al-Molok*) developed with the expressed goal to instruct monarchs, addressing their intellectual weaknesses and offering them practical counsel to deal with crises at hand.[7] This literature, which perhaps reached its pinnacle with *Siyasat-namah* (Book of Politics) of the celebrated Seljuq vizier Nizam al-Mulk (1018–1092), emphasized the need to staff the state bureaucracy with men of exceptional intellectual abilities.[8]

QAJAR ERA

The tradition of *Nasihat al-Molok* was very much in vogue during the Qajar era. A caste of viziers, private tutors*, mostowfis* (government accountants), and *monshiyan* (scribes) put their considerable abilities at the service of rulers. Speaking of Abbas Mirza (1789–1833), the governor of Azerbaijan and crown prince who brought the first printing press to Persia and undertook military reforms, Abbas Amanat writes, "Thanks to his small corps of advisers who schooled him in Persian history and literature, he entertained a sense of indigenous state-centered identity."[9]

The model intellectual-statesmen of the Qajar era is no doubt Mirza Taqi Khan Farahani, better known as Amir Kabir (1807–1852).[10] He was a long-time tutor to Naser al-Din Shah (1831–1896) before serving as his prime minister (1848–1851). Amir Kabir is credited among other things with establishing a new governmental order, negotiating the Perso-Ottoman boundary, publishing Iran's first government gazette (*Vaqaye'-e Ettefaqiyeh*),

and establishing the polytechnic academy known as *Dar al-Fonun* (abode of skills) in 1851, marking the beginning of modern education in Persia.

Another important intellectual-statesman of the late Qajar period was Hasan Pirnia Moshir al-Dowleh (1872–1935). Having served as Persia's minister to the Russian court, he returned to Iran and with the help of his father, who was foreign minister, managed to convince Mozaffar al-Din Shah (1853–1907) to establish the School of Political Science in 1899. Dar al-Fonun and the School of Political Science helped to train such intellectual-statesmen of the future as Mohammad-Ali Foroughi, Ali-Akbar Dehkhoda, Ali-Akbar Davar, Abbas Eqbal-Ashtiyani, Ghasem Ghani, Seyyed Valiollah Nasr, and Isa Sadiq. Pirnia also went on to play a role in drafting the 1906 Constitution, cofounding the Society for the National Heritage of Iran, serving as minister and prime minister (four times), and authoring the three-volume *Tarikh-e Iran-e Bastan* (History of Ancient Iran).

INTELLECTUAL-STATESMEN OF THE REZA SHAH PERIOD

If there is one period in Iran's modern history when the role of intellectual-statesmen was more crucial than any other, it was during the reign of Reza Shah (1925–1941). As the new ruler embarked on the task of creating new state machinery after the tumultuous events of the Constitutional Revolution and World War I, he came to rely on the skills of capable men of letters and politics to celebrate, concoct, and revive national myths while emblematizing national identity. Reza Shah had also realized that carrying out formidable tasks such as creating a modern judicial system was not possible without the cooperation of intellectual-statesmen. On the other side, in the ambiance of the post-constitutional era, many secular intellectuals were willing to abandon the paradigm of dissent and liberty in favor of service and security. These men did not join Reza Shah out of careerism or opportunism but rather based on a "call to duty" rooted in the belief that Iran needed to be made safe before it could prosper.[11] They were also cognizant of the fact that reducing the power of the clerical establishment in all facets of public life was not possible without the backing of the state. Let us look at the contributions of three intellectual-statesmen who continued the tradition of learned viziers.

Mohammad-Ali Foroughi (1877–1942), often referred to by his title of Zoka' al-Molk, is the quintessential intellectual-statesman of his era. He was a private tutor to Ahmad Shah Qajar (d. 1930), served as first and last prime minister under Reza Shah, and first prime minister under Mohammad Reza Shah. Appointed as the director of the School of Political Science (1907–1909) at the age of thirty, the erudite Foroughi went on to spend the

remaining three decades of his life holding high-level political posts.[12] He
served as Majles deputy (1909–1911), minister of finance (November 1911–
December1911, June 1923–1925), minister of justice (December 1911–June
1912 and August 1914–April1915), president of the High Court of Appeals
(June 1912–August1914 and 1921–1922), Persia's representative to the Paris
Peace Conference (1919) and the League of Nations (1928–), foreign min-
ister (January 1923–May 1923, May 1930–September 1933), prime minister
(1925–June 1926, September 1933–December 1935, August 1941–1942),
minister of war (June 1926–1928), ambassador to Turkey (1928–April 1930),
minister of national economy (April 1930–May 1930), and court minister
(1942). It was Foroughi who convinced Reza Shah to establish Tehran
University and travel to Turkey to see the extent of Atatürk's reforms. He was
the one who came up with the idea of establishing the Academy of Persian
Language, which was founded in 1935, and he served as its first president. In
addition, he drafted the law on cultural heritage, wrote the bylaws for the first
Majles, and negotiated in 1941, under trying circumstances, with the British
and Soviets over the terms of Reza Shah's abdication. Parallel to his political
work, Foroughi continued his scholarly work including writing "the first gen-
eral history of Western philosophy in Persian, a seminal text not only in offer-
ing the Iranian readers an insightful treatment of Greek and Western thought
but also in pioneering a technical prose that would become the hallmark of
modern Persian scholarship for decades to come."[13] He also established him-
self as a leading expert on the celebrated thirteen-century Persian poet Sa`di.

Ali-Akbar Davar (1885–1937) has been described as "the most capable
public administrator of the Pahlavi era."[14] After graduating from Dar al-Fonun
(1909), he became district attorney for Tehran in 1910 while writing articles
for the radical newspaper *Sharq* (East). Davar then went to Switzerland where
he earned a bachelor of law degree from the Université de Genève (1920), but
he abandoned his doctoral studies in law to return to Iran after the 1921 coup.
Back in Tehran, he founded the Radical Party (1922), published the news-
paper *Mard-e Azad* (1923–1924), and held such posts as director-general of
the ministry of education (1921), Majles deputy (1922–1927), member of the
Constituent Assembly (1925), minister of public utilities and trade (appointed
December 1925), minister of justice (February 1927–1933), and minister of
finance (September 1933–1937).

Davar proved to be an institution builder. As justice minister, he is credited
with establishing Iran's modern judicial system, compiling a new legal code
(that led to the termination of capitulations[15] in 1928), drafting various laws
including the marriage and divorce law, drafting rules and regulations for
prosecutors, and training new judges. As finance minister, he also helped to
consolidate Iran's public finances. In February 1932, it was Davar who suc-
cessfully defended Iran's case in the League of Nations after the British had

filed a complaint against Iran for abrogating the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. In addition, Davar founded *Madrasa-ye Tejarat* (School of Business) in 1926, combined the School of Political Science and the School of Law to form the Higher School of Law and Political Science (*Madrasa-ye Ali-ye ḥoquq va Olum-e Siyasi*) in 1927,[16] founded *Hey'at-e Taftishiyeh-ye Mamlekati* (early incarnation of the State General Inspectorate Organization) in 1929 and Daftar-e Asnad-e Rasmi (Registry of Official Documents) in 1932, and finally laid the foundations for Iran's chamber of commerce.[17]

Ali-Asghar Hekmat (1893–1980) is regarded as "the chief architect of the modernization of the educational system" in Iran.[18] A graduate of the American College and the Sorbonne, this scholar and professor whose name appears on over thirty books as author, editor, or translator also held the following high-level posts under both Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah: minister of education (1933–1938), interior (1939–1940), arts and crafts (1941), health (1943), interior, justice (1943), foreign affairs (1948–1949, 1958–1959); minister without portfolio (1947, 1949–1950); and ambassador to India (1953–1958). Like his Radical Party colleague Davar, Hekmat was also an institution builder. He was the minister who came up with the idea of the *pisahangi* (Boy Scouts) in 1934, and who suggested the establishment of Tehran University to Reza Shah, serving as its first rector (1935–1938). He was the force driving the construction of Amjadiye Stadium (1936), the National Library building (1937), the National Archeological Museum (1937), and mausoleums for Ferdowsi, Hafez, and Saʿdi, as well as revitalizing the National Association of Physical Education.

Foroughi and Hekmat along with such other cultivated men as Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh, Malek al-Shoʿara Mohammad-Taqi Bahar, and Seyyed Fakhroddin Shadman were representative of a generation of intellectual-statesmen who were politically active under both Pahlavi monarchs.

MOHAMMAD REZA SHAH PERIOD

During the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah (1941–1979), the corps of intellectual-statesmen serving as ministers, courtiers, senators, and diplomats expanded even more. Intellectuals serving as ministers included Ali-Naqi Alikhani, Ghasem Ghani, Daryush Homayun, Abdolmajid Majidi, Mohammad Mosaddeq, Houshang Nahavandi, Farrokrou Parsa, Majid Rahnama, Gholam-Hoseyn Sadiqi, Isa Sadiq, and Ali-Akbar Siyasi. The rank of ambassador included such figures as Fereydun Adamiyyat, Jahangir Amuzegar, Ali Dashti, Seyyed Morteza Moshfeq-Kazemi, Gholam-Ali Radi-Azarakhshi, and Zeinolabedin Rahnama. Cultural attachés included the likes of Reza Alavi, Abbas Eqbal-Ashtiyani, Nasrollah Falsafi, Mas'ud

Farzad, Seyyed Abolhasan Jalili, Hoseyn Khadiv-Jam, Mojtaba Minovi, and Mahmud Sana'i. The ranks of Majles and Senate deputies included the likes of Mozaffar Baqa'i, Khanbaba Bayani, and Mehdi Malekzadeh.

More broadly, considering the centralized nature of the economy, many other intellectuals decided to work for such state-sponsored institutions as the Center for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults,[19] the Central Bank,[20] the National Iranian Oil Company, the National Museum, National Radio & TV,[21] the Plan and Budget Organization,[22] as well as various universities, research institutions, and libraries.[23] This was similar to what their predecessors had done under Reza Shah when they affiliated with such institutions as academies, banks, *Kanoun-e Parvaresh-e Afkar* (Society for Public Guidance), *Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli* (The National Monuments Council of Iran), and *Showra-ye Ali-ye Maaref* (High Council of Education).

THE ETHICAL CHALLENGE

The cooperation of intellectual classes with authoritarian states is not unproblematic. Rulers often want the intellectual classes to unequivocally accept the present order of things and remain loyal and docile functionaries. As Mohammad Reza Shah once put it to an American interlocutor, intellectuals can voice "constructive criticisms," but should not commit "treason" against the state.[24] In other words, rulers are chiefly interested in an instrumental relationship with intellectuals and distrust the latter's culture of critical inquiry. Moreover, it is possible to say that intellectuals help to consolidate authoritarian rule when they acquiesce to state atrocities. For example, I am well aware that as justice minister Ali-Akbar Davar had to oversee the trial and imprisonment of his former colleague Abdolhoseyn Teymurtash and that many ministers and university rectors during the Pahlavi reign had to tolerate censorship, expulsion of students, and even the execution of political prisoners. However, intellectuals by their very nature are not generally fond of tutelary rule, heavy-handedness, corruption, censorship, and the benevolent despotism of the rulers.

More importantly, we often take the state and its existence for granted. However, the state is a constructed entity and not a natural one. As Natel Khanlari had mentioned in his 1955 lecture, the survival of the state requires a national effort, and the engagement and the sacrifice of its best and the brightest in all fields of endeavor. Hence, what we should be frowning upon is nonparticipation and not the act of participation. In other words, the job of an intellectual is not just "talking truth to power" but also realizing that there is "truth in power." The survival of any country, first and foremost, requires the latter rather than the former. So even in cases where intellectuals

deal with a nondemocratic state, the principle should be one of managing participation and contribution and not one of staying on the sidelines. In this ambiance, there are two variables at work: first, what type of rank/position/responsibility one accepts in the system; and second, how undemocratic the system is.[25]

By highlighting the contributions of some of Iran's modern intellectual-statesmen, this author maintains that the country benefited from their participation in power.

APPENDIX: SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF INTELLECTUAL-STATESMEN

Adamiyyat, Fereydun (1893–1989): A well-known historian (PhD, University of London, 1949) who served for many years in Iran's ministry of foreign affairs including as ambassador to the Philippines and India and representative in the International Court of Justice in the Hague.

Afshar, Iraj (1925–2011): Noted bibliographer, historian, editor, and librarian. Having served as the librarian of Tehran University's Faculty of Law and later Central Library (1965–1979), head of Teachers College's Library, and head of the National Library, he was a leading expert on Persian manuscripts.

Ahmadi, Ahmad-Reza (b. 1940): An avant-garde poet, he was affiliated with the Center for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults as a writer, manager of the sound recording production section, and editor from 1970 to 1994.

Alavi, Reza (1935–2012): Educated at Harvard and Oxford universities, Alavi was an expert on Indian languages and history. He served as cultural attaché to India in the 1970s as well as advisor to ministers of science and culture.

Alikhani, Ali-Naqi (b. 1929): A French-educated economist, he served as minister of economy (1963–1969) and rector of Tehran University (1969–1971).

Amuzegar, Jahangir (1920–2018): Having earned his doctorate in economics from UCLA, he served as minister of commerce and minister of finance and chairman of the National Iranian Oil Company before becoming Iran's ambassador at large to the United States (1963–1979) and a member of the board of the International Monetary Fund.

Ashraf, Ahmad (b. 1934): A sociologist (PhD, New School for Social Research, 1971), editor, and scholar, he worked at the Plan and Budget Organization before the revolution and was affiliated with *Encyclopaedia Iranica* at Columbia University for many years.

Bahar, Malek al-Sho`ara Mohammad-Taqi (1886–1951): An erudite poet, scholar, journalist, and professor, he also served as Majles deputy (various times between 1921 and 1928) and briefly in 1946 as minister of culture.

Baqa'i, Mozaffar (1912–1987): He earned his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Paris in 1935 and served as a politician, founder, and head of Hezb-e Zahmatkeshan-e Mellat-e Iran (Iran's Toilers' Party) and Majles deputy.

Bayani, Khanbaba (1909–1999): He earned his doctorate in history from France and served as founding rector of Tabriz University (1942–1950), deputy prime minister, senator, and head of Foreign Ministry's archives.

Bayani, Mehdi (1906–1968): Having earned his doctorate in Persian literature at Tehran University (1945), he was considered a pioneer in Persian librarianship and a specialist in Persian manuscripts and calligraphy. Bayani was head of the ministry of education's public library (1933–1937), founder of the National Library, and as the director of the Royal Library (1956–1968) served as the chief imperial librarian.

Dashti, Ali (1895–1982): A writer, journalist, and scholar, he served as a Majles deputy, ambassador to Egypt (1948–1951) and Lebanon (1963), and a senator (1953–1979).

Dehkhoda, Ali-Akbar (1877–1956): Renowned etymologist, encyclopedist, poet, and social critic. Dehkhoda had previously served in such capacities as secretary to the Persian ambassador to the Balkans, Majles deputy, head of the secretariat of the ministry of education, and head of the office of investigation in the ministry of justice.

Ebtehaj, Abolhasan (1899–1999): He served as governor of Bank Melli (1942–1950), ambassador to France (1950–1952), advisor to the International Monetary Fund (1952–1954), and head of the Plan and Budget Organization (1954–1958). Ebtehaj has been described as "one of the most important and powerful figures in the economic history of Iran during the middle decades of the 20th century . . . He exercised a major influence on the development of the Iranian banking system, and became a pioneer of economic planning in the country, earning international recognition for his vision and administrative competence" (Encyclopaedia Iranica, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ebtehaj-abolhassan).

Ebtehaj, Hushang (b. 1928): Writing under the penname of H. E. Sayeh, he has been one of Iran's leading contemporary poets. Before the revolution, he produced a musical program for the national radio.

Eqbal-Ashtiyani, Abbas (1896/7–1956): Professor, etymologist, and founding editor of *Yadegar* journal, he was Iran's cultural attaché in Turkey and Italy toward the end of his life.

Falsafi, Nasrollah (1901–1981): Tehran University history professor, journalist, translator, and poet, he served for five years as cultural attaché in Italy and Spain.

Farmanfarmayan, Khodadad (1928–2015): The U.S.-educated Farmanfarmayan was affiliated with the Institute for Social Studies and Research, and later became governor of the Central Bank of Iran, and head of the Plan and Budget Organization.

Farzad, Mas'ud (1906–1981): A translator, poet, and university professor, Farzad served as a cultural attaché in London.

Ghani, Ghasem (1893–1952): Physician (MD, American University of Beirut, 1919/20), scholar, translator, and expert on Hafez, he served in such capacities as Majles deputy (1935–1941), minister of health (1941), minister of education (1944), as well as ambassador to Egypt (1947) and Turkey (1948–1949).

Homayun, Daryush (1928–2011): Journalist, author and founder, and editor-in-chief of *Ayandegan* newspaper (1967–1977), he served as minister of information and tourism (1977–1978). Homayun was a high-level official of Rastakhiz Party before the revolution.

Jalili, Seyyed Abolhasan (1927–2015): A French-educated philosopher with expertise in Greek and German thought, Jalili started teaching at Tehran University in 1955. In the 1970s, he served as dean of faculty of letters and humanities at Tehran University and as a cultural attaché in France.

Khadiv-Jam, Hoseyn (1927–1986): Translator and scholar of Persian and Arabic, he served as a cultural attaché in Afghanistan before the revolution.

Kiarostami, Abbas (1940–2016): Painter, poet, and film director. Kiarostami was educational film director for the Center for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults and after the revolution became an internationally acclaimed film director.

Majidi, Abdolmajid (1928–2014): He had a PhD in law from France and served as minister of labor (1969–1972), director of the Plan and Budget Organization (1972–1977), and director of the Queen Farah Foundation (1977–1979).

Malekzadeh, Mehdi (1881–1955): A medical doctor educated in Beirut, he served a total of seven times as a Majles deputy, deputy prime minister, and senator (appointed in 1949). Malekzadeh authored a major book on the history of the Constitutional Revolution.

Mehran, Hasan-Ali (b. 1937): He served as governor of Iran's Central Bank (1975–1978), vice chair and CEO of National Iranian Oil Company, and minister of finance.

Minovi, Mojtaba (1903–1977): Professor, scholar, and translator, he served from 1957 to 1961 as Iran's cultural attaché in Turkey.

Mosaddeq, Mohammad (1882–1967): A Swiss-educated lawyer, he served as prime minister from 1951 to 1953 and nationalized the Iranian oil industry before being overthrown.

Moshfeq-Kazemi, Seyyed Morteza (1904–1978): Author of Iran's first novel entitled *Tehran Makhuf* (Horrible Tehran) and managing editor of *Nama-ye Farangestan*, he served as ambassador to Egypt, Syria, and a number of European countries.

Nahavandi, Hushang (b. 1932): A French-educated economist (PhD, 1958), who went on to write or translate fourteen books on economic subjects, he was minister of housing and development (appointed 1963), rector of Pahlavi University and Tehran University, head of Queen's Office, and minister of higher education.

Nasr, Seyyed Valiollah (1876–1946): Physician, literary scholar, educator, Majles deputy, and minister of education. He also served as director of the school of political science as well as schools of law, theology, and medicine at Tehran University.

Parsa, Farrokrou (1922–1980): A physician and advocate for gender equality, she served as Iran's first female cabinet minister from 1968 to 1971 as minister of education.

Pesaran, Hashem (b. 1946): He received his doctorate in economics from Cambridge University in 1972 and subsequently held such posts as head of the economic research department of the Central Bank of Iran (1974–1976) and the undersecretary of the ministry of education (1976–1978).

Qotbi, Reza (b. 1938): A former leftist and cousin of Queen Farah, he became the director general of the state-owned National Iranian Radio and Television and manager of Shiraz Festival.

Radi-Azarakhshi, Gholam-Ali (1909–1999): A poet and professor of literature at Tehran University, he served as Iran's permanent representative to UNESCO (1945–1963). Radi-Azarakhshi later established the Faculty of Literature and Social Sciences at National University.

Rahnama, Majid (1924–2015): A Tehran University professor, he became ambassador to Switzerland (1965–1967), minister of science and higher education (1967–1971), and deputy prime minister (1972–1977).

Rahnama, Zeinolabedin (1893–1989): Editor of the journal *Rahnama* and *Iran* newspaper, and an expert on Islam, he served as Majles deputy as well as ambassador to France, Lebanon, and Syria. Rahnama was also the head of the Iran Pen Society.

Rezazadeh-Shafaq, Sadeq (1895–1971): Active in the Constitutional Revolution as a fighter and journalist, he went on to earn a doctorate at the University of Berlin in 1928 with a dissertation entitled "Mystische Motive in Fechners Philosophie." Rezazadeh-Shafaq returned to Iran where he served as a professor at Tehran University, literary scholar, Majles deputy

(first elected in 1943), and senator (elected in 1950). As a member of the Iranian delegation, he was involved in drafting of the UN constitution in 1945. In 1946, he accompanied Prime Minister Ahmad Qavam in discussions with Stalin that led to the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Azerbaijan.

Sadiq, Isa (1894–1978): Having earned his doctorate at Columbia University (1931), Sadiq returned to Iran and served as a professor and university rector. He also served six terms as minister of education and five terms as a senator between 1940s and 1970s.

Sadiqi, Gholam-Hoseyn (1905–1991): After earning his PhD from the University of Paris (1938), he became a professor of sociology at Tehran University. A leading member of the National Front, he served as minister of interior and later as deputy prime minister under Prime Minister Mosaddeq and was imprisoned after the coup. Sadiqi was one of the founders of the Institute for Social Studies and Research at Tehran University in 1958.

Samii, Mehdi (1918–2010): A banker and man of finance, he is responsible for founding the Industrial and Mining Development Bank and held such other posts as governor of the Central Bank and president of the Agricultural Development Bank (1973–1979).

Sana'i, Mahmud (1919–1985): A British-educated psychologist, he was Iran's cultural attaché in England (1954–1957) before moving on to become deputy minister of education (1959–1960), and later founding director of Tehran University's Institute of Psychology (1965–1972).

Shadman, Seyyed Fakhroddin (1907–1967): Served in such posts as Tehran's deputy public prosecutor, Iran's oil commissioner in the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (for fourteen years based in London), minister of agriculture, finance, and justice, head of the Plan and Budget Organization's Supreme Council, and vicegerent of Imam Reza Shrine Properties. He was also a member of the Iranian Academy and the Cultural Council of the Imperial Court of Iran, a trustee of Pahlavi Library, and a professor of history at Tehran University (1950–1967). Shadman played a huge role in the establishment of the Abadan's Oil College. He is the author of numerous books and novels as well as articles. For his intellectual contributions, see Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (Syracuse University Press, 1996), pp. 54–63.

Shirvanlu, Firuz (1938–1989): A leftist activist from his student days when he was studying sociology of arts at Leeds University, he was instrumental in the founding of the Center for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults. Shirvanlu was also a writer and translator and worked in the office of Queen Farah.

Siyasi, Ali-Akbar (1895–1990): Credited with introducing the modern discipline of psychology to Iran, he served as minister of education

(1943–1944, 1948–1950), foreign minister (1950), and rector of Tehran University (1943–1955).

Tahbaz, Sirus (1939–1999): A writer and translator, he was in charge of the publication unit of the Center for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults from 1970 to 1978. He also compiled and published two dozen books on the celebrated poet Nima Yushij (1895–1960) and his poetry.

Taqizadeh, Seyyed Hasan (1878–1970): He was a chief protagonist of the Constitutional Revolution. Taqizadeh was fluent in Arabic, English, French, and Turkish and had vast knowledge of Islamic/Iranian history and literature as well as natural sciences. He served as Majles deputy (intermittently between 1906 and 1920, 1924–1928, 1947–1950), foreign minister (1926), governor of Khorasan (1928–1929), minister of roads (1930), finance minister (1930–1933), ambassador to France (1933–1934), ambassador to United Kingdom (1929, 1941–1947), and senator (1949–1967 [serving as president 1957–1960]). As a seasoned politician, Taqizadeh was the one dispatched to London in 1930 to discourage the British from causing problems among the tribes and sent to New York in 1946 to present Iran's case against Soviet occupation of Azerbaijan in the UN. A collection of his books, essays, and Majles speeches encompassing eighteen volumes has been published (see https://bit.ly/30EPnaA).

Teymurtash, Abdolhoseyn (1883–1933): A graduate of a military academy in St. Petersburg, he was involved in the Constitutional Revolution (1905–1907). Teymurtash served as Majles deputy, governor of Gilan, and court minister. He developed a reputation as a cultivated statesman and was a leading voice of the nationalist intelligentsia. He was arrested in 1933 on the charge of corruption and killed in prison.

Yeganeh, Mohammad (1923–1995): Having earned his MA in economics from Columbia University (1951), Yeganeh went on to serve as vice minister of economy (1964–1969), minister of development and housing (1969–1970), governor of the Central Bank (1973–1975), minister of state (1975–1977), minister of state and director of Plan and Budget Organization (1977), and minister of economic affairs and finance (1977–1978).

Zaryab-Khoei, Abbas (1919–1995): Historian, book expert, and translator. With a doctorate from the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany (1960), he taught at Tehran University from 1966 to 1979. He was a librarian in the Majles and Senate libraries for almost two decades.

Zoka', Yahya (1923–2000): Author, professor, and art expert, he served as director of the decorative art museum, the anthropology museum, and the National Library (1968–1969). He also served as an adviser to minister of culture and art (1970–1978).

NOTES

1. Paviz Natel Khanlari, "Be Dostan-e Javanam [To My Young Friends]," *Sokhan*, vol. 6, no. 4 (1955), pp. 273–76. The text was originally published in Farsi. The translation is my own.

2. This program allowed male high school graduates to serve as teachers in villages in lieu of their mandatory two-year military service.

3. Abbas Milani, "Paviz Natel Khanlari," in *The Eminent Persians: The Men and Women Who Made Modern Iran, 1941–1979* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008), pp. 971–77.

4. Plato, "The Republic," in *Classics of Western Philosophy*, 8th edition, ed. Steven M. Cahn (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2012), p. 140.

5. In Europe, such intellectuals as French novelist and art theorist André Malraux (1901–1976) served as minister of information (1945–1946) and minister of cultural affairs (1959–1969), and the writer Václav Havel (1936–2011) served as the last president of Czechoslovakia (1989–1992) and after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia as president of the Czech Republic (1993–2003).

6. A young Iranian thinker has written: "We should not expect political work from intellectuals and intellectual work from politicians." See Soroush Dabagh, *E'tedal Yani Barabari-Talabi va Rafe' Tabeyz* [Moderation Means Seeking Equality and Rejecting Discrimination], https://bit.ly/2JEcQTg.

7. For analysis of this genre, see Mehrzad Boroujerdi, ed., *Mirror for the Muslim Prince: Islam and Theory of Statecraft* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013), and Neguin Yavari, *Advice for the Sultan: Prophetic Voices and Secular Politics in Medieval Islam* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012).

8. See Neguin Yavari, *The Future of Iran's Past: Nizam al-Mulk Remembered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

9. Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 218.

10. Other notable statesmen of this era were prime ministers Mirza Abolqasem Qa'em-Maqam (d. 1835), Mirza Hoseyn Khan Sepahsalar (1826–1881), and Persia's counsel in Tbilisi and chargé de affaires in Paris Yusef Khan Mostashar al-Dowleh (d. 1895).

11. I have elaborated on this argument in Mehrzad Boroujerdi, "Triumphs and Travails of Authoritarian Modernization in Iran," in *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921–1941*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 146–54.

12. Another important director of the School of Political Science who held the post from 1924 to 1941 was Ali-Akbar Dehkhoda. For a short biography on Dehkhoda and all other intellectuals mentioned in this chapter, see the Appendix.

13. Amanat, *Iran*, pp. 475–76. The three volumes of *Seyr-e Hekmat dar Orupa* (History of Philosophy in Europe) were respectively published in 1931, 1939, and 1941.

14. Ibid., p. 451.

15. Capitulation refers to a practice whereby foreign individuals are subject to the laws of their countries of which they are a citizen rather than the country in which they reside. In Persia, this right was granted in the nineteenth century and was long considered as an embarrassing violation of the country's sovereignty.

16. In the post-constitutional period, as the Iranian judicial system came under the increasing influence of various European legal systems, the need for establishing a school of law become obvious. In 1920–1921, *Madrasa-ye Ali-ye Hoquq*, a free-standing school within the Ministry of Justice, was established. In 1935, the Higher School of Law and Political Science became Tehran University's School of Law and Political Science.

17. See "Ali-Akbar Davar," *Daneshnameh-ye Jahan-e Islam* [Encyclopedia of the Islamic World], http://rch.ac.ir/article/Details/9063, Accessed May 22, 2019.

18. "Hekmat, ʿAli-Asgar," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hekmat-ali-asgar, Accessed May 22, 2019.

19. For example, Ahmad-Reza Ahmadi, Firuz Shirvanlu, Abbas Kiarostami, and Sirus Tahbaz.

20. For example, Mehdi Samii, Khodadad Farmanfarmayan, Hashem Pesaran, Hasan-Ali Mehran, and Mohammad Yeganeh.

21. For example, Reza Qotbi and Hushang Ebtehaj.

22. For example, Abolhasan Ebtehaj, Abdolmajid Majidi, and Ahmad Ashraf.

23. For example, such figures as Iraj Afshar, Mehdi Bayani, and Yahya Zoka' worked in the National Library while Abbas Zaryab-Kho'i worked in the Majles and Senate libraries.

24. See E. A. Bayne, "Intellectuals and Kingship," *Persica*, no. 5 (1970–71), p. 123.

25. I am indebted to Ramin Safizadeh for the content of this paragraph.

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Part III

WOMEN INTELLECTUALS IN PRE- AND POSTREVOLUTIONARY IRAN

Chapter 7

Women's Rights in Iran's Experiment with Modernity

Haideh Moghissi

INTRODUCTION

Over a hundred years ago, in 1906, a group of women marched in the streets of Tehran, and took off their veils demanding the recognition of their rights as full citizens. Some of the deputies in the parliament (Majlis) who had just voted banning women (along with minors, the insane, the criminals, the bankrupts) from electing and being elected to the parliament branded the women as prostitutes who wanted to discredit the constitutional revolution in the eyes of people.[1] One hundred and ten years forward, Iranian women once again have to resort to similar tactics to draw attention to the use and abuse of female body by the self-appointed guardians of public morality for their political objectives. The young woman Vida Movahed, who stood on a utility box in Tehran's Enghelab Street in Winter 2017, waving her headscarf tied on a stick in defiance of Hejab law, and those who have followed her suite, cry out that they would rather be humiliated, arrested, fined, and tortured than submit obediently to imposed Hejab, this prime symbol of the ayatollahs' Muslim womanhood.

The protest of these women recaps also a perplexing question. What are the political and cultural grounds that have precluded the fulfillment of over a century of Iranian women's energetic campaign for basic rights? Can the failings of the country's modernizing projects be held responsible for the resurrection, with vengeance, of outdated Islamic gendered institutions, practices, values, and behaviors, including the legally mandate veiling in today's Iran?

These questions would invite a reexamination of the features of modernity, experienced in Iran in the area of women's rights. The starting assumption here is that Iran's experiment with modernity, which started more steadily over a century ago, bypassed some critical features of modernity,

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as it originated from distinct objective conditions and cultural heritage in Europe. A most critical idea of modernity was, in Charles Taylor's words, the idea of human agency, and the individual as "rational, sociable agent," entitled to "equal treatment and non-discrimination" and to living, for the mutual benefit, in peace and security with rights that could be "seriously pleaded against power."[2] The steady decay of feudal social order and the rise of capitalism, aided by colonial expansions, and the industrial, scientific, and technological developments, pushed the church out of the affairs of the state and diminished the role of the state as the caretaker of a particular religion.

There was a causal connection between secularization of public spaces and a measure of secular democracy and social justice, which formed the bases for women's successful campaigns for personal autonomy and legal parity with men of the same class and a degree of sexual equality. This critical stage remained unattainable in Iran. And while we don't take the general features of modernity as ethnically and culturally determined, we cannot overlook peculiar elements that disarticulated or disjoined various features of modernity in Iran to the detriment of women's equality with men. Most notable and enduring among them was the idiosyncratic Islamic values and gendered cultural beliefs, from which not even many pro-modernity intellectuals could free themselves. This peculiarity made the collision over women and women's rights a more lasting issue of conflict during decades of Iran's modernizing experiment than it was in Europe.

Surely, women's nonperson status, denial of female suffrage, lack of property rights, legally sanctioned marital rape and violence, lack of child custody, rigid gendered moral codes, and restrictions in access to certain fields of education and employment did exist in Europe too, and their elimination took many years. The church also fought hard to keep under its control women's body and their moral conducts, in the interest of sanctity of the family. Its battle in this area sill continues, specifically regarding the issue of abortion and women's right to choose. But over 300 years of advancements in the very notion of individual rights have made the power of the church virtually toothless in Euro-Atlantic countries. And in any case, the Muslim/ Shii clerics' resistance to change has outdone that of the church's, both in its longevity and in keeping its actual grips over legal and formal institutions. This fact contravenes women's legal and social equality with men. Surely, the tenacity of authoritarianism, the persistent political chaos and brazen corruption, the enduring intrigues and interferences of imperialist powers, the economic and technological underdevelopment, as well as the vagueness of intellectual support for modern values and practices, at crucial historical moments, have assisted Muslim clerics' war against modernity, particularly in the area of gender rights.

SECULAR INTELLECTUALS AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

From the mid-nineteenth century, a few Iranian intellectuals, much ahead of their time, passionately supported women's access to education and the unveiling as a means to enrich and enhance their roles as mothers, the producers of future generations. The anti-clerical Fathali Akhundzadeh (1812–1878) and Mirza Aghakhan-e Kermani (1854–1896), for instance, did not blink to attack the very foundation of religion and the Islamic Shari'a, for the treatment of women, including the imposition of Hejab, polygamy, forced marriages, women's seclusion, and their lack of training in science and technical subjects. To Akhundzadeh, all Muslims' habitual practices were inherently reactionary and against human autonomy and agency[3] and to Kermani, women's enslavement and their deprivation were obvious signs of the trouble when religion and politics were mixed, leading to the corrupt and arbitrary rule of the monarch and tyranny of the clerics.[4] The contributors to the handful dissident newsprints such as *Hablulmatin*, *Sour Israfil*, and *Molla Nasruldin* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also aspired the reconstruction of Iran's politics and economy and the ending of the colonial intervention and intrigues in Iran that was politically independent only in name. They sought the elimination of the clerics' moral and political power, whose most clear manifestation was deprivation of women from social life. Female intellectuals such as Qurrat-ul Ain (1815–1851), Bibi Khanoum Esterabadi (1858–1921), and Taj-ol Saltaneh, Naser-uldin Shah's daughter (1883–1936),[5] had also written against the patriarchal religious and cultural practices in the same period. But seen in the context of a patriarchal political and cultural climate in which whatever men do finds more audiences and is presumed more credible, the critique of male intellectuals received a wider hearing.

It is important to emphasize that many secular intellectuals opposed the Islamic practice of veiling and the restrictions imposed on women's public activities, but this did not mean their unqualified and unconditional support for women as equal to men, entitled to the same personal rights and liberties that men had. But the position of Iranian intellectuals in the period when Iran was taking baby steps toward modernity was not surprising. First, the project of modernity even in Europe had paradoxical consequences for women, leading some scholars to argue that it was emancipatory essentially to heterosexual European men, leaving behind women and non-Europeans/colonized people. For instance, full citizenship was denied to women, enslaved Africans, and other colonized people, and women's political clubs were shut down in the process.[6] True to the form, intellectual men in Iran—with some rare exceptions—were also a product of their time and not free from the hold of patriarchal Shiite/Iranian cultural values. The grips of the Shiite sexual

norms on the society, in particular, and oversensitivity to the concept of honor (*Namoos*), that decides women's place, rights, and obligations in Iran, as in many other Muslim-majority countries, are key in understanding the acceptance or tolerance of gender hierarchy and male superiority and privileges within the family and by extension within the social and political sphere.

The intellectuals' ambiguous or hesitant position vis-à-vis women's rights was reflected clearly in the process of writing the country's first constitution and the compromises that were made on the very notion of equality (Mosavat), with lasting consequences for women. The presence of the conservative clerics and the conformist lay individuals in the constitutional movement and in the first parliament certainly reduced and limited the quantity and quality of the constitutionalists' and other intellectuals' aspirations,[7] particularly those related to the issues of women's political rights and the right for having their associations. As Masha'alla Ajoudani, among others has noted, while the very concept of *nation* or *people* (*Mellat*) replaced the concept of *subjects*, the strong clerical objection to the idea of equality, which they saw against the Shari'a, resulted in twisting the meaning in a way that it defeated the purpose.[8] Hence, they reached a compromise by interpreting *equality* as equality before the state's laws only.[9] In effect, they shut the door to recognition of people's rights to engage in law-making processes and genuine representations in democratic institutions. Women were not even considered as *persons* to have such rights, and hence they were left behind by the constitution altogether. In a sense, the absence of one of the foundations of modernism, most notably equality of citizens and secular democracy, made Iran's experiment a "mutilated modernity" to borrow the term from the late feminist sociologist, Fatima Mernissi.

It can, of course, be argued that given the clerics' tight grips over the masses of people and their skillful manipulation of people's emotions for their own purpose, that was the protection of Islam and the Muslim lands from the aggression of the infidel foreigners, imposed such compromises on progressive intellectuals.[10] The compromise made on women's rights was perhaps a bargaining chip for overcoming the clerics' resistance against other signifiers of modern life that they considered against the Shari'a, such as banks, modern schools, even the registration of births and birth certificates. But the compromise can also reflect the intellectuals' religious proclivity (*din khou-i*) to borrow the term from Aramesh Doustar. Moreover, as Ajoudani argues, the absence of a civil society, and the fact that the country's political independence was under constant threat by the Russian and British colonial powers, made political independence, and not democratic rights and civil liberties, the priority for the activists. In a sense, the rise to power of an authoritarian figure, Reza Shah, the first Pahlavi king (1925–1941), too reflected the urgency understood by the political elite to end the destructive meddling of

colonial powers of the time in the county and the creation of the desperately needed administrative and institutional order and a modern bureaucracy, necessary infrastructure, modern army, large-scale industry, and so on.

AGENTS OF MODERNITY

During the period when Iran was embarking on capitalist development and the construction of the bases of a modern state, and prior to the emergence of "organic" intellectuals of diverse social background, with the influence to organize, persuade, and shape public consciousness (the groups that Gramsci identifies as "creators of sciences, philosophy and art"),[11] the agents of modernity were politicians/bureaucrats and the "traditional" intellectuals. The first category, the bureaucrats that Gramsci called "low-level" intellectuals, primarily originated from the ranks of the aristocracy and carried their traditionalist and conservative values to institutions of the new modern. Mokhberul Saltaneh Hedayat was not the only example in this category who while holding top positions during the first Pahlavi's rule was critical of the expanse of liberal practices, particularly the mixing of the sexes and the unveiling policy. The second group, the "traditional" or "professional" intellectuals, was varied "inter-class," some with literary and scientific credentials. Several parliamentarians, politicians, poets, and literary figures, such as Mirzadeh Eshqi, Aref Gazvini, Mirza Taqi Bahar, Iraj Mirza, Taghi Zadeh, and Ali Akbar Siasi, were intellectuals in this genre. It should go without saying that in this categorization we are talking about a pattern of intellectual positioning and not a strict, fixed alignment of each group, as each group had its internal ideological and intergroup conflicts and divisions. And each group consisted of intellectuals who worked in opposition to the ruling elite and those who worked with it for implementing its political agenda and social policy.

The state-led modernizing projects of the early twentieth century aimed at pulling Iran out of its socioeconomic chaos, in which women's degraded legal and social standing was seen as a part. The highlights of reforms in favor of women, during Reza Shah's reign, were extension of schooling to all girls that until then was accessible mostly to girls from religious minorities in French and American missionary schools, followed by the establishment of a modern university that admitted women, and, particularly, the unveiling strategy in 1936, a long aspired goal of women activists. This strategy was introduced six months after all men had been ordered to wear European-style chapeau. These reforms accompanied extensive infrastructural, administrative, and industrial developments, and were carried out under the Shah's watchful eyes with full support of a group of liberal, European-educated men

as his advisors, and despite the bloody resistance of the clergy. Breaking the hold of the clergy over the education and judiciary, bringing under state control religious endowments (*Uqaf*), banning certain superstitious religious rituals, limiting religious sermons (*rozeh khani*), as the main sources of clergy income, influence, and political power, and the enactment of a modern civil code directly or indirectly benefited women. Sections of the civil code on personal status included banning girls' marriage under fifteen and insertion of several conditions in the marriage contract under which women could initiate a divorce. While none of these provisions departed from the Islamic Shari'a, they nonetheless represented a significant improvement of women's lot.

Reza Shah had set for himself the task of constructing a "modern" Iran, but he did it with a callous disregard for the views and democratic rights of others and with no flexibility or compromise. Ordering the army's invasion of Goharshad Mosque in Mashhad and opening fire on protesters gathered in support of the cleric's opposition to the new dress code is a case in point. It is also worth mentioning that before it became a state policy, unveiling had already started to a limited extent, despite the clerics-provoked harassment and threats of the unveiled women. But once Reza Shah was convinced that the veiled women and the turbaned men represented the opposite image of a modern Iran, and despite the initial reliance of his administration on persuasion and encouragement,[12] the unveiling policy was enforced through coercion and without consultation or input of the women rights activists and organizations that were essentially supportive of the Shah's reforms. The engagement of activist women in the unveiling policy could help the smoother implementation of the reform through grassroots educational and consciousness-raising activities and assure the policy to take firmer roots. Instead, the burgeoning independent women organizations that had remained active in the post-constitutional revolution were ordered closure, and a bureaucratic, superficial, patchy resocialization project through a series of enhancement lectures (*parvareshe-afkar*) and the formation of a state-run women's organization, Kannon-e Banavan, were ordered.

Hence, the link between these otherwise important reforms with the persona of a ruthless, authoritarian king pushed the majority of progressive intellectuals into the opposition and turned women's rights and their social and moral conducts a major vehicle for opposing the Shah's despotic regime. Reversing the reforms thereafter remained the top priority for the Mullahs and their conservative followers from the Bazar and small businesses classes. This was the backdrop to the contradictory political, ideological, and cultural shifts in the perspectives and actions of the organic intellectuals of the new middle classes in the later periods. And this also explains the conversion of the pro-women orientation of previous generations of "traditional" intellectuals to the hostile and sexist trends of the opposition's organic intellectuals

who predominantly focused on the harms done by women's liberation and the liberated women to the national and cultural heritage. Criticizing modern women became a disguised critique of the authoritarian modernization schemes of the Pahlavi era particularly during the second Pahlavi, Mohammad Reza Shah (1941–1979) who succeeded his father, following the latter's forced abdication for his pro-German sentiments, under the pressure of the allied forces in 1941. The second Pahlavi king possessed neither his father's strength of character nor his determination to stand up to the men of religion. Hence, the clerics crept back into their influential positions and regained a good part of their prestige, influence, and wealth. Worse, in order to gain legitimacy, the Shah in fact resorted to religious gestures, such as making an annual pilgrimage to the holy cities and claiming that he was protected by this or that Shiite saint.

Nonetheless, following in his father's footsteps, he set for himself the objective of returning Iran's to it past glory (*tamadon-e bozorg*) through capitalist expansion, economic growth, and industrial developments, aided by the country's increasing oil revenues. After the CIA coup against Mossadeq government, he too adopted a one-man show strategy, blocking all venues for people's political participation and input. Even the organic intellectuals of the dominant classes, while enormously benefiting from their privileged status, were faced with limitations imposed by the dictatorial rule. Parallel to some positive reforms in favor of women, however, the women who embraced the opportunities provided by the modernization process and those who sought civil and personal liberties became the targets of derision, criticism, ridicule, and insult. This tendency harmed women's cause at the time when women gradually and painfully slowly were gaining the confidence to appear in public without being harassed, sought more access to social and economic resources, and claimed more rights.

A few examples may clarify my point. The prominent historian Ahmad Kasravi, whose anti-clerical views cost him his life, devoted a whole pamphlet to women's issues, entitled "Our Sisters and Daughters" in 1944. While denouncing polygamy and veil as a pre-Islamic aristocratic traditions and supporting women's education, Kasravi fiercely criticized urban women working outside home, rebuffing the "liberated" women "for their extravagant clothing and cosmetics and their improper behavior in parties and dances," and called the demands for women's suffrage an "out of tune song."[13] Another historian, Bastani Parizi, even suggested that "the central cause of all corruption and conflicts on earth" was women whose "footsteps were to be found in all lost wars and the decline of dynasties even in ancient Iran," adding that "women were the central cause of all corruption and conflicts on earth."[14] The sound argument of Bibi Khanoum, made half a century earlier in 1896, resonated so well here that "women have been confined to the

kitchen and been kept in Harems after all, so how could they be the source of the problem and chaos that the country faced."[15]

In a sense, political dictatorship made many constructive and socially progressive modernizing projects, carried out under the Shah's 1962 "White Revolution," unappreciated. Women's suffrage; the enactment of a new family legislation, the 1967 Family Protection Act (FPA), which while not parting from the oppressive sharia-based articles of the Civil Code on marriage, divorce, child custody, polygamy, and inheritance, was nonetheless a great improvement over the past, were among positive reforms. So were the formation of Education and Health Corps sent to the rural areas in which young women participated. All these reforms, as well as more personal freedoms gained by women, were positive developments, which nonetheless were rejected in *toto* by the majority of the opposition to the Shah's authoritarianism. Entangled in the Cold War climate, and the close geographical proximity to the then Soviet Union, the Shah's regime, guided by the U.S. and Israeli intelligence advisors, made the persecution of socialist activists, the organic intellectuals of the working class, and the new middle class its top priority. This strategy provided the opportunity to the inherently anti-socialist clerical establishment who were also unhappy about the regime's liberal policies in sociocultural domains, to use the networks of the mosques and Islamic associations for mobilizing support against the regime around their regressive political agenda. Their obscurantist activities above all centered on stopping the march of modern values and practices under the deceptive motto of anti-dictatorship and anti-imperialism.

Parallel to these material developments, the religiously inclined "traditional" intellectual attacks against so-called "liberated" women increased. Contributors to this regressive trend were trying to shape a consciousness in reverse of the early-twentieth-century male advocates of women's liberation[16] The archetype of the turnaround from the somewhat exaggerated faith in the workability of Western models to a blatant nativist, angry, hostile rejection of Western ways in its totality was perhaps Jalal Al-e Ahmad. It is not far off to suggest that his writings provided a rational or an intellectual justifications for the overt sexism of the period and to a large extent solidified the resistance to democratization of gender relations, which presumably could have gradually happened. In both his well-read books, *Gharb zadegi* (Westoxication) and *Dar Khedmat va Khianat-e Roushanfekran* (On the Service and Disservice of Intellectuals), Al-e Ahmad reserved his strongest fury and insults for modern women, in his words, "the army of consumers of powder and lipstick" alongside the "effeminate Westernized men." Using an unmistakably crude populist, misogynist language, he criticizes woman's emancipation the way it implemented in Iran as given women only "the right to parade themselves in public." He destigmatized sexism by attacking women who worked in a modern institution, in particular, the female secretaries in government agencies,

writing, "If the ladyship secretary is worthy of anything why is she not in charge of a department herself. And if she is not worthy of that and is merely used as an ornament for the waiting room, then what can I say."

The point is that the disdain showed by Muslim intellectuals, such as the clergyman, Morteza Mottahari, and his Paris-educated non-mullah counterpart, Ali Shariati, for the changing status, the dress and the conduct of the new middle-class women, which threatened the men's sense of security and psychological comfort in the 1960s–1970s, was not surprising. What is disturbing is the conformity of the religious-soaked ideas of these men, who linked women's quest for equality as an import and women who tried to maneuver within the suffocating bonds of cultural expectations, as foreign agents, with those of the seemingly secular intellectuals. The flawed logic of both groups cohered that women's modern attire, conduct, and social presence symbolized Western economic and political influences as the root causes of all national problems. The impact of this outmoded, moralistic intellectual tendency was felt by all socially active and politically aware women who ignored double standard and cultural expectations. Forough Farrokhzad, the foremost Iranian poet and filmmaker, personified such a woman. Many of her male peers, threatened perhaps by her liberated lifestyle and her refusal to forgo her desires and independent voices for social acceptability and intellectual recognition, undermined her literary quality. Still, others attributed literary growth to the fruitful influence of her partner in love, Ibrahim Golestan.[17] I certainly am not suggesting that all secular intellectuals agreed with or joined the woman-bashing trend. But many were coerced into tolerating this attitude by the force of internalized patriarchal double standards, or because of male bonding, or simply preferred to sit on the fence.

I must add that in contrast to these groups, the secular left intellectuals, whether or not active in political parties of the time, were consistently supportive of women's liberation. As early as the 1909, the manifesto of the Democrat Party (*Ferqeh Demokrat*), for example, had called for the "absolute equality of women with men in political rights,"[18] a point that was reiterated in the Communist, Tudeh Party's manifesto and in its program in the 1941. The Tudeh's manifesto also called for equal pay for equal work, maternity leave, and improving women's social rights and material conditions. After his arrest by Reza Shah's police, Dr. Taqui Arani made a point in his trial in mentioning the names of the socialist women prisoners, which can be understood as a political gesture to stress the parity of men and women in fighting despotism.[19] Nonetheless, the left's anti-imperialist fixation on one hand, and its flawed singular attention to the language of class, often collapsed into giving priority to national liberation and proletarian revolution over women's right struggle and often used blatant anti-feminism. The reluctance or half-hearted support for women's protests against the sexual politics

of the Islamist regime that replaced monarchy, following the 1979 revolution, most notably ayatollah Khoemini's veiling order and the subsequent assaults on women's right, manifestly confirm the disturbing intellectual retreat, compared to the earlier generation of left activists. After all, the socialist intellectuals were not immune to the patriarchal cultural values and gendered religious premises that creep into one's consciousness since childhood. But that is another story that I have discussed elsewhere.[20]

UNDER THE RULE OF THE AYATOLLAHS

Surely, multiple interconnected factors were involved in the success or failure of the twentieth-century modernizing reforms in Iran, including those aiming at improving women's rights. I want to stress a few points specifically. First, the most important missing link in Iran's modernizing process was the continued nonseparation of religion and state. This reality denied pro-women's rights intellectuals, within or outside the political establishment, the possibility for waging an extensive and far-reaching educational and awareness raising campaign to counterbalance the cleric's anti-modernity discourse and their tireless efforts to shape and mold ordinary people's mindset against women's equality with men. The precondition for such progressive project, however, was the existence of secular democracy and a democratic political system where decisions and policy initiatives could develop in consultation with knowledgeable, experienced individuals with links to the diverse communities within the civil society. Instead, every policy initiative was to be passed by the man on the top who would decide the substance and the scope of the reforms, based on his ideas, perceptions, and sensitivities.

Second, the modernizing Pahlavi kings were, in personal life, traditional and gendered-inclined, and in the case of the second Pahlavi, not free from the hold of religion. Reza Shah, a polygamous man himself, acting as the great patriarch, boldly and coercively had women done with their veils. But this policy signified more a desire to portraying the country as civilized and modern and less his belief in the rights of women to choice. He is quoted by his wife, the queen mother, as having stated that he "preferred to had died and not taken his wife to appear in public unveiled, but he had to do it in the interest of modernizing Iran."[21] He discriminated against his daughter, Ashraf, refusing her begging to be provided the same opportunity for schooling in Switzerland that was rendered to her twin brother, the crown prince.[22] The second Pahlavi, a womanizer, whose greedy appetite for beautiful women, some of whom were regularly flown from Europe, frustrated even his minister of court and his closest confidant, Asadollah Alam.[23] He thought women were not capable of producing anything noteworthy, not even a good

chef,[24] referred to his wife, the queen, in private as stupid (*naqess-ul aql*)[25] and threatened to send his sister, Ashraf, to prison for intending to launch a campaign for women's equal rights in inheritance.[26]

Third, a large number of the intellectuals, the agents of modernity in Iran, were secular men, with modern appearance, behavior, and lifestyle, but often with frozen premodern mentality, values, and expectations with regards to gender relations. Their conscious or unconscious imagination was stained by the male-centered Islamic-Iranian culture that sees woman as minors, in need of men's guidance, within or outside the family. They surely accepted women's rights to education, labor force participation, and political engagement. But deep down they could not accept women's autonomy and their claim to equality with men in the level of intelligence, the quality of judgment, and strength of the will. They appreciated a woman when she knew her place and her limitations as a woman, had good housekeeping skills (khanedari), even if she was a professional with comparable or more responsibilities than her male relatives. Above all, she was expected to be attentive to the family honor and cultural expectations and mores with regard to her body and her sexuality.

In the end, dictatorship and lack of democracy, itself the result of a combined objective and subjective conditions, prevented democratic grassroots organizations, including feminist organizations, to evolve and flourish. The absence of political freedoms, the growing gap between a minority rich and powerful and the majority disadvantaged and powerless, created a hostile environment, pushing a growing number of people, including women, who were the products of the modernizing policies of the regime, to turn against it. The state-run women's organizations, while playing a significant role in efforts for improving women's lot, could not replace the genuine independent democratic women's organizations. In sum, various agents of modernity to different degrees and for different reasons bear the responsibility for the failure of the processes that led to the tragedy of coming to power of an obscurantist and corrupt Islamist regime forty years ago.

The coercive modernization of the Pahlavis, for reasons that were discussed, backfired in the mass support given to the clergy during the 1979 revolution, leading to the downfall of the second Pahlavi. It is ironic that the absence of the notion of equality and the individual agency and autonomy that were missing from the 1905 constitution turned on its head and sealed the idea of human inequality, by the establishment of the outlandish religious notion of *guardianship of the jurist* (velayat-e Faqih), the immutable rule for life of an unelected clergyman with claim to having a divine mandate and standing above and over the rest of the society, in wisdom and the faculty of judgment.

The top priority of the new regime has been de-modernification of social relations with gender as its salient feature. The policy that started only three

weeks after the uprising, beginning with the annulment of the FPA, removing women from the bench, closing certain fields of higher education to women, introducing mandatory Hejab, and sexual segregation of public spaces, has continued without relief. The present Supreme Leader's de-modernification scheme has a gendered "social and cultural engineering" components, the term he repeatedly uses. The heart and soul of the policy is systemic policing of the society in order to control the so-called "social vices" in the interest of the society's "moral security" (*amniyat akhlaqi*). The main targets are secular women and the youth who refuse to succumb to the cultural values and expectation of the Islamists. The ayatollah repeatedly urges the police to have a wider presence everywhere and encourages ordinary people to use *Atash Beh Ekhtiar* (fire at will), which means freedom to intervene whenever and wherever they see transgression from Islamic values. This gives a green light to criminal activities of Islamic guards and well-organized militia (Basiji) gangs to lash out against female citizens whenever and in any way they wish.

The clear objective of all these policies is to take apart what has been built decades earlier to improve women's rights. The regime's policy of re-Islamification of the society has born fruits without doubt, in what I have called de-womanization of public spaces, by way of various policy initiatives or legislation and extensive legal and paralegal coercive apparatuses. Suffice is to mention that after forty years since the revolution, women's share in the total economically active population not only has not increased parallel to the dramatic population growth that has doubled since 1979, but it has also dropped from the prerevolution figure of 14.8 percent in 1976.[27] Early retirement or part-time work for women; gender quotas in hiring processes for public sector jobs; and increasing maternity leaves entitlement, which is widely assessed as facilitating firing women on the excuse of reduced productivity and lower presence, are some of the instruments used to push women out of the workforce. The rate of unemployment, particularly for university-educated women, is three times higher than their male counterparts.

The Islamic government's gender politics also relies on large-scale resocialization projects through creation of various religious women's center offices and sites; the introduction of Quranic schools and annual Quran citation competition; Islamic fashion shows; installation of a clergyman in the administration of every schools at all levels; and increasing the number of female seminaries for training female preachers.[28] In addition to the state-run media, multiple other ideological apparatuses, with gender as central core, work to assist the regime in its goal of establishing the Islamic society it hopes to construct. The Organization of Islamic Propaganda, the Office of Islamic Propaganda, the High Council of Cultural Revolution, Youth Cultural Center, Artistic Center of Islamic Propaganda, the Coordinating Council of

Islamic Propaganda, and Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute are but a few examples.

Iranian women have braved through both the trying experience of modernization under the two Pahlavi kings and the torturous course of re-Islamization schemes of the Islamist rule. However, under the threat of the harshest police surveillance they continue their quest for gender democracy and rights. Their resistance to the gender politics of the new regime challenges not only the new rulers but the whole country to see that the most acute and urgent need for Iran is to let forces of modernity restart their transformative march. The sobering experience of living under the rule of the obscurantist men of religion, for forty years, has manifestly demonstrated that secularity, humanism, democracy, and conditions of equality are what the county needs, and political expediency or male-defined national interests should not once more be allowed to compromise these objectives.

NOTES

1. Mangol Bayat-Philip, 'Women in Revolution in Iran', in *Women in the Muslim World*, eds. L. Beck and Nikkie Keddie (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 301–2.

2. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 159–60.

3. Fereydoun Adamiyat, *Life and Thought of Mirza Fathali Akhund-Zadeh* (Tehran: Kharazmi Publishers, 1349/1971), pp. 205–6.

4. Fereydoun Adamiyat, *Andishe-haye Mirza Aghakhan-e Kermani* (The Thoughts of Mirza Aghakhan-e Kermani) (Tehran: Tahouri Publishers, 1347/1969), p. 157.

5. Homa Nateq and Fereydoun Adamiat, *Social and Political and Economic Thoughts in the Unpublished Works of the Qajar Period* (West Berlin: Navid Publishers, 1368/1989), pp. 22–26.

6. For a good analysis of the subject, see L. V. V. Tijssen, 'Women Between Modernity and Postmodernity', in *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*, ed. B. S. Turner (Sage Publications, 1991).

See also T. R. Kandall, *The Woman Question in Classical Sociological Theory* (Miami, FL: Florida International University Press, 1988).

7. Ibid., p. 441.

8. Masha'alla Ajoudani, *Mashrouteh Irani* (Iranian Constitutionalism) (Tehran: Akhtaran Publishers, 1385/2006), p. 403.

9. Ibid., pp. 204–6.

10. Examples of the cozy relationships between the top Mullahs and the British and Russian representatives in Iran and buying the Mullahs through offering gifts or paying steady stipends abound. For an evidence of this claim, see Firoz Kazemzadeh's *Russia and England in Iran (1864–1914)* (Tehran: Jibi Book Corporation, 1352/1973),

p. 407. Kazemzadeh cites M. S. Ivanov who had traced a letter in Leningrad's central state archives, written by the British consulate to Seyed Abdolah Behbehani, thanking him and Seyed Mohammad Tabtabaee for their sincere relations with the embassy and stating the authorization of the payment of 1,500 tomans monthly to each cleric. Obviously, keeping the masses of people in their ignorance or busy with trivial religious clashes, organized and supervised by the Mullas, sabotaging internal initiatives for modernizing the country, and maintaining it soaked in religious superstitions and in its state of disarray and always in debt to the British and Russian banks or to European governments served the interests of the imperialist powers of the time.

11. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Gerofrey Nowell Smith (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1985), pp. 10 and 13.

12. See Iran National Archives, *Violence and Culture: The Unveiling Secret Documents, 1313–1322* (Tehran: Iran National Archives, 1371), pp. 2–10 (in Persian).

13. Ahmad Kasravi quoted in Haideh Moghissi, *Populism and Feminism in Iran: Women's Struggle in a Male-Defined Revolutionary Movement* (Great Britain: Macmillan & St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 82.

14. Bastani-Parizi, *Siasat va Eghtesad dad Asr-e Safavi* (Politics and Economy in Safavid Era), 1979, pp. 276–95, Bastani's and Kasravi's statements are cited in my *Populism and Feminism …* pp. 83–84.

15. See footnote No. 9.

16. Even a secular intellectual, like Reza Baraheni, who had shown awareness of women's plight and had written on the masculine character of Iranian culture and male obsession with sex, could not resist the seduction of blaming women for their submission to the Western cultural assault, suggesting that Westernized women were more irresolute and deracinated and easier impressed than men. One wonders why women overtake men only when negative characteristics were at issue. See Reza Baraheni, *The Crowned Cannibals: Writings of Repression in Iran* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1977), p. 47.

17. For an excellent biography of Forough Farrokhzad, see Michael Hillmann's fine book, *A Lonely Woman* (Washington, DC: Mage Publisher, 1987).

18. Introduction to Party Democrat's Manifesto written by Mohammad Amin Rasoul Zadeh, in Fereydoun Adamiyat, *Ideology-e NehZat-e Mashroutiat-e Iran* (The Ideology of the Iranian Constitutional Movement) (Tehran: Payam Publishers, 1976/1355), p. 294.

19. Maramnameh-e hezb-e Tudeh Iran (The Tudeh Party's Manifesto), *What Tudeh Party Says and Wants*, Tehran, 1323/1944.

20. Moghissi, *Populism and Feminism in Iran*.

21. *The Diaries of Asadollah Alam*, Vol. 4, p. 298.

22. Ashraf Pahlavi, *Memoire, Chehreha'ee Dar Yek Aayeneh* (Faces in One Mirror) (Tehran: Frzan-e Rooz Publisher, 1389/2000), pp. 48–49.

23. See *The Diaries of Asadollah Alam*, Vol. 6, pp. 1355–56 [1976–77], ed. Alinaghi Aalikhani (Bethesda, MD: Ibex Publishers, Inc., 2008), pp. 42, 44, 338, 482, 493, 517.

24. Mohamad Reza Shah's interview with Oriana Fallachi, the Italian journalist.

25. See *The Diaries of Asadollah Alam*, Vol. 2, p. 98.

26. *The Diaries of Asadollah Alam*, Vol. 4, pp. 299–300.

27. For a thorough analysis of female labor force participation in postrevolution Iran, see Farhad Nomani and Sohrab Behdad, *Class and Labour in Iran* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), Chapter 6, and also, Haideh Moghissi and Saeed Rahnema, 'Working Class and Islamic State in Iran', *Socialist Register*, 2001, pp. 197–218. The obvious and widespread gender discrimination in government employment policies has even raised criticism from President Rouhani's own inner circle in 2016. In an interview with the daily *Shahrvand* (April 8), the then vice president for women and family affairs, Shahindokht Molaverdi, described the lowering of quotas for women in the exam for government and public sector jobs as discrimination and clear exclusion.

28. The present number of female seminary students studying in 470 seminaries across the country is reported to be 60,000 and 70,000 have already been graduated. See http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/women-and-politics-in-the-islamic-republic-of-iran-781441192141/#sthash.QKOH26Cm.dpuf.

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Chapter 8

"And, Here I Am," Forugh Farrokhzad and Modernity

Farzaneh Milani*

Book publishing in Iran is a fascinating paradox. In spite of dwindling readership, staggering inflation, scarcity of paper, governmental intrusion into creative spaces, and the demand that authors conform to the regime's religious and moral mandates, it is a vibrant industry. According to the latest available statistics, Iran is the tenth country in the world—after China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Russia, Germany, India, Indonesia, and France—in terms of the number of book titles it published in 2014.[1] More than 72,000 titles were published in that year alone. This figure, I suspect, does not include cheaply printed and proudly pirated books.

In such a richly endowed market, one recent volume stands out with a rather unusual title. *The Iranian Don Quixotes*, by Bijan Abdul-Karimi, is presented as a historical novel and "an attempt to ponder, examine, and reassess the encounter of Iranians with modernity."[2] The book was first published in 1,000 copies in late 2018, but soon after its distribution, the regime confiscated all remaining copies from bookstores. An electronic file began circulating online—free. A haunting tale, this is no work of literary distinction. Nor is it an easy book to read. In 734 long pages, it catalogs graphic, ghastly details of torture, beheading, dismemberment, incarceration, exile, and the execution of many of the leading figures of the Babi and Baha'i faiths during the Qajar period.

The long list of people called the "Iranian Don Quixotes" includes only one woman—Tahereh Quorratol'Ayn, one of the first nineteen disciples of Bab and also a poet. Even though Abdul-Karimi views the Iranian Don Quixotes as bumbling fools tilting at windmills, the lone woman included in his all-male inventory had to be more than just a woman.[3] With conviction, the

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* For my brother, Abbas Milani

author identifies Tahereh with "two fully contradictory characteristics: girlish beauty and delicacy as well as manly courage and audacity."[4] Granted admission to forbidden territories as a manly girl, Tahereh is excluded as a grown woman. Infantilized and treated as a perpetual girl-child, she is resexualized as an honorary man.

Abdul-Karimi's take on Tahereh can perhaps be dismissed as extreme, biased, shrill. But his views are not unique by any means. Exceptions aside, the role of women writers and poets is a mostly unexplored aspect of Iranian modernity and not studied in any systematic fashion in dominant discourses on the subject. Indeed, literary criticism has not been reticent to include women.[5] There is a welcomed proliferation of critical studies of their work. However, while women have been acknowledged as writers and poets, they have been mostly sidelined as thinkers and pioneers who made distinct and significant contributions to Iranian modernity.

Why the silence, we might ask? Why the exclusion, the discursive segregation, the push to the margins? Why the neglect, the relegation to footnotes, when women writers and poets generated ideas that reshaped contemporary Iran? These innovators looked segregation in the face, challenged old assumptions, and revolutionized Iranian literature and society. They emerged from the inner sanctum to which they had been driven for centuries and went on a hazardous journey "from the described and the imagined to describers and imaginers."[6] By negotiating boundaries, they rejected walls that divide, silences that seclude, stereotypes that suffocate. They integrated female voice and vision into a predominantly masculine literary tradition and democratized it by including women as producers, interlocutors, consumers, and objects of representation on an unprecedented scale. They opened new vistas by offering fresh possibilities in language, knowledge, feeling, and mutually liberating, mutually respecting gender relations. By reimagining the world, they challenged asymmetrical power relations and traditional definitions of power, authority, and authorship. Believing the personal and the political intersect in intimate life, these women brought modernity into personal relationships and inside the home.[7]

Modernity, many writers, social theorists, and literary critics have argued, was ushered in when Don Quixote left his little village in 1605 to explore the world and search for adventures.[8] A variety of reasons have been offered as to why Cervantes' masterpiece is the first modern novel in the world: the centrality of the individual; multiple perspectives; an embrace of ambiguity; tolerance for uncertainty; integration of different genres; suspension of disbelief, among many others.[9] In this article, I will focus on one of the central paradoxes of modernity—the coexistence of freedom of movement as a basic human right alongside the massive expansion of incarceration as a form of penal punishment. Tellingly, the tale of Don Quixote, this ingenious knight

errant, began with the harrowing incarceration of his creator, who was held prisoner by pirates.[10]

Cervantes sends Don Quixote to wander through the world, and the world opens its arms to him. Freedom of movement is his right as a modern citizen, just as curtailing it is his grave punishment. While article thirteen of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that "everyone has the right to freedom of movement," Michel Foucault reminds us that the proliferation of prisons is very much the product of modern society. In his book, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, he writes, "Punishment has become an economy of suspended rights," shifting radically from death and torture to surveillance and careful regulation of space and movement. "From being an art of unbearable sensations," he observes, punishment in the modern world is based on several "constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions."[11] The "guilty" individual is enclosed, cloistered, controlled.

I would like to suggest the same double metaphor of captivity and freedom as a central trope of Iranian women's literary tradition. It is also one of the key markers, makers, and shapers of Iranian modernity.

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, a counter-narrative to gender segregation began to be constructed in Iran, demanding a more unfettered, less inhibited liberty for women to step out of real and figurative private spaces. Power is closely interconnected to the control of space and physical movement. Exclusion—through incarceration, gender, and race segregation—prohibits access to centers of power and education, full exercise of legal and economic rights, pursuit of jobs in the public sector, and easy integration in public forms of art. To maintain its hegemony, gender segregation not only separates the world of men and women but also controls voice, mobility, and visibility. It establishes complex intersections between bodies and borders in a physical and symbolic sense, and turns trespassing of assigned spaces and roles into a serious threat.[12]

The conventions and values that concealed women's bodies applied to their literary voices, as well. Segregation had a powerful impact on Iranian literature. It shaped literary production and representation. It imposed certain restrictions on men and covered women's literary voices with a contrived form of silence. Women writers knew desegregation was central to their literary enterprise. In the words of Simin Behbahani, who identified with the borderless voice and visibility of the Gypsy, "to stay alive," women had to cross delineated boundaries and "slay silence":

Sing, gypsy, sing
In homage to being you must sing
Let ears register your presence.
Eyes and throats burn from the smoke

That trails the monsters as they soar in the sky.
Scream if you can of the terrors of this night[13]

   To become a published writer or poet, Iranian women not only needed a
room of their own and economic independence, as Virginia Woolf remarked
in her groundbreaking work, *A Room of One's Own*, but also the freedom
to leave that room and return to it at will.[14] Without such a right, a room
becomes a prison cell. Without such a right, women could only develop
their talent in private forms of art: storytelling, lullaby singing, carpet weav-
ing, cooking, sewing, knitting, embroidering, needle working. Without such
a right, the pantheon of Iranian literature would have been condemned to
remain segregated—as indeed it was—for centuries.
   In a segregated society, the degree of man/woman interaction and inter-
mingling remains almost the same for both sexes. However, while men enjoy
mobility, women's easy access to the public domain is carefully monitored
and curtailed. Reflecting that reality, pages of Persian literature are replete
with tales of male travelers, pilgrims, explorers, adventurers, and trailblaz-
ers. They are full of men who have claimed the road—whether on foot, or a
donkey, horse, motorcycle, car, train, or plane. It is hard to imagine Rustam
without his horse, Rakhsh. It is hard to imagine Sufi masters without their
wanderings or mapping out for their disciples the spiritual quest. Consider
Attar's exquisite masterpiece, *The Conference of the Birds*, in which he
writes about a group of male birds sent on a spiritual journey. However,
female birds, despite their wings and their ability to fly, are excluded from his
allegorical travel narrative.[15] They are not pilgrims in this voyage of discov-
ery and self-discovery. Attar makes sure to remind his readers, "Completion
of this road needs a man."[16] No wonder, Parvin E'tessami laments, "A woman
lived in a cage and died in a cage/ The name of this bird in the rose garden
was never mentioned."[17]
   Let me hasten to add parenthetically here that not only Persian literature
but also the world literary landscape is, for the most part, the territory of
men on the move. Don Quixote is inseparable from his donkey, Rocinante;
Ulysses is associated with his wanderings, Odysseus with his heroic journeys.
Women, however, have often been restricted to their socially designated
spaces. World literature is full of sleeping beauties and damsels in distress
awaiting the arrival of a Prince Charming galloping on his horse. It is full of
women trapped in castles, towers, attics, segregated spaces, and beauty ideals
and safety warnings that inhibit their mobility.[18] Women could neither travel
freely nor, in the words of Virginia Woolf, "loiter" freely in public squares.[19]
"There is probably a simple reason for this," explains Margaret Atwood,
"send a woman out alone on a rambling nocturnal quest, and she's likely to
end up a lot deader a lot sooner than a man would."[20] Atwood has a point.

Would Little Red Riding Hood, who, by the way, was not riding on anything, have confronted the Big Bad Wolf if she had, like a good lass, cast down her eyes under her little red hood and stayed on her designated path? Don't witches, those counter-ideal women, use their broomsticks—the very sign and symbol of female domesticity—as a flying vehicle? Are not the women viewed as the lowest category of female sex workers called streetwalkers?

Aware of the restricted mobility of their body and voice, women writers and poets were at the forefront of the public search for a new world of human possibilities. To break the spell of their textual quasi-invisibility, they made the circulation of their bodies and their voices central to their artistic universe. That is why, for the last 170 years or so, during which female writers and poets could claim heritage and successive generations of literary foremothers, the spatial tropes of movement and containment have been at the core of their literary tradition. From Tahereh Quorratol'Ayn, who risked life and limb and abandoned the women's quarter, to Zebra, the outspoken protagonist of Azareen Van der Vliet Oloomi's, *Call Me Zebra*, winner of the 2019 prestigious PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, women have refused to stand still behind closed gates and heed the "you don't belong out here" message. If Tahereh went from door to door, street to street, city to city, and country to country in search of the Beloved, a blatant violation of the then obligatory code of gender segregation, then, likewise, Zebra, "a modern literary inventor," traveled half the globe and walked "the void of her multiple exiles causing trouble, discombobulating the world."[21]

Refusing to be confined by imprisoning walls and codes of gender segregation, women claimed the road—not as trespassers or interlopers, but as seasoned navigators; not chaperoned, but unescorted; not with hesitation and fear, but with resolve and courage. That is how they became the chroniclers of a presence asserted, a body reclaimed, a voice regained. Through the magic of literature, which Van der Vliet Oloomi considers the "only true form of cartography in the world," these women trespassed sacrosanct boundaries. Literature became their voyage and destination, the magic carpet that took them on a grand tour of banned spaces and taboo topics. In a country where women still need the written permission of their male guardians to leave the country, it became their freedom machine and allowed them to navigate the world.[22]

It is no exaggeration to claim that the reorganization of physical, social, and discursive spaces and the refusal to have their presence under lock and key run like a unifying thread through the work of female writers and poets. In her novel, *The Blue Logos*,[23] dedicated to "Don Quixote and Aunt Showkat," Shahrnush Parsipur writes, "I was entering the depth of darkness, the deep of the sea. I felt cold. I was becoming an absence. I wanted warmth; I wanted love; I wanted light; I wanted presence. I screamed, why do you

always keep me in the deep of the sea?" Repeating the latter question seven consecutive times in a single paragraph, Parsipur adds, "I was weeping. Grief was killing me. I felt I am shrinking in myself . . . When I wanted to walk, I felt heavy. I could only take little steps. It was like I was limping and one foot was shorter than the other."[24]

In this passage, the female narrator of *The Blue Logos* bemoans an imposed exclusion. She refuses to become a present absence and wants to claim her rightful space in the world. She wants to be heard, to be seen, to be acknowledged as a real flesh-and-blood woman. She wants to walk at full speed rather than limp. She wants the kind of visibility that does not deny her individuality and the humanity of an entire gender. "Why do you always keep me in the deep of the sea?" is also Parsipur's intertextual homage to Forugh Farrokhzad and a line in her celebrated poem, *Let us Believe in the Dawn of a Cold Season,* in which she demands inclusion and visibility:[25]

Look, how heavy time stands here
And how a school of fish chew my flesh
Why do you always keep me in the deep of the sea?
I feel cold
And I despise these mother-of-pearl earrings[26]

It was this violence of erasure that Farrokhzad aimed to overcome with her boundary-pushing work. It was this imposed absence that would force her to recede in the dark, in the background, relegated to "the deep of the sea" that she rejected. It was indeed this existential struggle to insert herself in public spaces, this insistence that her textured presence and full-fledged humanity be acknowledged, that made her a quintessentially modern poet.[27] It is like the visibility and the space Ralph Ellison demanded in a race-segregated country and in the poignant opening lines of his seminal book, *Invisible Man.* "I am an invisible man," wrote Ellison, "No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me."

From the beginning of her career, Farrokhzad knew she had come to occupy forbidden territories. In an afterword to *Captive*, which functions as her early career literary manifesto, she wrote,

"I have been looking for a chance to defend myself since being deluged on every side by torrents of accusations and floods of criticism. I am therefore, taking this opportunity to justify my goals and explain the path I see before me . . . [A]s soon as a woman picks up her pen, as soon as she assumes the right to talk

about personal feelings, in other words, the minute, a woman allows her poetry to reflect her feminine soul, all of a sudden, the four pillars of heaven begin to tremble. Cries of alarm arise on all sides. Everyone laments the loss of modesty, bemoans the death of morality."[28]

As a young woman, Farrokhzad sought individual dignity and liberties. She challenged monolithic and static identities and insisted on being simultaneously a poet, cinematographer, painter, and actor as well as daughter, sister, wife, mother, and lover. She adopted a multiplicity of points of view, excavated her repressed memories, and claimed ownership of her body and desires while emphasizing responsibility for her liberated sexuality. She longed to democratize the family unit and opened up a new expanse of domestic subject matters formerly kept in the closet. She refused to reduce the world to binary opposites, which, in her view, are based upon exclusion, injustice, power imbalance, and domination. No contemporary Iranian poet, male or female, modern or traditionalist, young or old, incorporates and integrates binary opposites into his or her writing with more significant effect. In her work, be it prose, poetry, or film, a twilight zone with porous boundaries and competing narratives is created; facile categories that dichotomize good and bad, right and wrong, old and new are rejected; rigid divisions are not tolerated, bridges are built.

Wanting to recast her private story as collective history, this poet adopted an autobiographical mode of writing in a culture where, at the time, life narratives, in particular by women, were rare literary commodities.[29] She wrote in the first-person singular and strove for candor. She wanted to say what she thought, and mean what she said. She wanted to focus on the concrete, the specific, the personal. She called herself a "sinner," a "disloyal wife," an "unworthy mother," "an infamous fool," even a "self-confessed harlot," but refused to fearfully "whisper in the dark." She was always crafting a self-narrative and reaching into the past and the future, into dreams and nightmares in order to learn more and more about herself.

For her, poetry was "daylight, open windows, and fresh air."[30] It was informed, informative, and cathartic. Truth mattered to her. Individual freedom, personal responsibility, and choice mattered to her. Regardless of consequences, she spoke out about who she was, stood up for her visions, and raised her voice in support of her ideals. The paradoxical nature of her writing—its ups and downs, doubts and convictions—portrays the stubborn humanity of its poetic persona, celebrating the survival of an individual and her individual truths.

If telling the truth was the guiding principle of her life and work, recreating herself set forth the values that made her who she was, or at least whom she aspired to be.[31] She did not always live up to her ideals, and she was the first one

to admit her failure, discuss her imperfections, and look in the mirror of her soul to dust it off relentlessly. The word "mirror" and the verb "to look" appear and reappear again and again in all five of her poetry collections. The first image in *The House Is Black* is that of a woman gazing at her own reflection in a mirror.

It is, however, the liberty to move about freely that undergirds all other rights for Farrokhzad. As a poet and an individual, she refused to stay put in spatial, mental, intellectual, or emotional ghettos. Her mind, like her art, did not recognize borders. An incessant search for the open road is a defining characteristic of her short life and thirteen-year literary career. In her poem, "Only the Voice Remains," with a typical combination of clarity of expression, complexity of insight, and poetic force, she asked six times in sixty verses why she should stop. The rhetorical question, the poem's refrain, was the poet's motto and her most pressing concern in life[32]:

Why should I stop, why?
The birds have gone off to find waterways,
The horizon is vertical, and moving is rocketing.
Shining planets spin
At the edge of sight
Why should I stop, why?

Farrokhzad's whole body of work is the account of an explorer defying familiar frames and certainties. It is the tale of a border-crosser, a Gypsy living on frontiers. Taken as a whole, it is the account of a rich variety of real and metaphorical journeys. Good poems, for her, were like a borderless path, like an open road.

> Whether a poem is short or long does not really matter. One can linger for years on a single poem, and still see something new in it. One walks, returns, and keeps on walking back and forth without ever getting tired. Should one stop, it is only to observe something that was not seen in previous strolls. There is horizon in such a poem, there is space and beauty and nature and man in it. There is also a kind of honest fusion with all these things, as well as a conscious and enlightened look at them.[33]

Love of motion and the open road, however, is only part of the story. In her life, as in her letters, poems, and films, Farrokhzad wrote about feelings of containment. With her gaze fixed to the sky, she found her feet weighed down by attachments and rules, hampered by chains, entangled in conventions. Although she never experienced imprisonment in the literal sense of the word, the entire body of her work can be read as a prison memoir—albeit the account of a prisoner who never submitted to imprisonment. In a letter to

her husband, she wrote, "My soul, like a caged bird, is restless." It is hardly surprising that she titled her first poetry collection *Captive*, and gave ample expression to feelings of captivity in *The House Is Black*. While not shot in a "prison," this documentary film speaks the language of containment. The camera zooms in on a fully fenced off Leprosarium with huge wooden fences looming over its entranceway. The lepers' colony becomes a parable for any form of cloistered existence, any kind of forced exclusion and invisibility. "Our being, like a cage full of birds, is filled with moans of captivity," laments the sad and melodic voice-over of Farrokhzad.

Surely, the young director's own feelings of confinement within restrictive cultural and familial structures filled her with compassion for the subjects of her film—people under a medical sentence of incarceration with no chance of parole.[34] It is challenging to listen to her lamentations in the film, all borrowed from the Old Testament, and not think of her own poetry.

I said if I had wings of a dove
I would fly away and be at rest
I would go far away and take refuge in the desert
I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.
For I have seen misery and wickedness on earth[35]

A born survivor, Farrokhzad did not succumb to feelings of entrapment, to despair, to imprisoning walls. Instead, she let loose the wings of her fertile imagination and became the companion of birds and breeze. Metaphors of control—walls, veils, imposed silences, fences, cages, chains, blind windows, closed doors, and bars—coexist side by side with the desire to sprout wings, to fly, flee, run, dance, roam streets, climb mountains, and sing. Hers is the song of a caged soul in search of wings and a voyage into the gateless sky. Like the many birds that wing through her work—phoenixes, eagles, doves, crows, finches—she soars with the magnanimous pleasures of the sky. On the wings of words, "clutching at the tail of every breeze," she travels far and wide.

Sheltered by the night
I rush, clutching
At the tail of every breeze
To pour frantically
My tresses in your hands
And from this green, fresh
Summer pasture's tropical flowers
I make you an offering.
Come with me.
Come with me to that star . . .

Come with me to that star
Where no one fears the light
I breathe on floating islands
I am looking for a chunk in the vast sky
Free from petty thoughts[36]

Farrokhzad's career came to an abrupt end in 1967. Dying as she lived—
in motion—she, who loved the open road, was killed behind the wheel of a
speeding car—a tragic and early death, but also emblematic of motorized
modernity. Although she was at the height of her career and quite success-
ful as a poet and cinematographer, she had lived a life marked by episodic
feelings of loneliness and isolation, nervous breakdowns, institutionalization,
electric shock therapy, forced separation from her only biological child, and
repeated attempted suicides.

The price Farrokhzad and her pen-wielding female colleagues have
paid for their transgression has been exorbitant. Tahereh Qurratul'Ayn
was executed when she was thirty-six. Parvin E'tessami died of a myste-
rious fever at thirty-four. Taj al-Saltaneh attempted suicide three times.
Zand-Dokht Shirazi died in her early forties, a premature death caused by
depression. Fatemeh Sayyah died of a heart attack at forty-five. Mahshid
AmirShahi, Goli Taraghi, Shahrnush Parsipur, and many others have expe-
rienced depression, incarceration, institutionalization, or attempted suicide.
Ghazaleh Alizadeh hanged herself with colorful ropes in Javaherdareh vil-
lage in Ramsar. Kobra Saidi, better known as Shahrzad, endured imprison-
ment and institutionalization for seven years. Homeless for a while, she
currently lives alone, disillusioned, and embittered, in a little village in the
south of Iran.[37]

This catalog of depression, isolation, imprisonment, suicide and attempted
suicide, early death, and execution is wrenching. The road to desegregation—
a central tenet of Iranian modernity—has not been easy for women. Nor has
it been easy for the men who believed in it, advocated it, and practiced it. A
recent illustration of this is a term of opprobrium that has gained wide cur-
rency in Iran. Labeled *zan zalil*, shortened to ZZ, this breed of men is ridiculed
as hen-pecked, effeminate, girly men.[38] They are criticized for the painful loss
of cherished definitions of ideal masculinity. Believed to be dominated and
domesticated by aggressive women, they are blamed for spending too much
time inside the house. At least four recent books with *zan zalil* in their titles
have been published in Iran. They are haunting obituaries, describing, with
much chagrin, the death of the old order. While praising traditional, provider/
protector men whose place is outside the house, they lament the emergence—
on a massive scale—of women who do not know their proper place and have
invaded male provinces.

Lurid, crude, and deeply alarmed, these books are not unique in their fear of interloping, intrusive women occupying masculine spaces.[39] For decades, while women were emerging as a vibrant catalyst of change, some of our political, social, and religious thinkers as well as literary figures have warned against women parading themselves in public. In the words of Jalal Al-e Ahmad, "We have drawn women, the preservers of tradition, family, and future generations, into vacuity, into the streets. We have forced them into ostentation and frivolity."[40] Such comments—and there were many of them—soon swelled to a thunderous roar, metamorphosed into chants, became a rallying cry for a sea of angry men and women with clenched fists and a clear message: women don't belong in the public square.

It also bears mentioning that oceans away, dissolving conventional distinctions of geography, culture, history, and religion at a barrier-breaking moment when more women are in positions of power, running for office in record numbers, and have reached the pinnacles of economic, academic, literary, and professional success, a familiar slogan, aimed exclusively at women, can be heard again—loud and clear. "Send her back"; "Lock her up."

NOTES

I have benefited from the comments and criticisms of Abbas Milani, Jo-Anne Hart, Kenny Marotta, Rae Blumberg, and Laura Smith. I am most grateful to them.

1. Fariba Amini and Rudi Matthee helped me in collecting these book publishing data. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Books_published_per_country_per_year.

2. Bijan-e Abdul Karimi, *Don Quixote-hay-e Irani* [*The Iranian Don Quixotes*] (Tehran: Naqd-e Farhang, 2018), the introduction.
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1AhLPNV_AjVI7jXoSmT7hPw-JbY hXXYgs.

3. The adjective "Quixotic" has a wide spectrum of meanings and implications. It can mean unrealistic, impractical, foolish. It can also connote visionary, chivalrous, gallant. It is precisely this sense of the comingling of such disparate meanings that gives it significance and wide usage.

4. *The Iranian Don Quixotes*, 138.

5. It is hard to deny the particular power of women writers in Iran today. They are steering literature in new directions, exploring the politics and poetics of space and its intricate intersection with power. They are publishing a record number of books and best sellers in different genres—fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. They play an active and defiant role in cyberspace and the blogosphere. They are winning some of the most prestigious literary awards. They have attained unprecedented stature previously reserved for male writers. Often, women's novels and poetry collections outsell those of their male counterparts.

6. Toni Morrison, *Playing in The Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1992).

7. Literary modernity in Iran is often characterized with the broad growth of the printing industry; the expansion of the communications media; the switch from oral tradition to print culture; the vernacularization of the written language; the birth of the novel; the introduction of free verse; the widespread launch of literary criticism; the introduction of the camera, photography, and cinema; adaptation to national and international pressures; and the impact of Western literature, among others.

8. Remarkably, *Don Quixote* is also the scene of the first appearance in Western literature of a veiled Muslim woman, Zoraida. Thereafter, the Muslim woman increasingly came to be depicted as captive of her faith and her veil. Appearing and reappearing in paintings, novels, and films, on television screens and the covers of books and magazines, she came to represent the failed modern citizen—the unmodern. Also, the word "harem" entered the English language in 1634. An extension of the veil and its architectural double, it was viewed as a veritable domestic penitentiary. Earlier, the word "seraglio," a derivative of the Persian word "saray," meaning "a palace," was used for women's quarters. Significantly, the emergence of this sartorially and spatially trapped woman in Western literature, her demotion from palace to prison, coincides with the advent of modernity and the Prison Industrial Complex.

9. Don Quixote organizes knowledge, life, and its telling in a new way. He recreates himself into a new existence. Named Alonso Quixano, he adopts a new name and becomes the architect of his own destiny and its narrative. If Alonso was an isolated and almost invisible man, Don Quixote fashions himself into a knight errant, rejecting dogmatic certitudes and an either/or mentality by juxtaposing—indeed, integrating—seemingly binary opposites: reality and illusion, sanity and madness, old and new, captivity and freedom.

10. In the prologue to the first part, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra tells his readers the book was "begotten in a prison, where every discomfort has its place and every sad sound makes its home."

11. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1995), 11.

12. For the many intersections of gender segregation and the freedom of movement, see Farzaneh Milani, *Words, Not Swords: The Iranian Women Writers and The Freedom of Movement* (Syracuse, NY: University of Syracuse Press, 2011).

13. Simin Behbahani, *Dasht-e Arjan* [*Arjan's Plain*] (Tehran: Zavvar, 1983). For a translation of the whole poem, see *A Cup of Sin: Selected Poems of Simin Behbahani*, ed. and trans. Farzaneh Milani and Kaveh Safa (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1999), 75.

14. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1957).

15. In her novel, *Touba and the Meaning of the Night*, Parsipur's heroine refers specifically to this forced exile of the female birds from spiritual quest and protest that "they have never passed through the seven cities of love," or "like the birds in *The Conference of the Birds* they have not climbed to the Ghaf mountaintop in order to

see themselves in eternal mirrors." Touba va Ma'nay-e Shab (*Touba and the Meaning of the Night*, 1989, trans., 2006), 423.

16. Farid Ud Din Attar, *The Speech of the Birds*, trans. Peter Avery (Cambridge, UK: Islamic Text Society, 1998), 69.

17. Parvin E'tessami, *A Nightingale's Lament*, trans. Heshmat Moayyad and A. Margaret Madelung (Lexington, KY: Mazda, 1985), 108.

18. It is true that several assertive, independent, and resourceful women populate the pages of Classical Persian literature. However, while these heroines violate the conventions governing cultural propriety, they also preserve and reiterate the prevailing norms through ingenious narratological ploys devised by their male creators. The overwhelming majority of these women—Rabee, Manijeh, Shirin, Rudabeh, Tahmineh, Vis, Zulaikha, and others—reinscribe the accepted codes of behavior as they resist them. They break the norms but do not challenge or reject prevailing power structures. In fact, within the narrative framework, they maintain the traditional divisions of space and roles. In the long run, they accept the dictates of insalubrious segregation and do not challenge its echoing legacy and the cultural, political, and economic inequalities it causes. They transgress the status quo but do not undermine it. Whatever boundaries they trespass, whatever heresies they commit, they eventually return to their proper place and role. For an elaboration on how rules of segregation are simultaneously adhered to and subverted in Classical Persian literature, see "Enclosed Bodies, Trapped voices, Framed Images: The Poetics of Segregation," in *Words, Not Swords: The Iranian Women Writers and The Freedom of Movement*, 29–49.

19. "By hook or by crook," writes Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, "I hope that you will possess yourselves of money enough to travel and to be idle, to contemplate the future and the past of the world, to dream over books and loiter at street corners and let the line of thought dip deep into the stream."

20. Margaret Atwood, "Headscarves to Die for," *The New York Times*, August 15, 2004, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/15/books/headscarves-to-die-for.html?mtrref=www.google.com.

21. Azareen Van der Vliet Oloomi, *Call me Zebra* (Boston, MA and New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018), 48.

22. Suffragists and early women's rights advocates knew the liberating potentials of the bicycle and called it a "Freedom Machine." Susan B. Anthony claimed, "The bicycle has done more for the emancipation of women than anything else in the world." Quoted in Annie Londonderry, *Women on Wheels: The Bicycle and the Women's Movement of the 1890s*, available at http://www.annielondonderry.com/womenWheels.html.

23. For a detailed analysis of *The Blue Logos* as a modern novel, see Abbas Milani, "Modernity & Blue Logos: Rediscovering the Feminine," in *Lost Wisdom: Rethinking Modernity in Iran* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2004), 139–54.

24. Shahrnush Parsipur, *Aghl-e Abi* [*The Blue Logos*] (Santa Monica, CA: Zamaneh, 1994), 234.

25. Forough Farrokhzad's poem "Let's Believe in the Dawning of a Cold Season" (Forough Farrokhzad, *Iman Biavarim be Aghaz-e Fasl-e Sard* [*Let's Believe in the Dawning of a Cold Season*] [Tehran: Morvarid, 1974], 17).

26. Forugh Farrokhzad, "Let Us Believe in the Dawn of a Cold Season," in *Iman Biavarim be Aghaz-e Fasl-e Sard* [*Let Us Believe in the Dawn of a Cold Season*] (Tehran: Morvarid, 1974).

27. In an epilogue she wrote to *Captive*, Farrokhzad writes, "When the New Poetry first entered the literary scene, it was greeted with the same hue and cry; its music sounded unfamiliar to the ear. Many people probably still believe that an epoch of decadence started with the rise of modern poetry in our literature. Surely, their opinion cannot stop its evolution because the New Poetry is a response to our day. It is a self-evident principle that poetry, like every other spiritual and emotional need, is created by the time, place, and circumstances in society. The world in which we live today is quite different from that which gave birth to our classical literature, and the very needs of this world surely guarantee the survival and continuing progress of the New Poetry. Even though not much time has passed since it came into being, we can see that the uproar it caused has already begun to subside. Those who were just yesterday ready to ridicule and condemn it have now begun to admit its beauty and novelty. It is this very experience that gives me hope. And so with this hope and faith, and with certainty that calm will come after the storm, I strive towards my goals." Forugh Farrokhzad, *Asir* [*Captive*], trans. Farzaneh Milani (New York, NY: Rhombus Press, 2018).

28. Farrokhzad, "Clarification," Ibid., 55–58.

29. Even in her early poetry, Farrokhzad wanted to tell her tale. In her first poetry collection, *Captive*, she writes, "I am a bird/A bird with dreams of flight/My songs changed to laments on my lips/My days are buried beneath my desires/Don't seal my lips with the lock of silence/For I have secrets to reveal/I am driven by the need to reach people's ears/With the fiery echo of my songs."

30. Forugh Farrokhzad, "The Conquest of the Garden," in *Tavalodi Dighar* [*Another Birth*] (Tehran: Morvarid, 1963).

31. By her own admission, Farrokhzad wanted to recreate herself in the image of her own liking. "I am my own creator," she said in an interview. Forugh Farrokhzad, *Harfha'I ba Forugh Farrokhzad: Chahar Goft va Shonud* [*Conversations with Forugh Farrokhzad: Four Interviews*] (Tehran: Morvarid, 1976), 47.

32. Forugh Farrokhzad, "Only the Voice Remains," in *Let Us Believe in the Dawning of a Cold Season*.

33. Farrokhzad, *Conversations with Forugh*, 49.

34. The poetic personae in all five of her poetry collections is at times joyous and in flight, giddy with love and energy, alive with ecstasy and motion. Other times, she is trapped in a room, depleted, weeping, grieving, driven to madness, and suicidal.

35. "The House Is Black"

گفتم کاش مرا بال‌ها مثل کبوتر می‌بود
تا پرواز کرده راحتی می‌یافتم
می‌شتابم به سوی پناه گاهی از باد و طوفان
زیرا که در زمین مشقت و شرارت دیده‌ام

36. Farrokhzad, *Tavalodi Digar*, 65.

37. For Shahrzad's work, see Kamran Talattof, *I Won't Dance for You: A Collection of Shahrzad's Poetry* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2019).

38. To depict a stay-at-home man as childlike and effeminate is nothing new. Take Hassan Kachal in the popular folktale of that name ("Hassan the Baldy"), which has served as a cautionary tale and was adapted into a highly acclaimed musical in 1970 (directed by Ali Hatemi). Hassan Kachal is ashamed of his appearance and stays cooped up inside the house rather than playing with neighborhood boys. Hassan's behavior in no way defies the assigned gender roles except in one area: his preference of a "feminine" space to the place associated with masculinity. His grief-stricken mother tries every trick she knows to persuade her son to go out. As a last resort, she places red apples between his bedroom and the outside door. Hassan is tempted, leaves the house, and his life is changed forever. With his masculinity secured, he lives happily ever after. So does his mother.

39. The Islamic Republic in its early days tried its best to "purify" public space by clearing out women. Thousands of women were coerced into early retirement; many lost their jobs; many were forced into exile. Women were segregated in mosques, schools, universities, beaches, and buses. They disappeared as entertainers and singers. They faded away from the silver screen. Women's place, it was argued, was not public but private, not out in the streets but inside the house.

40. Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West*, trans. R. Campbell, ed. Hamid Algar (Berkeley, CA: Mizan, 1984), 70.

Chapter 9

Simin Daneshvar

The Forging of an Intellectual

Nasrin Rahimieh

This analysis will center on Simin Daneshvar's work as it relates to her status as an Iranian intellectual. Focusing particularly on the earlier part of her career when she first made her mark on the Iranian literary scene as the author of *Savushun*, a novel published in 1969 that quickly became a best seller. I will analyze Daneshvar's representation of the challenges of maintaining intellectual autonomy in a male-dominated social and cultural milieu. To this backdrop, we must add the looming presence of Daneshvar's husband, Jalal Al-e Ahmad, and the tendency among cultural historians to view him as the more consequential of the two, or as Farzaneh Milani has argued, relegating her "to the status of the wife of the famous writer Jalal Al-e Ahmad."[1] To regard Daneshvar as Al-e Ahmad's wife achieves little but to reaffirm the cultural discourses that continue to wall off women's work from their male counterparts'. What I propose to do is to situate Daneshvar's writing within those very discourses to illustrate how conformity and resistance are tightly interwoven in her fiction as well as the letters she wrote to her husband during her absences from Iran. I have narrowed the focus of my analysis to the 1950s and 1960s both in Daneshvar's fiction and correspondence to better highlight the extent to which she was caught up in the contradictory impulse of challenging cultural practices that subordinate women *and* succumbing to the desire to perform the role of the exemplary wife and, yet, navigated a path to asserting her intellectual independence. As a first step toward this analysis, I would like to briefly place my understanding of the concept of the intellectual.

In his collected essays *Representations of the Intellectual*, Edward Said considers what he believes to be the two most famous twentieth-century descriptions of intellectuals, Antonio Gramsci's and Julian Benda's. He cites Gramsci's oft-cited statement in his *Prison Notebooks* that "all men

are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals,"[2] and he juxtaposes it with Benda's view of "intellectuals as a tiny band of super-gifted and morally endowed philosopher kings who constitute the conscience of mankind."[3] That "man" should be the focus of both conceptualizations of the intellectual is a reminder of a history that did not deign to imagine women as intellectuals. Said breaks with this history and includes women such as Woolf and de Beauvoir in his essays. In addition to breaking with this gender divide, Said assumes a global history of intellectuals that does not privilege the West: "There are thousands of different histories and sociologies of intellectuals available, as well as endless accounts of intellectuals and nationalism, and power, and tradition, and revolution and on and on. Each region of the world has produced its intellectuals and each of those formations is debated and argued over with fiery passion."[4] Throughout his reflections on intellectuals, Said argues for a more expansive and inclusive definition of the intellectual as "someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say, and what they do."[5] While I draw on this definition for my analysis, I do not adopt it as a rigid category to suggest, for instance, that Simin Daneshvar maintained consistent and static views about the conventional and the established, although she did not follow her husband's lead in embracing various political tendencies during his life. My aim is to illustrate how Daneshvar grappled with social and cultural norms in her effort to articulate her intellectual autonomy. I contend that Daneshvar's stance was informed by the gendered Iranian conceptualizations of the intellectual that viewed women as auxiliary to the serious business of being an intellectual and, equally importantly, her recognition of contradictions and paradoxes they expose. Allow me to illustrate this point by turning to the novel, *Savushun*.

The protagonist, Zari, is depicted as an educated and headstrong woman who is devoted to her husband and children. The novel is set during World War II in Shiraz when the British forces occupied the southern part of Iran. The narrative revolves around British domination of the local population and economy and the complicity of Iranians who stand to benefit from their collusion. Zari and her husband, Yusof, are far from interested in serving the interests of the British. While they do not themselves suffer from the food shortages caused by the war and the occupation, they are keenly aware of the hardships other less well-to-do fellow citizens have to endure. This is amply signaled in the opening scene of the novel, which describes the lavish wedding of the governor's daughter. Taking in the extravagant displays, Zari thinks: "What a mound of dough How much flour they must have used! And, besides, as Yusof said, 'At a time like this!' At a time when a single

loaf could make a whole family's evening meal."[6] While Zari's observations ventriloquize Yusof's views, they also recall Zari's encounters with the British as a schoolgirl and her defiance of the British headmistress on the occasion of a British delegation's visit to the school. The pupils were ordered to wear freshly pressed white blouses as part of their uniform, but Zari who was mourning the loss of her father did not comply and wore a black blouse. The headmistress is particularly irked as she had chosen Zari, because of her mastery of English, to welcome the delegation. Taking the matter into her own hands, the headmistress forcefully removes Zari's black blouse, tears off a sleeve, and dresses Zari in a white blouse. After the welcome, along with the other schoolgirls, Zari was to recite Paul the Apostle's letter to the Corinthians, but when it is Zari's turn "involuntarily Milton's poem about Samson's blindness sprang to her mouth."[7] Having already humiliated Zari in front of her classmates, after this incident the headmistress punishes Zari by squeezing her arm and insulting her in Persian, revealing a knowledge of Persian she had carefully concealed from the Iranian pupils. The recollection of these events foregrounds Zari's deeply seated suspicion of the British and her efforts in keeping the forces of occupation away from home without relying on her husband.

The division of labor between Zari and Yusof, with Zari in charge of the domestic responsibilities and Yusof attending to the broader social and national sphere, is particularly well illustrated in a chapter of the novel when Yusof has gathered with a group of similarly minded men to chart out an act of armed resistance. Zari enters the room where her husband and his friends are meeting clandestinely:

> She entered the room and put the hookah in front of her husband. With the doors closed, the air in the parlor was warm, and sweat was beading on everyone's foreheads and noses. Majid had taken off his jacket and opened his shirt collar. Zari went to the cupboard, brought out straw fans, and put them on the table. Then she took small plates, knives, and forks out of the cupboard and set the table so quietly that she made no noise at all.
>
> It was strange. Zari had just cut open two watermelons and both turned out yellow and unripe. She took this as a bad omen. The third water-melon was not bad. She was about to cut the edges in zigzags, but she thought, who is going to look at the zigzag shapes of the melon now?
>
> She put the large platter of watermelon next to a map of Iran that they spread on the table. They were all bending over and looking at it.[8]

As Zari attempts to provide sustenance for the men engaged in planning, her husband reminds her of her intrusiveness: "Turning to Zari, he said, 'Khanom, don't make so much noise.' 'All right,' she replied realizing that

she was being asked to leave."[9] Zari does return but only to serve the men who acknowledge her presence by raising a toast to her, but quickly cease to notice her: "They were talking and joking, oblivious to Zari's presence. She was there to put the salt shaker in front of them, fill their glasses, or put the chicken gizzards on Majid's plate, because he liked them."[10] Even when outside forces intrude into Zari's sphere and she is called upon to extend hospitality to the guests, she remains a hostess and a caretaker hovering at the edges of the discussion about the nation's future. As the men pore over the map of Iran, Zari considers cutting the watermelon into decorative pieces. The juxtaposition of the metaphoric carving out of the nation by foreign and native forces and Zari's limited reach to carving up of food and nourishment for the men defending the nation delineates women's role in serving the nation.

When her husband is killed, Zari takes a stand against the hostile forces beyond her home. Facing authorities preventing a public display of mourning, Zari says defiantly: "They killed my husband unjustly. The least that can be done is to mourn him. Mourning is not forbidden, you know. During his life, we were always afraid and tried to make him afraid. Now that he is dead, what are we afraid of anymore? I, for one, have gone beyond all that."[11] Zari's defiance in this scene is indeed heroic and a source of inspiration to those cawed by the police force. She is no less heroic at the end of the novel. In fact, what was and continues to be resonant in the novel is the synergy between Yusof and Zari in their political views and their devotion to their family, home, and homeland. The gendered division of labor distills the ideal modern family in which the wife is educated, free-spirited, and yet devoted to her husband and children and her contribution to the nation, whose autonomy is at risk and needs the family unit's collective sacrifice. And yet, as Farzaneh Milani has masterfully illustrated:

> [Zari's] relatively happy marriage has not only denied her the intellectual stimulation and independence of her school days, it has also forced her to curb her thoughts and feelings. Like many others, Zari finds herself surreptitiously sweeping her real emotions under the carpet. This ideal wife and mother cannot speak her mind even within the confines of her own home. Sporadic seclusion becomes an oasis in which she can take refuge from the frenzied and heavy load of her duties and delegations and accompanying frustration and discontents— sanctuary, or rather a safety valve, for her boiling, yet silenced, protestations.[12]

Milani's nuanced characterization is particularly significant in that it counters other critics such as Hasan Mirabedini who writes: "In [female-authored] stories women's issues have most often been viewed from a male perspective and women do not exhibit an independent character. Even Zari, *Savushun*'s heroine, has no will of her own and relies on Yusof to think and decide for

her. She and other women in the novel, with the exception of Miss Fotuhi who becomes mad, not only do not rise up against customary beliefs, they devote all their efforts to main the status quo. The extent of Zari's emotional transformation is to follow Yusof's path."[13] This wholesale rejection of female agency and intellectual independence does not take into account the male-dominated conditions and the accompanying ridicule that cause Miss Fotuhi's nervous breakdown.

We encounter Miss Fotuhi in an insane asylum Zari visits once a week as part of her almsgiving. We learn of her remarkable trajectory: "Miss Fotuhi was not at all one to have been ignored. She was the first woman in the city to wear a blue, bell-shaped *chador* and abandon the black shroud, as she called it. The unveiling law had still not been officially announced when she even let go of the blue bell-shaped *chador*. In her better days, she would complain to Zari, 'Alas, no one appreciated me. Men were not ready to accept a woman like me.'"[14] While the narrative does not make a direct causal relationship between her activism and her breakdown, it underscores her remarkable pioneering work: "Of course, the daughter of Fotuhi, when she still had her faculties, was pretty good with her pen and wrote articles in the local newspapers about women's rights and against the injustices of men. She also managed a magazine in which she incited young women to action."[15] Even in her diminished mental capacity, Miss Fotuhi clings to what remains of her former self. Unlike other residents of the asylum, she asks for reading and writing material:

> The Iran newspaper, which was published in the large format and was mailed to Yusof from Tehran twice a week, lined notebooks, and pencils were the things Miss Fotuhi wanted. She would say, "I will permit you to help the world of science and literature." Miss Fotuhi loved the serial stories in Iran. She said that she was writing her autobiography in the notebooks. Once one notebook was filled, she would ceremoniously entrust it to Zari and say, "Rent me a safety deposit box in the national bank. Get the money for it from my brother and store my work for safekeeping. There might be a fire here and all my work will be destroyed." The first time Zari believed it and read Miss Fotuhi's notebook. It consisted of some incoherent ideas written in jumbled handwriting.[16]

The novel does not pinpoint what causes Miss Fotuhi's loss of her faculties, but her brother, a progressive political activist in his own right and like Yusof a committed intellectual, is quick to diagnose his sister's condition: "We must build the society in such a way that nobody's sister goes mad. My sister's madness is a symptom of the malady of our society. When we organize the masses and come to power, we will administer justice."[17] Brought into sharp relief is the disjuncture between Miss Fotuhi's bother's lofty ambitions that

await a revolution to come and his abandonment of a sister whose condition he accepts as beyond remedy. Zari's accusation that Mr. Fotuhi is not even concerned about his sister is the kind of challenge that goes unanswered, leaving intact the persistent gender divide that produces equally gendered outcomes to acts of resistance: men like Yusof become celebrated heroes and martyrs while women like Miss Fotuhi become mad women locked away and forgotten in insane asylums.

I do not suggest that Daneshvar's novel affirms Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's proposition in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, which suggests women's self-definition is forever caught up in and subordinated to patriarchal figurations of women as either angel or monster. Trapped between this polarized image of themselves, Gilbert and Gubar argue that nineteenth-century women writers contend with a vexed self-image that reveals both their conformity with the patriarchal images of women and their rebellion against them. The identification with the "witch-monster-madwoman" Gilbert and Gubar see as "so crucial an avatar of the writer's own self"[18] is absent from Daneshvar's novel. In fact, in the final chapters of the narrative, as Zari hovers in a semiconscious state she worries might be leading to madness, she emerges defiant and far from the madwoman in the attic or the asylum.

This defiant spirit is amply evident in Daneshvar's letters to her husband over the course of their marriage. Notwithstanding an abiding affection and commitment that runs through her letters, Daneshvar sets clear limits to her devotion. A case in point is the series of letters she wrote to Al-e Ahmad in January 1962 when he was traveling in Europe and she was in Iran. In a letter dated January 13, 1962, while writing about a gathering also attended by Ebrahim Golestan and his wife Fakhri, Daneshvar opines about his having failed to greet her despite their families' long history together, including her father having been their family doctor. She notes that Fakhri at least acknowledges her presence with a nod. Golestan, on the other hand, ignores her entirely. She asks herself why she should be so irked by Golestan's behavior:

> Maybe I am taking issue with him because of my feminism and the profound empathy I feel for Fakhri. To ensure that you know your wife well and unambiguously, I brandish my feminism before you. And in due course you will come to know its properties. Yes, my dear, I am a supporter of women's rights and the advancement of those rights and the improvement of women's rights regardless of where they live. But my feminism is different from the Western variety that had begun to burgeon in the US when I was there.[19]

While brandishing her feminism, a word she transliterates rather than translates into Persian, Daneshvar is keen to distinguish her own concept of feminism and her autonomous formulation. This is particularly important in light

of the currency of Al-e Ahmad's critique of Iran's near total dependency on the United States at the level of ideas, institutions, and sociocultural conduct. His treatise, *Gharbzadegi*,[20] and its circulation and sales in Iran, albeit in terms of logistics, are mentioned in the exchanges between the husband and wife. Daneshvar's insistence on distinguishing her feminism from that of her American counterparts could indeed be read as an allusion to her husband's apparent inability to live up to the very ideas he prescribes for his nation.

Daneshvar's oblique references having gone unnoticed by Al-e Ahmad, she writes forthrightly in a subsequent letter dated January 26, 1962, about having received three letters in Persian and English that informed her about Al-e Ahmad having a relationship with a woman named Hilda who had been acting as the group's local guide. As in her previous letter, Daneshvar zeroes in on Golestan and his extramarital affair with Forugh Farrokhzad. Interestingly, Daneshvar does not mention Farrokhzad by name, focusing instead on Golestan's conduct vis-à-vis his wife, Fakhri. Picking up on Al-e Ahmad's reference to having dreamed of Golestan, she writes: "Do you know why you dreamt of Golestan again? Because you are doing what he has done. But know that I am neither Fakhri, nor your mother, nor your sisters, nor Tayyebeh Khanom. I will leave you. I might be an insignificant individual, but I am not abject and will not submit to humiliation."[21] She also tells her husband that she consulted with their friend and political activist Khalil Maleki who points out the irony of that fact that "Jalal has written *Gharbzadegi*, but in the West he has taken refuge with a Western woman."[22] Perhaps Al-e Ahmad did not see his own conduct mirrored in the portrait of the West-stricken man he paints in his trenchant critique of Iran's rush to embrace Western norms and modes of dress and conduct:

> The west-stricken man is the most faithful consumer of western manufactured products. If he were to wake up one day and find that the hair stylist, the tailor, and the shoeshine parlor, and the car repair shop had closed, out of frustration he would give up the ghost lying down with his legs stretched in the direction he thinks is that of Mecca even though he does not know which way Mecca is. His creature comforts which I have described are more vital to the west-stricken man than schools, mosques, hospitals, and factories.[23]

Al-e Ahamd's critique of West-stricken men is extensive, as is his denunciation of Iranian women who have become slaves to everything Western. The noticeable gap between what Al-e Ahmad preaches and how he behaves is in part explained in his autobiographical essay, *A Stone on a Grave*, which he did not wish to be published until after his death presumably because of its highly personal nature.

A Stone on a Grave is devoted to Daneshvar and Al-e Ahmad's childless-
ness and the great effort they made in order to have a child. By the time he
wrote it, Al-e Ahmad knew that his low sperm count was the reason they
remained childless. Nonetheless, he reports being told by a Swiss doctor
he consults that as a Muslim he is entitled to take another, younger wife to
increase his chances of fathering a child: "If you have a one percent chance
now, it would become fifty percent if you change your wife."[24] Al-e Ahmad
does not act immediately on this advice. However, when he is in Hanover
during a cold spell, he writes: "The beds were cold and I disliked water
bottles. I officially picked up a girl in the middle of the street."[25] When he
reaches Amsterdam, he no longer needs to cite the cold for striking up a rela-
tionship with another woman:

> In Amsterdam the issue became serious, I mean the Second Person Singular got
> us into trouble. A woman, recently divorced and on the lookout, and the same
> age as me. A devoted servant in the complete sense of the word. A bigger naïve
> fool than I. Seven days was not enough for her. She followed me to London. She
> stayed there for ten days too. Returning, she also took me back to Amsterdam.
> Two more days. *What if I become pregnant? Fine. I know. I'll marry you.* And
> this type of talk. I intentionally acted on the doctor's advice, until the journey
> ended and I returned. Letters, and more letters, and my eyes constantly on the
> lookout for news. News of a reciter of "There is no God but Allah" that I had
> planted in the land of infidels. One month passed, two months, three months,
> but there was no news to be had. Letters would come but the news would not.
> Frustration and disappointment, and worst of all, my wife had not only caught a
> scent of it but she knew everything.[26]

The fascinating disavowal of agency in this passage is in sharp contrast with
Al-e Ahmad's other works. He is represented as ensnared by the woman to
whom he appears to submit readily. The only agency he assumes is to invoke
the advice and the authority of the doctor he saw in Zurich. He also has no
qualms about the effect his actions might have on his wife and suggests that
he would have concealed the matter from Daneshvar, had she not otherwise
learned of the affair.

In contrast to her husband, Daneshvar is forthright and asks directly in her
letters if he is having an affair and why he did not have the courage to speak
about it to her. She considers the possibility that he believed that another
woman could give him a child or that he merely succumbed to a passing
fancy. She also suggests that if the latter were the case, she could consider
forgiving him. And yet she also lays out his choices. She recommends that,
in the event the rumor is true and he is considering taking a second wife, they
begin the process of separation and divorce. With a remarkable pragmatism,

she tells him to go to the nearest Iranian embassy and give his brother, Shams, power of attorney to deal with the necessary steps for their parting, albeit amicably. She concludes her letter by reminding Al-e Ahmad that they are neither the first nor the last couple to have their marriage end in divorce.

Daneshvar's calm and resolute manner and her ability to act according to her own principles and sense of integrity is indeed reminiscent of Said's definition of an intellectual as "someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say, and what they do."[27] That is not to say that Daneshvar does not struggle with the cultural norms and social expectations that she does not otherwise respect and uphold, but in a moment of intense personal crisis, she demonstrates her willingness to reject the conventional path.

NOTES

1. Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Plagued by the West* (*Gharbzadegi*), trans. Paul Sprachman (New York, NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1982), Modern Persian Literature Series, 4, 190.

2. Antonio Gramsci, "The Intellectuals," in *An Anthology of Western Marxism: From Lukács and Gramsci to Socialist Feminism*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), 115.

3. Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1994), 4–5.

4. Ibid., 10.

5. Ibid., 23.

6. Simin Daneshvar, *Savushun: A Novel about Modern Iran*, trans. M. R. Ghannoonparvar (Washington, DC: Mage, 1990), 20.

7. Ibid., 203.

8. Ibid., 26.

9. Ibid., 250.

10. Ibid., 251.

11. Ibid., 363.

12. Farzaneh Milani, *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 1991), 193.

13. Hasan Mirabedini, *Sad sāl dāstān nevīsī dar īrān*, Vols. 3 & 4 (Tehran: Cheshmeh, 1998), 1109.

14. Daneshvar, *Savushun*, 146.

15. Ibid., 145–46.

16. Ibid., 144–45.

17. Ibid., 277.

18. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1979), 79.

19. Masud Ja'fari, ed., *Nāmihhā-yi Sīmīn Daneshvar wa Jalāl Āl-I Ahmad*, Vol. III (Tehran: Nīlūfar, 2004), 334. The translation from the Persian original is my own.

20. The term coined by the Iranian philosopher Ahmad Fardid has been translated into English as Plagued by the West, Occidentosis, and Westitis.

21. Ja'fari, *Nāmihhā-yi Sīmīn Daneshvar*, 350.

22. Ibid., 347.

23. Al-e Ahmad, *Plagued*, 71.

24. Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *A Stone on a Grave*, trans. M. R. Ghanoonparvar (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2008), 74.

25. Al-e Ahmad, *A Stone*, 75. The original text reads: "man az kisih-i ab-i garm badam miamad," which should be translated as hot water bottle. *Sangi bar guri* (Bethesda, MD: Iran Books, 1991), 76.

26. Al-e Ahmad, *A Stone*, 76, italics in the original.

27. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 23.

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Part IV

IRANIAN LEFT: FROM MARXIST INTELLECTUALISM TO REVOLUTIONARY ROMANTICISM

Chapter 10

The Perplexity of the Iranian Marxist Intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s

Touraj Atabaki

Iran saw rapid, albeit uneven, economic and social development during the last fifteen years of Mohamad Reza Shah Pahlavi rule (1962–1977), juxtaposed with a move from milder forms of autocratic governance to a more repressive kind of political dictatorship. If, at the beginning of this period, the degree of political exclusion for both right and left of the political opposition differed, by the end of the period almost all sides of the political spectrum were subject to insistent repression. The Iranian Marxists, in all its diversity, adopted different positions in the face of political dictatorship, from passive propaganda to armed encounter. But for both the armed and nonarmed factions of the Marxists, the Iranian working class was the object of a sustained campaign. The self-appointed Marxist political vanguard endeavored to subject the labor to "enlightenment" and mobilization so that it might assume its historical agency on the road to revolutionary transformation.

This paper intends to reexamine the perceptions of the Iranian radical armed Marxist intellectuals, the founders of the Organisation of Iran People's Feda'i Guerrillas' of the Iranian working class and labor movement within the context of the social and economic changes during the two decades prior to the revolution of 1978–1979.[1]

INTRODUCTION

The coup of August 19, 1953, was a turning point for the organized labor movement, which for more than a decade had cast a long shadow over Iran's political and social life. The years leading up to the coup had seen two different approaches toward organizing the labor movement. The first approach was taken by some of the early leaders of the labor movement, whose engagement

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with the labor activism and movement dated back to the time of Reza Khan, later Reza Shah rule (1921–1941). It included, for example, the organization of the memorable oil workers' strikes of May 1929 and the strike of the workers of the Vatan Textile Factory in Isfahan in May 1931. Among the early leaders of the labor movement were Yousef Eftekhari, Ali Omid, and Rahim Hamdad. Benefiting from their experience in Iran's Communist Party and the labor movement of the interwar period, once they were discharged from prison, following the Allied occupation of Iran in 1941, they sought to organize a labor movement that was independent from any political organization or party. Thus, they chose not to join the Tudeh Party, founded in 1941, or its affiliated union. *The Iranian Trade Union* (Ettehadiyeh-ye Kargaran-e Iran) was born out of this endeavor. The second approach was that of the newly established Tudeh Party of Iran's union *The Central Council of Trade Unions of Iran* (CCTUI, Showra-ye Markazi-ye Etteahdiyeh-ha-ye Kargaran-e Iran). The leader of this council, which benefited from widespread Soviet-backed propaganda, came from among the Tudeh Party leadership, and its members were loyal to the Tudeh Party.[2] The Iranian Trade Union after several years of unsuccessful attempts at organizing workers with no political allegiance, finally could not continue competing with its rival union the CCTUI and left the scene.[3] The destiny of CCTUI was not glistening either. Following the initial exceptionally expansion of the Tudeh Party and its affiliated CCTUI, by the end of the 1940s, the labor movements were eventually affected by the political instability of the Tudeh Party. This led to the party's previously strong presence in the Iranian labor movement being weakened and at the end what was left from the CCTUI was nothing but a reference in the Iranian labor history.

POST-COUP CRISIS AND THE FORMATION
OF THE DEVELOPMENT STATE

One of the immediate outcome of the August 1953 coup was the wide-ranging repression overriding every corner of the political sphere in Iran. The coercive suppression of the Tudeh Party and its affiliated union, the CCTUI, resulted in the party and union activists either being imprisoned or forced to emigrate. The years 1953–1960 were a barren period; the labor movement hit rock bottom. Compare to the wide national-scale labor movement in the 1940s, in the post-1953 coup we see fragmented provincial labor activities in some major labor-intensive complexes and industries. The strikes of the oil workers in 1957 and 1959, the brick workers of southern Tehran of 1957 and 1959, and the Vatan Textile Factory of Isfahan in 1959 were among these workers' protests. During these years, there was a yellow

syndicate organized by the government under the name of the *Congress of Iranian Workers Unions*, representing Iranian government at the international podiums, including the annual conferences of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).[4] However, the Congress of Iranian Workers Unions did not even feel obligated to publish not even to convey the ILO endorsements for the improvement of workers' living and working conditions to the Iranian authorities.

The economic recession of 1960–1963 revitalized these disparate labor movements, which had been poorly organized. Initially, some political organizations, which were marginalized, following the 1953 Coup and the introduction of martial law, now were able to reorganize themselves once more and practice their activities publicly. The formation of the second *National Front* (Jebheh-ye Melli) and the commencement of strikes and political and union protests are the hallmarks of these years, which led to a deep political crisis. In May 1961, teachers organized a nationwide strike demanding a pay rise. During the protests of Tehran, which took place in front of the parliament building, a teacher named Khan'ali was shot dead by a policeman. Nine months later, on January 21, 1962, the students of the University of Tehran, with the support of the National Front, went on strike. This protest was also coercively dispersed.

Surprisingly, unlike the 1940s, there was now no cooperation between the labor movement and other guild or political movements. Each of these movements followed their own path, independent from and indifferent to other or others. The political movement's aim was to protest against the government that had seized power in the aftermath of the coup and against the repression that had ensued. Their goal was to open the window of opportunity just wide enough to let in a ray of light, allowing supporters of the anti-government movement to breathe easier and carry out their activities freely. The labor movement, in contrast, was indifferent to the turbulent political situation and remained focused on issues connected to ensuring the workers had money to put bread on the table. According to the Chargé d'affaires for Labour at the United State Embassy in Tehran, at the request of the Ministry of Labour, in 1960 an assessment of the average cost of living for a worker's family was carried out. The result was so shocking that the government refused to make it public. Though the average daily wage was 50 rials, a family of four needed 178 rials just to subsist.[5]

The result of the economic recession was an increase in labor protests and strikes.[6] The sociopolitical consequences of the economic recession worried the statesmen of the Pahlavi government and, although the United States had itself played a part in the deepening of the economic recession, it now joined some Iranian government statesmen and similarly expressed its concerns. Among many consequences of this concern was a consecutive change in the

ruling cabinets. In January 1961, when the Kennedy Democrat administration retained power in the White House, the United States displayed its anxiety and fear about the development of a political crisis in Iran.

The post-World War II, and explicitly 1960s, was the pinnacle of the "anti-imperialist" movement embedded in the ever-increasing tensions of the Cold War. The world coming out of World War II, along other criteria, was characterized as the world of new political realignment, economic and social reconstruction, chiefly through the agency of developmental states.[7] The United Nation called the postwar period and explicitly the 1960s as the decade of global and massive economic and political reform. In a language turn, the underdeveloped countries became members of the developing world and poised to leap over decades of economic stagnation and poverty. The authoritarian reform was chiefly confined within the boundaries of economic development aiming to a swift transition from the precapitalist relations to a more capitalist economy with certain degree of practicing Fordism.[8]

In Iran, following eight dark years of severe political repression, in May 1961, a rally was organized by the National Front, in Jalaliyeh, north of Tehran, calling for an end to political exclusion and repression. Three months later, in August 1961, the Shah held his own rally in Doushan-Tapeh, east of Tehran, where he announced the introduction of a series of widespread economic reforms that he intended to implement soon.[9] A year and a half later, on January 26, 1963, a referendum was held on the initial Shah's program of reforms—a series of far-reaching socioeconomic plans, later be known as the *White Revolution*.

At the heart of the White Revolution was the land reform. It was hoped that this reform would upset the existing precapitalist relations in rural areas and thus rapid capitalist economic growth would follow. Furthermore, the preindustrial stages of societal development could be skipped so that a society that was largely dependent on agricultural economy would develop into a capitalist society capable of joining the world economy. Industrialization of the economy was a fundamental pillar for this process. The establishment of the *Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries* (OPEC) in 1960 paved the way for the growing prosperity of oil-producing countries through increased oil revenues.

On the share of oil on the economic growth and development and the objectives that brought OPEC into its existence, Fuad Rouhani, the first general secretary of OPEC, referred to the preamble of the Resolutions of the First OPEC Conference by saying:

> The desperate need for accelerated economic development amongst the so-called underdeveloped countries of the world is self-evident. Mankind has at its disposal today technical knowledge sufficient to ensure for all of us the material

comfort and security which we need. We must put this knowledge to work, and employ all our resources, both human and material, in order to combat the evils of hunger, sickness and lack of adequate shelter which still plague the majority of countries throughout the world. As a nation, we have the will power to do so. What we need now is to create a larger body of people familiar with already known techniques in agriculture, industry and commerce and to make the enormous investment required in each sector. The formation of these professional bodies and the investment of the huge sums required, will tax our financial resources to the utmost.

. . . In the face of these difficulties, the responsibility for channelling the resources of a nation towards economic development must lie with the government. Nowhere is this more true than in the great oil exporting nations, most of whom are members of OPEC, and earn almost all of their foreign exchange from payments by the oil companies exports of the nation's production of crude oil and refined petroleum products.[10]

The Third Development Plan (1962–1967) provided the roadmap of this process. To register the land reform on his own record, the Shah, however, insisted that the outcome of his reforms should be detached from the Third Development Plan. The Third Development Plan, during its implementation, managed to secure national GDP growth of 8.8 percent. Within this, the average annual growth share of industrial and mining sectors was 7.7 percent.[11] In this period, migration of the workforce from rural to urban areas resulted in a decrease of the workforce in the agriculture sector and an increase in the labor force in urban industry. Hundreds of thousands of villagers surged toward the cities. Between the years 1956 and 1966, of the total 950,000 newly created jobs, 623,000 were in the industrial and mining sectors. People employed in these sectors were predominantly from the excess labor force from rural areas. Between 1962 and 1968, from the total active labor force of the country (6.6 million in 1962 and 7.8 million in 1968), the share of the agricultural sector shrank by 6.1 percent. In contrast, the number of people employed in industrial sectors grew by 4.2 percent to more than 2 million people.[12]

However, alongside the economic growth that occurred together with notable economic and social change, there was no trace of political development. The exclusive and coercive political practices were prevailing as before. While in the social sphere, change in the urban and rural relationship becoming more conspicuous, the political space was still suffering from the post-1953 coup repression. A strong female presence in all professions including an increase in the number of female workers, widespread literacy programs, increased higher education opportunities, improved healthcare and communication networks, among others, were the direct outcome of the practice of

such a developmental state. The population mobility, which was the outcome of these reforms, led to increased rights of citizens whom the Shah, adopting an obscure terminology, referred to as *free-liberated men* and *free-liberated women*. Enforced top-down reforms together with increased powers of social forces from below resulted in demands from citizens for their rights. The political activists of this period could not ignore these developments.

With the commencement of the governmental reforms, there was great confusion among the various political parties and organizations that opposed the government. They were unsure of how to react to these governmental reforms—whether to support the reforms, oppose them, or a combination of both. The protest slogans of the students from the University of Tehran at that time, "yes to reforms, no to dictatorship," were soon adopted by many political organizations, including the National Front. The reaction of the Tudeh Party to the governmental reforms was influenced by the diplomatic relationship between the Soviet Union and Iran; it changed from rejection at the beginning of 1962 to welcoming it at the end of the same year.[13]

THE OUTCOMES OF THE GOVERNMENTAL REFORMS AND THE PERPLEXITY OF THE NEW MARXISTS INTELLECTUALS

In the autumn of 1967, when the Third Development Plan had ended, Bijan Jazani (1938–1975), a leading Marxist intellectual and activist, and his comrades published a study of Iranian society and the living standards of the different stratums of workers and peasants. This study was later becoming known as the *Jazani-Zarifi Group Thesis* or *The Dilemmas of the Anti-Imperialist and Freedom Movements of the Iranian Proletariat and the Main Responsibilities of the Iranian Communists*. The main argument of this thesis was that:

> Following the coup of 19 August [1953], militarisation and the rule of a police state over socio-political milieus has become the regime's main underlying policy. This policy even at the peak of the regime's reform manoeuvres remained constantly in force. . . . The reform manoeuvres which the regime began since 1962 were not comparable to any previous reforms in terms of their form or content. When we use the word manoeuvre for the regime's reforms it does not mean that steps were not taken towards reforms. . . . Every manoeuvre leads to its own impact, depending on its depth and range and this impact in turn leads to change. A closer observation of the regime's current reform manoeuvres is important since some erroneously believe that the nadir of the political movement and silence of the people is due to these manoeuvres and this has hindered

any progress the [political] movement might have made. However, in our opinion, although we do not refute some of the impacts of these manoeuvres, the main reason for the silence of Iranian society is indeed the unprecedented suppression and dictatorship which silences any opposition with bullets.[14]

Bijan Jazani, in the early years of the 1970s (probably 1974), in a treaty titled *The Conclusion of the Last Thirty Years of Struggles in Iran* (Jam'bandi-ye Mobarezat-e Si-Saleh-ye Akhir dar Iran), discusses in more detail the effects of economic reforms of the 1960s on the class structure in Iran, particularly the working class at the end of this decade. Later, part of this treaty was published under the title of *Analysis of the Position of the Revolutionary Forces in Iran*:

> The working-class of today Iran has witnessed dramatic economic growth over the past two decades. The working-class of Iran can be divided into various stratums or subdivisions. These subdivisions specify the working-class as follows: unskilled workers, workshop workers and industrial workers are the three main categories. Agricultural workers are a new sector, whose numbers are growing . . . The rapid growth of recent years has divided the working-class into two groups; new and old. Although both old and young workers, work in the same workshops or industrial complexes, in theory there are clear boundaries which divide them from each other. Old workers are distinguishable in terms of age, expertise, income, and family responsibilities. These older workers have experienced one or two periods of the economic and political movements. Despite, relative conservativism and passivism, being less active because of their age and profession, they are relatively enjoying more class consciousness. However, their distance from the younger workers' group together with their frustration caused by the unhealed wounds of the fruitless efforts of the previous two decades, pessimism and individual ambitions have all been huge obstacles to this consciousness being passed on to the younger generations. This binary opposition is largely apparent in the most important sector of the working-class, the industrial workers. These workers have often become professionals. While they receive better pay, they humiliate and look down on the new workers who lack any knowledge and culture of the working-class. The young generations of industrial and workshop workers have a higher level of education than those of the previous generation. Some of these workers come from urban and petty-bourgeoisie backgrounds. In contrast, the older generation often have rural roots. Although the young labourers lack the work culture, they have clear-cut socio-political demands which derive from their urban origins and the preferences have recently developed in the rural areas. The number of industrial workers of state and private sectors in manufacturing and mining (such as oil, electricity, energy, mines etc.) is nearly 350,000. While the workers of

traditional workshops (such as masons, tailors/dressmakers, blacksmiths, print
house workers, urban carpet weavers, workshop spinners and weavers) and
non-industrial workers (such as railroad workers, transport workers, bus and
urban drivers, hotel, hostel and restaurant workers, public bathhouse workers,
barbers and hairdressers etc.) are more numerous than the industrial workers
and total at least 600,000 people. The unskilled construction and road workers
fluctuate in different seasons but on average, the number employed in this sector
is estimated at 400,000 to 500,000. In this respect, the working-class by eco-
nomic definition makes up approximately 18 percent of the total number of the
country's employees. If we add agricultural and seasonal daily paid employees
to this number and add it into the countless number of unemployed, this would
make up 25 percent of the total employed and those actively seeking employ-
ment. This means that the Iranian working-class never reached such a number.
This labour force produces nearly 50 percent of the total national production.[15]

Masoud Ahmadzadeh (1945–1972), in his book *Armed Struggle, Both
Strategy and Tactic* (Mobarezeh-e Mosalahaneh, ham Esteratezhi, ham
Taktik), which carries the date of publication, summer 1970, discusses the
outcome of the land reform and addresses the different stages of its imple-
mentation, an indication that his group known as *Pouyan-Ahmadzadeh-
Meftahi Group*, before turning to "armed struggle," had studied the economic
changes of the 1960s. In the narrative of Ahmadzadeh:

> The goal of the so-called White Revolution was to extend the influence of impe-
> rialism in urban and rural areas. . . . [But] what was the reason that the regime
> consciously chose to eradicate feudalism which constituted its main social base?
> Does this mean that the end of feudalism was only a pretence? Or could it be
> said that feudalism was not the main social base of the regime? If feudalism
> was not indeed the main social base of the regime, then which economic power
> was represented by the government and which political will was persuaded by
> the government? The truth to be told, the answer is that this power is world
> imperialism . . . Only a central power, supported and controlled by imperialism
> could safeguard the economic interests of the feudalists. This central power had
> to initiate the spread of imperialistic control, while at the same time suppressing
> the anti-imperialist movement of the people. In fact, feudalism changed into
> dependent feudalism and wherever this dependency was rejected, the central
> power [government] immediately acted. With the expansion of the authority of
> the central power and the influence of imperialism, feudalism was increasingly
> pushed out of the power bases. When the feudal economy conflicted with the
> interests of imperialism, without facing a serious problem or needing the help
> of people for the suppression of feudalism, the regime buried feudalism which
> was already in demise.[16]

In Ahmadzadeh's view, the burial of feudalism was accompanied by the expansion of political strangulation:

> Here there are no spontaneous mass movements as there should have been expected, and if there are, they are limited and scattered in terms of time period, place and scope. Here, there are no noticeable working-classes or labour organisations. In general, the workers are not well-informed about any opposition movements. And if some elements of consciousness develop amongst some workers enabling them to form small circles of their own, in practice these circles, are not capable of propagating and promoting mass labour activities. The lack of widespread spontaneous movements which is inextricably linked with the harsh police state has practically distanced workers from any political views or actions. As a result of this situation, the workers lack any experience of fighting, class organisation or even trade-union consciousness. Consequently, workers' groups who consider organising a political opposition movement are few and there is practically no significant relationship between the intellectual circles and these workers. Thus, in this respect the workers are not ready to accept political leadership and develop the class consciousness. The worker would be ready to be involved in political movement, accept socialist consciousness, and ready to be organised in political party and trade union, only after years of spontaneous economic and trade union activities. Here, where any labour movement is immediately suppressed, it is natural that the labouring mass avoids the political struggle. The Political activity requires consistency, organisation, and an overall acceptance of discipline. It also calls for consciousness and altruism. In a situation where the workers are inevitably tied to struggling to cope with their everyday needs, it would be neither possible for them to accept political struggle, nor believe in it. In the absence of any notable spontaneous mass movements, it is not possible to witness the formation of widespread labour circles.[17]

In a note at the end of the treaty by the publisher, we read:

> We do not deny the possibility of communication with the workers. We have enjoyed a great deal of cooperation from our workers comrades. We mean that there is no possibility of communication with the workers, in the real sense and in its traditional form. It is possible to work amongst workers. It is possible to recruit them, though of course with great difficulty and with very low outcome. But it is not possible to rally the majority of these groups of people. It is not possible to propagate and perform propaganda work.[18]

It is clear that the reference to the inability of working among the workers was due to the police state control that had cast its long shadow over workplaces.

Later in his study, Ahmadzadeh further analyzes the situation in the following terms:

> Discussing about an independent labour movement in the current situation in Iran is nonsense. The main conflict in our society is between people and imperialism, overshadows more minor conflicts such as the distinct contradiction between labour and capital. Moreover, the suffocating political pressure, politicises any social movement and makes the emergence of an independent labour movement less probable. The political struggle in our society is inevitably an armed struggle. Therefore, a self-conscious working-class does not emerge from a labour movement; it is, rather formed out of an armed mass struggle. The purpose of the newly formed groups must be to unite not only the members of the working-class but every other member of society. Relying upon the entire community, these groups must be the voice of the common demands of people. Our terrain is where we can fight effectively and unite people most successfully.[19]

In his *Armed Struggle, Both Strategy and Tactic*, Ahmadzadeh mentions the obstacles that in his view debar the formation of the working-class movement. These obstacles are all reduced to imperialistic policies, the oppressive practices of political establishment, and the replacement of labor-capital contradiction by the people-imperialism one. However, Parviz Pouyan (1946–1971), another member of the *Pouyan-Ahmadzadeh-Meftahi Group*, presented a different analysis in his treaty of The *Necessity of Armed Struggle and Rejection of the Theory of Survival* (Zarourat-e Mobarezeh-e Mosalahaneh va Radd-e Teoriy-ye Baqa'). The date of the treaty is the spring of 1970 and is written a few months earlier than Ahmadzadeh's work. In the *Necessity of Armed Struggle and Rejection of the Theory of Survival*, Pouyan does not focus on the socioeconomic changes of the 1960s; he is more concerned with the outcomes of these changes in shaping the behavior of the working class and laboring poor:

> The process a worker goes through in his transformation into a disciplined revolutionary agent is a long, challenging and complicated one. Our experience indicates that the workers, even the young ones, despite being dissatisfied with their situation, are not very interested in political education. We can work out the reason for this. The lack of any tangible political contact and awareness has led to some degree of acceptance of the prevailing culture of society. Young workers, in particular, spend their limited leisure hours and few savings on despicable petty-bourgeois entertainments. Most of them have developed lumpen characteristics. During work hours, if they have the opportunity to have a conversation, they try to waste the working hours by vulgar gossiping. Those who read books are absorbed in the most sordid and reactionary contemporary

literatures. By preventing any political mass movements and encouraging easily accessible entertainments, our enemy is trying to persuade our workers to accept despicable petty-bourgeois entertainments and in this way spread the anti-venom of any political consciousness . . . In factories and wherever labour power has become a commodity, whether governmental or private, flagrant exploitation is rampant. If we express their agony using words, they feel this oppression with their skin and flesh. We write about their sufferings, but they must endure it constantly. Nevertheless, they tolerate this situation and patiently accept it. They try to lessen the pain by seeking solace in petty-bourgeois entertainments. Why? Several reasons for this can be summed up thus: they consider their enemy's power and their inability to escape the enemy's dominance as absolute facts. How can one be liberated with absolute weakness against absolute power? It is precisely this assumption that induces disinterest and even mockery to political discussions as a disapproving reaction to their lack of power amongst workers.[20]

In an addendum to this treaty dated June 10, 1971, the Organisation of Iran People's Feda'i Guerrillas, noted: "The fact that the deficiency of connection between the pioneer of labour groups with the organised proletariat in the spontaneous struggles, made any mass connection with the proletariat impossible, does not mean that we cannot be in touch with pioneer workers individually. In our movement we have had many examples of pioneer activist workers."[21]

Bijan Jazani, too, in an analysis of the position of the revolutionary forces in Iran, without mentioning Pouyan's analysis, explicitly criticizes him:

One of the social characteristics of our society is the position of the petty-bourgeois in relation to the working-class. While, in relation to the historical weakness of the industrial bourgeoisie, the working-class in its true sense has not developed in our society, the urban petty-bourgeoisie has significantly developed. The backwardness of workshop production, the size and the hierarchy of the distribution and finally the extended bureaucracy which is in out of proportion to the productive force of society have caused the various groups of the petty-bourgeoisie to grow. The social and economic weakness of the working-class has manifested itself in the qualitative retardation of this class in comparison to the national bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie. Therefore, the growth of a petty-bourgeoisie has always been a prerequisite for the quality growth of this disproportionality, which is the undeniable characteristic of our society (and is often observed in dependent and oppressed societies) and has always been evident. This fact has laid the groundwork for significant development in various areas. . . . Despite this historical deficiency which has continued until today, the working-class in the years prior to its defeat [1953], had a much higher level of class consciousness and culture compared to the present-day. The economic

and political processes which were launched after August 1941, and culminated
in the coup of 1953, played an essential role in consolidating self-consciousness
amongst the working-class. In fact, a working-class without its class conscious-
ness and solidarity is a dispersed mass lacking revolutionary spirit. Working
collectively with machinery in close proximity to others provides a platform for
first economic and then political empathy and solidarity. The worker's culture
which is the outcome of his/her material life does not develop immutably, as
soon as a worker begins working in an industry or workshop. It is part of a long
process together with economic, social and political processes in relation with
other classes and groups through understanding his/her social status against
other classes. Our working-class is well aware of its own culture and possesses
enough class consciousness to undergo such processes. The most important part
of the working-class in Iran, that is, workers who today are aged between 18
and 30 have had very limited class consciousness and yet their class culture has
not been substituted by their previous culture (of peasant and petty bourgeoisie).
This group of labouring class focuses mainly on their own personal problems
and shortcomings. They are not aware of their collective power; they do not
trust each other, and they attempt to solve their problems individually. Any
small-scale collective actions that the working class has achieved over the past
two decades have been so limited that they have failed to familiarise the new
generation of working-class with any class consciousness or culture. Those who
are talking about the degeneration of the working-class or about the influence of
the non-labour culture on this class must realise that what is happening is not the
degeneration or the substitution of another culture instead of the labour culture.
It is rather the result of a young, inexperienced, and underdeveloped working-
class culture. Unfortunately, without the development of collective activities
of the working-class, the working-class will never miraculously acquire a
well-developed culture of class consciousness. This development would in the
beginning be predominantly economic (in the form of protests and strikes over
economic issues). Without self-awareness, the working-class will be unable to
achieve its historical mission. That is the objective root of the today's deficien-
cies in the working-class movement.[22]

A reexamination of the readings and analysis of the labor movement of
the 1960s by three of the pioneering guerrilla movement theorists, Jazani,
Ahmadzadeh, and Pouyan, demonstrates that in his analysis Jazani focuses
on the history of the labor movement, the existence of various layer within
working class, and the culture of each stratum. These criteria are missing in
Ahmadzdeh's and Pouyan's analysis. But what all three of these guerrilla
movement theorists have in common regarding the class struggles of the
workers is the fact that for them, class struggle is nothing but an organized
and structured confrontation. While evaluating the economic situation of the

workers and the working class's spontaneous action, Jazani's structuralist and political understanding of the labor movement evidenced in his description of what he terms "political movements or organised economic movements," which "have connections to the working-class and its ideology and is the political or economic representative of this class."[23] Such an interpretation of the labor movement means accepting the hegemony of politics and culture in the realm of everyday life. Of course, none of these theorists denied this hegemony, and what is more, by highlighting the political repression of the post-1953 coup, they considered the destruction of any political barriers as the main purpose of the struggle of the fledgling communist movement in Iran.[24]

CONCLUSION

Of the major characteristic features of the developmental states is the rapid and uneven development they implement in order to overcome the age-old underdevelopment. Not solely in the economic sphere one could trace such uneven development, but also there is no harmony between changes and reforms in economy and the political spheres. Iran of 1960s and 1970s could be singled out as one of the leading examples of practicing uneven development. While through two decades, the country's economy witnessed significant changes and reforms, effecting the social settings and class compositions, though unevenly, the political sphere had been still suffering from the post-Coup 1953 repression, which by the early 1970s was altered from an autocratic form of governance to a more repressive kind of political dictatorship.

With reference to such development, this paper revisited and examined the perceptions of the Iranian radical armed Marxists, the founders of the Organisation of the Iran People's Feda'i Guerrillas of the deeds of the Iranian developmental state's practice in 1960s and 1970s and the revolutionary agency of the Iranian working class and laboring poor with reference to such development.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Nasser Mohajer for being always generous with his boundless erudition and Hossein Pourbagheri for his editorial support.

2. For an overview of the Iranian Labour Movement in the aftermath of World War II, see: Touraj Atabaki, "L'Organisation Syndicale Ouvrière en Iran," *Sou'al*, 8 (1987): pp. 35–54.

3. In support of *The Central Council of Trade Unions of Iran*, the *Trud*, the press organ of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions of the Soviet Union referred to Yousef Eftekhari as "provocateur and a pseudo leftist," who "practically provoked the workers to sabotage the military support of the Soviet Union." Atabaki, "L'Organisation Syndicale," p. 48.

4. The Congress of Iranian Workers' Unions was formed in 1950 by merging of two *Syndicates of the Iranian Labourer's Union* (SKI) and the *Central Union of Labourers and Farmers of Iran* (AMKA), both with the support of the government.

5. U.S.A. Government Records, report about labour, 1960, July 4, 1963, quoted in: Habib Lajevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran* (New York, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1985), p. 205.

6. Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 422.

7. For a historical review of the formation and practices of the developmental states, see: M. Woo-Cumings, ed., *The Developmental State, Cornell Studies in Political Economy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999) and D. Ludden, "Development Regimes in South Asia: History and the Governance Conundrum," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40 (2005): pp. 4042–51.

8. For a review of Fordism and Post-Fordism see (November 26, 2018), http://www.willamette.edu/~fthompso/MgmtCon/Fordism_&_Postfordism.html.

9. The program of widespread economic reforms that the Shah promised was in fact the brainchild of Hassan Arsanjani and his team. Arsanjani was a long-standing advocate for land reforms and also a renowned expert in agriculture who had prepared this plan at the request of the prime minister, Ali Amini. See: Gholamreza Afkhami, ed., *Ideology, Process and Politics in Iran's Development Planning. An Interview with Manouchehr Gudarzi, Khodadad Farmanfarmain and Abdol-Majid Majidi* (Washington, DC: Foundation for Iranian Studies, 1999), pp. 167–70. Iran Amini, *Zendegi-ye Siyasi-ye Ali Amini* (Political Life of Ali Amini) (Tehran: Nashr Mahi, 2009), p. 171 and 385. Gholamreza Afkhami, ed., *Ideology, Process and Politics in Iran's Development Planning. An Interview with Alinaghi Alikhani* (Washington, DC: Foundation for Iranian Studies, 2001), p. 37.

10. *National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Newsletter*, no. 60, July 1963.

11. *Gozaresh-e 'Amalkard-e Barnameh-ye 'Omrani-ye Sevvom 1341–1346* (Report of the Results of the Third Development Plan 1962–1967) (Tehran: Organisation of Planning, 1968).

12. Ibid.

13. In order to refashion its relationship with the Soviet Union, in July 1962, the Iranian new government announced that Iran never let nay country to install any military base for long-range missiles. A stand, welcomed by the Soviet Union and opened a new chapter in diplomatic relation between two countries.

14. Bizhan Jazani, *Masa'el Jonbesh zed Estemari va Azadibaksh Khalq Iran va 'Omdeh-tarin Vazayef Komunist-hay-ye Iran* (The Problem of Anti-Colonial and Libation Movement of the People of Iran and the Main Tasks of the Iranian Communists) (Reprinted in Paris: Sazeman Ettehad Fadaiyan Khalq Iran, 2003), pp. 4–9.

15. Bizhan Jazani, "Jam'bandi-ye Mobarezat-e Si-Saleh-ye Akhir dar Iran" (The Conclusion of Thirty Years of Struggles in Iran), *19 Bahman Theorik*, no. 6, second part, December 1975, pp. 165–67.

16. Maoud Ahmadzadeh, *Mobarezeh Mosalahaneh, ham Esteratezhi, ham Taktik* (Armed Struggle, Both Strategy and Tactic) (Tehran: Sazeman-e Cherik-ha-ye Fad'i Khalq Iran, 1971), p. 2.

17. Ibid., p. 4.

18. Ibid., p. 7.

19. Ibid., p. 62.

20. Amir Parviz Pouyan, *Zarourat-e Mobarezeh-e Mosalahaneh va Radd-e Teoriy Baqa'* (The Necessity of Armed Struggle and Rejection of the Theory of Survival) (Tehran: Sazeman-e Cheik-ha-ye Fad'i Khalq-e Iran, 1971), pp. 30–31.

21. Ibid., p. 23.

22. Jazani, "Jam'bandi-ye Mobarezat-e," pp. 167–69.

23. Ibid., p. 164.

24. In the study of the labor movement and its history, two approaches could be identified. The first one, with a structuralist understanding of the class identity, focuses on the workers in the context of labor unions and investigates the history of the labor movement only in the framework of the history of the unions. It is based on an understanding of the labor movement as a movement identified by the juxtaposition of labor economic demands with the challenging of governing political establishment structure. The confrontational acts by the organized labor is the major characteristic of this approach. Accordingly, with such confrontational approach, the workers class identity eventually develops from sharing grievances against capitalists, that is to say, from a class "in itself" to an awareness of mobilising themselves as a social class against capitalists, a class "for itself." In contrast to this approach, there is another reading of the labor movement, which is not structuralist, and includes nonorganized workers and adaptive (nonconfrontational) struggles as being part of the workers' movement and the history of this movement. In this approach, the class identity of workers is not limited to the context of their confrontational acts, but includes also the process of labor representation and recognition. For further discussion on old and new labor, see: Marcel Van der Linden, "Labour History: The Old, the New and the Global," *African Studies*, 66, no. 2–3 (2007); Touraj Atabaki, "From 'Amaleh (Labor) to Kargar (Worker)': Recruitment, Work Discipline and Making of the Working Class in the Persian/Iranian Oil Industry," *International Labour and Working-Class History*, 84 (Fall, 2013).

Chapter 11

Intellectual Statesmen and the Making of Iran's Illiberal Nation-State (1921–1926)

Afshin Matin-Asgari

INTRODUCTION

In 1969, as Shah Mohamad-Reza Pahlavi's escalating autocracy appeared increasingly at odds with the constitutional frame of Iran's government, former prime minister Asadollah Alam made the following entry in his memoir: "Today, I was at the Senate, celebrating the sixty-fourth anniversary of the Constitution's inauguration. But it looked more like a funeral than a celebration."[1] Typical of what Alam has recorded in the confidentiality of his memoir, the above quotation shows cynical awareness, at the highest echelons of the Pahlavi regime, that Iranian constitutionalism was long dead. With characteristic frankness, Alam's memoir often notes that the Pahlavi monarchy's pretense of democracy, parliamentary government, and the rule of law is nothing but a sham. Below, I argue that Iran's constitutional tradition, and hence the potential for liberal-democratic government, did not just die but was murdered. More specifically, I will show how the elimination of potentially democratic politics was plotted deliberately and carried out systematically by "intellectual statesmen" whose collective endeavors laid the foundation of an illiberal, in fact dictatorial, nation-state in 1920s Iran.

This chapter therefore is a study of how a cohort of nationalist intellectuals, many of whom became high functionaries of Reza Shah's dictatorship (1926–1941), were responsible for both conceptualizing and institutionalizing Iran's modern illiberal nation-state and its Persian-chauvinistic nationalist ideology. Countering conventional narratives, I will argue that illiberal nation-state building was neither a predetermined imperative of Iranian history nor the only "realistic" option available in the early 1920s. In the immediate aftermath of World War I, Iran had a weak but functioning

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constitutional government, with different nation-building projects being debated in a national assembly (*majles*) and a new "public sphere" formed by municipal councils (*anjumans*), small political parties, and a relatively free press. Among these contending projects was the dictatorial road taken under Reza Shah, an option that appeared "inevitable" only after it forcibly and violently eliminated all other contenders. The chapter focuses on the years 1921–1926 to show how the dictatorial path of nation-building was the outcome of contentions and contingencies, with the role of hegemonic ideas and their intellectual makers being decisive.

This way of looking at nation-building calls for explaining, rather than justifying, why and how its illiberal variant won over other contenders, including a relatively liberal-democratic constitutional option. It involves probing the question of why Iran's liberal-democratic tradition has been feeble intellectually and almost nonexistent as sustained political practice. In both politics and historiography, such questions relate to a long-running debate on whether intellectuals, as critical thinkers, should remain dissenters or serve governments, even undemocratic ones, in important political capacities. This question too is addressed below, although not as a matter of stark choices between diametrically opposed alternatives. In other words, any judgment of intellectuals and state power must be context-specific, depending on the character of the government in question, as well as the particular position an intellectual occupies in it. This way of approaching the question is not an evasion of perplexing moral and political quandaries by resorting to relativism. On the contrary, as will be seen below, this chapter holds intellectuals responsible for their political choices, particularly the choice of laying the foundations of an illiberal nation-state.

INTELLECTUALS, LIBERALISM, AND CONSTITUTIONALISM

We must begin with a note on the contested term "intellectual" and its application in modern Iranian history. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci and Karl Mannheim, intellectuals are defined as all those engaged in the production of specialized knowledge and its dissemination across society. Traditionally, this classic definition pertained to clerics and government functionaries, Gramsci's "traditional intellectuals," who were organically tied to privileged social strata, and whose knowledge production tended to uphold rather than upset social and political hierarchy. The classic definition was challenged by a new conception of intellectuals as generically "progressive" or politically defiant, a view that appeared in post-Enlightenment Europe and quickly resonated worldwide. Embodiments of this new definition were

eighteenth-century French *lumieres*, or "enlighteners," nineteenth-century Russia's revolutionary *intelligentsia*, and twentieth-century "committed intellectuals" who "spoke truth to power." By the early twenty-first century, a turn toward the older or classic definitions of intellectuals emerged, distinguishing between their technocratic/bureaucratic functions and their moral-political role as social critics and advocates of public interest.[2] While all of these fluctuating definitions of "intellectuals" have affected Iran, this chapter will use the term as it pertained to the period it covers, that is, the decades between the two World Wars. As I have argued elsewhere, the most sophisticated discussion of intellectuals and their social role in this period appeared in the short-lived Marxist periodical *Donya* (1934–1935). It defined intellectuals as "individuals whose fields of perception are broadened due to literacy, education, and schooling, accessible to them because of their particular (generally middle-class) social position." *Donya* considered intellectuals to be not generically progressive but ideologically divided, according to their social affiliation and political leanings. Similar to but independently of Gramsci, it saw "leading intellectuals" engaged in perpetual contestations for cultural hegemony as the nation's "educators." Moreover, it claimed, the social role of "leading intellectuals" was "to elevate Iranian civilization and transfer the benefits of European civilization to Iran." Assuming that Iran's interaction with modernity would be unilaterally "progressive," *Donya* was rather naively dismissive of right-wing nationalist ideology and illiberal modernist projects of nation-building.[3]

As with "intellectuals," the meaning of the term "liberal" is ambiguous and contested. In twentieth-century Iran, "liberalism" was used to denote intellectual fickleness and political feebleness, while in recent decades the term has acquired more positive currency among intellectuals and academics.[4] The imbroglios of Iranian liberalism are related to the confused trajectory and shifting fortunes of liberalism worldwide. A source of confusion has been the lack of distinction between liberal intellectual traditions and liberalism as governmentality and political practice. To make the distinction clearly, we should consider statesmen or women liberal only when their political practice is consistently liberal, something quite distinct from the case of individuals whose beliefs or worldview might be liberal. Though distinct, the above two categories are of course related, since, prior to becoming a political tradition, liberalism began as an intellectual movement advocating freedom and tolerance, particularly in matters of religion and politics. The most outstanding articulation of this movement was the European Enlightenment in all of its conflicted richness. But liberalism also became a form of politics and governmentality, beginning when the French and American revolutions installed constitutional or republican governments requiring consent from at least some of those governed and justified by doctrines of social contract and/or natural

rights. Identified with property-owning middle classes, political liberalism was in the forefront of European and global revolutionary upheavals until the mid-nineteenth century when a new working-class political movement, and its socialist ideology, emerged as its main rival. Liberalism and socialism then clashed and overlapped, their convergence producing the twentieth-century model of the Liberal/Social Democratic Welfare State. With the failure of its Soviet and Third World contenders, welfare state liberalism also fell apart, being replaced by the neoliberal model, whose ideology links liberalism and democracy to unregulated markets and the unfettered accumulation of capital. At present, an authoritarian neoliberal model of governmentality has become the norm worldwide, further obfuscating the meaning of liberalism and making its future viability uncertain.[5]

In modern Iranian history, familiarity with liberalism, as both intellectual stance and mode of governmentality, began in the nineteenth century and mainly in relation to the English tradition of individual rights, parliamentary government, and the rule of law. A few Qajar travelers, merchants, and diplomats came to know and appreciate the English liberal tradition, which in practice remained remote and intangible to an emerging intelligentsia trying to articulate a proto-nationalist consciousness. The latter group, for example, Jamal al-din Asadabadi (Afghani), came to identify Britain with its highly illiberal colonial and imperial rule, considering England's liberal tradition at home as irrelevant to Iran. Even more, the sharp contrast of Britain's illiberal colonialism to England's fledgling liberalisms tarnished irrevocably the very meaning of liberalism in Iran, equating it with duplicitousness and deceit masking selfish and sinister political interests. Nor was the reputation of liberalism enhanced with many Iranian "liberal" statesmen joining Freemason lodges, widely reputed to be serving a hidden British agenda.[6]

Occasional nineteenth-century expressions of optimism about the extension of British liberalism to Iran, such as reformist Malcolm Khan's allusions to the English parliamentary system, or Baha'i religion founder Bahaollah's letter to Queen Victoria in praise of England's representative government, reflected a basic confusion about England's liberalizing government and the blatantly illiberal nature of the British Empire.[7] An important but scarcely noted disconnect of liberalism to Iran and the rest of the world is the fact that classical liberal political philosophy was Eurocentric, excluding "backward" countries and "medieval" people from the orbit of liberal governance. According to J. S. Mill, for example, the best that "uncivilized" people and countries outside of Europe could hope for was "enlightened despotism." Mill's classic, *On Liberty*, is quite clear on this point:

> Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians . . .
> Liberty, as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the

> time when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion. Until then, there is nothing for them but implicit obedience to an Akbar or a Charlemagne. If they are so fortunate as to find one.[8]

As his reference to Emperor Akbar suggests, Mill called for "enlightened despotism" in places such as India, which was then under British colonial rule.[9]

Historians of Iran also need to question a conventional narrative that links British liberalism to Iranian constitutionalism. The immediate precursor to and direct inspiration of Iranian constitutionalism was the Ottoman Empire's modernizing reforms and Young Ottoman intellectuals' adaptation of constitutionalism to Islam.[10] The identification of Iranian constitutionalism with England's liberal-democratic tradition began with British Orientalist E. G. Browne's 1910 classic, *The Persian Revolution*, which quickly became a paradigmatic narrative of Iranian nationalist historiography. However, Browne wrote the book not for Iranians but for English language readers, whom he wanted to mobilize against British intervention against Iranian constitutionalism. To this end, he deliberately distorted his narrative, claiming Iranian constitutionalists, including clerical factions, were freedom-loving nationalists fighting a despotic shah to revive "Persia" as a great "nation" that had existed since antiquity. Browne's well-intentioned but distorted attempt at making English political traditions the normative benchmark for modern Iranian history deeply influenced Iranian nationalism and historiography. This lingering influence is clear, for example, in Homa Katouzian's depiction of Iran as a "short-term society," whose supposedly cyclical nonprogressive history and "failed" modernity are gauged against the paradigm of European "long-term" societies, particularly the English model of durable legal and juridical traditions.[11] The purported influence of the English model appears also in Ali Ansari's perceptive study of Iranian nationalism that claims Iranian constitutionalists were seeking "representative institutions regulated by Laws . . . as befits a constitution which ultimately derived from the (unwritten) English Constitution."[12]

In recent decades, and partly in reaction to the Islamic Republic's wholesale and simplistic rejection of everything associated with the Pahlavi monarchy, a creeping ideological revisionism, championed by nonhistorians, seeks to redeem Pahlavi era "intellectual statesmen."[13] A pioneer of this trend was Abbas Milani's engaging political biography depicting Amir Abbas Hoveyda, the last Shah's longest-serving prime minister, as a liberal intellectual. Hoveyda, according to Milani, was "a true intellectual, a man of cosmopolitan flair, a liberal at heart who served an illiberal master." An oxymoronic premise, this claim was impossible to substantiate in relation to a prime minister who, by his own as well as Milani's admission, spent almost thirteen years merely carrying out what an illiberal king would dictate. Nevertheless,

this biography's Persian translation was an enormous success, reaching its twentieth printing as of this writing.[14] Beyond popular best sellers, influential scholarship too is involved in the political redemption of Pahlavi-era statesmen. For instance, Homa Katouzian's study of controversial politician Hasan Taqizadeh concludes that he "wanted a democratic but powerful government, something like English democracy, or modernity in its deep true sense of the word."[15] This generous estimation is contradicted by Taqizadeh's own admission that, while serving in high positions, he was merely an "instrument" implementing Reza Shah's diktats. Ironically, Taqizadeh claimed that being "an instrument" of dictatorship absolved him from responsibility, a defense rejected at the time by politicians like Mohammad Mosaddeq, yet apparently convincing to Taqizadeh's present-day scholarly partisans.[16]

Mohammad-Ali Foroughi is another major figure of interest in recent revisionist redemptions of Reza Shah's intellectual statesmen. "The hope and goal of Foroughi," argues Ramin Jahanbegloo, "was to create suitable conditions for the implementation of modern and liberal principles in Iran, by concentrating his efforts in state reforms from above." Jahanbegloo considers Foroughi's *The Path of Philosophy in Europe* (1938–1941) to be a work in "defense of liberal values."[17] The first compendium of modern European thought in Persian, *The Path of Philosophy in Europe*, in fact reveals Foroughi's utter conservatism, evident, for example, in his preference for Montesquieu as ultimate political philosopher. Foroughi's conservatism is so thorough that he deliberately avoids discussion of political philosophy after Montesquieu. He merely mentions eighteenth-century France's materialist *philosophes*, calling them atheists whose ideas "need not occupy our time." Predictably, his coverage of the nineteenth century ignores radical social philosophers like Marx, while referring to socialists as "individuals whose ideas were strange and therefore had no success."[18] Foroughi devotes a fairly long section to J. S. Mill, but again avoids mentioning his social and political thought, stating explicitly that "in introducing Stuart Mill's philosophy, we focus on his epistemology (*hekmat-e nazari*), particularly his logic, leaving aside his practical philosophy (*hekmat-e 'amali*) since what he says about the latter subject is not that important."[19]

Mehrzad Boroujerdi, author of a pioneering study of Iranian intellectuals, defends the "intellectual statesmen" who served Reza Shah's dictatorship by citing Plato's dictum that if good or wise men withdrew from politics, their place would be taken by the politically unwise or unfit. But Plato's claim makes sense only when good or wise men serve a government whose overall record is deemed positive. And this seems to be the case with Boroujerdi's estimation of Reza Shah's rule, whose "autocratic" character he acknowledges but only in passing. More specifically, Boroujerdi's positive evaluation of men like Foroughi and Taqizadeh rests on their purported commitment

to "constitutionalism, nationalism and secularism."[20] However, historians of modern Iran agree that Reza Shah's brand of nationalism and secularism was highly anti-democratic, while, as we shall see below, all of the statesmen Boroujerdi names in fact undermined constitutionalism, turning it into a façade for dictatorship.

The rest of this chapter therefore will show why, as I have argued in more detail elsewhere, none of Reza Shah's "intellectual statesmen" were constitutionalist, liberal, or democrat. I contend that these men were in fact the intellectual architects, rather than mere instruments, of dictatorial nation-state building. According to Boroujerdi, Reza Shah's "intellectual statesmen" were advocates of "benevolent dictatorship," which he apparently considers appropriate to 1920s Iran.[21] On the contrary, I would argue that terms like "benevolent dictatorship" or "enlightened despotism" are conceptually oxymoronic, while their familiar historical referents, for example, Prussia's Frederick or Russian Tsars Peter and Catherine, had nothing to do with democratic government. What I intend to show is that scholars who argue the necessity or naturalness of "benevolent dictatorship" in 1920s Iran do not look closely at how this project was chosen and implemented by nationalist intellectuals. Effectively suspended by Russian and British intervention before World War I, Iran's new constitutional government had been no more than an aspiration or a framework for building a nation-state. Ironically, while contemporary scholarship adheres to continuity narratives of both the nation and the state in Iranian history, early-twentieth-century nationalists invariably bemoaned the fact that Iran was neither a nation nor possessed a state in the modern sense of these term.[22] Afshin Marashi's excellent study of Iranian nationalism notes that we cannot assume correspondence between premodern polities and the abstract category of "the state." He locates the emergence of the Iranian nation-state in the 1870s–1940s period, assigning priority to the agency of the state in the building of "the nation."[23] However, by early twentieth century, particularly after constitutional government was suspended by foreign intervention, nationalist thinkers and statesmen came to agree that both an Iranian nation and a modern state had to be built from the ground up. As another eminent historian of modern Iran has noted: "The Qajar empire in the second half of the nineteenth century simply was not a nation-state . . . Iranian national identity was not an existent that needed to be symbolized, but an idea yet to be realized."[24] Thus, the nationalist elite's preoccupation with Iran's "salvation" reflected nation-building anxieties more than the fear of foreign threats to Iran's nonexistent nationhood. To see this with clarity, we must step outside nationalist narratives to revisit a complex cluster of events, compressed in a fateful five-year period, starting in 1921 and culminating in the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1926.

When foreign armies of occupation, mainly the British who held Tehran, began to withdraw in 1921, Iran had neither a clear nation-building agenda nor a state capable of implementing it. In 1919, the British had tried to impose a treaty that would have turned Iran into a semi-protectorate by placing its military and finances under London's direct control. This attempt failed as the treaty was widely denounced in Tehran's vociferous nationalist press, especially as it became known that British diplomats had bribed Prime Minister Vosuq al-Dowleh in secret negotiations. Recently, however, "revisionists" historians have argued in defense of the 1919 treaty and Vosuq al-Dowleh's role in it. This judgment anachronistically counters the almost unanimous consensus of Iran's nationalist elite a hundred years later.[25] A major unstated objective of the 1919 treaty was to prevent the spread of the Russian Revolution to Iran, which nevertheless took place when a small Red Army detachments landed in the Caspian province of Gilan and joined forces with local rebels to declare a Soviet Socialist Republic. During 1920–1921, the fall of Tehran to Bolshevik-backed rebels was prevented only by the presence of British occupation armies holding the capital. At this point, while Tehran's shaky Qajar regime was propped up by the British, the northern provinces of Gilan, Azarbaijan, and Khorasan, the country's economic, political, and military center of gravity, were held by nationalist and constitutionalist rebels, none of whom was secessionist.[26] Given this configuration, the future course and character of Iran's nation-building project remained uncertain. The global precondition to ending this uncertainty was the 1921 accord by which British and Soviet governments settled their clash across Eurasia, ending also their military intervention in Iran. This great power settlement then allowed for the halted project of Iranian nation-state building to resume in 1921. It is precisely at this point that nationalist and Orientalist narratives tell us that a hyper-centralized state was necessary to save Iran from the "catastrophic" conditions of dysfunctional constitutionalism, foreign meddling, secessionism, and disintegration.[27] According to Homa Katouzian: "By the end of World War One, the chaos caused by the Constitutional Revolution had brought Iran to the verge of disintegration, leading Taqizadeh and many other intellectuals to conclude Iran needed a strong centralized government."[28] However, as historian Stephanie Cronin points out, the argument that British military evacuation left Iran in "catastrophic" conditions was originally the cover story for the British-instigated 1921 coup that provided Iran with a new "savior" regime:

> Discussions of the constitutional era almost always end with the defeats of 1911,
> while the era of authoritarian modernization begins in 1921 with Riza Khan's
> unheralded and apparently inexplicable eruption onto the national political

stage, the intervening decade [being] little more than a hiatus of primordial chaos without historical significance.[29]

Following the rise of Reza Khan, the myth of 1921 "catastrophic" conditions, and its implied suggestion of the need for a strongman savior, became the foundation of Pahlavi-era historiography. In reality, the British departure in 1921 coincided with Iran signing a friendship and nonaggression treaty with the Soviet Union, which meant both superpowers officially endorsed Iran's independence. Nor did the lack of Tehran's control over the provinces mean that the country was on the verge of disintegration. All of Tehran's major political contenders were nationalist, while provincial centers challenging the capital's authority was routine under decentralized Qajar rule. Unlike the wars of Turkish independence fought by the Ankara regime, all of the wars waged by the Tehran regime during the1920s, both before and after the rise of Reza Khan, were against internal "enemies." Nevertheless, "the discourse of disintegration," depicting Qajar Iran's alleged decade-long tittering on the verge of collapse only to be saved in 1921 by Reza Khan, is deeply and uncritically entrenched in modern Iranian historiography.[30] Nor was Reza Kahn's modern dictatorship the return of supposedly despotic patterns inherent in Iranian history, as Homa Katouzian claims. Katouzian's model of "despotism-chaos-despotism," as the invariable feature of Iranian history, rationalizes modern dictatorship by normalizing it according to the familiar narrative of Oriental or Asiatic Despotism.

The abovementioned familiar narratives ignore the evidence that Iran's project of hyper-centralized nation-state building found clear articulation only in the aftermath of World War I. The earliest references to this project appear in the Berlin-based nationalist periodical *Kaveh*, which by 1921 had given up on constitutionalism to embrace enlightened despotism. *Kaveh*'s chief editor Taqizadeh was clear on this point:

> We believe only three options exist for ruling Iran. First, benevolent despotism, prompting progress and civilization, in other words what Europeans call "enlightened despotism," . . . Second, malevolent despotism, which most despotic governments, with a few exceptions, actually are. Third, flawed and imperfect constitutionalism. A fourth option, a benevolent perfect constitutionalism, is undoubtedly preferable to all of the above. But that is possible only in progressive countries and not in Iran, and hence irrelevant to our discussion.[31]

Kaveh's successor *Iranshahr* was more ideologically ambitious, proposing to save Iran by dissolving all ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity into a mystical nationhood based on "Aryan blood and soil." As *Iranshahr*'s editor, Hossein Kazemzadeh, put it:

> Our nationhood is defined by our being Iranian (*Iraniyat*) . . . The sacred all-encompassing concept of "being Iranian" covers under its spirited wingspan every member of the Iranian nation, regardless of religious or linguistic differences. Whether Kurdish, Baluchi, Zoroastrian or Armenian, those of Aryan blood, who consider Iranian soil their land, must be called Iranian.[32]

The most radical Berlin-based nationalist periodical, *European Letter* (*Name-ye Faragestan*), openly advocated a fascist dictatorship, proposing a course of action that Reza Khan had initiated in Iran:

> The current Italian Prime Minister, Mussolini, is a dictator . . . He is indifferent to monarchism or republicanism, as long as fascists are in power . . . He pretends to believe in the parliament, but when necessary, uses threats to produce his own parliamentary majority . . . Iran too needs such a dictator. [33]

The same belief in dictatorship was expressed openly by European-educated Ali-Akbar Davar, ardent Reza Khan supporter during the 1920s and later the architect of Iran's modern judiciary under Reza Shah. In 1923, Davr argued: "Iranians would not become human beings voluntarily. Salvation must be forced on Iran . . . Someone must be found to educate Iran under the whip, obliterate this babbling generation, and force people to work."[34] However, Reza Shah's modernizing military dictatorship was not fascist because it relied neither on a political party nor on any popular mobilization from below. Ideologically, it combined various ingredients from what nationalist émigré periodicals and their cohorts in Tehran suggested. It also embraced the racist emphasis on "Aryan blood," something that became part and parcel of Iranian nationalist consciousness and propagated officially by the Pahlavi regime and its intellectual spokesmen. On the occasion of Reza Shah's 1926 coronation, for instance, Prime Minister Foroughi was emphatic about the new dynasty's purity of blood: "The Iranian nation knows that today it has a monarch who is pure-bred (*pakzad*) and of Iranian race (*Irani-nejad*)."[35] The same blatant Aryanism is found in *Ancient Iran* (*Iran-e bastan*) "arguably the most important work of historiography produced during the Reza Shah years," written by Hasan Pirnia, veteran constitutionalist and several times prime minister, who also served as one of Reza Khan's intellectual tutors during the 1920s:

> Coming to the Iranian Plateau, the Aryans found there people who were ugly and inferior in race, habits, morals and religion . . . The Aryans called these native people *tur* or *div* [demon] . . . Considering them inferior, the Aryans treated these people as victors treat the vanquished. Therefore, at first [the Aryans] accorded them no rights whatsoever, fighting and killing them

wherever they were found. But later, when natives no longer posed any threat, the Aryans assigned to them difficult tasks, such as farming, animal husbandry, and domestic services. Thus, being needed, the natives received certain rights, such as those accorded slaves and concubines living under their masters' protection . . . The Aryans came to Iran not to conquer and plunder, but to settle in this country; therefore, they had to take the natives' lands.[36]

This passage is remarkable not only for its blatant racism but also because it reveals the "colonial" positionality of Pirnia and the nationalist elite vis-à-vis the country's inhabitants, whom they wanted to "domesticate" forcibly into modern nationhood, just as their imaginary pure-bred Aryans ancestors had colonized ancient Iran.

CAN NON-PERSIANS AND OTHER SUBALTERNS SPEAK IN HISTORIOGRAPHY?

The lack of attention to the 1920s right-wing drift of nationalist discourse, corresponding to the political rupture of this period, causes otherwise excellent studies of Iranian nationalism to take for granted the rise of authoritarian nation-state building. Ali Ansari, for example, basically repeats Katouzian, but grounds the need for a "strong-man savior" in the mythical patterns of Iranian history:

> The practical failure of the Constitutional movement, the inability to achieve a working consensus in the new parliament and the havoc of the Great War, persuaded the country's intellectuals that Iran's salvation lay with a "strong man." The search for a saviour to come and rescue the country form itself has a profound historical pedigree in Iran, but in this case the myth was modernized.[37]

Ansari's study of Iranian nationalism emphasizes correctly its mythological features, yet at times upholds nationalist narratives that need to be demythologized. Taking a different route, Afshin Marashi's study traces nation formation as a cultural or "pedagogical" endeavor, largely leaving out the decisive political struggles and massive violence involved in the process. Marashi sees Iran's nation-state formation as a continuum beginning in the 1870s and completed by the 1940s. His treatment pays little attention to the great ruptures of the Constitutional Revolution, World War I, and the political struggles of the early 1920s. Moreover, the position of Tehran, as the center of a culturally homogenized Persian-speaking nation, is taken for granted.[38]

The Constitutional Revolution, however, had opened up a popular democratic path to nation-building in defiance of political centralization in Tehran. The fact that constitutionalism was saved by popular risings in Azerbaijan and other provinces undermines nationalist narratives equating modernity and progress with hyper-centralization. The rising in Azerbaijan was led by the Tabriz municipal council (*anjoman*), one of the regional and provincial councils (*anjomanha-ye ayalati va velyati*) set up by the new constitution to oversee the central government's administration of provincial affairs. Though lacking legislative powers, these councils quickly proved their potential for popular mobilization in Tehran and a few other cities. If allowed to take root and function properly, the regional and provincial councils could have formed the basis of a decentralized or even a federal structure of government.[39] Largely forgotten by historians, these popular councils were part of "the public sphere" that added grassroots democratic content to the abstract frame of parliamentary government. Marashi mentions how theorists of nationalism, like Jurgen Habermas and Benedict Anderson, emphasize the contribution of "the public sphere," formed by a free press, neighborhood associations, coffeehouses, political clubs, and reading rooms:

> A public sphere analogous to that described by Habermas and Anderson did also take shape in the Iran of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The new circulation of newspapers, the proliferation of a novel print-culture made possible by emerging print technologies, and the energetic quality of the literary-polemical discourse of the years surrounding the constitutional revolution, all testify to the formation of an Iranian public sphere that was cable of giving form to a generalized opinion to speak for the national community.[40]

Marashi notes correctly moreover that, in comparison to Europe, this early Iranian public sphere "*enabled* a much larger array of cultural possibilities and narrative forms to circulate and contest for hegemony."[41] Yet, he pays little attention to how the destruction of this public sphere during the 1920s emptied constitutionalism of its potentially democratic content. In the early 1920s, Iran had a relatively free press and small but influential political parties, including socialists and communists. Roughly 20 percent of the country's fledgling industrial labor force was organized in a central trade union, whose official organ *The Truth* (*Haqiqat*) was among the country's leading daily newspaper. Meanwhile, a lively debate on cultural modernity was raging in the pages of avant-garde papers published in Tehran and leading provincial capitals Tabriz and Mashhad. Once again, democratic cultural modernity came from the provinces, articulated most prominently in the Tabriz paper *Modernity* (*Tajaddod*), whose young editor Taqi Raf'at

challenged the conservatism of Persian literary canons, advocating instead literary modernism in both Persian and Azeri Turkish.

The idea of a multilingual Iranian modernity was linked to Azerbaijan's autonomous local government, and along with this government, was wiped out violently by armies dispatched from the capital to impose a Tehran-centric Persianate vision of modernity. Reza Khan's barracks-style centralization meant the closure not only of a potentially multilingual public sphere but also of the space for modernist cultural creativity in Persian. Prior to his accession to the throne, Reza Khan used his position as prime minister and minister of war to end press freedom and silence critics of his personal dictatorship through exemplary displays of violence, such as murdering the modernist poet and journalist Mirzadeh Eshqi and the attempted murder of politician and nationalist poet Mohammad-Taqi Bahar.[42] In relation to this period's closures of democratic options, historian Abbas Amanat notes that the abandonment of a republican campaign in favor of Reza Khan's dynastic rule "proved a major loss for Iran's political future," since "the Pahlavi hereditary succession in and of itself would be a major obstacle to long-term political change even after the fall of Reza Shah in 1941."[43] Thus, when Prime Minister Foroughi was crowning Reza Khan in 1926, he and his nationalist cohorts were well aware that the launch of the Pahlavi dynasty revived the moribund institution of monarchy by turning it into a modern dictatorship. This was noted by Taqizadeh, who, in the last principled stand of his career, voted in the Majles against the transferring of monarchist powers, from the Qajar dynasty to Reza Khan. He declared dramatically: "I say, to history and future generations, this is not done according to the country's constitution, neither does it serve the country's best interest." Nevertheless, as Mosaddeq would observe, Taqizadeh soon "enslaved himself to the very monarchy he had deemed un-constitutional." [44]

Marsahi's notice of the vibrant post-Constitutional public sphere ends abruptly without attention to the campaign of political and military violence that forcibly closed this space even before Reza khan became king. Instead, he digresses into postcolonial theory, something whose relevance to nation formation in Iran remains unclear, except in an important sense, which Marashi again mentions only in passing. Noting the domineering position from which Reza Shah's state forced its version of nationhood across Iran's diverse political, ethnic, and cultural spaces, he suggests that "the Pahlavi state thus came to play the role of a *surrogate colonial state*, and in turn came to take on the political character of an external presence against which discursive and political forces came to position themselves." Therefore, he concludes, Iran's "bourgeois nationalist stratum" was subsumed within the "Pahlavi modernist rationality and had very little opportunity to speak on behalf of the Iranian subaltern." Alienated from both the Pahlavi state and "the bourgeois

nationalist stratum," the vaguely defined "Iranian subaltern" then turned to Shi'ism "as a surrogate ideology of *difference*."[45] Here, Marashi's important observation about Reza Shah's dictatorship building the nation like a "colonial state" is lost in the opaque semantics of postcolonial theory. The typical nation-state's repression of "subaltern" or "minority" people within its borders has been noted by political thinkers including Hanna Ardent who identifies it as the norm in the new international order established after World War I. According to Ardent, following the defeat and dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, the victorious Anglo-French Allies imposed the new nation-state form on Central and Eastern Europe, knowing it was not sustainable, given the ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity of almost every new nation. "The representatives of the great nations," she writes, "knew only to too well that minorities within nation-states must sooner or later be either assimilated or liquidated." Ardent therefore clearly saw the conflicted character of the modern nation-state, as well as its drive toward forcible assimilation of "minority" people, including their genocide. Going farther, she astutely notes, albeit in passing, the similarity of the modern nation-state's treatment of its "minorities" to colonialism.[46]

The colonial character of nation-state building in the Middle East, via the imposition of the League of Nations' Mandate system on former Ottoman territories, is of course not in dispute. To understand how the Pahlavi regime acted like a "colonial state," however, we must shift to the perspective of "minority" or "subaltern" groups at the receiving end of its forced nation-building imperative. Here, we find new interventions in Iranian historiography trying to retrieve silenced subaltern voices. Stephanie Cronin's collection of essays, *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns in Iran: Opposition, Protest and Revolt, 1921–1941*, challenges common historiographic assumptions about Reza Khan's rise and Reza Shah's regime being "the only dynamic and modern element in an otherwise ossified and moribund 'traditional' environment." On the contrary, she argues, "This defining period in modern Iranian history was one where the power of the new state was constantly contested by a wide range of social groups with diverse forms of political representation, modes of action and ideological vision."[47] Cronin's is the only book-length study showing how Iran's subaltern groups resisted top-down nation-building by the Pahlavi state "and its lieutenants among the modern intelligentsia." These groups include the politically active "crowd" in Tehran and provincial cities, the urban and rural poor, the new working class in the oil fields, junior tribal khans, and the lower ranks of the army.

In tandem with Cronin's work, scholars from Iran's ethnic and national "minorities" have recently joined the debate on Iranian nationalism and nation formation.[48] In their provocatively titled "Can non-Persians speak?" Kurdish scholars Kamal Soleimani and Ahmad Mohammadpour challenge

the methodological nationalism of Iranian historiography. They argue persuasively that the Pahlavi regime acted like a "colonial state" in its nation-building project. Mohammadpour and Soleimani use the concept of "internal colonialism," found in scholarship describing the integration of indigenous people into modern nation-states. Scholar of Mexico Pablo Gonzalez-Casanova has defined "internal colonialism" as "the rule of one ethnic group . . . over other such groups living within the continuous boundaries of a single state."[49] According to Soleimani and Mohammadpour, this definition fits the process by which the Pahlavi state imposed its version of national culture, through the medium of Persian language, on Iran's ethnically and linguistically diverse population. This reading describes accurately how Iranian nation-building was accomplished according to a blueprint put forward by nationalist intellectuals in the post-World War I era. During the 1920s, nation-building through imposed cultural and linguistic uniformity was advocated by political associations like Young Iran, whose program Reza Khan promised to adopt and personally implement. It was also propagated in nationalist periodicals such as *The Future* (*Ayandeh*), representing the European-educated intelligentsia, many of whom became Reza Shah's statesmen.[50]

As in many other nation-building projects, the imposition of a uniform national culture and a single national language was rationalized under the pretext of saving the country from vague existential threats. This argument was articulated clearly in Mahmoud Afshar's editorial in the first issue of *Ayandeh*:

> Perfecting national unity means the spread of Persian language throughout the country, getting rid of . . . regional differences in behavior, appearance, etc; and making Kurds, Lurs, Qashqais, Arabs, Turks and Turkomans speak the same language and dress the same way . . . We believe that until national unity in language, morality, dress, etc., is achieved, our political independence and territorial integrity is constantly in danger. Unless we can make uniform all of Iran's various regions and different ethnicities, in other words, making all of them truly Iranian, we face a dark future.[51]

Afshar's Persian nationalist prejudice was shared by independent-minded nationalists like Ahmad Kasravi, whose own first language was Azeri Turkish.[52] When it came to the "elimination" of Iran's non-Persian languages, Kasravi was emphatic: "All I have defended and wished is the elimination of languages spoken in Iran: Turkish, Arabic, Armenian, Assyrian and semi-languages [i.e. Kurdish, Shushtari . . .], for all the Iranians to speak only one language, which is Persian."[53]

As Cronin and others have noted, the imposition of a uniform national culture during the 1920s–1930s, especially in rural and tribal areas, meant the

systematic use of physical and cultural violence against Iran's non-Persian-speaking inhabitants by a state that was ethnolinguistically foreign to them. The extreme violence of this process is acknowledged even by scholars like Katouzian who insist Reza Shah's rule was no departure from premodern pattern of Iranian history. The forced settlement of tribal people, writes Katouzian, was "a process, which often led to large-scale deaths. Those in charge of such operations looked upon nomads almost in the same way as many American whites viewed the Native Americans in the nineteenth century."[54] Katouzian also quotes a Majles deputy who, soon after Reza Shah's fall, gave the following description of his regime's treatment of nomadic population:

> The Qashqai, Bakhtiyari, Kuhgiluya and other nomads . . . not only has their tribal property been looted, but group after group of these tribes have been executed without trial . . . They brought khans of Boyer Ahmad to Tehran with the pledge of immunity, and then killed them saying they were rebels . . . The way they settled the tribes was the way of execution and annihilation, not education and reform. And it is precisely this approach that has sapped the strength of the Iranian society and weakened the hope of national unity.[55]

Contrary to certain scholarly assumptions, this brutal and dictatorial course of nation-building was not the legacy of the Constitutional Revolution, but a sharp deviation from it. Though the Constitutional Revolution had made little headway into the countryside, its impact there was considerable and on balance liberating. Rural and tribal people formed the bulk of Iran's population, whose labor on the land and in animal husbandry was the productive foundation of the country's economic life. During the Constitutional Revolution, the novel idea of land reform was proposed by Iran's first modern political party, the (Social) Democrats.[56] Meanwhile, peasants and tribal people participated in the political struggles of the revolution and its aftermath until the countryside was violently pacified by Reza Shah's military. According to leading tribal historian, Arash Khazeni, the Bakhtiyari tribe's participation in the Constitutional Revolution "represents a strange moment in the narrative of the making of modern Iran, for here were pastoral nomadic tribes that at least for a time were Iran's revolutionary armies." He notes further: "This reality seems difficult to reconcile with a historiography that has privileged the urban classes as the natural carriers of nationalist sentiments and has often dismissed the tribes as the enemy of a unified, independent and modern Iran."[57] Khazeni explains how, during the early twentieth century, the "confederate and decentralized" structure of premodern Iranian polity was replaced by a "more assertive state less tolerant of the political and cultural autonomy of its heterogeneous population." In fact, incessant wars waged against tribal

populations fixed the boundaries separating Iran from Anatolia, Central Asia, and India, while also establishing Iran's "territorial integrity" (*tamamiyat-e arzi*) within formerly autonomous "internal" spaces now claimed for the nation.[58] The forced "settlement" of tribal populations, and the destruction of their autonomy, culture, and ways of life, however, was not unique to Iran but part and parcel of nation-building projects across the Middle East.[59]

CONCLUSION: ALL OF REZA SHAH'S INTELLECTUAL STATESMEN

Nationalist intellectual statesmen like Foroughi and Taqizadeh were doubly responsible for illiberal nation-state building in Iran, first for conceiving and advocating it as a political project and second for implementing it under Reza Shah. These men shared a conservative social background and worldview, Taqizadeh being the exception who had started out as a revolutionary social democrat only to end up as another "instrument" of dictatorship. Whether European-educated or not, all others were like Foroughi, disdainful of ordinary people, while subservient to Iran's conservative power structure and foreign powers, particularly the British. Foroughi's subservience to British policy was clear as far back as 1919, when he attended the Versailles Peace Conference in a small delegation representing Iran. At the time, Foroughi had the following opinion of his countrymen: "There is no Iranian nation, and Iranians do not want to become human beings."[60] In a confidential memorandum to Tehran, he complained about his delegation being kept in the dark about Prime Minister Vosuq al-Dowleh's secret negotiations with British diplomats. He wrote:

We tried hard to approach the British, but they told us to wait for the impending results of their negotiations with the Iranian government . . . The British find the situation in Tehran favorable to placing Iran under their own political and economic control . . . [However] they want to make Iranians relinquish their affairs to them voluntarily.[61]

Foroughi's total pessimism about Iranian conditions necessitating its "surrender" to the British empire is quite emphatic:

Iran has neither a state, nor a nation [*Iran na dowlat darad, na mellat*] . . . Of course, I do not believe that Iranians should show enmity toward the British. On the contrary, I believe we must make all efforts to be on friendly terms with them and to enjoy the benefits of this friendship. The British have interests in Iran, which are undeniable and must be recognized sincerely . . . No one says we must act contrary to what the British want. The point, however, is

the extent of our surrender to the British, which should not require us begging them to come put a leash around our neck.[62]

> Thus, a persistently conservative and illiberal ethos guided the career of Foroughi, who was the prime minister crowning a blatantly dictatorial Reza Khan, served him dutifully until being discarded, and again became prime minister in 1941 to save the institution of monarchy and the Pahlavi dynasty as he opposed Allied proposals for declaring a republican regime in Iran.[63] Moreover, Foroughi negotiated a treaty accepting the Allied invasion of Iran "not as an occupation but as temporary logistical access." His often-quoted 1941 pronouncement on the Allied occupation—"They come, they go, and they don't bother us" was a "gigantic understatement"—once again showing his subservience to foreign powers and blatant disregard for the suffering of ordinary Iranians.[64] In fact, as far back as 1931, British diplomats in Tehran had identified Foroughi as the only politician "on whose support Britain could count."[65] This estimation coincided with those of independent-minded nationalists like Mohammad Mosaddeq who believed Foroughi "accepted whatever was dictated to him."[66] Foroughi's 1941 inaugural speech, when becoming prime minister after the fall of Reza Shah, was downright contemptuous of ordinary people:

During the last thirty-five years, you seldom have enjoyed the benefit of real freedom and the rule of law, witnessing instead your national government and the foundations of constitutional regime repeatedly trampled upon. Do you know what caused this? I will explain it to you. The real reason was you did not fully appreciate this benefice, failing to meet its requirements.[67]

> This most erudite of Reza Shah's intellectual statesmen was ready to acknowledge the flaws of a fallen dictatorship, but not the responsibility of its intellectual architects and high functionaries like himself. Instead, he blamed ordinary Iranians for imposing despotism upon themselves, since they were not deserving of "real freedom and the rule of law." Thus, Foroughi and his cohorts remained students of J. S. Mill, except that they had conveniently ditched the liberal parts of the English master's teachings.

NOTES

1. Abdolreza Hushang Mahdavi, *Goftoguha-ye man ba Shah: Khaterat-e mahramane-ye Amir Asadollah Alam* (Tehran, 1992), 121.

2. For studies of Iranian intellectuals, see, for example, Ramin Jahanbegloo, *Moderniteh, demokrasi va roshanfekran* (Tehran, 1995) and *Moj-e chahrom* (Tehran, 2003); Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented triumph of Nativism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996); Afshin

Matin-asgari, *Both Eastern and Western: An Intellectual History of Iranian Modernity* (Cambridge and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018). On intellectuals see Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York, NY: 1936); Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and other Writings* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1978); Stephan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006); Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jurgen Habermas* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1982); Collin Gordon, ed. and trans., *Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972–1977* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1980).

3. Matin-asgari, *Both Eastern and Western*, 104–8; pp. quoted on p. 105.

4. For studies of Iranian liberalism, see Ramin Jahanbegloo, *Democracy in Iran* (New York, NY: Palgrave McMillan, 2013); Ramin Jahanbegloo, ed., *Civil Society and Democracy in Iran* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012); H. E. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornel University Press, 1990); Sussan Siavoshi, *Liberal Nationalism in Iran: Failure of a Movement* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990); Afshin Matin-asgari, "Abdolkarim Sorush and the Secularization of Islamic Thought in Iran," *Iranian Studies*, 30, nos. 1–2 (Winter/Spring 1997): 95–115. Ali Mirsepassi, *Democracy in Modern Iran: Islam, Culture, and Political Change* (New York, NY and London: New York University Press, 2010).

5. On the historical trajectory and internal tensions of liberalism, see, for example, Edmund Fawcett, *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014); James Traub, *What Was Liberalism? The Past, Present, and Promise of a Noble Idea* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2019); Uday Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire. A Study in Nineteenth Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999); John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Indianapolis, IN and Cambridge: Hackett, 1978); Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty. Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002). John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1993). On the convergence of liberalism and socialism see Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London and New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005) and Norberto Bobbio, *Which Socialism? Marxism, Socialism and Democracy*, trans. Roger Griffin (Cambridge: Polity, 1987). On the recent unraveling of liberalism see Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land* (New York, NY and London: Penguin, 2010) and Mark Lilla, *The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity Politics* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2017).

6. Abbas Amanat, "Through the Persian Eye: Anglophilia and Anglophobia in Modern Iranian History," in *Facing Others: Identity Boundaries in A historical Perspective*, eds. Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vejdani (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 125–49.

7. Amanat, "Through the Persian Eye," 140.

8. Mill, *On Liberty*, 10.

9. Not coincidentally, Mill had spent thirty-five years working for the British East India Company. Ibid., ix.

10. On the connection of Iranian constitutionalism to Russia and the Ottoman Empire, see Matin-asgari, *Both Eastern and Western*, 20–27. See also Houri

Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries: Armenians and the Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian and Ottoman Worlds* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019).

11. Katouzian has propounded this theory repeatedly in several works. The following chapter, for example, shows how he uses British history as a positive benchmark of comparison: Homa Katouzian, "The Short-Term Society: A Comparative Study in the Problems of Long-Term Political and Economic Development in Iran," in *Iran and the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century: Essays in Honour of Mohammad-Reza Djalili*, eds. H. E. Cehabi, Farhad Khosrokhavar, and Clement Therme (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2013), 144–64. For comparisons with European, particularly British, history, see Ibid., 146–49.

12. Ali Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 52.

13. For another example of politically revisionist historiography by a nonhistorian, see Hamid Shokat, *Dar tir-ras-e hadeteh: Zendgi-ye sisi-ye Qavam al-Saltaneh* (Tehran, 2006). Yet another example, again by a nonhistorian, is Sadeq Zibakalam, *Reza Shah* (Tehran: Rozaneh, 2019).

14. Abbas Milani, *The Persian Sphinx: Amir Abbas Hoveyda and the Riddle of the Iranian Revolution* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2000), x. See my review of this book: Afshin Matin-asgari, "The Transparent Sphinx: Political Biography and the Question of Intellectual Responsibility," *Critique*, 10 (Fall 2001): 87–108.

15. Homa Katouzian, "Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh: Seh zendegi dar yek 'omr'," *Iran Nameh*, XXI, nos. 1–2 (Spring–Summer 2003): 7–48, p. 41.

16. The text of Taqizadeh's talk is in Baqer Aqeli, *Ruzshomar-e Traikh-e Iran*, vol. 1 (Tehran, 1990), 444–49; Reference to being an "instrument" (*alat-e fe'l*) on p. 448. For Mossadeq's rejection of Taqizadeh's defense, see *Iran Nameh*, XXI, nos. 1–2 (Spring–Summer 2003): 165–70.

17. Ramin Jahanbegloo, "Iranian Intellectuals and Cosmopolitan Citizenship," in *Iranian Identity and Cosmopolitanism: Spheres of Belonging*, ed. Lucian Stone (London and New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2014), 17–33; quoted on p. 24.

18. Mohammad-Ali Foroughi, *Seyr-e hekmat dar Orupa*, vol. 1 (Tehran, 2000), 161 on Montesquieu and vol. 2, pp. 186, 123 on *philosophes*, Marx, and socialists.

19. See Foroughi's discussion of Mill in Ibid., 128–45; Quote on p. 143.

20. Mehrzad Boroujerdi, "Triumphs and Travails of Authoritarian Modernization in Iran," in *The Making of Modern Iran: State and society under Riza Shah, 1921–1941* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 146–54, p. 151.

21. Reference to Reza Shah as "benevolent dictator" is in Ibid., 147, 152.

22. In many ways the best and most nuanced synthesis of modern Iranian history, Abbas Amanat's *Iran: A Modern History* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2017) still shows traces of the continuity thesis. An outstanding exception to the continuity thesis is Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power and the State* (Seattle, WA and London: The University of Washington Press, 2008). See its introduction, pp. 1–8.

23. Afshin Marashi, "Paradigms of Iranian Nationalism: History, Theory and Historiography," in *Rethinking Iranian Nationalism and Modernity*, eds. Kamran

Scot Aghaie and Afshin Marashi (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014), 3–24, p. 12.

24. Juan R. I. Cole, "Marking Boundaries, Marking Time: The Iranian Past and the Construction of the Self by Qajar Thinkers," *Iranian Studies* 29, nos. 1–2 (Winter/Spring 1996): 35–56; quoted on p. 37.

25. For a recent "revisionist" debate on the 1919 treaty, see *Andisheye Pouya*, 8, no. 59 (May–June 2019): 64–76. Kaveh Bayat's contribution is in Ibid., 70–72. Bayat makes the same argument in Kaveh Bayat and Reza Azari-Shahrezai, *Amal-e Iranian: Az konferens-e solh-e Paris ta qarad-e 1919 Iran va Engilis* (Tehran, 1392), 41–42. For historians' consensus view on the 1919 treaty and its aftermath, see Amanat, *Iran*, 404–6, 410–11.

26. Amanat calls these movements "secessionist" without any elaboration. See Amanat, *Iran*, 445.

27. On the origins of "the catastrophic perspective," see Stephanie Cronin, *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns in Iran: Opposition, Protest and Revolt, 1921–1941* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 4–5. The label "period of disintegration" is used in Oliver Bast, "Disintegrating the 'Discourse of Disintegration': Some Reflections on the Historiography of the Late Qajar Period and Iranian *Cultural Memory*" in Touraj Atabaki, ed., *Iran in the 20th Century: Historiography and Political Culture* (London and New York, NY: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 55–68. See especially pp. 61–65.

28. Homa Katouzian, preface to the special issue on Taqizadeh in *Iran Nameh*, XXI, nos. 1–2 (Spring–Summer 2003): 3.

29. Cronin, *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns in Iran*, 5.

30. See Bast, "Disintegrating the 'Discourse of Disintegration'."

31. *Kaveh*, 2, no. 9 (1921): 3.

32. *Iranshahr*, 2, no. 2 (October 1923).

33. *Name-ye Farangestan*, no. 1 (May 1924).

34. See Kaveh Bayat, "Andisheh-ye sisai-ye Davar," *Goftogu*, 2 (1993): 116–33; Davar quoted on pp. 125, 130.

35. See the text of Foroughi's speech in Nasrollah Amirentezam, *Khaterat-e Nasrollah Amirentezam* (Tehran, 1998), quoted on p. 223.

36. Hasan Pirniya, *Iran-e bastan* (Tehran: Donya-ye ketab, 1932), 157–58.

37. Ali M. Ansari, "Nationalism, Myth and History in Modern Iran," in *Iran and the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2003), 129–43, quoted on p. 132.

38. Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran.*

39. Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906–1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy and the Origins of Feminism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996), 73–81.

40. Marashi, "Paradigms of Iranian Nationalism," 3–24. Quoted on p. 14. On the formation of a public sphere during the Constitutional Revolution, see also Negin Nabavi, "Spreading the Word: Iran's First Constitutional Press and the Shaping of a 'New Era'," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 14, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 307–21.

41. Marashi, "Paradigms of Iranian Nationalism," 15.

42. Matin-asgari, *Both Eastern and Western*, 92–98.

43. Amanat, *Iran*, 434.

44. Taqizadeh and Mosaddeq quoted in Matin-asgari, *Both Eastern and Western*, 81–82.

45. Marashi, "Paradigms of Iranian Nationalism," quoted on pp. 18, 19.

46. Hannah Ardent, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, NY: Harvest/HBJ, 1979), 270–73; quoted on p. 273. "So far, nobody has bothered to find out the characteristic similarities between colonialism and minority exploitation." Ardent quoted in Ibid., footnote to p. 273.

47. Cronin, *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns in Iran*, 3.

48. Alireza Asgharzadeh, *Iran and the Challenge of Diversity: Islamic Fundamentalism, Aryanism, and Democratic Struggles* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Abbas Vali, *Kurds and the State in Iran: The Making of Kurdish Identity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014). Kamal Soleimani, "Kurdish Image in Statist Historiography: The Case of Simko," *Middle East Studies*, 53, no. 6 (2017): 949–65. Ahmad Mohammadpour and Kamal Soleimani, "Interrogating the Tribal: The Aporia of 'Tribalism in the Sociological Study of the Middle East," *British Journal of Sociology*, March 20, 2019, doi:10.1111/1468-4446.12656. See also Rasmuss Elling, *Minorities in Iran: Nationalism and Ethnicity after Khomeini* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2013).

49. Kamal Soleimani and Ahmad Mohammadpour, "Can Non-Persians Speak? The Sovereign's Narration of 'Iranian Identity'," *Ethnicities* (2019), 3.

50. The 1921 program of Young Iran Society is in Shahrokh Meskub, *Dastan-e adabiyat va sargozasht-e ejtema'* [The Story of Literature and Society] (Tehran, 1994), 30.

51. Mahmoud Afshar in *Ayandeh*, no. 1 (1925); Quoted in Nader Entekhabi, *Nasionalism va tajaddod dar Iran va Torkieh* (Thran, 2011), 42.

52. Matin-asgari, *Both Eastern and Western*, 119–21.

53. Kasravi quoted in "Can Non-Persians Speak?" 15.

54. Katouzian quoted in "Can Non-Persians Speak?" 9.

55. Quoted in Homa Katouzian, "Riza Shah's Political Legitimacy and Social Base," in *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921–1941*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 15–36, p. 28.

56. Eric Hooglund, *Land and Revolution in Iran, 1960–1980* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1982), 37–38, notes the (social) Democrats were the first Iranian political party proposing land reform.

57. Arash Khazeni, *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-Century Iran* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2009), 191.

58. Ibid., 193.

59. On the violent suppression of tribal populations in the Middle East, see Joseph Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001), for Jordan, 56–59. For Iraq, see Jeremey Salt, *The Unmaking of the Middle East: A History of Western Disorder in Arab Lands* (Berkeley, CA, Los Angeles, CA, and London: University of California Press, 2008), 91–100.

60. Foroughi's statement while at the 1919 founding meeting of the League of Nations. See Iraj Parsinejad, "Yaddashtha-ye yek Irani-ye motemadden-e ba-ma'rafat," *Bokhara*, 108 (October–November): 463–93; quoted on p. 471.

61. From the text of Foroughi's 1919 memorandum, reproduced in Ali-Asghar Haqdar, *Mohammad-Ali Foroughi va sakhtarha-ye novin-e madnai* (Tehran, 2005), 150–51.

62. Ibid., 158–60.

63. Both Soviet and British ambassadors insisted on declaring Iran a republic with Foroughi himself the president. Baqer Aqeli, *Zaka al-Molk Foroughi va Shahrivar-e 1320* (Tehran, 1989), 102.

64. The quotations are from Amanat, *Iran*, 506.

65. British Foreign Office (May 5, 1931) document, quoted in Abbas Milani, *Eminent Persians: The Men and Women Who Made Modern Iran, 1941–1979*, vol. 1 (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 154. As far back as 1919, Foroughi had argued, "No one says we should go against what Britain wants. The point, however, is the extent pf subservience to the British, which should not go as far as our begging them to come put leashes around our necks." Quoted in Ali-Asghar Haqdar, *Mohammad-Ali Foroughi va sakhtarha-ye novin-e madani* (Tehran, 2005), 160.

66. Fakhreddin Azimi, *Iran: The Crisis of Democracy* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1989), 39.

67. Foroughi quoted in Anonymous, *Gozashteh cheragh-e rah-e ayandeh ast*, vol. 1 (Tehran, n.d.), 118. The wording of this passage, reproduced in the memoir of Foroughi's son, is altered slightly to make Foroughi's harsh condemnation of the people ambiguous. Nevertheless, the full text makes it clear that Foroughi blames the people for Reza Shah's dictatorship, while exempting himself of all responsibility. Aqeli, *Zaka al-Molk Foroughi va Shahrivar-e 1320*, 201. This was noted by the contemporary press that severely criticized Foroughi for such views. See *Gozashteh cheragh-e rah-e ayandeh ast*, 119–20.

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Chapter 12

A Singular Intellectual

Mostafa Sho'aiyan, a Revolutionary Scholar

Peyman Vahabzadeh

Mostafa Sho'aiyan (1935–1976) has remained a singular intellectual and activist within twentieth-century Iranian history. Gone are the long years during which he was relegated to oblivion, as well as the short years later during which yellow journalism tried to appropriate his critical stances for its anti-leftist propaganda. Moreover, Sho'aiyan can no longer be locked up in the prison house of rigid leftist politics and doctrinal ideology. In fact, my in-depth studies of his life and politics, in particular, my book containing a comprehensive intellectual biography of Sho'aiyan, show that he transcends the very politics and ideology with which he is being identified.[1] Contrary to yesteryear, Sho'aiyan can no longer be simply ignored or appropriated, as now he stands within the ranks of the critical intellectuals in the twentieth-century Iran due to recent scholarship on his life and thought.

Sho'aiyan's writings are voluminous—over 2,300 pages. He researched and wrote on an impressive range of diverse subjects from poetry and fiction to history, policy analysis, and theory. He introduced a maverick tradition of open letters at the time when secrecy was the most valued characteristic of politics in general and underground activism in particular. After experimenting with legal and nonviolent methods in the early 1960s as a way of bringing about change in the post-1953 Iran, he chose militant and underground activism, all the while he conducted extensive research and functioned as a freelance and self-didact scholar who would engage with international and national equally. He was indeed an overlooked internationalist but also a global thinker.

To substantiate these points, this chapter first offers a short biography before shedding light on Sho'aiyan's theoretical legacy, an ontology of revolutionary intellectuals, and scholarly work. For detailed analyses of his works, I refer the interested reader to my published works on him.[2]

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BECOMING A SINGULAR REVOLUTIONARY

One of four children, Mostafa was born in 1935 into a family of humble means in southern Tehran. His father was once a young revolutionary who had fought in the Jangali movement (1915–1920), led by Mirza Kuchek Khan, and fled to Tehran after its defeat and married his mother. While completing his high school by working part-time at the time of semi-open political conditions, he became interested in politics during the Premiership of General Haj Ali Razmara (1901–1951; premier: June 1950–March 1951) and joined a pro-Mosaddeq splinter group of the Pan-Iranists known as Mehrdadiyun (after its leader, Mohammad Mehrdad). In the months following the popular revolt of July 21, 1952, that forced the Shah to reinstate Mohammad Mosaddeq as the Premier, however, Sho'aiyan left Pan-Iranism for good.[3] The 1953 coup that toppled Premier Mosaddeq radicalized his ideas, and this is when, after entering university, he began exploring Marxism. But the view of a nationwide front for the liberation of Iran, a movement that Dr. Mosaddeq had tried to build, stayed with him. Mosaddeq remained his hero.

In 1958, he was admitted to Tehran Technical Institute (renamed: University of Science and Industry) to study welding engineering. At the Institute, he attended classes on social psychology taught by Mahmud Tavakkoli (1927–2007), a former Tudeh officer who was tried by a military tribunal for his involvement with the Autonomous Azerbaijan Province (November 1945–December 1946) and after release had subsequently become critical of the Tudeh Party and written two critical analyses about Tudeh. Tavakkoli was at the center of a small group known as Jaryan, to which Sho'aiyan joined in the spring of 1961.[4]

In the aftermath of an electoral crisis in 1960, the Second National Front (*Jebheh-ye Melli-ye Dovvom*) was founded to use the semi-open conditions that lasted until 1963 and enter electoral politics. Sho'aiyan joined its "left-wing," which included other leftist figures including Bizhan Jazani, a founding figure of the People's Fadai Guerrillas (PFG), whom Sho'aiyan met several times between 1962 and 1964. Jazani labeled Jaryan (and through guilt by association, Sho'aiyan) "American Marxists,"[5] and this derogatory designation came back to haunt Sho'aiyan in the years to come. The label refers to Tavakkoli's analysis that in the competition between American and British imperialisms, Iranian Marxists should wish the Americans to win, as American victory would prepare the conditions for the revolution.[6] During these years, Sho'aiyan launched a critical experiment: it involved mobilizing the country's leading clerics to boycott the state's economic institutions. It failed because the clerics (ayatollahs Khomeini, Milani, and Shari'atmadri) refused to endorse it, but it also showed Sho'aiyan the limitations of clerical politics.[7] Simultaneously, he submitted an analytical strategy for the Second

National Front,[8] which led him to lose all hope in these nationalists after they ignored his work. The failure of these nonviolent experiments convinced Sho'aiyan to prepare for armed struggle. This is a significant turning point: the Shah would not allow for the opposition he could actually control, and that was a sad irony.

Mostafa graduated as the top student of the class of 1962, which brought him a state scholarship to the University of Oklahoma, United States.[9] Having rejected the offer, he was deployed to Kashan to teach at Industrial Secondary School. It took him four years to finally transfer to Tehran based on medical grounds in 1966.[10] Although he wished to stay at the heart of events in Tehran, Kashan preserved him from the state's repressive measures following the June 1963 crackdown on clerical and other opposition. During these years, Sho'a'iyan wrote an extensive critical essay on Khalil Maleki's Society of Socialists (*Jame'eh-yi Sosialist-ha*, or Socialist League).[11]

By 1967, Sho'aiyan and his close comrade Parviz Sadri started a metal shop to prepare for armed struggle. This workshop is linked to the grenade shells that resurface several times in the early 1970s in the bases of not only his future group but also those of the Organization of Iranian People's Mojahedin (OIPM) and the People's Fadai Guerrillas (PFG or Fadaiyan).[12] At the same time, they were both living openly and holding regular jobs, while engaged in clandestine activity. It is important to note that this is the time when Jazani's group, whose survivors cofounded the PFG, also prepared for armed struggle.

His book on the Jangali movement (1920–1921), *A Review of the Relations between the Soviet Union and the Revolutionary Movement of Jungle* (1968),[13] which was destroyed by SAVAK, was a turning point in his thinking. With his suspicion of pro-Soviet communism confirmed in his analysis, he emerged as an unparalleled theoretical figure that sharply rejected Leninism—the canonical qualifier of revolutionary Marxism at this time. His path-breaking *Rebellion* (*Shuresh*; 1971)—renamed *Revolution* (*Enqelab*; 1974) after the author's third revision—ambitiously presents a theory for the liberation of Iran through armed movement.

In 1968, Sho'aiyan created an urban guerrilla cell along with Sadri and Behzad Nabavi. This group was ideologically mixed, as militant Marxists (Sadri) and Muslims (Nabavi) worked together. The group was forced into the underground in 1972 when SAVAK uncovered its unrealistic plan to sabotage the Isfahan steel plant, and members, including Nabavi, were arrested.[14] At this time, though, being in contact with the OIPM, Sho'aiyan successfully planned the prison escape of Reza Reaz`i, the Mojahedin's leader, and helped him rebuild the group's network after the SAVAK raids of August 1971.[15] All the while, Sho'aiyan kept writing and sent his writings abroad. These include

critical essays on the treatises of PFG founders, Massoud Ahmadzadeh and Amir Parviz Puyan.[16]

The attack on the Siahkal gendarmerie post by survivors of Jazani's group catalyzed Iranian militants. Unrelenting despite the setbacks, in 1972 Sho'aiyan cofounded the People's Democratic Front (*Jebheh-ye Demokratik-e Khalq*, or PDF) along with Nader Shayegan Shamasbi. But in May 1973, a PDF base was raided by security forces: Shayegan, Hassan Rumina, and Nader Ata`i were killed and ten members arrested. Sho'aiyan's partitioned team survived,[17] but they joined the PFG in June. Aware of Sho'aiyan's anti-Leninist stance, the Fadaiyan detached him from his comrades and deployed him to Mashhad. Sho'aiyan had joined the PFG on the condition that his work, *Rebellion*, be given to Fadai members for discussion and feedback. He was obviously in no position to impose conditions on the PFG, and the latter's interest in accepting this group was to acquire experienced militants such as Marzieh Ahmadi Osku`i and Saba Bizhanzadeh who quickly rose in PFG ranks. The PFG leadership regarded Sho'aiyan's works with suspicion, in particular after Jazani's warning from prison reached Hamid Ashraf in 1973. Jazani had called recruitment of Sho'aiyan "dangerous" and his ideas "radical and Trotskyist."[18] The next months brought about bitter clashes between Sho'aiyan and PFG leadership, leading to his being expelled without any support in March 1974. Sho'aiyan accused the PFG of Stalinist methods and documented his observations.[19]

In the next two years, Sho'aiyan remained underground mainly by staying in the apartment of his friend Azam Heydarian and her husband Touraj. We are profoundly indebted to these individuals: they took Mostafa's writings to Mazdak Publishers in Europe. He spent most of his time functioning as an underground scholar and revising *Revolution*.[20]

At 7:40 AM on Thursday, February 5, 1976, in Estakhr Street in central Tehran, Sho'aiyan was summoned by police officer Constable Yunesi, and after his weapon jammed, he committed suicide by swallowing his cyanide capsule. On page 4 of daily newspaper *Ittila'at* (February 7, 1976), a small headline appeared: "In a Shootout a Terrorist Was Killed," and the death of a singular revolutionary and one of Iran's most wanted men was reported in two sentences. Mostafa is buried in Section 35 of Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery.[21]

THEORETICAL LEGACY: AGAINST THE LENINIST GRAIN

Sho'aiyan's extensive research of the Jangali movement appeared in the 500-page historical work, *A Review of the Relations between the Soviet Union and the Revolutionary Movement of Jungle*. Written in 1968, the book was

destroyed in the printshop by SAVAK in 1970, and a surviving typeset copy was published by Edition Mazdak (Cosroe Chaqueri) in 1976. Not knowing any foreign language,[22] Sho'aiyan had to rely on the existing sources and translations, which limited his research. And yet, the author of the most authoritative work on the Jangalis, Cosroe Chaqueri, recognizes Sho'aiyan's effort in providing "a long, interpretive analysis of the Jangali Movement."[23] In this extensive and detailed study, in spite of its shortcomings and lack of access to original documents, Sho'aiyan convincingly shows that it was Lenin who betrayed the Jangali movement, led by Mirza Kuchek Khan, and the Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran (1920–1921). He shows how the Soviets withdrew their support for the Jangalies in order to improve their diplomatic relations with England and Iran. In short, the young Soviet Union betrayed the Iranians.[24] His conclusion: "Among the enemies of Iran, the Soviet Union is the only one that has appeared (or appears) with a friendly face."[25] This research gave him a new perspective about Lenin and causes him to take an anti-Leninist position, which he theorized in *Revolution*. This position set him up against the doctrinal Left that cherished Leninism. This fundamental disagreement was the key source of contention in his debates with Momeni, the PFG theorist.

The study cultivated a deep suspicion of Leninism in Sho'aiyan. Not only did Lenin betray the Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran, he was also against militant action of the kind Iranian militant intellectuals had founded in 1971. According to Sho'aiyan, Lenin understood political assassination as "terrorism" because it involved armed conflict.[26] He quotes his comrade Shayegan saying, "The very fact that I carry a weapon and live militantly means the rejection of Leninist methods."[27] We do know that following Jazani's theory of "armed propaganda," carefully targeted political assassinations had become, in 1973–1974, the signature action of the PFG, a self-declared Marxist-Leninist group. To Sho'aiyan, the PFG embodies a contradiction by disregarding reality in favor of upholding nominal adherence to a normative ideology (Leninism). For Sho'aiyan, action is the true measure of ideas.

Rejecting Leninism forced Sho'aiyan to ambitiously produce his very own theory of revolution—a daunting task from which he did not shy away. His was a Marxian-liberation theory with undeniable affinities with the revolutionary internationalisms of Che Guevara and Tricontinentalism (and implicitly Fanonian anti-colonialism), with key elements of Marx's agency of the working class and historical determinism still in place. His *Revolution* offers a convoluted way of trying to reconcile theoretically heterogeneous elements that, I emphasize, was internationalist in scope. The Kasravite prose of this book also complicates his arguments, rendering it a slow read. Unlike his contemporaries (Jazani and Ahmadzadeh), he did not intend to theorize revolution solely for Iran, although the Iranian revolutionary movement is a

vital component in the book; instead, his *Revolution* has the grand objective of theorizing revolutions in Asian, African, and Latin American countries with similar conditions to Iran. Unconventional as it sounds, this is the work of an author who once wrote: "To accept or reject something, I do not need verses [*ayeh*]. Anyone who states something that articulates the inner relations of reality and sheds light on the objective realities—that is acceptable to me, even when [such articulations] clearly negate the verses of anyone, including Marx."[28]

ON THE ONTOLOGY OF REVOLUTIONARY INTELLECTUALS

While in PFG ranks (June 1973 to March 1974) and stationed in Mashhad, Sho'aiyan engaged in written debates, in August 1973, with Hamid Momeni (1952–1976), the PFG theoretician in those years, over a number of key theoretical issues including his work *Shuresh* but also on the *raison d'être* of the revolutionary intellectuals. Known for his written defense of Stalin and Mao Zedung, Momeni knew Russian and would hold inflexible ideas. It must be noted that his views did not represent the PFG ideology and must be regarded as an anomaly within the Fadaiyan organization that actually held diverse ideas under its Marxist-Leninist outer shell, as I have argued elsewhere.[29] Since I have already discussed the details of these debates elsewhere, I focus on its contours and significance for this intellectual biography.[30] I emphasize that this debate is rather unparalleled in twentieth-century Iran, and we are lucky it has been documented for posterity.[31]

The essence of the debate hinged on whether, in approaching the intellectuals, one must regard them, following classical Marxism, as a social group feeding off the proletarian surplus value, and thus essentially belonging to the bourgeoisie (or petite-bourgeoisie) exploitative class, or on the contrary, one can regard intellectuals as a relatively "free-standing" social group that can potentially align itself with either the bourgeoisie or the working class. In a nutshell, the former was Momeni's position, the latter Sho'aiyan's. By virtue of dwelling in a canonical and formulaic position, attributed to classical Marxism but actually developed by Soviet Marxism-Leninism, Momeni accused Sho'aiyan of eclecticism and deviationism, a disease he had contracted from his very loose association, in the 1960s, with Khalil Maleki and his followers' publications such as *Andisheh va Honar* (Thought and Art), which propagated anti-Stalinist positions of intellectuals such as Isaac Deutscher. It must be noted that Sho'aiyan was in fact deeply critical of Maleki.[32] Sho'aiyan's positions, in other words, smacked of the alleged degeneration within the international socialist movement that was

represented by the likes of Trotsky, current Soviet leaders (Khrushchev and later), Tito, Dubcek, and so forth.[33]

But what does Sho'aiyan have to offer about the revolutionary intellectuals? Sho'aiyan offers a new term to capture the essence of his generation's *revolutionary* intellectuals, those who launched armed struggle in 1971. We must note that a few cases aside, the militant activists in the 1970s were primarily university students and university graduates from either middle or lower classes. With the expansion of universities and postsecondary institutions in the 1960s—needed for training the professionals who would operate the expanding industries and institutions due to the Shah's ambitious developmental plans—these institutions had become the hubs for socializing into resistance against the Shah's autocracy. In the universities, however, the Shah's developmental projects were critically questioned for their lack of social justice components by the very young women and men who were supposed to run the country in the near future. As such, those whom the state should have incorporated were, by and large, alienated from the state. In the postcolonial climate of the 1960s in which "socialism" (in its various shades) was deemed as an alternative to ruthless capitalist exploitation and expropriation, these intellectuals had to attribute their activism to the abstract, universal agency of the working class, following Marxist theory. In other words, as Sho'aiyan subtly points out in this debate, the Iranian revolutionary intellectuals, with their non-proletarian background, had to conceal their own identity and agency to stay on par with the *dominant idioms* of Marxist-liberationist discourse in order for their revolutionary action to belong to, and be identified with, an internationalist family in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Momeni's Marxist-canonical position belonged to this dominant discourse: he subdued the revolutionary intellectuals under the "working class" from which the intellectual must constantly learn (somehow!) in order to purify themselves from their petite-bourgeois characters. In a way, Momeni's position entailed the denial of the agency of the intellectuals (himself included) so that his rigid theoretical abstraction would not be shaken. Sho'aiyan, on the other hand, reflected on his own life and found Momeni's theory inapplicable to his reality. So he challenged Momeni through a neologism: instead of using the word *rowshanfekr* or intellectual (literally: enlightened-minded) to refer to the militants like himself and his interlocutor, Sho'aiyan proposed the term *rowshangar*—literally, enlightener. As such, instead of denying, in effect, Iranian militant intellectuals their agency (Momeni's position), Sho'aiyan tried to offer a *self-understanding of the revolutionary intellectuals.* Momeni was irritated by this neologism and found it as an evidence of Sho'aiyan's lack of knowledge about Marxism[34] and thus eclecticism.

According to Sho'aiyan, "The weight of struggles against the regime (*dastgah*) is still upon the shoulders of the educated and intellectuals

(*rowshanfekran*) in Iran."[35] This is an explicit and honest admission that does not subsume the *raison d'être* of revolutionary intellectuals under pregiven, abstract concepts. "Our anti-reaction, anti-colonialism struggle has not yet expanded beyond the domain of the intellectuals and has not reached the masses," he continues. "In its most expansive moments, [the struggle] has paid a visit to a handful of craftsmen and workers and has withdrawn faster than we had imagined. [This is true] to the extent that the share of other forces, layers, and classes in this effort is so little that one could simply ignore it."[36] Therefore, the "enlighteners" of the working class, made up of diverse "layers" (*layehha*), will embark on "educating" the masses and leading them toward a popular uprising.[37] This is because each *social class is internally plural*,[38] which explains why there are multiple layers of enlighteners. These layers of enlighteners are attached to each class, but this does not mean that they have joined that class. If, economically, the intellectuals do "directly participate in the process of production," how can they be anything but the "mentor [or teacher; *amuzgar*] of the class"? That said, as the teachers of the oppressed class, the enlighteners are also "the products of the class and class conflict." And this leads to a maverick statement that positions Sho'aiyan against the dominant understanding of Marxism-Leninism among his comrades-in-arms: social mobility indicates that "class essence" (*seresht-e tabaqati*), which determines class existence (*zendegi-ye tabaqati*) is not determined simply by being born into a class. Rather, "living the life of a class determines one's class essence." Moreover, "the key (*asl*) is not that who is born into which class, but that in which class one lives and for which class one fights."[39] In short, it is not one's place in the productive process that determines one's class (position); it is what one's *politics* represents that determines one's class. Sho'aiyan relies on his experience to declare that in Iran, the intellectuals are expected to convey "the struggle to the masses."[40] As such, the enlightener (revolutionary intellectual) can actually be a free-standing agent of change that challenges the powers that be on behalf of an oppressed class, teaching the class, through the militant intellectuals' action, how to join the struggle that has already begun. This reflects precisely how Sho'aiyan understands his activism without his view being shaded by ideological lenses.

It was expected that Sho'aiyan would be attacked by Momeni for not extracting his concept of intellectual from class analysis. Perceiving the intellectuals as semiautonomous means that Sho'aiyan thinks the intellectuals can *politically* stand outside of capitalist relations of production while feeding off the labor of workers, and this was clearly sacrilegious from the standpoint of Marxist orthodoxy. In many occasions, Momeni accused Sho'aiyan of lacking proper knowledge of Marxist theory, which caused him to confuse an appropriate terminology and appeal to "arbitrary" (*mandaravardi*) words

(i.e., *rowshangar*).[41] Interestingly, Sho'aiyan does admit his lacking knowledge about Marxist class analysis,[42] but he does not see this as a deficiency: in fact, his lack enables him to construct a theory that matches his reality. Hence the singular intellectual.

In Sho'aiyan's understanding of the intellectuals, there is an interesting connection to the seminal work of Antonio Gramsci. One can trace this connection through an intertextual observation. The word "*layehha*" (layers), that Sho'aiyan deploys in August 1973 to describe how the intellectuals *represent* oppressed classes, had appeared in Manuchehr Hezarkhani's translation (from French) of Antonio Gramsci's famous essay, "On Intellectuals," published in *Arash* magazine (beginning with No. 15, February–March 1968), in which Hezarkhani had translated Gramsci's term "strata" into "*layehha*."[43] The connection is clear.[44] Sho'aiyan was an avid reader of these magazines and had published in the intellectual magazine *Jahan-e Naw* before he went underground. His heterodoxy and his reliance on sources that would fall outside of the strict Marxism-Leninism of his comrades-in-arms compensated for his lack of foundational Marxist knowledge. Instead, in a maverick way, he deploys a theory that he finds fit with his own experience as a veteran activist. For him, experience overrides sanctioned conceptual algorithms.

In fact, Sho'aiyan had an absolute disregard for schoolish Marxism to which, in his appraisal, the militants of his day uncritically adhered. The leftist "activists circulate outlawed books ineptly and without taking intellectual lessons from them. At most, they feel content with finishing to read them," he critically observes. "They read these books only to memorise some passages word for word. . . . Faced with the actual events, they only seek out models rather than exercising their brains. . . . That is why the wing (*jenah*) that calls itself 'the Left' so far has been the most uncreative tendency."[45] And the urge to merely copying the experiences of other movements leads Sho'aiyan to an astute observation. His affirmation of the reality of leftist intellectuals as the vanguard of the oppressed under dictatorship does not impede him from launching a pathology of "intellectualism," which manifests itself in grandiose self-exhibitionism. In their zeal to aggrandize their self-image, Iranian revolutionary intellectuals potentially put the movement in jeopardy through both their bodily gestures and irresponsible comments.[46] The leftist intellectuals also love to publicly show themselves as dissidents by "spreading books" (*ketabparakani*) and "sharing writings" (*neveshtehbazi*).[47] These conducts have always exposed the movement to intelligence and security forces. Because of these characteristics, observed Sho'aiyan, such leftist intellectuals inadvertently endanger the movement they wish to instigate right from the very start.

Sho'aiyan's ontology of Iranian intellectuals sheds light on the life of an entire generation of militant-leftist activists in the 1970s Iran. Instead of

subsuming the educated and university students under the theoretically sanctioned agency of the working class, he boldly acknowledges *Iranian militant intellectuals as the agents of national liberation, democracy, and socialism.* But importantly, he makes this acknowledgment at the time when there is *no popular movement for the intellectuals to represent.* His concept of the "enlightener" of the class, the teacher of the oppressed, in its diverse layers and multiple political positions, indeed marks a distinct conceptual configuration of the Iranian intellectuals, a configuration that remains true to the very existence of intellectuals to this day: the intellectuals, today still, remain the teachers of the classes they wish to represent.

THE UNDERGROUND SCHOLAR

Since the late 1960s and while increasingly engaged in the all-consuming life of an underground activist, Sho'aiyan nonetheless remained steadfast with his research and writing. How he managed to reconcile the two—living a consuming, clandestine life and becoming arguably Iran's most prolific writer of the Left—remains baffling. It suggests an untamable intellect, infinitely curious and unwaveringly committed to producing the knowledge he deemed necessary if national liberation in Iran were to be realized. And he was unrelenting despite the crushing pressure by his contemporaries (his devoted friends excluded) to submit to the Marxist norms of the time and although he rarely received encouragements for his work. Of course, as his work continued, by around 1968, he had developed a Kasravite prose that complicated his already complex theoretical positions.

In the late 1960s, aside from a daring poem titled "interrogation" (*bazjuii*),[48] he published two articles in *Jahan-e Naw*, both of which reveal the emergence of a critical mind. In "The Life History and Burial of a Theory,"[49] Sho'aiyan launches a critique of the Soviet Union's policy of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism, launched by Nikita Khrushchev. For him, as an unrelenting internationalist inspired by Che Guevara, this position was a betrayal of the world proletariat and national liberation movements. But in his criticism, he blames Lenin as the one who deviated from Marx's internationalism and was responsible for the banal Soviet policy under Khrushchev.[50] According to Sho'aiyan, national liberation movements in Asia and Africa have proven that there cannot be any peaceful coexistence with colonial-imperialist powers. Furthermore, the 1968 Prague Spring revealed the internal crises of the socialist block.[51]

In "The Words" ("*Vazhehha*"),[52] we see an interesting idea that prefigures today's "critical discourse analysis." He probes the dominant discourses pertaining to postcolonial conditions, in particular, the way the word

"development" and its derivatives are played in order to control the Third World. In retrospect, Sho'aiyan (a nonacademic) can be viewed as a forgotten precursor of scholarly, critical studies of "development." According to Sho'aiyan, the signifier "development" is deployed discursively by the imperialist powers to characterize Third World countries as "undeveloped" (*tose'eh nayafteh*), "backward" (*aqabmandeh*), "backwardly held" (*aqab negahdashteh shodeh*), "developing" (*dar hal-e tose'eh*), or "slow-growing" (*kamroshd*), thus placing advanced capitalist countries (read: colonizers) at the zenith of civilization, models to be emulated by "backward" countries. Development, therefore, is something that postcolonial countries *lack*, and they must follow, and participated in, capitalist economy for growth. These "words should be alerting," states Sho'aiyan, and the revolutionary intellectuals must educate people about the true intentions behind these words; "words should be politically (political in the widest sense) . . . 'guiding' [*rahnama*]."[53] His version of "discourse analysis" continues in another article, "A Glance at the General Disarmament Conspiracy" (1970).[54] Here, he probes the word "peace" as it was propagated by the Soviet Union in the mutual disarmament policy the USSR pursued during the Cold War in its relations with the United States. In deploying the word "peace" by the Soviet leaders, Sho'aiyan found the betrayal of the anti-colonial movements. Arms do not cause wars, he contends, and disarmament does not bring peace either.[55] Disarmament must disarm capitalism, while only revolutionary violence can terminate capitalist oppression.[56] This proves that the Soviet foreign policy of disarmament is essentially imperialistic.[57]

In *Pardehdari* (Exposing; 1968), he offered a researched work on a specific article of the Shah's reforms charter (the White Revolution) on the allocation of factory profits to the workers.[58] Through extensive statistical research aided by his old associates from Jaryan, Ali Akbar Akbari and Houshang Keshavarz Sadr,[59] Sho'aiyan brilliantly showed how this specific reform, while applying to only a small sector of Iranian industry, was meant to hegemonically connect the workers to the state by displacing the workers' target of protest and objection unto factory owners instead of the regime. This particular reform was meant to depoliticize the workers and bring them onside with the regime, a move that successfully reduced the perceived revolutionary potential of the workers, which in turn forced the leftist intellectuals to partake in revolutionary action, as discussed earlier, *on behalf of the working class.*

Sho'aiyan did not miss any opportunity to launch his own research projects and to have them published in various ways. When he could not publish his research, he would have his associates and comrades to somehow use them. Hossein Sadri, younger brother of Parviz Sadri, recalls that in March 1972, Sho'aiyan suggested that Hossein wrote his honors thesis based on

Sho'aiyan's research, "Carpet and the Social Conditions of Its Production," offering him a table of contents as well.[60]

Also, while in hiding in 1973, Sho'aiyan retrieved a copy of Arsalan Puriya's *The Record of Mosaddeq* (*Karnameh-ye Mosaddeq*) from his hidden stashes, wrote a preface to it, and arranged for its publication by Edition Mazdak (1976). He clearly knew that without disseminating the experiences of the past, the present activists were likely to repeat the errors of the previous generations. In the preface, he clearly states: "This book is very useful for those in Fadaiyan's ranks who are not familiar with the events of this period [the 1950s] as they are too young and have no access to the sources."[61] Here we discover a Sho'aiyan who emerges as a scholar that spends his underground life to construct an edited, abridged version (199 pages) of Puriya's 769-page treatise.

Last, clandestine life did not deter Sho'aiyan from collecting archival materials from previous movements—materials that were in fact "illegal." Accomplished historian Homa Nateq reports that one day in the winter of 1975, when Sho'aiyan was in hiding and one of Iran's most wanted men, he appeared at her door with a small suitcase and a briefcase filled with documents that included documents relating to the 1953 coup and various political statements and leaflets about it; the University of Tehran student publications, statements from the clergy including a printed treatise by ayatollah Khomeini in defense of the Constitution; communiqués of different groups and parties including the Liberation Movement of Iran (*Nehzat-e Azadi-ye Iran*) during the Premiership of Ali Amini (1961–1962); newspapers and publications of the time; pictures of Mosaddeq in house arrest in Ahmadabad; and his own and others' revolutionary poetry. The documents provided by Sho'aiyan motivated Nateq to use them and complete Sho'aiyan's project by publishing a summary of student protests between 1955 and 1962.[62] Heaven knows how this underground scholar collected, stored, and delivered these materials to a scholar he respected, knowing that the archives would be put to proper use and prevent the past movements from slipping into oblivion.

How many scholars in Iran have carried a pistol and a grenade, and held a cyanide capsule under their tongue while roaming the streets, and all the while collected, hid, retrieved, and delivered research materials about the dissident movements in which they participated?

CONCLUSIONS

Sho'aiyan lived as he believed. He practiced what he preached. While he died a revolutionary's death, he lived the multifaceted life of a scholar, researcher, writer, and nondoctrinal thinker. This is why, a few dedicated comrades

aside, today no one and certainly no political party claims his legacy. He single-handedly stood up to the normative theoretical expectations of the time that congealed in uncritical adherence to Marxism-Leninism. He remained an "intellectual" in the true sense of the term: he spoke truth to power while being steadfastly an uncompromising critic of status quo both among friends and against dictatorship. In light of this author's extensive studies of his life and work, this chapter tried to shed light on lesser-known aspects of his unique legacy as a formidable and maverick intellectual.

NOTES

1. Peyman Vahabzadeh, *A Rebel's Journey: Mostafa Sho'aiyan and Revolutionary Theory in Iran* (London: OneWorld, 2019).

2. Ibid.; Peyman Vahabzadeh, "Mostafa Sho'aiyan: The Maverick Theorist of the Revolution and the Failure of Frontal Politics in Iran," *Iranian Studies* 40, no. 3 (June 2007): 405–25; Peyman Vahabzadeh, "Mustafa Shu'a'iyan and Fada`iyan-i Khalq: Frontal Politics, Stalinism, and the Role of Intellectuals in Iran," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 1 (April 2007): 43–61; Peyman Vahabzadeh, "Mostafa Sho'a'iyan: An Iranian Leftist Political Thinker Unlike His Peers," *Revolutionary History* 10, no. 3 (Spring 2011): 360–75.

3. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, *Shesh nameh-ye sargoshadeh beh Sazman-e Charikha-ye Fadai-ye Khalq-e Iran* [*Six Open Letters to the Organization of Iranian People's Fadai Guerrillas*] (Tehran: Edition Mazdak, 1980), 13.

4. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, "Nameh-ye sargoshadeh beh Mazdak" ["Open Letter to Mazdak"], *Problems of Revolution and Socialism* 6 (Spring 1976): 52.

5. Bizhan Jazani, *Tarh-e jam'eshenasi va mabani-ye estratezhi-ye jonbesh-e enqelabi-ye khalq-e Iran; bakhsh-e dovvom: tarikh-e si saleh-ye siyasi fasl-e avval* [*A Sketch of the Sociology and Foundations of the Strategy of the Iranian People's Revolutionary Movement; Second Part: The Thirty-Year Political History Chapter One*] (Tehran, 1979), 86.

6. Sho'aiyan, *Six Open Letters*, 24, n. 3. See also: Peyman Vahabzadeh, "Bizhan Jazani and the Problems of Historiography of the Iranian Left," *Iranian Studies* 38, no. 1 (2005): 167–78.

7. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, "Jahad-e emruz ya tezi bara-ye taharrok" ["Today's Jihad, or a Thesis for Mobilization"], in *Chand Neveshteh* [*Selected Writings*] (Florence: Edition Mazdak, 1976). Articles in this collection are individually paginated.

8. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, *Nasl-e javan va Jebheh-ye Melli* [*Younger Generation and the National Front*], Unpublished manuscript.

9. Anush Salehi, *Mostafa Sho'aiyan va Romantism Enqelabi* [*Mostafa Sho'aiyan and Revolutionary Romanticism*] (Spånga, Sweden: Baran, 2010), 74.

10. Ibid., 76–94.

11. Sho'aiyan, *Six Open Letters*, 22. n. 2.

12. See Peyman Vahabzadeh, *Parviz Sadri: namai az yek zendegi-ye siyasi* [*Parviz Sadri: A Political Biography*] (Vancouver: Shargon Books, 2015).

13. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, *Negah-i beh ravabet-e Showravi va nehzat-e enqelabi-ye Jangal* [*A Review of the Relations Between the Soviet Union and the Revolutionary Movement of Jungle*] (Florence: Edition Mazdak, 1976).

14. Sho'aiyan, *Six Open Letters*, 14.

15. Ibid., 23, n. 2.

16. See "Chand khordehgiri-ye nab" ["Some Pure Criticisms"] and "Cheh nabayad kard?" ["What Is Not to Be Done?"], in *Selected Writings*. Articles in this collection are individually paginated.

17. Vahabzadeh, *A Rebel's Journey*, 42–43.

18. Mehdi Fatapour as quoted in Ibid., 120.

19. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, *Sheshomin nameh-ye sargoshadeh be Cherikha-ye Fadai* [*The Sixth Open Letter to the Fadai Guerrillas*] (Florence: Edition Mazdak, 1976), 5, 20, 23, 34, 42; Sho'aiyan, *Six Open Letters*, 133. See also: Vahabzadeh, "Mustafa Shu'a'iyan."

20. Salehi, *Mostafa Sho'aiyan*, 390–91, 403.

21. For a detailed biography of Sho'aiyan, see Vahabzadeh, *A Rebel's Journey*, ch. 1. Constable Yunesi was executed by Revolutionary Tribunal sometime after 1979.

22. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, "Nameh-ye sargoshadeh be Mazdak" ["Open Letter to Mazdak"]. *Problems of Revolution and Socialism* 6 (Spring 1976): 83, n. 13.

23. Cosroe Chaqueri, *The Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran, 1920–1921: Birth of the Trauma* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), xix.

24. Today we have the luxury of having Leon Trotsky's "top-secret" telegram to Lenin (June 1920) about the subject: in this telegram, Trotsky refers to the lack of revolutionary situation in the East (he specifically names Persia)—interestingly while there is actually a Soviet Republic in Gilan! The Soviet betrayal of their Iranian comrades is clear and the evidence damning. Trotsky writes: "It follows from this that a *potential Soviet revolution in the east* is now advantageous for us chiefly as a major item of *diplomatic barter with England*" (my emphasis). See: Jan M. Meijer, ed., *The Trotsky Papers 1917–1922*, Vol. II (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 209.

25. Sho'aiyan, *A Review*, 15.

26. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, *Enqelab* [*Revolution*] (Florence: Edition Mazdak, 1976), 115–16.

27. Shayegan as quoted in Sho'aiyan, *Revolution*, 116.

28. Sho'aiyan, *Six Open Letters*, 52.

29. Peyman Vahabzadeh, *A Guerrilla Odyssey: Modernization, Secularism, Democracy, and the Fadai Period of National Liberation in Iran, 1971–1979* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010), xviii, xxi, 33–34.

30. Vahabzadeh, *A Rebel's Journey*, ch. 4. See also Vahabzadeh, "Mustafa Shu'a'iyan," 56–59.

31. Hamid Momeni and Mostafa Sho'aiyan, *Juyeshi piraumun-e rowshanfekr ya rowshangar-e tabaqeh-ye kargar* [*An Inquiry into the Intellectual or the Enlightener of the Working Class*] (np: Enqelab Publishers, nd). This work has recently been republished: Mostafa Sho'aiyan and Hamid Momeni, *Darbareh-ye rowshanfekr: yek*

bahs-e qalami [*On Intellectuals: A Debate in Writing*], ed. Nasser Pakdaman (Köln, Germany: Forough Verlag, 2007).

32. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, "Chand negah-e shetabzadeh" ["Some Hasty Glances"], *Selected Writings*, 13. Articles in this collection are individually paginated.

33. Hamid Momeni, "Darbareh-ye roshanfekran-2" ["On Intellectuals-2"], in Momeni and Sho'aiyan, *An Inquiry*, 31.

34. This is a succinct summary of the debate in Momeni and Sho'aiyan, *An Inquiry*.

35. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, *Cheh bayad kard?* [*What Is to Be Done?*], Mimeographed monograph, 1968, 9.

36. Sho'aiyan, *What Is to Be Done?*, 9.

37. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, "Yek Layeh" ["A Stratum"], in Momeni and Sho'aiyan, *An Inquiry*, 5.

38. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, "Juyeshi piramun-e yek naqd" ["Inquiry about a Critique"], in *Nimgami dar rah: jebheh-ye rahaibakhsh-e khalq* [*Half-a-Step on the Way: The People's Liberation Front*] (np: Enqelab Publishers, 1972), 7.

39. Sho'aiyan, *A Review*, 59–60.

40. Sho'aiyan, *What Is to Be Done?*, 9.

41. Momeni, "On Intellectuals-2," in Momeni and Sho'aiyan, *An Inquiry*, 25.

42. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, "Pasokh-e Rafiq Sorkh" ["Response of Red Comrade"], *Problems of Revolution and Socialism* 6 (Spring 1976): 32.

43. Antonio Gramsci, "Peydayesh-e rowshanfekran" ["The Formation of Intellectuals"], trans. M. Hezarkhani, *Arash* 15 (February–March 1968): 27–36; Antonio Gramsci, "Moze'-e mokhtalef-e rowshanfekran: no'-e shahri va no'-e rustai" ["Positions of Intellectuals: Urban and Rural Types"], trans. M. Hezarkhani, *Arash* 16 (April 1968): 17–28; Antonio Gramsci, "Me'yarha-ye enteqad-e adabi" ["Criteria for Literary Criticism"], trans. M. Hezarkhani, *Arash* 19 (January–February 1969): 17–21; Antonio Gramsci, "Chand noqteh atf-e moqadamati" ["Introductory Remarks"], trans. M. Hezarkhani, *Arash* 20 (April 1969): 63–93. The first two articles are the two parts of Gramsci's famous essay on intellectuals. See: Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1971), 5–22.

44. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 5; Gramsci, "The Formation of Intellectuals" (Persian), 27.

45. Sho'aiyan, *What Is to Be Done?*, 17.

46. Ibid., 9–12.

47. Ibid., 14, 16–17.

48. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, "Bazjuii" ["Interrotation"], *Jahan-e Naw* 24, no. 1 (April 1969): 160.

49. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, "Sargozasht va dafn-e yek te`ori" ["The Life History and Burial of a Theory"], *Jahan-e Naw* 23, nos. 10–12 (Winter 1969): 26–35. This article was republished under the same title in his *Selected Writings* (1976), which I subsequently reference.

50. Sho'aiyan, "The Life History and Burial of a Theory," in *Selected Writings*, 4–6. Articles in this collection are individually paginated.

51. Sho'aiyan, "The Life History," 7–8.

52. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, "Vazhehha" ["The Words"], *Jahan-e Naw* 24, no. 3 (August–September 1969): 91–102; This article was republished under the same title in his *Selected Writings* (1976), which I subsequently reference.

53. Sho'aiyan, "The Words," in *Selected Writings*, 6. Articles in this collection are individually paginated.

54. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, "Negahi beh towte`eh-ye khal'-e selah-e omumi" ("A Glance at the General Disarmament Conspiracy"), in *Selected Writings* (1976). The article was originally intended for *Faslha-ye Sabz* but the magazine was shut down before publishing it.

55. Sho'aiyan, "A Glance," in *Selected Writings*, 4. Articles in this collection are individually paginated.

56. Ibid., 12, 14, 18.

57. Ibid., 20, 38.

58. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, "Pardehdari" ["Exposing"], in *Selected Writings* (1976). Articles in this collection are individually paginated.

59. Salehi, *Mostafa Sho'aiyan*, 101.

60. Vahabzadeh, *Parviz Sadri*, 102, n. 91.

61. Mostafa Sho'aiyan, "Preface," in Arsalan Puriya, *Karnameh-ye Mosaddeq* [*The Record of Mosaddeq*], ed. Mostafa Sho'aiyan (Florence: Mazdak, 1976), v.

62. Homa Nateq, "Sarkub-e jonbesh-e danshjui (1334–1341)" ["Crackdown on the Student Movement (1955–1962)"], *Zaman-e Naw* 10 (November 1985): 143.

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Part V

IRANIAN RELIGIOUS THINKERS: INTELLECTUALS OR IDEOLOGUES?

Chapter 13

Iranian Islamic Thinkers and Modernity

Farzin Vahdat

Modernity is a complex phenomenon with multiple dimensions and different phases. To make matters even more complicated, there is little consensus among scholars as to how to attempt to define modernity. In the tradition of Critical Theory, however, going back to Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Frankfurt Scholl theorists such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, as well as Jurgen Habermas, modernity has been conceptualized in terms of human subjectivity. What I mean by subjectivity is that in the modern period a critical mass of individuals have acquired a good degree of power, autonomy, volition, discipline, and agency. As a result, modern individuals created and support a sociopolitical system that allows and even encourages freedoms of various types. This system brings nature under human control through science and technology, with positive and negative results.[1]

Many of the modern Islamic thinkers in Iran, and elsewhere, have subscribed to a notion of human subjectivity, which I call "mediated subjectivity" or indirect subjectivity. In this circuitous paradigm, first the attributes connected to subjectivity, such as power, knowledge, volition, and agency, are projected onto the omniscient and omnipotent God of monotheism, and then the very same attributes are reappropriated for humans. Many of the modern Muslim thinkers have articulated this appropriation as humans being the vicegerent and successor of God on earth, that is, the Qur'anic notion of *kalifatollah fi al-ardh*.[2]

In this chapter, I discuss five Iranian Islamic thinkers—Afghani, Shariati, Khomeini, Motahhari, and Soroush—who have had major impacts on the sociopolitical discourse in modern Iran

JAMAL AL-DIN AFGHANI/ASSADABADI (1839–1897)

Afghani can be considered one of the first Muslim thinkers who attempted to bring about a modernist reform to Islam and the Muslim world.

At the outset, it must be mentioned that Afghani in fact promulgated two very different discourses for his followers. One discourse was aimed at the Muslim elite. This discourse was very much in agreement with modern critical thought and reasoning, two of the most significant components of human subjectivity. His other discourse, what may be called his "populist discourse" was addressed to the average Muslim and as such denied any notion of *individual* subjectivity. Rather, it promoted a sense of collective agency in order to counter Western imperialism.

It is noteworthy that in Afghani's "elitist discourse" there is a critical approach that is a part and parcel of his commitment to the unorthodox "Islamic" philosophy. "If someone looks deeply into the question," he claimed, "he will see that science rules the world. There was, is and will be no rule in the world but science."[3] But, a few pages later he qualified his statement by saying that modern science is undergirded by philosophy:

> A science is needed to be the comprehensive soul for all the sciences, so that it can preserve their existence, apply each of them in its proper place, and become the cause of progress of each one of those sciences. The science that has the position of a comprehensive soul and the rank of a preserving force is the science of *falsafa* or philosophy, because its subject is universal. It is philosophy that shows man human prerequisites. It shows the sciences what is necessary. It employs each of the sciences in its proper place. If a community did not have philosophy, and all the individuals of that community were learned in the sciences with particular subjects, those sciences could not last in that community for a century . . . that community without the spirit of philosophy could not deduce conclusions from these sciences. The Ottoman government and the Khedive of Egypt have opened up schools for the teaching of the new sciences for a period of sixty years and until now they have not received any benefits from those sciences.[4]

What is of crucial importance is that Afghani grounded his conceptualization of philosophy in the idea of reasoning and critical argumentation as he contended that "the father and mother of knowledge [*elm*] is reasoning [*borhan*] and reasoning is neither Aristotle nor Galileo. The truth exists where there is reasoning."[5] In another essay entitled *Fawaid Falsafa* (The Benefits of Philosophy), Afghani took his argument one step further by claiming that philosophy was even more significant than revelation and the latter is but a preparatory stage for the achievement of philosophy. In other words, Afghani argued that revelation

was a base that would lead the way to a subjectivist epistemology based on philosophy. He first argued in favor of the centrality of critical faculties in humans:

> Philosophy is the escape from the narrowness of animal sense-impression into the wide area of human perception. It is the removal of darkness of bestial illusions with the light of natural intelligence; the transformation of blindness and lack of insight into clear-sightedness and insight.[6]

Then he discussed the role of Islam and the Qur'an in preparing the pre-Islamic "savage" Arabs to embrace the philosophical traditions developed by more civilized nations:

> In sum, in that Precious Book [The Qur'an] with a solid verse, He planted the roots of philosophical sciences into purified souls, and *opened the road* for man to become a man. When the Arab people came to believe in that Precious Book they were transferred from the sphere of ignorance to knowledge, from blindness to vision, from savagery to civilization, and from nomadism to settlement. They understood their needs for intellectual and spiritual accomplishment and for gaining a living.[7]

These ideas later developed, Afghani argued, and Arabs realized that they could not develop further without the help of other nations: "Therefore, notwithstanding the glory, splendor, and greatness of Islam and Muslims, in order to exact and elevate knowledge, they [Arabs] lowered their heads and showed humility before the lowest of their subjects, who were Christians, Jews and Magians [Persians] until with their help, they translated the philosophical sciences from Persian, Syriac and Greek into Arabic. Hence it became clear that their Precious Book was the first teacher of philosophy to the Muslims."[8]

In the same essay, Afghani acknowledged the necessity of satisfaction of human material needs such as agriculture and animal husbandry, procurement of water, construction of shelter, and preservation of health—all achieved through sciences and technology.[9] Yet, he considered critical philosophy to be the foundation of these sciences and technologies: "It [philosophy] is the foremost cause of the production of knowledge, the creation of sciences, the invention of industries and the initiation of crafts."[10] Afghani's most explicit statement of his critical thinking was articulated in an article published on May 18, 1883, in *Journal des Debats* in response to Ernest Renan's uncritical attack on Islam as being inherently against modern civilization. In this article, Afghani demonstrated the baselessness of Renan's racist attitudes toward Arabs and yet praised the superiority of critical thought, that is, scientific and philosophical thought over revelation.[11]

In his "populist discourse," however, where he was addressing average Muslim, Afghani was very much against individual subjectivity for which he used the French term *egoism*. He wrote that for those who are corrupted by disbelief, "the quality of *egoism* [in French transliteration] overcame them. The quality of *egoism* consists of self-love to the point that if a personal profit requires a man having that quality to let the whole world be harmed, he would not renounce that profit but would consent to the harm of everyone in the world."[12]

Afghani's "populist discourse" is most sharply expressed in a famous essay entitled "The Truth about the Neicheri Sect and Explanation of the Neicheris," published in 1881. In this essay, Afghani depicted a picture of an anti-imperialist collective subject, possessing political and military power incarnated in an Islamic nation, which could stand up to Western hegemony.[13] He identified the concept of "social solidarity" [*hey'at-e ejtemaiye*] as the linchpin of this collective subject, which imperialism was destroying. Drawing on Ibn Khldun's parallel concept of *asabiyah*, Afghani's concept of social solidarity explained the longevity of civilizations and nations in terms of sets of beliefs, which bonded the members of a society together and protected that society from external invasion and internal disintegration.

The Neicheris or "materialists," as Afghani in his "populist discourse" lumped together the unorthodox and critical thinkers, the socialists, communists, and nihilists, were in his view bent on destroying the social solidarity of nations, Islamic or otherwise, throughout history.[14] What made social solidarity possible, in his analysis, was religious faith and specifically faith in a Transcendental Deity who would in the next world mete out reward and punishment as recompense to individual believers' deeds while living on earth.[15]

ALI SHARIATI (1933–1977)

Despite his short life, Shariati had a major impact on Iranian intellectual and sociopolitical life. Like ayatollah Khomeini and Muttahari, Shai'ati's discourse belongs to what I called "mediated subjectivity." In this scheme, human subjectivity is indirect and *contingent on God's subjectivity*. Thus, while human subjectivity is not denied, it is never independent of God's subjectivity and in this sense, it is "mediated." This situation is usually conducive to a great conflict between the divine subjectivity and human subjectivity which gives rise to various other types of conflicts. One of the sharpest conflicts that result from this core conflict is, as we will see, is the constant and schizophrenic shifting of grounds between confirmation and negation of human subjectivity in general, because once humans are endowed with subjectivity it might appear to negate God's sovereignty.

Another characteristic of mediated subjectivity is a constant oscillation between individual subjectivity and that of collectivity, particularly in the discourse of Shariati.

One of the central themes in the thought of Shariati was the idea of selfhood and identity.[16] He believed that the Iranian sense of selfhood is being destroyed by Western imperialism and devoted his considerable talent to restore the Iranian self. The most essential question to ask, however, is to what "self" did Shariati want to return? What were the constituent elements of this utopian ipseity that Shariati led his followers to?

There is no doubt that the roots of this "self" to which he felt a calling to return were firmly established in the Islamic past in general and the Shii religion in particular. However, this did not mean to exclude Iranian culture as such. On different occasions, Shariati alluded to the specific contributions of the Iranian culture to the making of Islamic civilization.[17] It would be a grave mistake, though, if we assume the historical "self" to which Shariati alluded was simply a return to the primal past. The historical self of Shariati was the product of a radical reinterpretation of religion and culture. In an article titled "Return to the Self" (not to be confused with the book with the same title), Shariati used the term *rushanfekri* to refer to something very close to the concept of modern enlightenment.[18] But he insisted that each society should achieve *rushanfekri* based on its history, culture, and language.

In an essay entitled *Baz Gasht be Khish* [return to the self], Shariati explicitly rejected the traditional self that has been concocted and imposed on Iranians by tradition as "neo-reactionary" and "antiquarian" (*kohneh parasti*).[19] The "new" self that Shariati was proposing was based on a reading of monotheistic metaphysics, which, implicitly or explicitly, constitutes the ontological foundations of what I have called "mediated subjectivity," common among the thinkers discussed here. Thus, Shariati posited human subjectivity based on God's subjectivity. Alluding to the Qur'anic conception of humans as God's vicegerent, or His successor on earth, he wrote:

> Man, before whom the angels prostrated themselves, is the successor of God in nature. As privy to God's secrets and as His special trustee, who possesses His character and shares His spirit, man has volition, freedom, responsibility, vision, consciousness, creativity, perfection, beauty and wisdom. He [man] is the creator of his destiny and responsible for his time, society, faith, culture, history and future.[20]

As we can see in the passage above, Shariati enumerated all the elements of modern subjectivity. He even identified human volitive capacity as the grounding of humans' roundabout subjectivity. "The only superiority that man has over all other beings in the universe, lies in his will . . . Therefore,

man is the successor of God on earth and his kin. The spirit of God and man are nourished from the same source of excellence, that is having volition."[21]

Yet, in Shariati's scheme, as well as some other thinkers discussed in this chapter, the subjectivist autonomy of humans entails submission to God's will. Shariati and most other Islamic thinkers, implicitly or explicitly, perceive this as contradictory and much of their philosophical efforts are devoted to smooth away this presumed contradiction.[22]

The mechanism that Shariati utilized to arrive at human subjectivity was an interpretation of the metaphysics of monotheism that viewed human existence in terms of a theomorphic "journey" or "movement," which started at the level of "matter" and would carry and elevate humans to the level of God's spirit:

> In the language of religion, man is a divine essence, an essence superior to matter and dominant over nature. He originates from God's Spirit, which means he possesses God's attributes. But since the Fall [*Hubut*] onto the earth, nature and society, man has forgotten his "primal self-divinity" (*khud khodai nukhustin*) and merely allows his material and animal inclination to develop. As a result, the sublime values invested in him die out and he considers himself merely as the highest life in the evolution of animals. He forgets that he is a spark from the divine realm, that his mission is to "divinize" the world and that his being is God-like.[23]

On a deeper ontological level, however, Shariati's journey toward subjectivity does not arrive in subjectivity, but in an "annihilation" in God. For example, in a letter apparently written to his son and appended to his mystical book *Kavir* (The Desert), he advanced the analogy of the "river" and the "ocean" to describe the relation between God and humans in their theomorphic journey toward subjectivity. Using the tropes of the "sun" and the "ocean" to represent the divine origin and influence, he wrote that while the river originates from the ocean, it is frozen and static without the sun's rays that impart consciousness to it and make it move again to the direction of the ocean. But once it is reunited with the ocean it is in the form of "submergence" and "fusion," implying the surrender of human subjectivity to that of God's.[24]

In a similar vein, in a passage that may amount to an ode to human subjectivity, found in another poetic and mystical work, the *Fall*, Shariati wrote:

> Man is an animal who just like a tree grows toward the sky above. He is the tall statue of rebellion who has risen from the lowliness of the mundane world toward the beyond. He has been created in the image of imagination and dream to pierce all ceilings. All his organs are swords fighting whatever "is." He fights against whatever holds him, whatever imposes on him. He has a rebellious neck

to stick out. He has not submitted to the corrosive effects of the elements and has not surrendered in weakness; he has not conformed to the bonds of nature. He wishes to break, tear, pierce, clutter, soar and be liberated. He is the tree of rebellion, the flower of negation. His answer to the eternal "is" is "no." By gradual negation of nature he affirms himself, creates himself, he "becomes." Nietszchean nihilism is true, the [Hegelian] return to the Absolute Idea, the Absolute I, is true.[25]

But immediately after this passage, a "voice from the depth" of his "nature" calls him not to listen to anything except revelation, which is encoded as the "pure blue color of the heaven."

As I have tried to demonstrate above so far, Shariati's discourse attributed a type of conditional subjectivity to human beings. In some parts of his discourse, Shariati explicitly addressed human subjectivity in terms of agency. He used the Aristotelian notion of "efficient cause" (*elliyat-e fa'eli*, literally active cause) to refer to human agency. However, his notion of agency did not refer to the individual but the collectivity. He wrote:

> In the Qur'an, the "Messenger" is not considered as the agent [*Ellat-e Fa'eli*] of basic changes in history. Rather he is introduced as the carrier of the message who has to show the true path to the people and his mission ends at that point. It is then up to the people whether to choose or not to choose this message and truth, and there are no "accidents" possible in this religion since everything is in the hands of God. In general, the audiences of every creed and religion are the principal agent of change in their community and because of that we see the Qur'an always addresses the "people" [*nas*]. The prophet is appointed for the people, he talks to the people, he is questioned by the people. The causes of progress, change and decline are the people and people are responsible for history and society.[26]

Based on the above observation, Shariati concluded that Islam was the first social philosophy which considered the people, and not the elite or the "great individuals," as the principle agent of history and directly responsible for their society.[27] Shariati placed so much emphasis on this issue in his discourse that thematically he equated "the people" with the notion of God. To be certain, he emphasized, theologically speaking, the idea of equating people with God would be blasphemous. But in the social context, "we can always substitute the people for God," since otherwise the Qur'anic injunction, "to give God interest-free loans," for example, does not make any sense.[28] In this scheme of equating people with God, however, Shariati saw to it that by "the people" he meant the collectivity by opposing the latter to the individual.[29]

Shariati's notion of mediated subjectivity of the collectivity is also captured in his definition of the "Perfect Man," a reinterpretation of a similar notion among the medieval Islamic philosophers:

> [A Perfect Man] is a man who has not been rendered one dimensional, broken, defective and self-estranged by life. By submitting to God, he has been liberated from all submissions; by surrendering to His absolute will he has rebelled against all tyranny. The Perfect Man is one who has immersed his ephemeral "individuality" in "eternity of human collectivity" and by negating his "self" he became enduring.[30]

Shariati's obsession with collectivity caused him to reject, for the most part, notions of individuality or liberal democracy. As a result, he attacked the idea of the individual and civil freedoms on the grounds that they merely provide a license to indulge in "immoral" and criminal activities.[31] Moreover, Shariati contended, the only people who benefit from these freedoms are those with money and power and not the ordinary citizen.[32] He interpreted the Qur'anic concept of *isar* ([Ar. *ithar*] Altruism) as the "death of the individual" so that the "other" may simply live.[33]

Despite Shariati's antipathy toward the individual as the carrier of this subjectivity, the logic of his own metaphysics seems to have forced him at times to reluctantly recognize the inevitability of the individual in any scheme involving human subjectivity. Indeed, in some of his writings, he seems to have waged a theoretical struggle to suppress the emergence of the individual as the carrier of his mediated and inchoate subjectivity. The most compelling reason forcing him to recognize the centrality of individual subjectivity, however, is the pivotal role he ascribed to the concept of human responsibility and its political cognate social commitment. He realized that the concept of responsibility cannot have any meaning without the individual as the subject. This strong logic forced him to assert:

> When my "I" is absolutely negated and my "self" is lost, the sense of responsibility in my feelings and actions is meaningless, and when you tell the individual you are merely a fruit of your society and acquired all your shape, color and even your being from your environment, naturally he would not develop a sense of being responsible for his attributes and actions.[34]

Shariati's political philosophy betrays a close affinity to his ontological views. As we saw earlier, his metaphysics was informed by an ontological movement, or what I have termed a theomorphic journey, from our "lowly" base in nature and matter to the realm of perfection akin to that of the Divinity. For him the "perfection" of society was the embodiment of this movement. He

used the Islamic term *Ommat* (Arabic *Umma*) to convey this notion. *Ommat* in Islamic tradition means the larger Islamic community of believers, the sole basis of which, at least in theory, if not practice, is the faith of the members. *Ommat* developed early in the Islamic history as the larger community of believers to transcend the tribal structure of pre-Islamic Arabia, and as such is often interpreted in contradistinction to the "modern" notion of the nation-state. But Shariati did not focus on this issue in his reconceptualization of *Ommat* and instead emphasized what he viewed as the "becoming" and movement of society toward a putative perfection:

> *Ommat* is comprised of a collectivity in which the members, under a great and sublime leadership, feel the responsibility for the progress and perfection of the society in their blood and life and with their convictions. They are committed to a view of life, not as "being," the comfortable stagnation of existing, but as "becoming" and moving toward absolute perfection, absolute self-conscious-ness and the constant creation of sublime values . . . [As such, this is the mean-ing of the Qua'ranic verse:] "we are from God and to God we return."[35]

For such an ideal community to achieve its goal of transcendence, Shariati contended, leadership is necessary and he called this leadership *Imamat*. Traditionally, the concept of *Imamat* (literally meaning leadership in Arabic) has been used in Shiism to designate the leadership of the Shii community after the prophet by his descendants through Ali and his daughter Fatima and opposed to the Sunni institution of Caliphate. But Shariati, claiming a seman-tic relationship between the terms *Ommat* and *Imamat*, defined the latter as the leadership of the community in pursuit of his ontological goal:

> *Ommat* is a community in the process of "moving" and "becoming" toward absolute transcendence. Since now we understand *Ommat* we can easily find a clear definition for *Imamat* and its social role. Accordingly, *Imamat* is the leadership that guides the *Ommat* in this movement.[36]

Based on these premises, Shariati distinguished between two types of polity. For the first type of polity, found in the modern West he used the term *poli-tique*, in French transliteration. By this Shariati meant a community in which the civil society is in charge of governing and the state merely "administers" its affairs. For the second type of polity, corresponding to his conceptualiza-tion of *Ommat*, he chose *siyasat*, a Perso-Arabic term meaning politics but with connotations of pedagogy and guidance. In the *politique*, Shariati com-plained, the leadership has no responsibility to undertake any social reform or to ameliorate the public's consciousness so that the "youth can be improved in their thinking and immoral people become moral." These are not within

the sphere of the responsibilities of the state.[37] But in the East where *siyasat* is the epitome of polity, it is the responsibility of the government to transform people's moral, mental, and social conditions from what they "are" to what they "ought" to be.[38] This mode of thinking led Shariati to assert that the leader of Ommat:

> Unlike the president of the United States, or the host of a radio talk show, is not committed to act according to the wishes of his constituency. He is not committed to providing the maximum of happiness and gratification for members of society. Rather he must lead the society, by the fastest, shortest, and the most straight route, toward perfection, even though this perfection my cause pain for the members . . . a point that needless to say, they have consciously accepted and is not imposed on them.[39]

The pedagogic element in Shariati's conceptualization of polity led him to invoke images of children in need of "kindergarten" (*kudakestan*) to describe the citizens of Iran.[40] Even worse, he reinvoked the concept of the "sheep" in need of leadership, thereby reducing the autonomous subject as citizen back to the *ra'iyat* (literally sheep) of the Qajar period. Thus Shariati's notion of "committed guidance" (*rahbari moteahed*), as he called his idea of leadership, negated the possibility of popular sovereignty, at least for a few generations to come. He wrote:

> The principle of democratic government, in contrast to the sacrosanct exhilaration that this word carries, is opposed to the principle of revolutionary change and spiritual guidance. In a society in which political leadership is based on a particular ideology and its agenda is the transformation of corrupt and putrid traditions, the leadership (government) cannot be based on the views and wishes of the public; the government cannot stem from the degenerative masses.[41]

For a country like Iran, Shariati prescribed a combination of a charismatic leader and a leader "selected" by people but not responsible to them. In his book *Ommat va Immamat*, he focused on the idea of a charismatic leader as the Imam who is neither appointed, elected nor even designated by the prophet.[42] The right to be the leader, Shariati asserted, "is an innate right, inhering in the essential quality of the leader and not in external factors of 'election' or 'appointment.'"[43] In contrast to a democratic polity, in a "regime of guidance" people do not elect their leaders, they merely recognize them.[44] In the absence of a charismatic leader, the leader may not be elected by popular vote, but "selected" by the "experts" who are trusted by people and he would not be responsible to the populace, but to "principles of guidance" according to which he has to move the society toward its higher goals.[45]

In the book *Ommat va Immamat*, which contains most of his thoughts on the issue, Shariati grounded his arguments against popular sovereignty in the historical context of the cases of succession following the death of the Prophet and the emergence of Shiism. Therefore, Shariati and later his followers could argue that his anti-democratic thought had merely a historical significance and had nothing to do with our time. To be sure, Shariati did not completely dismiss the possibility of a participatory and democratic polity, even though he did not elaborately discuss this theme. For example, in his influential book, *Safavid Shiism and Alavid Shiism*, he briefly mentioned that the Islamic polity after the prophet and the twelve Shii Imams should be grounded in popular sovereignty based on the two Islamic principles of "consultation" (*shura*) and consensus (*ijma'*).[46] Indeed, as I have been trying to demonstrate, Shariati's discourse contains both elements—elements that are against the notion of popular sovereignty and citizenship rights and those that are in favor of them.

The significance of Shariati and his discourse for Iranian history may symbolically be understood by his references to his intentions of bringing forth an "Islamic Protestantism." By Islamic Protestantism, he meant the idea of using religion itself to reform religion and culture on a large scale. As a result, Shariati can be viewed as a person who introduced an elemental form of subjectivity, albeit inchoate and collectivist in nature, to a large number of Iranians hitherto not much affected by the revolution of subjectivity in modern times.

RUHULLAH KHOMEINI (1902–1988)

In his ontological reflections, Khomeini, in a similar manner to Shariati, posited a move from the material sphere to the spiritual realm, to be accomplished both by the individual and society. Islam, he argued, had provided the most effective means to achieve these goals. But, early in its history, Islam was engulfed by the Jews and their cultural intrigues and intellectual distortions.[47] Moreover, Khomeini contended, the same destructive forces were aimed at Islamic culture by the Crusaders and later in the past 300 years by the colonialists who have tried to neutralize Islam as a cultural force because it obstructed their economic and political schemes.[48]

In recent history, however, the external enemies of Islam and Iran were not alone in their aim of destroying Islam. They were greatly aided by the "internal elements," that is, the secular intellectuals, who had "lost" their "selves" in the face of the cultural onslaught of the West.[49] Using the terminology that may be traced back to Al-e Ahmad, Khomeini integrated the latter's concept of "self-loss" (*khud bakhtegi*) in his discourse to describe the Iranians' loss of their authenticity.[50]

The mechanism through which this "self" was lost and the state of "inauthenticity" was ushered in and then perpetuated, Khomeini believed, consisted of the separation between religion and politics beginning in the early stages of Islam that has continued in our own time owing to the machinations of the imperialists.[51] Accordingly, he concluded that the establishment of the theocratic state, to enforce the Islamic law, was the most reasonable means of fulfilling the frustrated goals of Islam.

Khomeini had shown a keen interest in the "moral development" of the "masses" as early as the 1940s, when in his book *Secrets Unveiled*, he responded to the Kasravite brand of modernity that only religion is capable of transcending the materialist culture of modern times.[52] Khomeini's views on the goal of the development of "refined man" rested on a set of metaphysical assumptions which were not too different from those of Shariati and, as we will see next, Motahhari. In fact, drawing on Islamic Gnostic tradition, Khomeini often expressed what I called the "journey toward subjectivity" in Shariati, in terms of agape, an attraction or love toward the divine:

> Man has certain properties which are not present in any other being. One such property is the desire for absolute power and not limited power; [for] absolute perfection and not limited perfection. And since absolute power and perfection are realized in none other than God, man by nature seeks God and he is not aware of it . . . [Those who seek worldly power and perfection] do not understand that in all beings the attraction to absolute perfection is the love of God and the tragedy is that we do not understand and mistake one for the other.[53]

Just as it was the case with Shariati, the upshot of Khomeini's prescribed ontological migration away from nature also ends not in the self-realization of the subject but the annihilation of the potential subject.[54] Also like Shariati, he utilizes a "hydraulic" image, not the river and the ocean as Shariati did, but the "drop and the ocean" or the "wave and the ocean."[55] Thus, Khomeini's partially subjectivist ontology manifested in his notion of migration to a higher plateau is also simultaneously contravened by an opposite trend rooted within the very same ontological system.

Khomeini believed in a very "creationist" view wherein beings are brought into existence by "something external to them."[56] While he implicitly rejected any panentheistic interpretation of existence, he did not absolutely deny the possession of subjectivity by humans but made it contingent upon the Subjectivity of the Supreme Essence: "Beings that are subordinate to the Supreme Name also possesses perfection, but to an inferior degree, one limited by their inherent [limited] capacity."[57] Thus, we can see this ontological contrariety of positing potential human subjectivity and negating it

at the same time, also constituting the core of "mediated subjectivity" in Khomeini's discourse.

As early as 1944, in response to the criticism of the followers of Ahmad Kasravi (d. 1946) for interpreting some Qura'nic verses as the negation of human agency and volition, Khomeini acknowledged human agency and only posited the "support" of God as having an influence on human actions. He maintained that human mind has such a capacity to enable us to choose between good and evil, but he immediately qualified his statement by asserting that human freedom is within the framework of Divine Determinations (*Taqdirat-e Elahi*).[58]

In fact, in Khomeini's view, humans are neither devoid of subjectivity and agency nor are they fully in possession of these, rather a position in between:

Freedom . . . implying that [human] beings may be independent in their agency and being created . . . and necessity, implying the denial of all effects attributed to any entity other than God and claiming that God directly organizes and effects everything, are both impossible. Therefore, the true position is a position in between. This means that creatures [i.e., humans] are "effective possibilities" [*emkan-e moaser*] and capable of causality [*elliyat*] but not immediately and independently. In all the universe there are no independent agents [*fa'el mostaqel*] except the sublime God. And all beings, as they are not independent in their essences, in their actions and attributes they are not independent either. These beings [i.e., humans] have certain attributes, and effect certain actions and achieve certain deeds but not independently.[59]

Because of mediated subjectivity, Khomeini, very much like Shariati, often vacillated between upholding human agency and denying it at the same time. But, owing to his theological conservatism, he had a greater tendency toward negating it. In the abstraction of pure theology, he could not admit any type of existential independence for humans. In the more abstract sections of his book *Talab va Eradeh* (*Desire and Will*), he considered human existence "in-another" and not "in-itself."[60] In this context, he also cited those verses of the Qur'an that deny the direct subjectivity of humans.[61] But in the more concrete contexts involving human volitive capacity, Khomeini attempted a reconciliation:

Man, therefore, while he is a free agent [*fa'el mokhtar*], he himself is the shadow of the Free Agent and his agency a shadow of the Sublime God's Agency. In brief, even though God's will is applied to the Most Perfect Order [*Nazm-e Attam*, i.e., the universe], it is in no conflict with man being a free agent, as the Divine transcendental knowledge which is the origin of the universe, is in no conflict with human freedom and in reality confirms it.[62]

Khomeini's subscription to the ethics of responsibility compelled him to recognize human freedom and subjectivity. We have to choose between good and evil, between "prosperity" and "adversity" (*sa'adat va shaqavat*) by choosing correct beliefs and practices.[63] As a result, Khomeini dismissed the notion of human "nature" (*seresht*) and predetermined character.[64] Those born with "good" or "evil" natures are equally free to choose their deeds and equally responsible for them.[65] This more positive side of Khomeini's cosmology led him to interpret Islam as a religion of action and activism, and also militarism. Throughout his career, Khomeini stressed that Islam is a religion of action and movement against oppression. Moreover, as early as 1944, he discussed the promotion of martial skills in Islam, even betting on horse racing and shooting competitions.[66]

During the revolution of 1979 and even after, Khomeini made a clear connection between human "dignity" and a militarist subjectivity. In an address on the occasion of the Iranian New Year on March 21, 1980, he said:

> Beloved youth, it is in you that I place my hopes. With the Qur'an in one hand and a gun in the other, defend your dignity and honor so well that your adversaries will be unable even to think of conspiring against you. At the same time, be so compassionate toward your friends that you will not hesitate to sacrifice everything you possess for their sake. Know well that the world today belongs to the oppressed, and sooner or later they will triumph. They will inherit the earth and build the government of God.[67]

As such, in the course of the Islamic Revolution in late 1970s and the eight years of Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988), Khomeini encouraged the people of Iran, particularly the popular classes, to realize the limited and inchoate subjectivity that he ascribed to them.

In his political writings, Khomeini emphasized the training of professional revolutionists. He also insisted on a similar approach to apply ascetic measures to the "masses" for their "refinement." In his discourse, the two parallel notions of ascetic revolutionarism for the few and refinement from above for the "masses" converged in an all-important concept of what he called the "Governance of the Jurist." Khomeini's ideas on the establishment of a theocratic state in which the clerics would take over the reins of political rule on behalf of the Hidden Imam whose divine mandate he believed was delegated to them were the result of a long process of development in his discourse. His ideas on the subject came to fruition in a book entitled *Velayat-e Faqih* (*Governance of the Jurist*), first published in early 1970s. By choosing this title, Khomeini meant to convey two ideas. One was that political rule and government, in the absence of direct divine revelation or "inspiration" through the Prophet or the Imams, respectively, would devolve to the Islamic

jurists and among them to the highest juridical authority. The other message was that the people are much in need of a caretaker, just as much as children need a custodian, to oversee their moral development and refinement, because *velayat* also means custodianship.

Thus, in Khomeini's discourse, we also encounter a set of contradictions that he could not resolve. On the one hand, he posited a form of contingent subjectivity for the people and encouraged them to realize it. On the other hand, he considered the people as children in need of a custodian who would force them acquire probity and virtue.

MORTEZA MOTAHHARI (1920–1979)

Just like Shariati and Khomeini, but perhaps more articulately and explicitly, the ontological cornerstone of Motahhari's discourse is based upon a movement away from nature to beyond nature, to metaphysics. Since early in his career, Motahhari had committed himself to challenge Marxian discourse and what he considered to be Western materialist thought. In his challenging of the philosophical tenets of Marxian thought, Motahhari, relying on an interpretation of monotheistic ontology, had posited a dual human mode of existence. On the one hand, he posited an animal, material, and corporeal side of human existence, and on the other hand, a "humanness" and cultural and spiritual life opposed to the former. Marxism, he argued, prioritized the first aspect of human existence and hence denied humans' true humanity by emphasizing the animal and material side of humanity. He then proceeded to present his ontological views, which shed much light on his most fundamental beliefs about human existence and what I have termed the movement toward subjectivity, worth quoting at length. In contrast to the Marxist view of human existence, he wrote:

> The truth is that the course of man's evolution begins with animality and finds it culmination in humanity. This principle holds true for individual and society alike: Man at the outset of his existence is in a material body; through an essential evolutionary movement, he is transformed into spirit or a spiritual substance. What is called the human spirit is born in the lap of the body; it is there that it evolves and attains independence. Man's animality amounts to a nest in which man's humanity grows and evolves. It is a property of evolution that the more the organism evolves, the *more independent, self-subsistent and governing of its own environment it becomes. The more man's humanity evolves, in the individual or in society, the more it steps toward independence and governance over the other aspects of his being. An evolved human individual has gained a relative ascendancy over his inner and outer environments* [i.e., inner and outer nature].[68]

This unmistakable metaphysics of subjectivity lead Motahhari, just like Khomeini and Shariati, to the realm of consciousness as a high point in the ontological movement, but it again landed ultimately not in Hegelian self-consciousness but in religious beliefs and faith. As Motahhari continued in the same passage:

> The evolved individual is the one who has been freed of dominance by the inner and outer environments, but depends upon belief and faith . . . The more evolved human society becomes, the greater the autonomy of its cultural life and the sovereignty of that life over its material life. Man of the future is the cultural animal; he is the man of belief, faith, and method, not the man of stomach and waistline.[69]

Even though Motahhari ultimately relinquished the notion of self-consciousness by collapsing it into faith and belief, on occasions he did allude to the importance of the emergence of self-consciousness. In a treatise on the philosophy of ethics, for example, in which he struggled with modern European philosophy, he argued that the prophets have come to transform human consciousness to self-consciousness, the achievement of which is tantamount to achievement of ethics.[70]

Motahhari also invoked the Qur'anic concept of "vicergerency of man" as God's successor on earth as the grounding of his subjectivist approach:

> In the Qura'nic perspective, man is a being chosen by God, his successor [*khalifa*] and vicegerent on earth, half spiritual and half material, with a self-conscious nature, free, independent, a trustee of God, and responsible for himself and the world. He is in control of nature and earth and heavens, knows of good and evil. His being starts from weakness and impotence and evolves toward power and perfection, but he does not find solace except in God's presence and by his memory.[71]

In a Sartrean existential manner, Motahhari conceived of humans as architects and painters who are the only beings endowed with the ability to build their own nature and "paint" their own "visage" in whatever manner they choose.[72] Another aspect of Motahhari's subjectivist discourse was that he, like Khomeini and Shariati, emphasized the Qura'nic notions of dignity and magnanimity (*karamat va ezat-e nafs*), constituting an ethical pivot for him.[73]

Motahhari postulated that while humans cannot completely sever their ties with factors such as heredity, nature, society, and history, they should try to rebel against these limitations and liberate themselves from their tyranny—that humans can overcome these sources of alienation and realize their subjectivity through the power of their reason and faith.[74] He even viewed history in terms

of "dis-alienation," in which the subject overcomes the alienation (*maskh*) and self-estrangement to achieve an authentic self by virtue of consciousness and intellect—a far cry from Shariati's Heideggerian view of authenticity.[75]

Having said all this, we must remember that Motahhari's thought still belongs to the universe of discourse that I have designated as mediated subjectivity. Thus, the other side of his discourse is fraught with the negation of human subjectivity. In his major work on epistemology entitled *The Principles of Philosophy and Method of Realism* (which in fact is an extended and elaborate commentary on the work of another contemporary Islamic philosopher, namely Mohammad Hossein Tabatabai), Motahhari criticized Protagoras for his view that "man is the measure of all things." Motahhari had acquired some knowledge about Kant's philosophy through the Persian translation of some secondary sources on Kant. Despite such limitations, he had acquired some impressive understanding of some of the basic concepts of Kantian philosophy. With regards to the Kantian notion of moral autonomy, Motahhari commented that "it is both true and untrue. It is true in the sense that in reality man's heart inspires these (moral duties) to him. But it is not true in the sense that we assume that human conscience is independent from theism." The problem with Kant, Motahhari further argued, was that he aimed to portray the "conscience" as the only source of duty without reference to the ultimate divine source.[76]

Similar to Shariati and Khoeini, in Motahhari's discourse the ultimate stage of the movement from nature to beyond does not end in subjectivity as we know it, but in the annihilation of the potential subject in the universal. Motahhari also invoked the analogy of the reunification of the drop with ocean as the highest stage of "self-consciousness."[77] Immediately after Motahhari had postulated the human as the architect and painter of her destiny, he added the necessity of religious institutions for showing humans how to build and shape their future.[78] Similarly, in contrast to his attribution of independence and freedom to humans mentioned earlier, in another essay he denied the possibility of human agency, because as he perceived, it would be in conflict with the Universal Subject.[79]

Motahhari was the one of the few Iranian Muslim thinkers who was interested in the individual. This interest, however, was not as intrinsic to his system of thought as much as it was "forced" upon him by an external factor, namely his total opposition to Marxism. This claim is borne out by the fact that viewed from within his own discourse, he often associated the "corporeal materiality," from which humans must distance themselves in the journey to the higher-level existence, with individuality: "The elevated and ideal aptitudes of humanity are born of its faith, belief and attachment to certain realities in the universe that are both *extra-individual*, or *general and inclusive, and extra-material*, or unrelated to advantage or profit."[80]

In brief, Motahhari's discourse belonged to the paradigm of mediated subjectivity in which the constant vacillation between the upholding of human subjectivity and denying it was a central characteristic. He clearly expressed this vicissitude in a lecture that was printed in his *Philosophy of Ethics*:

> Sartre says "man is a free will." We ask, whence the will? . . . Man, only in virtue of being a glimmer and emanation of the "meta-physical" can be dominant over nature and [claim that] his resolves are not predetermined . . . What does it mean [to say that] man has no authentic self except freedom? Yet, of course it is somewhat true that man has no nature, and tonight I wanted to explicate this matter in Islamic philosophy. The issue that he [Sartre] has raised under "existentialism," the Islamic philosophers do not recognize as existentialism, but in a different language they have partly expressed . . . that man makes his own being, that man chooses his own existence, that man is not like objects, natural.[81]

Motahhari had set himself the task of providing an Islamic response to modern civilization and the critique that Westerners leveled at Islam and Muslims. He had learned that one of these critiques was that Muslims believed in destiny (*gaza va qadar*) and necessity (*jabr*). Another question that preoccupied Motahhari was that of theodicy, that is, why there is evil in this world given God's omniscience and omnipotence.

As such, one of the major tasks he undertook was to reconcile human will with God's volition and providence. In doing so, he, like his mentor ayatollah Khomeini, discussed the issue of free will and providence in the historical context of the debate between the so-called early Islamic "rationalists," the Mutazalites, and their opponents, the Asharites. Motahhari agreed with the Mutazalites' view that the criteria set by humans to judge good and evil could also serve as measures for the divine actions.[82] This meant the acknowledgment of the existence of evil, since evil could not be dismissed as misjudgment based on human criteria. And, since unlike Zoroastrianism the existence of evil could not be attributed to one of the two deities, there is no possibility of attributing evil to Satan.[83] Furthermore, because evil could not be attributed to God, either it follows that humans must be free or they choose their courses of action, which may result in good or evil. But, as Asha'rites pointed out, Motahhari reminded his readers, the granting of agency to humans meant the denial of God's agency and subjectivity.[84] Similar to his mentor Khomeini, Motahhari attempted to reconcile this perceived contradiction by adopting "a position between positions," but with the difference that, at times, Motahhari seems much bolder in positing human subjectivity. In his book *Divine Justice*, he wrote:

In the Shii philosophy and theology, man's freedom is posited without man being portrayed as a partner in "God's property," and without God's volition being subjugated and subordinated to human will. Divine Providence [*Qaza va Qadar-e Elahi*] has been established in the entire universe without implying man's compulsion by God's will.[85]

Motahhari opposed the necessetarianism (*jabr*) of the Asha'rites' type on the account of the social evils that it generates. He argued that the belief in humans' unfreedom leaves the hands of oppressors free while it restricts the ability of the oppressed to fight back. Those who have usurped a position of power or plundered the public wealth always talk about God's grace toward them and those who are their victims do not protest since it would be considered a rebellion against the divine decree.[86] Motahhari also addressed the question of human and individual responsibility and confirmed this responsibility against necessitarian views.[87] But, in conformity with the logic of mediated subjectivity and as if pressured by his own emphasis on human subjectivity, Motahhari attempted to resolve the putative contradiction between human freedom and Providence from a slightly different angle. He postulated that human agency is on the level of "action" and compelled action at that, while the divine subjectivity is of the creative type.[88] According to this view, human subjectivity is a category *subsumed* under the Universal Subjectivity. As Motahhari put it, "The borderline between theoretical belief and disbelief is 'subsumption' [*az Ou-ii,* literally 'From Himness']. Believing in a being whose existence is not subsumed under Him is disbelief [*sherk*]. Believing in a being whose 'action' is not subsumed under Him is also disbelief."[89] As a result Motahhari grounded human volition in Providence rather than in human volition itself, the "will to will," of modern subjectivity.

As I have tried to demonstrate, it is in the characteristic of mediated subjectivity to vacillate between the two poles of positing and negating human subjectivity. In Motahhari's discourse, however, on occasion, this oscillation takes a rather steep sway in the direction of positing human agency and subjectivity. Immediately after he had posited the subsumption of human agency and volition under Providence, Motahhari postulated the possibility of "change in the Providence because of providence," through human agency.[90] Then, in his own words, he came to an "intriguing" conclusion that even God's knowledge is subject to change. He asked rhetorically:

Is God's knowledge subject to change? Is God's decree subject to reversal? Can lower influence the higher? The answer to all these questions is positive. Yes, God's knowledge can be changed, that is some of God's knowledge is subject to change; God's decrees can be changed. Yes, the lower can influence the higher. The "lower order" [*nezam-e sufla*] particularly man's will and action

may shake the "higher order" [*nezam-e ulavi*] and cause changes in it. This is the highest form of man's control over his destiny. I confess this is bewildering, but it is true. These are sublime and exalted issues of *bida*' [the change in an earlier Divine decree] discussed in the Qur'an for the first time in the history of human culture.[91]

To be sure, after such bold remarks, Motahhari reverted to negate the possibility of independent human subjectivity. However, in the final analysis he was forced to postulate the idea of independent "essences" with "wills of their own" to explain the existence of evil: "Evil exists because beings are different in their own essences and not because of the deficiencies in the transcendental emanation."[92] Such a tendency on the part of Motahhari inclined him to be relatively more receptive to the idea of individual subjectivity, of course within the limits of the paradigm of mediated subjectivity. Motahhari's interest in the individual, as I mentioned earlier, was not intrinsic to his paradigm. Yet because of the peculiarity of his slightly different paradigm, he was able to accommodate the individual more openly.

In a book apparently written to refute Marxist philosophy entitled *Society and History* (*Jame'-h va Tarikh*), Motahhari often assumed a philosophical instead of a theological approach to issues. He postulated that in the "lower" echelons of existence, that is, in inanimate objects, the individual and the universal are enmeshed in one another. That is, the individual is submerged in the universal (*Kol*). As we climb up the ladder of existence, beings acquire more individual independence from the universal and there is a combination of plurality within the unity. In humans, this condition is most advanced and there is constant conflict between the individual and the universal and in human society the autonomy of the constituent individuals is most developed.[93] In the same book, Motahhari presented a view concerning the relation between the individual and collectivity in which he mentioned different levels of priority accorded to the individual and collectivity, ranging from the absolute priority of the individual to the absolute priority of the collectivity. Motahhari chose the middle ground and advocated a type of society in which neither the collectivity nor the individual would dominate the other. In such an ideal society, which is approved by the Qur'an, the organic character of the collectivity is maintained while the "relative autonomy of the individual is [also] preserved."[94]

It is interesting that in his misunderstanding of Durkheim's conceptualization of the "social fact" as representing the totality of Durkheim's discourse and as assigning priority to the collectivity, Motahhari took issue with Durkheim and criticized the alleged anti-individualism and determinism in the thought of a modern European thinker.[95] As such, in so far as he posited the element of subjectivity in his system of mediated subjectivity, Motahhari

realized that subjectivity and freedom must be located in the individual, while not denying the importance of the collectivity. In his view, while the Qur'an accords objectivity, power, and viability to the society, it also "considers the individual capable of disobeying the society."[96] Motahhari also took the concept of "responsibility" to its logical conclusion and located it in the individual:

> The teachings of the Qur'an are entirely based on responsibility, responsibility for the self and for society. The command to do good and refrain from evil is the injunction for the individual to rebel against corruption and depravity in society. The stories and parables of the Qur'an often contain the rebellion and revolt of the individual against social corruption. The story of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, the most noble Prophet . . . they all contain this element.[97]

In giving credence to the individual in his discourse, Motahhari's sociological views obviously came into conflict with those of Shariati. For Motahhari, the ideal "Islamic classless society" meant a society without discrimination, and deprivation, but not without differentiation.[98] He even considered the society as an "arena for competition toward progress and perfection," in which "the hurdles that confine the individual on the way towards perfection and the blaming of human aptitudes" must be eliminated.[99] It is significant that even in his attempts to achieve a reconciliation between the individual and collectivity, at least on some occasions, he was more on the side of the individual:

> Islam is certainty a social religion and believes in the eminence of society. It believes in the priority of the interests of the collectivity over the individual and has canceled class privileges. At the same time the Islamic social system does not ignore the real rights and privileges of individuals; it does not devalue the individual before the society. Unlike some world thinkers [i.e., Marx] it does not claim that the individual is nobody and society is everything; that all rights belong to the society and not to the individual; that the society is the owner not the individual or that society is authentic but not the individual. Islam definitely believes in private rights, private ownership and the authority of the individual.[100]

Motahhari's interest in the individual was perhaps partly in response to the modernist discourse, the example of which he found in the purported views of Washington Irving on Islam. His inclination toward the individual, however, was perhaps equally if not more motivated by his opposition to Marxist ideology.

It has to be noted that in Motahhari's writings direct bearings on political issues and particularly revolutionary politics are relatively scant. Perhaps

because of his relative caution in his relations with the Pahlavi regime, unlike Shariati and Khomeini, and his short life after the revolutionary period, his "political" writings were minimal.[101] Immediately after the establishment of the Islamic Republic and shortly before his death, Motahhari wrote a few essays, some unfinished, regarding the revolutionary politics, which were published posthumously. In an interview published with these essays, he expressed his forebodings regarding the trampling of freedom as a result of the revolutionary process, and the strong populist trend within it, while he acknowledged the necessity of social justice.[102] In another essay in the same book, however, while he advocated "freedom of thought" (*azadi fekr*), he opposed what he called "freedom of opinion" (*azadi aqideh*). He defined thought in terms of "reason" (*aql*) as opposed to "faith" (*iman*). He argued that Islam, in contrast to Christianity which has suppressed reason and stressed faith, has emphasized reason.[103] On the other hand, he defined "opinion" (*aqideh*) in terms of convictions (*e'teqad*) and "attachments" (*del-bastegi-ha*), which are grounded in "emotions," and as such rejected them.[104] This type of reasoning led Motahhari also to espouse a notion of guidance from above, denying the freedom of citizenship:

> What is required to respect man? Is it to guide him on the path to progress and perfection? Or is it to claim that since he is man and possesses human dignity, he is free to choose whatever he wishes for himself and we should respect it because he has chosen it for himself, even though we know it is not right and we know it is false with myriad consequences? What man chooses for himself might be chains. How can we respect these chains?[105]

Yet in another essay in the same book, he asserted that people should have enough freedom in politics to learn how to elect a representative to the parliament to increase their political consciousness. Even in regards to religious issues, he thought people should have certain freedoms to develop their consciousness. He used the analogy of a person trying to learn something who needs to be left alone, despite discomfort, to learn by trial and error.[106]

These contradictions, rooted in Motahhari's paradigm of mediated subjectivity, also found expression in his writings on women. Before the revolution, he had written comparatively more on the "safe" issue of women. Some of his articles had even appeared in the "secular" and mainstream women's magazine, *Zan-e Ruz* (roughly meaning "modern woman") under the Shah's regime. Thus, in a book written on the subject of the veil for women, for example, he argued that the traditional head-to-toe wrapping of women, which causes their social isolation, was not an authentic Islamic dress code for women. Indeed, he argued, the proper Islamic "covering" (*pushesh*) was not to cause social isolation for women and confine them to the private sphere.

He even did not oppose women's driving. On the other hand, Motahhari considered women's demand for equal rights "selfish lust," conducive to "create scandal."[107] It should be noted that in his misogyny, Motahhari's theory was not only informed by the incompleteness of subjectivity characteristic of mediated subjectivity. In other words, he did not merely oppose women's rights only because he half-heartedly supported human rights. Rather, he did so because he offered the partial rights of mediated subjectivity only to men, as he considered the human lineage the property of men exclusively. As a result, in this regard his discourse failed to universalize even the incomplete rights of mediated subjectivity by confining them to men only.[108]

ABDULKARIM SOROUSH (1945–)

Unlike Shariati, Motahhari, and to some extent Khomeini, Sorush has faulted the notion of a human journey toward theomorphism, which constituted one of the important ontological bases of the Islamic revolutionary discourses of the prerevolutionary era, in the 1960s and 1970s. In an article originally published in the magazine *Kayhan Farhangi* in 1985 and later reprinted in his book *Tafarroj-e Son'* (The Unfolding of Creation), Sorush criticized the notion of humans as a "becoming-toward-perfection."[109] In the same article, obliquely criticizing the expectation of moral perfection by citizens, Sorush has blamed the Islamic government of setting unrealistically high moral standards for Iranians. He has advised government officials that the first lesson for managing a polity is tolerance for human imperfection.[110] In another essay, he has denied that the mission of the prophets has been to elevate humans to perfection: "The prophets were not sent to angels and they did not view humans as imperfect angels so that they would transform them to perfect angels. Man is man and he is not to be transformed into an angel."[111]

In yet another essay, Sorush has warned against the desire on the part of humans to achieve the status of divinity as the first step toward corruption and evil.[112] He has also warned that the application of the notion of human perfectibility and theomorphism to the political sphere may result in particular privileges on the part of some individuals to accord themselves special rights as the vicegerent of God on earth.[113] Thus, it seems that Sorush's eschewing of the path to metaphysics and theomorphism, which constituted an essential aspect of Shariati, Motahhari, and even Khomeini, is motivated by the postrevolutionary political developments such as the Islamic regime's intolerance for human imperfection, manifested in rigid moral requirements, as well as the elitist monopolization of political power by the clerics. However, one more motivation may be added to Sorush's eschewing of the metaphysical path. The theomorphic "journey toward subjectivity," albeit strongly rooted

in Islamic metaphysics, could not develop any further in a religious society like Iran. Such a development would have meant the negation of other aspects of religious belief, and likely to create a strong reaction because it could evoke the idea that God's sovereignty would be negated. For these reasons, Soroush seems to have taken a detour to arrive at human subjectivity and its corollaries.

In an article published in 1992 in the weekly journal *Kayhan Havai*, Sorush has identified the "essence" of modernity as the emergence of certain new types of knowledge that did not exist before.[114] These include modern ethics, sociology of religion, philology, and the study of tradition and ideology. These new forms of knowledge have created an unbridgeable gap between modern humans, on the one hand, and the ancients and the world of "objects," on the other.[115] In this way, Sorush has substituted a detour for the direct "metaphysical" discussion of subjectivity by emphasizing epistemological dimensions of the knowing subject. To this subjectivist epistemology, Sorush has added a hermeneutic element and has likened the external world to a text in need of interpretation:

> Likening the external world to a written text is an eloquent simile. This means that no text reveals its meaning. It is the mind of the philologist which reads the meaning in the text. Phrases are "hungry" for meanings. They are not pregnant with meaning, albeit they are not satisfied with any food either. Accordingly, the meanings of the phenomenon are not written on them and are not obtained by simple looking. The observer must know the "language" of the world to read and understand. Science and philosophy teach us this language (or languages). And these languages are neither stagnant nor perfect, but in constant transformation.[116]

In a related vein, Sorush has argued that our understanding of the world is necessarily historical, since social and human institutions, "instead of being fixed by nature are fluid" and we can only truly observe them when we "sit at their ontological stream and watch their flow."[117] Most significantly, in what is one of his most important books he has published, *The Theoretical Contraction and Expansion of the Sharia (Qabz va Bast-e Teoriki-e Shariat)*, Sorush has applied this subjectivist approach to knowledge, to our understanding of religion and sacred data:

> As no understanding of nature is ever complete, and always enriched by newer scientific works and the arrival of competing views and historical developments, so are understandings of religion. This applies both to Jurisprudential [*Feqhi*] views as well as convictions and beliefs [*nazariyat-e e'teqadi va usuli*]. Muslim's understanding of God, Resurrection, Providence [*qaza va qadar*]

reveal some of their meanings in theory and practice [gradually]. Similarly, Jurisprudential views such as the "Governance of the Jurist" and the [Qur'anic precept of] the "Injunction to Do Good and Avoid Evil," etc., reveal their exact meanings in the historical process.[118]

In this interpretive approach toward religion, Sorush has repeatedly pointed out that our knowledge of religion is contingent upon other human categories of knowledge that emerge historically. He has argued that religious knowledge which is derived from the "Book, the Tradition and the Biography of religious leaders" is a "consumerist" type of knowledge and as such directly influenced by "productive" forms of knowledge (i.e., physical and social sciences as well as philosophy and humanities). There are no religious types of knowledge that are not contingent upon these "external" and human branches of knowledge, and since the latter are always in flux, the former will also change.[119] Furthermore, Sorush has argued, there is a close relationship between modern philosophical anthropology (i.e., modern view of humans) and our knowledge of nature, epistemology, and religious knowledge as they constitute the "parts of a circle."[120] As a result, the style of religiosity is different in each epoch and religious knowledge is subject to "contraction and expansion" (i.e., change) in different individuals and different periods depending on the changes in human branches of knowledge of the time.[121] The contingency of the religious types of knowledge upon other branches of human knowledge, in Sorush's view, even applies to the words of God: "The discovery of the innermost [meanings] of the words of God . . . is directly contingent upon the development of human knowledge [*ma'aref-e bashari*], including the mystical, philosophical and scientific forms of knowledge."[122]

Based on those theoretical constructs, Sorush has advocated the notion of a "dynamic jurisprudence" (*fiqh puya*) as opposed to the traditional jurisprudence of the conservatives. In his view, only this dynamic jurisprudence can provide solutions to some of the practical problems that the Islamic regime has faced in its encounter with modernity. Problems that are rooted in the clerical regime's conflict with the modern juridical sphere, economics, culture, arts, media, and so on.[123] Based on his epistemology, Sorush has attempted reconciliation between religiosity and *rushanfekri*.[124] In his view, a religious *rushanfekri*—an oxymoron from the viewpoint of the conservatives as well as some secular critics—is possible considering the epistemological dichotomy, and the simultaneous dialogue, between the inner essence of religion and human understanding of it.[125]

It is my contention here that what Sorush has been striving for in his theoretical efforts is nothing less than an epistemological subjectivity in which the human subject treats the "religious knowledge" as the object of subjectivity. In conformity with his eschewing of metaphysics, for the reasons I explained

above, Sorush does not usually refer to the concept of human vicegerency
and the Islamic concept of the human as God's successor on earth. Instead
of such a direct approach to human subjectivity, Sorush has emphasized the
Qur'anic grounding of human vicegerency in "knowledge."[126] In addition to
treating the "religious knowledge" as the object of the interpretation by the
human agent, Sorush has suggested the same attitude in treating the contents
of historical data as an object of interpretation by active human agency.[127]

   Sorush's discourse and his own way of positing a form of human subjectiv-
ity entails certain potentials for secularization, which need to be examined in
some detail. In his book *Rushanfekri and Religiosity*, Sorush has discussed
Ali Shariati's work and its effect on secularization of religion. As if address-
ing his own critics, Sorush has asked rhetorically, how Shariati would not
be positively affected by the ideas of Voltaire, Descartes, and Sartre, given
his familiarity with the obscurantism of the church in medieval Europe?[128]
Interestingly, this observation seems to apply to the disenchanting effects of
his own writings also. As we saw before, Sorush argued that religious knowl-
edge is contingent upon other types of knowledge that are available in a given
period. Based on this, he has implied the recognition of a secular cosmology
embodied in modern philosophical anthropology and sociology as the stan-
dard to validate religious cosmologies and the search for a religiosity which
is "attentive" to human needs.[129] He has even gone as far as claiming that
"values and responsibilities (good and evil) . . . and conventions (language,
customs, etc.) are characterized [by the fact that] they do not inhere in Truth,
and change by human decision. They are not universal or eternal . . . they are
not true or false."[130]

   In a similar way, Sorush has viewed the notion of Divine Providence in
terms of human subjectivity:

> History is not dependent on an "external sphere." No hand from outside diverts
> it and there is no [external] force over history. This is true even with regards to
> a Divine view of history . . . God's actions are realized through the agency of
> the natural dispositions of beings, or [in case of humans,] their wills. Men have
> lived in history as their humanness has necessitated and what has occurred in
> history has been natural and there has been no cause except men's humanness
> giving rise to historical events.[131]

In his later articles published in magazines such as *Kiyan*, Sorush has cast a
shadow of doubt on hitherto absolute and determined categories such as eth-
ics. In an article in the monthly magazine *Kiyan* published in 1994, Sorush has
claimed that absolute ethics only belongs to gods and not to the human sphere.
Ethics, he has maintained, is not an exact and systemic science and will never
reach an ideal precision and rigor.[132] Even if we assume that good and evil are

absolute, we cannot determine what course of action the subject must take in difficult ethical crossroads.[133] Furthermore, ethics, like categories of knowledge he discussed, is as much subject to temporal and spatial consideration and as such its injunctions are not absolute and eternal.[134] As an important thesis in this article, Sorush has stated that "ethics, therefore, is contingent on life and must befit it, not *vice-versa*."[135] In this article, Sorush has also assailed the "transcendental" and absolutist ethics of the revolutionary period and its tragic consequences and, as an alternative, has proposed a conceptualization of ethics based on "exceptive" [*estesnapazir*] and fluid principles.[136]

One of the most important concepts that Sorush has repeatedly thematized is the notion of "temporalizing religion" (*asri kardan-e din*). Based on his earlier notion of the contingency of religious knowledge on other secular and human branches of knowledge of the period, Sorush has argued that not only life and the "age" should become religious but also religion must become temporal and humanized, an idea which seems only inevitable in the aftermath of the revolution of subjectivity.[137]

In his political discourse, Sorush has unambiguously declared his support for political democracy. He has exposed the totalitarian tendencies in the discourse of his religious opponents and criticized the moral sclerosis which seized Iran after the revolution. In this respect, Sorush has warned against the populist religious rhetoric prevalent in Iran and championed the cause of "critical reason" against what he deems to be the demagoguery of "mass society."[138]

The cornerstone of Sorush's political discourse seems to be "faith," a concept that, as we saw earlier, was elaborated upon by Shariati. But in Sorush's case, faith belongs to the individual. In an article published in *Kiyan*, Sorush has argued that the faith of an individual can be possible only if she or he is free to choose. Consequently, Sorush has argued, faith and freedom constitute two inseparable categories which can lay the foundations of a religious democracy:

> The faith of each individual is the exclusive experience and the "private property" of that individual. Each of us finds faith as an individual, as we die as an individual. There may be collective rituals but there is no collective faith . . . The realm of faith is the realm of resurrection, and in resurrection people come as individuals . . . True faith is based on individuality and freedom . . . The foundation of religious community is consented faith. [Moreover], not only faith cannot be forced, it cannot be homogenized either, and to the extent that people have different personalities, faiths are also variegated and nuanced.[139]

Sorush has made a distinction between a liberal democracy and a secular society, on the one hand, and a "religious democracy" with pluralistic principles,

on the other. In a liberal democracy, according to him, the freedom of "inclinations" (*amyal*) and desires is the foundation of pluralism and secular society, but a "religious democracy" may be built on the basis of freedom of faith.[140] In another article published in the magazine *Kiyan*, Sorush has identified one of the main tasks of a democratic religious state to be the protection of the freedom of faith and creation of a social condition conducive to such freedom.[141]

Congruent with these premises, Sorush has placed a special emphasis on the idea of human freedom in the more overtly political aspect of this discourse:

> Freedom is prior to everything. I have recently come across some speakers in our society who, in the way of criticism and reproach, have said, "for some [i.e., for Sorush] freedom is a foundation." Yes, why shouldn't freedom be a foundation? Even if we accept religion, submissiveness and obedience, we do so because we have freely chosen them.[142]

From early on in his career, Sorush has criticized the concept of the "Governance of the Jurist," at first obliquely, but later increasingly more openly and directly. In a number of articles published in *Kiyan*, Sorush has revealed the incompatibility of the concept and institution of clerical rule enshrined in the notion of the "Governance of the Jurist." He has pointed out that since the Governing Jurist derives his right to rule from God, not much is left for the populace in the arena of governing. "At most," he has written, people's role is "to discover who has this right [to rule]."[143] Sorush has also appealed to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, which has allowed for the convening of an "Assembly of Experts" charged with overseeing the selection of the "Governing Jurist," and in case of latter's incompetence his dismissal. He has argued that since the Assembly of Experts is elected by popular vote and since the "Governing Jurist," as the highest power in the Islamic Republic, derives his legitimacy from this assembly, the sovereignty of Iranian people is guaranteed, if not directly at least implicitly, by the Constitution. And once people's sovereignty is recognized, it cannot be partial and thus full sovereignty, even over the position of the Governing Supreme Jurist, belongs to the people.[144] On this basis, Sorush has posited the notion of popular sovereignty overriding that of the so-called Supreme Jurist (*Vali-e Faqih*):

> If you have the right to oversee the government, it can easily be demonstrated that you also have the right to govern . . . As soon as the right is released it will occupy all the space. Without a doubt the foundation of the democratic government is that people constitute the "principle" in it. This means people are the creator, the critic and observer of the government.[145]

In connection with his conceptualization of a religious democratic state, Sorush has emphasized the concept of mutual rights and responsibilities. He has observed that, in contrast to traditional society where the emphasis is on responsibilities instead of rights, in a democratic society, rights and mutual rights as responsibilities are stressed. Further, as Imam Ali has demonstrated, Sorush has argued, mutual rights is most significant in the relations between the citizens and the state.[146]

Sorush's insistence upon the distinction between liberal democracy and religious democracy notwithstanding, there seems to be little difference between this type of democratic polity and any other. Sorush himself seems to have recognized it when he stated that in his conceptualization of a religious state: "Because people are religious, the state is religious and not because the state is religious people must become religious."[147] Furthermore, as far as the form of this type of state is concerned, Sorush himself has suggested, it is not different from other democratic states and the only difference is that only because the society is religious, therefore, "the state machinery would be in the service of the faithful."[148] In what may be surprising to some, Sorush has alluded to the United States as a possible model for a religious democratic society, by referring to the notion of American democracy as discussed by de Tocqueville, where even though religion and politics are separate, religion has been a guiding principle in American society and polity and where the ethics of universality in religion has a bearing on the harmony between the freedom of subjectivity and democracy.[149]

In recent years, Soroush has embarked on a very controversial path in his hermeneutic approach to understanding of Islam and the Qur'an. First, he advanced a theory that the language of the Qur'an is a human language and that the Qur'an is "directly authored by Muhammad and is his experience; [it is the result of] ebullition and outgrowth of his soul and therefore it is [in] his language and [belongs to] his expression."[150] Even though the experience of the Prophet was sacred, argues Soroush, the language of that experience is not divine and sacred. Even as the generator of the text, Muhammad's personal conditions and his states of mind, events occurring around him, his geographic situation, and tribal life shaped his experiences and historicized and localized them. "This means," Soroush states, "God did not speak and did not write a book; but a historicized human spoke instead of Him and wrote the book and the book's words are the words of that human."[151] In this regard, Soroush's theoretical constructs allow a wider path in interpreting the Qur'an and its precepts and injunctions.

More recently, however, Soroush has gone one more step further and posits that the Qur'an consists of Prophet's dreams. According to Soroush, "Muhammad [PBUH] is a narrator who honestly relates his prophetic and secretive dreams to us in a normal language and plane Arabic without

[using] tropes and metaphors. And the Qur'an is his "book of dreams" (*khab nameh*)."[152] And as in the case of all dreams, Soroush argues, the Qur'an is need of dream interpretation. Here Soroush uses the Perso-Arabic term *ta'bir* instead of *tafsir*. The difference, he explains, is that in Persian *ta'bir* is the term for interpretation of dreams, whereas *tafsir* is usually used in the hermeneutic interpretation of texts, sacred or otherwise. Utilizing this approach, Soroush contends, has many benefits. We can interpret the Qur'an in light of modern scientific findings. For example, we can interpret the Qur'anic statement that Noah live 950 years; some of the Jews turned into pigs and monkeys because of their contumacy; that Moses opens up the Nile [*sic*] [or that he turned] the staff into a python.[153] We can also amend some of the precepts that are out of sync with modern values and norms such as cutting the hand of a thief. In this way, Soroush's recent discourse has opened the road for deep reforms in the practices and perceptions of religion.

CONCLUSION

What is crucial to understand about Islamic thinkers discussed in this chapter is that they played a "parturient" role in contemporary Iranian history and their significance lies in the fact that their message reached a large number of Iranians who were not much touched by the revolution of subjectivity. As the foundation of modernity, with all its positive and negative consequences, subjectivity was widely broached in Iran in peculiar form by religious thinkers discussed in this chapter. As argued above, this curious paradigm of "mediated subjectivity" constituted the core of the religious discourse in the second half of the twentieth century in Iran. Given the influence of religion and religious thinkers during that period on the populace, it can be claimed that this discourse had a widespread and deep impact on the semiconscious consciousness of Iranians in a critical and painful period of their contemporary history. Undoubtedly, mediated subjectivity is an incipient form of subjectivity and agency. However, once this type of inchoate subjectivity is thematized in a society and internalized by a critical mass of individuals, it can morph into a more fully fledged kind of agency and subjectivity and even intersubjectivity. In a Habermasian paradigm, intersubjectivity constitutes the foundations of modern democracy. When individuals in a society consider themselves right-bearing autonomous actors and advance the same attributes to their fellow citizens, then democratic institutions can be built.

There is no doubt that Iranians have gone through a painful experience in the past few decades. The tumultuous revolution of 1979 and the consequent

eight years of bloody war with Iraq has left deep scars on Iranian psyche and culture. Almost everywhere, it seems, the revolution of subjectivity has been accompanied by violence of different types—internal strife and revolutions as well as external conflicts and wars. Yet, the medium to long-term outcome of this type of painful experience could be development of subjectivity and agency on a large scale, which could lead to intersubjectivity and thereby ethos of citizenship and democracy.

NOTES

1. Modernity has had very contradictory results. On the one hand, it has given birth to modern democracy, prolonged human life, and controlled some of the dev-astating aspects of inner and outer nature. On the other hand, in late modernity we possess the means to annihilate the entire civilization. We are also on the verge of inflicting such a damage on our planet that would be difficult to reverse.

2. One of the characteristics of the notion of mediated subjectivity is that it can virtually simultaneously posit and negate human subjectivity, because once humans are deemed to possess subjectivity it may appear to deny God's sovereignty.

3. Afghani 1968a, 102.

4. Ibid., 104.

5. Ibid., 107; translation slightly modified.

6. Afghani 1968b, 110.

7. Ibid., 114; emphasis added.

8. Ibid.; emphasis added.

9. Ibid., 110.

10. Ibid.

11. Afghani 1968c, 81–87.

12. Afghani 1968d, 151.

13. Neicheris were the followers of Sir Ahmad Khan (1817–1897) and the term "Neicheri" was derived from the English word *nature*, which Afghani used as a generic term representing unorthodox views and atheism.

14. Afghani 1968d, 140.

15. Ibid., 167.

16. Self and selfhood are often synonymous with the subject and subjectivity. In fact, a preeminent philosophe of Islam and modernity, Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938), used the Persian term *khudi* (literary, self) to refer to the notion of modern subjectivity.

17. In his book *Return to the Self*, for example, he said, "After fourteen centuries of companionship between Iran and Islam, a rich and expansive culture has appeared in which the two elements are indistinguishable" (Shariati 1979a, 61).

18. Shariati 1976a, 15.

19. Ibid., 33.

20. Shariati 1979b, 107.

21. Shariati 1980[?], 11–12.

22. It is in this perceived contradiction also that lies at the source of our next thinkers' constant vacillation between posting human subjectivity and then negating it in various ways, almost immediately.

23. Shariati 1977a, 19.

24. Shariati 1983a, 566.

25. Shariati 1983b, 144–45.

26. Shariati 1968, 13.

27. Ibid., 15.

28. Shariati 1994, 153.

29. Shariati 1994, 227–28; 1972[?], 93–94.

30. Shariati 1972[?]a, 101–2.

31. Shariati 1979b, 157.

32. Ibid.

33. Shariati 1972[?]a, 61. Shariati dismissed the criticism of his anti-liberal ideas as an "irrelevant parliamentarism" espoused by liberal intellectuals who do not understand and share the sufferings of the people (Shariati 1979b, 48).

34. Shariati 1972[?]a, 373–74.

35. Shariati 1979b, 50–51.

36. Ibid., 52.

37. Ibid., 42–43.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., 66.

40. Ibid., 41.

41. Ibid., 153.

42. Ibid., 122–23.

43. Ibid., 124.

44. Ibid., 125–26.

45. Shariati 1976b, 14–15.

46. Shariati 1971b, 258, 274.

47. Khomeini 1978, 6–7.

48. Ibid., 17–19.

49. Ibid., 19.

50. According to Roy Mottahedeh (1985, 303), Khomeini had read Al-e Ahmad's *Westoxication* and admired it.

51. Khomeini 1978, 23.

52. Khomeini 1979[?]a [1944], 276.

53. Khomeini 1981, 76–78.

54. Khomeini 1981b, 383–84.

55. Ibid., 396, 406.

56. Ibid., 367–68.

57. Ibid., 369. Khomeini seems to have reserved the concept of "God's vicegerency on the earth" only for the Prophet and not for ordinary humans as did Shariati and Motahhari. See Khomeini 1978, 54.

58. Khomeini 1979[?] [1944], 48. In constructing this notion of contingent human agency, Khomeini was also responding to the Kasravi's criticisms of

"apparent changes in God's will", or *Bida'*, a classical paradox discussed in Islamic theology. See Khomeini 1979[?] [1944], 83–89.

59. Khomeini 1983, 73.
60. Khomeini 1983a, 62–63.
61. Ibid., 85.
62. Ibid., 129.
63. Ibid., 140.
64. Ibid., 142.
65. Ibid., 148–49.
66. Khomeini 1979[?] [1944], 244–45.
67. Khomeini 1981b, 287.
68. Motahhari 1985a, 29; emphasis added.
69. Motahhari 1985, 24–30.
70. Motahhari 1987, 132. Motahhari also argued that while in the Judeo-Christian tradition the notion of human consciousness is suppressed as evidenced in the story of Genesis, in the Islamic account human consciousness is encouraged, since according to the Qur'an, God teaches Adam all the names (i.e., realities) and then commands the angels to prostrate themselves before him (Motahhari 1985a, 32). Based on this ontology, Motahhari also arrived on a subjectivist epistemology. Drawing on the seventeenth-century Iranian philosopher Mulla Sadra, Motahhari argued for a subjectivist epistemology in which consciousness and intellect are the primary faculty involved in the processing of sense data and thereby in representation. See Motahhari and Tabatabai 1978[?], 63–72.
71. Motahhari 1979[?], 25.
72. Ibid., 253, 268.
73. Motahhari 1978a, 44, 147.
74. Motahhari 1979[?], 272.
75. Motahhari 1980, 35–36.
76. Motahhari and Tabatabai 1978[?], 128–29.
77. Motahhari 1979[?], 299–302.
78. Ibid., 269.
79. Motahhari 1979a, 53.
80. Motahhari 1985a, 27; emphasis added.
81. Motahhari 1987, 216–17.
82. Motahhari 1974, 9.
83. Ibid., 32.
84. Ibid., XXIV.
85. Ibid., XXX.
86. Motahhari 1979b, 19.
87. Motahhari 1979a, 133.
88. Ibid., 127.
89. Ibid., 102.
90. Motahhari 1979b, 48.
91. Ibid., 49–50.
92. Motahhari 1974, 126.

93. Motahhari 1978b, 331–32.

94. Ibid., 326.

95. Ibid., 320.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid., 331.

98. Motahhari 1979a, 69.

99. Ibid., 76. These views were probably expressed to oppose Shariati's view and show the ideological contrasts between the two.

100. Motahhari 1979c, 115–16.

101. Soon after the revolution of 1979, Motahhari was assassinated by an esoteric group called *forqan*.

102. Motahhari 1985b, 22–23.

103. Ibid., 92–95.

104. Ibid., 97. According to these criteria, Motahhari found the "logic" of monotheism sound because it is "rational," whereas he viewed the logic of nonmonotheistic religions grounded in "opinion," and therefore unsound (Motahhari 1985b, 97–98). Thus, for example, he criticized the British government for "granting" freedom of worship to all forms of "idol worship" such as "cow worship" as abuse of freedom of thought and the Declaration of Human Rights (Motahhari 1985b, 99–100).

105. Ibid., 100.

106. Ibid., 123.

107. Motahhari 1991, 226–27.

108. The reason why men are so sensitive to prevent their wives' contacts with other men, Motahhari argued, was because "creation" has commissioned only men to preserve the lineage in the future (Motahhari 1991, 61).

109. Sorush 1987, 263.

110. Ibid., 265–66.

111. Sorush 1984, 62.

112. Ibid., 158.

113. Ibid., 171.

114. Sorush 1992, 12.

115. Ibid.

116. Sorush 1991, 192.

117. Ibid., 198.

118. Ibid., 214–15.

119. Ibid., 79–80.

120. Ibid., 88.

121. Ibid., 89.

122. Ibid., 203.

123. Sorush 1988, 51.

124. *Rushanfekri* can be translated as "intellectualism" as well as enlightenment, connoting modern Enlightenment. Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923–1969), Shariati, and now Sorush certainly intend to convey this meaning in some of their writings by using the term *rushanfekri*.

125. In his book, *Rushanfekri and Religiosity* (*Rushanfekri va Dindari*) (1988), Sorush has attempted to achieve a reconciliation between the two sides of one of

the largest cultural chasm in the second half of the twentieth century in Iran, that is, religion and modernity.

126. Sorush 1984, 48.
127. Sorush 1991, 162.
128. Sorush 1988, 79.
129. Sorush 1991, 109.
130. Sorush 1994a [1978], 185.
131. Sorush 1987, 261.
132. Sorush 1994b, 23.
133. Ibid.
134. Ibid.
135. Ibid., 25.
136. Ibid., 26–30.
137. Sorush 1991, 215.
138. Sorush 1996a, 67.
139. Sorush 1994c, 7.
140. Ibid., 8.

141. Sorush 1996b, 39. In his more theoretical and abstract writings, Sorush has considered only the individual as "real" and the collectivity as a theoretical construct whose reality is merely hypothetical. This ontological priority of the individual over the collectivity seems to be the grounding of his somewhat later political writings in which the individual is central. See Sorush 1994 [1978], 79.

142. Sorush 1996c, 253. By emphasizing this idea of freedom, Sorush has been careful not to neglect the concept of social justice. He has written in the same article: "The conflict that some have projected between freedom and justice (under the rubric of the conflict between democracy and socialism), that if we choose freedom, justice is destroyed and if we pick justice, freedom is sacrificed, is a spurious conflict" (Sorush 1996c, 254).

143. Ibid., 5.
144. Sorush 1996b, 5.
145. Ibid.
146. Sorush 1984, 209–13.
147. Sorush 1996b, 10.
148. Ibid., 11.
149. Sorush 1994c, 12.
150. http://drsoroush.com/fa/. Visited on November 14, 2018.
151. Ibid.
152. Ibid.
153. Ibid.

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Chapter 14

From Nakhshab to Neo-Shariati

Three Generations of Iran's Modern Muslim Left

Mojtaba Mahdavi

INTRODUCTION

"What does it mean to be contemporary?" and "of whom and of what are we contemporaries?" "Contemporary," Giorgio Agamben argues, "is the untimely": a "relationship with time that adhere to it through a disjunction and an anachronism." It is the ability to know how to observe the "obscurity" and the "darkness" of our time, disallowing "to be blinded by the lights" of the epoch.[1] In other words, "those who coincide too well with the epoch, those who are perfectly tied to it in every respect, are not contemporaries, precisely because they do not manage to see it; they are not able to firmly hold their gaze on it."[2] For Agamben, "the contemporary is the one whose eyes are struck by the beam of darkness that comes from his own time."[3] Hence, "contemporariness inscribes itself in the present by making it above all as archaic."[4]

This chapter asks whether and how a post-Islamist and postrevolutionary reading of Ali Shariati's thought—known as the *neo-Shariati discourse*—remains "contemporary" in the Agambenean tradition. "Of whom and what" is the neo-Shariati discourse contemporary? In answering this question, the chapter first traces back the historical origins of this discourse followed by its conceptualization. It examines epistemological and ontological underpinnings of this discourse, namely the trilogy of "freedom, social justice, and civil spirituality." It problematizes whether the neo-Shariati's progressive post-Islamist stance and its quest for a homegrown *democratic socialism* would make it a "contemporary" alternative to the "exhausted epistemics"[5] of

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nativist Islamism, hyperethnic nationalism, neoliberal capitalism, right-wing populism, and autocratic socialism.

THE NEO-SHARIATI DISCOURSE: GENEALOGY AND HISTORICAL ORIGINS

At the risk of generalization but with a merit of some clarity, one could trace back the genealogy of the Muslim left in modern Iran to Jamal al din al-Afghi/ Asad Abadi, egalitarian Muslims in the *Ejtema'iyoon-A'amiyoon* (Social Democrats) during the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, Mirza Kouchek Jangali, and Sheikh Mohammad Khiabani, among others. However, it was Mohammad Nakhshab (1923–1970) whose novel and noble idea of *Socialist Theism* marked the first historical episode of the Muslim left in modern Iran. Nakhshab's *Socialist Theists Movement* was a truing point.

Mohammad Nakhshab (1923–1970): A Socialist Theist

Socialism made a profound impact on young Muslim activists in the 1940s. It was in this context that Mohammad Nakhshab, Jalal ed-Din Ashtiyani, and Hossein Razi founded the *Socialist Theists Movement* (*Nehzat-e Khodaparastan-e Sosiyalist*) in 1944.[6] The Socialist Theists synthesized "Islamic spirituality and socialist ideas and thus developed what they called a 'middle school of thought' between idealism and materialism; they characterized this as 'positive socialism.'"[7] According to Mohammad Nakhshab, the leading ideologue of the Socialist Theists Movement, freedom and social justice are the core values of both Islam and socialism. Islamic discourse, he argued, is a mediated worldview (*maktab-e va'seteh*); it stands between idealism and materialism, and between communism and capitalism. More specifically, there is more affinity between Islam and socialism than between materialism/Marxism and socialism. There is an inherent contradiction, he argued, between socialism as a humanist/ethical ideal and materialist philosophy of Marxism. Socialism, it was argued, is a sacred struggle of selfless individuals whose ethical responsibility and political ideals are not correlated with their socioeconomic base. For the Socialist Theists, the spiritual element of Islam provides a strong incentive for people to fight for freedom and social justice. Moreover, it is much easier to disseminate socialist ideals in Iran, he argued, through the Islamic concepts.[8] The Socialist Theists boldly and confidently believed that "in terms of advocating justice and progress, Islam does not lag behind Marxism. On the contrary, because of its emphasis on freedom and democracy, it is superior to it." Furthermore, "socialism or the public ownership of means of production," they argued, remains "the shortest

way of overcoming injustice, poverty, ignorance, self-alienation, misery, and exploitation."[9]

The Socialist Theists challenged the hegemony of any privileged class over others and fought simultaneously at least on three fronts: first and foremost, they were anti-clerical in the context of Islamic tradition. There is no clerical *class* in Islam, they argued. "The clergy, instead of emphasizing Islam's progressive social and economic messages, had focused on metaphysics and has imbued Islam with bizarre mysteries, miracles, and in general, superstition."[10] Socialism, they argued, was the essence of Islam; they interpreted the Quranic concept of *showra* (consultation) as a form of democratic socialism and reinterpreted the Quran in light of *humanist* (not Soviet) socialism.[11]

It is worth noting that their idea of *the affinity between Islam and socialism* inspired many young Muslims in the 1960s and 1970s. Ali Shariati (1933–1977), ayatollah Mahmoud Taleqani (1911–1979), and others were influenced by such a novel and revolutionary discourse. The impact of the Socialist Theists in Taleqani's book *Islam and Ownership* (1953), is evident.[12] The Socialist Theists, known as the *intellectual father of Iran's modern Muslim Left*, contributed immensely to the cause of a social democratic interpretation of Islam.

Second, the Socialist Theists were critical of the "actually existing" Western liberal democracy. Jalal ed-Din Ashtiyani, one of the founding fathers of the movement, offers a very interesting critique of Western liberal democracy:

> Western societies, which form a small part of the family of nations, enjoy the state of affluence at the expense of poverty and suffering of many others. Nevertheless, the signs of decline and self-alienation can also be seen in the West. The role of capitalism and *misguided democracy* have turned people into machine-parts and into talking ballot-papers, which can be sold and bought. . . . Political parties are turning into election shops.[13]

As Hunter points out, "the Socialist Theists were essentially against the domination of a particular class over others, but they had no clear idea of how to reconcile the requirements of safeguarding individual freedom and the running of a society."[14]

Third, the Socialist Theists challenged the state-centered Soviet-style socialism, or "actually existing socialism," and instead offered a *humanist* and *social-based* socialism. They clearly opposed Iran's pro-Soviet Marxist political party, the Tudeh Party, both for its materialist philosophy as well as for its Soviet-style socialism. Equally important, they contested the Tudeh Party's political dependency on the Soviet Union policy. The Tudeh Party's support to the Soviet's demand for oil concession in Iran's northern provinces (the proposed Caspian oil concession) contributed to the split within

the Tudeh Party in 1944. The emergence of the Socialist Theists coincided with the rise of anti-Soviet socialist trends among other social forces in Iran.

The Socialist Theists, in sum, were among a very few modern social forces in Iran who pioneered the idea of a *humanist and indigenous democratic socialism*. They were far ahead of some of their fellow Iranian Marxists who were intimidated by the Soviet and later by Maoist Marxism. Although not quite sophisticated in a philosophical term, their contribution to transcend false dichotomies of religious tradition and modernity, freedom and social justice, democracy and socialism, and the local and the global paradigms was profound. Their simultaneous critique of the clergy, Soviet Marxism, and capitalism did inspire the second generation of the Muslim Left, particularly Ali Shariati.[15]

Ali Shariati: A Gramscian Moment! On the Emancipatory Trinity of Freedom, Equality, and Progressive Civil Spirituality

Ali Shariati (1933–1977) was the most sophisticated and influential socialist Muslim in modern Iran. Like many other thinkers, Shariati's ideas were in the making and developed over time; he shifted his positions on a number of issues. Hence, one has to make a clear distinction between the *mature* Shariati, especially in his post-prison period (mid-/late 1970s), and the *young* Shariati, especially before and during the Ershad period (1960s and early 1970s). Moreover, it is crucial to make another distinction between Shariati's *core* and *contingent* thought. While Shariati's contingent ideas are less relevant to postrevolutionary Iran, some of his core ideas require new interpretations and may contribute to the current post-Islamist social condition in Iran.[16] Last, Shariati's core ideas/thought contain some *unthought*, which needs serious and sophisticated rethinking. For the purpose of this chapter, I suggest that Shariati's core ideas/thought are twofold:

Return to khish (Self) Not to khish (Plough)!

For Shariati, "social objectivity creates religious subjectivity," not the other way around.[17] This is how the sociopolitical hierarchy creates polytheism. The struggle between monotheism (*towhid*) and polytheism (*shirk*) is a social, not a theological, conflict between two social forces in history. Polytheism is a religion of polytheistic social formation such as class, race, or other forms of domination; it aims to justify the status quo. Monotheism, in its socio-historical terms, is the struggle for human emancipation; it aims at self- and social awareness and responsibility. For Shariati, institutionalized religion has always undermined the emancipatory aspect of religion. Religion is "human awareness," a "source of existential responsibility," which would lead to

social responsibility. In *Religion against Religion*, Shariati argues, "If I speak of religion, it is not the religion which has prevailed in human history, but a religion whose prophets rose for the elimination of social polytheism. I speak of a religion, which is not realized yet. Thus, our reliance on religion is not a return to the past, but a continuation of history."[18] One could argue that there is an elective affinity between Shariati's future-oriented approach toward religion and how the European neo-Marxist Ernest Bloch (1885–1977) examines the role of *hope* and *utopia* in society.[19]

Shariati made a clear distinction between his indigenous and authentic idea of "Return to the Self" (*b'azgasht beh khish*) and a regressive, nativist, and nostalgic return to the past. The first approach, he argued, involves a critical reexamination of our tradition/historical legacy in order to liberate the nations' tradition from all kinds of hegemonic discourses—institutionalized religion of the clerical class as well as the autocratic/colonial modernization. The second approach, however, is best represented by "Return to the Plough" (*b'azgasht beh khish*)! The two homophones *khish* (self) and *khish* (plough) in Persian were used to conceptualize and characterize the discourse of Return to the Self.[20]

A Counterhegemonic Trinity of Emancipation: Freedom, Social Justice, and Civil Spirituality

Structures of domination, Shariati argues, have constantly hindered self- and social awareness of human beings in history. In his Gramscian approach/formulation, structures of domination rested upon a triangle of economic power, political oppression, and inner ideological/cultural justification. He provides a critique of the three pillars of "trinity of oppression," *zar-zur-tazvir* (gold-coercion-deception) or *tala-tigh-tasbih* (gold-sword-rosary), meaning material injustice (*estesm'ar*), political dictatorship (*estebd'ad*), and religious and other forms of cultural alienation (*estehm'ar*). Shariati offers a three-dimensional ideal type—"a trinity of freedom, social justice, and civil spirituality" *(azadi, barabari, 'erfan)*—in opposition to the "trinity of oppression" and in recognition of self- and social awareness.[21]

The problem, argued Shariati, was that freedom without social justice degenerated into a freedom of market, not a freedom of human beings. Social justice without freedom undermined human dignity, and spirituality without freedom and social justice ignored the core/essence of our humanity.[22] These ideals turned into regressive forces, new means of domination, and served the status quo. The solution to this problem, Shariati argued, is to synthesize the three ideals, making a three-dimensional self and society/polity. In other words, the unity and harmony of three ideals of freedom, social justice, and spirituality bring about self- and social awareness, human emancipation, and

harmonizes the relationship between nature, man, and God. The unity of three ideals would free human being from the bond of divine and materialistic determinism. It "frees mankind from the *captivity of heaven and earth alike* and arrives at *true humanism*."[23]

More specifically, the core of Shariati's discourse is threefold: freedom and democracy without capitalism and neoliberal market fundamentalism, social justice and socialism without authoritarianism and materialism, and civil spirituality and ethics without organized religion and clericalism.

Democracy and Freedom

For Shariati, the "actually existing" democracies offer only a minimum requirement of an ideal radical democracy. Shariati is more inclined toward *demokr'asi-ye showra`i* (consultative democracy), advocating active and effective participation of citizens in the public sphere. However, Shariati's position on democracy and the role of intellectuals in the state is controversial and needs further inquiry.

For Shariati, the *rushanfekran* as Iran's organic intellectuals are the critical conscience of society and obliged to launch a "renaissance" and "reformation." As such, in his theory of *Ummat va Imamat* (Community and Leadership), the young/early Shariati advocated the idea of "committed/guided democracy," implying that the *rushanfekran* are obliged to take a political leadership to raise public consciousness, and guide public opinion only in a transitional period after the revolution. Such a revolutionary leadership would transform the ignorant masses (*ra's*) into citizens with an informed opinion (*ra'y*), and a procedural formal democracy into a substantive consultative democracy.[24]

The early Shariati was skeptical of procedural democracy in the Third World/postcolonial countries. His skepticism was primarily informed by the experience of the newly independent countries after World War II where the ignorant and conservative masses "would not be attracted by a progressive leadership concerned with the total transformation of society's old modes of thought, concepts and ways. If the people were to vote under such circumstances, Shariati argues that their vote would be for ignorant and conservative leaders like themselves."[25]

More specifically, Shariati's position should be examined in the context of the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Bandung in 1954, where the postcolonial revolutionary leaders advocated "committed/guided democracy" to stop the manipulation of public opinion in the electoral process in new postcolonial states. In the initial transitional phase from the old order to the new "the principle of democracy (was) considered to be in contradiction with the principle of revolutionary change, progress and leadership."[26]

Nonetheless, the mature/late Shariati seems to have changed his earlier position and explicitly rejected dictatorship of any form or of any social class. The late Shariati often quoted Rousseau in that "Do not show people the 'path,' and do not assign them [what to do]; just give them 'sight' [vision]! They will find the path properly, and will know their own obligations."[27] For the late Shariati, like Antonio Gramsci, the main mission of intellectual is not to lead but to enlighten the masses. The responsibility of intellectuals, he argued, "is not political leadership; it is to give masses awareness, that's all"! Once a *rushanfekr* (intellectual) awakens and enlighten society, champions and leaders will emerge from the society.[28] Hence, the theory of "committed/ guided democracy" does not capture the core of Shariati's political theory.

Did Shariati advocate a religious state? Did his ideas contribute to the theory of *velayat-e faqih*? Shariati articulated a humanist Islamic discourse in that people are the only true representative of God on earth. According to the late Shariati, the principal agents of change in history and society are people, not political or religious elites. He even explicitly argued that in society and social issues, "we can always substitute the people for God."[29] In *Religion against Religion,* Shariati accused the clergy of a monopoly of the interpretation of Islam and a clerical despotism (*estebd'ad-e ruhani*), which, he argued, is the worst and the most oppressive form of despotism possible in human history—the "mother of all despotism and dictatorship."[30] The religious state, he argued, is a clerical despotism/oligarchy. It is not accountable to people, because it projects itself as God's representative on earth. In the religious state, nonreligious and the religious other are perceived as God's enemy and devoid of basic rights. Brutal injustice is justified in the name of God's mercy and justice.[31] Nonetheless, for Shariati, modern and civil progressive spirituality, not organized religion, may play a constructive role in the public sphere.

Social Justice and Equality

Shariati's egalitarian leaning and constant critique of social injustice/inequality makes him a socialist thinker. For Shariati, however, socialism is not merely a mode of production; rather, it is a way of life.[32] He is critical of state socialism, *worshipping personality*, *worshiping party*, *and worshipping state*; he advocates *humanist socialism*. He was critical of Soviet and other forms of state-centered socialism and was clearly influenced by the idea of democratic socialism.

There is an elective affinity between Shariati and the European neo-Marxism, anarchism, and cultural humanist Marxism. Shariati was among a very few pioneer Iranian intellectuals who introduced European cultural/ humanist neo-Marxism to the Iranian society when the dominant discourse of Iranian Marxism—with the exception of very important but marginalized

figures—was Soviet and/or Chinese Marxism. Shariati was clearly influenced by the Hungarian neo-Marxist philosopher Georg Lucacs (1885–1971), German neo-Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch (1885–1977), and certainly German-American critical philosopher Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979). It is not clear to what extent Shariati was familiar with the Italian neo-Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937); what is clear, however, is that he has been influenced by Gramsci's sociocultural approach to transform the society as well as Gramsci's concepts of cultural hegemony and counterhegemony. The affinity between Shariati and Gramsci, argues Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, is profound as Shariati's cultural approach was "a Gramscian moment in contemporary Iranian politics."[33] Furthermore, Shariati studied under European Marxologists such as George Gurvitch (1894–195) and Henry Laufer, and taught their work in Iran. Shariati's humanist, cultural, and Gramscian socialism was critical of not only state-sponsored socialism but also economism, determinism, and authoritarianism in orthodox/conventional Marxism. In his own words:

> It is clear in what sense we are not Marxists, and in what sense we are socialists. As a universal and scientific principle, Marx makes economics the infrastructure of man; but we [hold] precisely the opposite [view]. That is why we are the enemy of capitalism and hate the bourgeoisie. Our greatest hope in socialism is that in it man, his faith, ideas and ethical values are not super-structural, are not the manufactured and produced goods of economic infrastructure. They are their cause. Modes of production does not produce them. They are made between two hands of "love" and "consciousness." Man chooses, creates and sustains himself.[34]

Moreover, Shariati's egalitarianism and his passion for social justice were not merely influenced by European neo-Marxism. He was equally influenced by Iran's national and religious traditions/movements such as Mazdak and Shu'ubiyya movements, as well as the Arab Left scholars such as Judah al-Sahhar, the author of *Abu Dharr al Ghifari*.

Civil and Progressive Spirituality

For Shariati, freedom and social justice must be complemented with modern, civil, and progressive spirituality. Nonetheless, he makes it crystal clear that freedom and social justice remain the top priorities for ordinary people, and spirituality is futile without freedom and social justice. Shariati uses the symbolic story of the Adam and the Forbidden Fruit in the Garden of Eden to highlight the significance of civil rights and social justice, and to demonstrate how mysticism/spirituality may turn into a false conciseness and religious deception: "In the Garden of Eden, Adam was blessed with every gift from

God. Every fruit in this bountiful garden was permitted, with the exception of one fruit, [the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil], which had been forbidden." Yet in today's world, continues Shariati, "the ordinary people are denied access to most every fruit. *The permitted fruits have become forbidden for us*." He then asks, "How are we to go after the forbidden fruit when our basic human rights (*hoquq-e a'dami'yat*) has not been recognized, when we have been denied the God given gifts of this garden, when we have not tasted even its permitted fruits?"[35] Then he forcefully makes his point:

> To preach about love to those who do not have bread is nothing but a nasty deception dressed as piety and asceticism. And to tell those with no drinking water the story of Alexander's search for the fountain of eternal life is nothing but a bad joke! *Intellectuals must remember that in our context, our mission is to help people find the permitted fruits, not to send them after the forbidden one*.[36]

Moreover, Shariati is well aware of the shortcomings of official and organized mysticism: the established/institutionalized religion and mysticism "became a shackle on the foot of the spiritual and material evolution of mankind." It "actually separates man from his own humanity. It makes him into an importunate beggar, a slave of unseen forces beyond his power; it deposes him and alienates him from his own will. It is this established religion that today we are familiar with."[37] Nonetheless, a civil *'erfan*/spirituality, he argues, is a modern spiritual vision, ontology and epistemology, which is different from religious formalism and passive mysticism. His notion of civil and progressive spirituality remains in a critical dialogue with other religious traditions and modern ethical concepts. It is, in fact, a *postreligious spirituality*.[38]

For Shariati, the trinity of freedom, social justice, and spirituality (*azadi, barabari, 'erfan*) is not a mechanical marriage of three distinct concepts. Rather, it is a dialectical approach toward self- and social emancipation; it puts together three inseparable dimensions of man and society. In sum, Shariati's trinity of *azadi*, *barabari*, and *'erfan*, the most relevant core of his thought, translates into a new polity of *spiritual social democracy*—an *ethical/humanist democratic socialism*. This ideal type clearly needs further conceptualization and clarification of the role of civil spirituality in the public sphere, translating abstract ideal types into a workable synthetic political model.[39]

It may be argued that in Shariati's synthetic trinity, *'erfan*/spirituality has a preeminent status in giving meaning to both equality (*barabari*) and freedom (*azadi*). Equality, in his view, is not simply a just system of production and distribution, but also an ethical philosophy that guides everyday actions and contains a moral/humanist dimension. Emphasis on equality is not simply a

class-based critique of capitalism. It also has important philosophical, ethical/moral implications, which can inform our commitment not only to fight socioeconomic exploitation but also our struggle for human dignity.

Similarly, spirituality can play a critical role in informing the nature of freedom and democracy. Here Shariati seems to be inspired by Mohammad Iqbal Lahori's (1877–1938) concept of "spiritual democracy."[40] In other words, this is not a mechanical amalgamation of liberal democracy and spirituality, but rather a substantive model of democracy informed by a spiritual ontology. Therefore, religion cannot play an official, legal, and institutional role in the state, but as a spiritual ontology it may play a constructive role in advancing a moral and ethical politics. Any effort to establish an organized religion—a Shari'a-based Islam—as a state official ideology seems contrary to the counterhegemonic and emancipatory trinity of freedom, equality, and spirituality.

In sum, Shariati's three-dimensional alternative discourse of freedom, social justice, and spirituality was an attempt to overcome the dark side of modernity and to liberate/emancipate modern humanity from modernity's "iron cage."[41] Equally significant, yet, was Shariati's radical critique of *resilient fence of tradition*. In his own words, two equally destructive and deceptive forces/discourses captivate us, and each produces a different form of false consciousness, cultural alienation, and deception: "*Estehm'ar*" and again "*Estehm'ar*"! The first refers to autocratic modernity, market fundamentalism, and alienation by the hegemonic/colonial modernity. The second refers to religious deception and dogma.[42] Shariati seems to invite us to exercise an act of "epistemic disobedience,"[43] "delinking" from the establishment—"the gatekeepers" of "word of reason" and "word of God." His approach is an invitation to think through a solution from within.[44]

Iran after the 1979 revolution and under an Islamist clerical oligarchy is not the same as Iran in the 1960s and 1970s when Shariati lived. Besides, new discourses have emerged in the contemporary Muslim majority contexts and the world has gone under certain paradigm shifts. These structural and discursive changes require new thinking. Furthermore, there is much *unthought* in Ali Shariati's thought and the new generation of critical progressive Muslims in postrevolutionary Iran need to address and acknowledge these changes.

NEO-SHARIATI DISCOURSE: A PROGRESSIVE POST-ISLAMIST MUSLIM LEFT?

A new generation of the Muslim left, disenchanted with the dominant Islamist ideology/polity and unsatisfied with the neoliberal hegemonic discourse, is again looking to Shariati. Shariati's critical stance toward

tradition and modernity, clericalism and neoliberal capitalism, shallow reformism and militant/violent approach toward change, together with the admiration of *radical and revolutionary reform* both in religious thought and in sociopolitical structure, appeals to this generation.[45] Like the previous two generations of Iran's Muslim Left, the third generation is diverse and composed of different intellectuals and movements. Nonetheless, the neo-Shariati discourse is the most sophisticated representative of this emerging postrevolutionary discourse. The neo-Shariati discourse admires Nakhshab and Shariati's radical critique of the trinity of domination (*zar*, *zor*, *tazvir*) and praises the trinity of emancipation (*azadi*, *barabari*, *'erfan*). They admire Shariati's radical critique of old and new forms of deception and cultural alienation (*estehm'ar*)—religious fanaticism and neoliberal/colonial modernity, or *religious fundamentalism* and *market fundamentalism*—critical dialogue of tradition and modernity, and above all a Gramscian approach toward sociopolitical change by raising people's awareness, and sociocultural transformation.

The neo-Shariati discourse explicitly advocates a "civil society approach," or a "societal" path toward just development and democratic socialism. It opposes a "state-centered" path toward socialism, and regards individual freedom and liberty fundamental to human dignity. While it remains critical of neoliberalism and some elements of liberalism, its critique aims to deepen and broaden the scope of freedom for as many marginalized people as possible. It follows a "social" approach to democracy.[46]

The neo-Shariati discourse, nonetheless, seems to acknowledge that both Iran and the world have changed since the demise of Shariati and therefore, a new discourse is warranted. The rise of Islamism/Khomeinism into power, and a massive sociocultural transformation of the Iranian society have created a new condition, which requires new thinking. The neo-Shariati discourse needs to revisit the intellectual legacy of the Muslim left and gives serious thought to the unthought in this tradition. Hence, this discourse seems to explicitly advocate a secular/*urfi* polity and rejects the Islamist project of an Islamic state. The Islamic state, in theory, is an oxymoron; in practice, it is no less than a clerical oligarchy, a Leviathan, which protects the interests of the ruling class. The new Muslim Left is, therefore, "post-Islamist."[47] It categorically rejects the idea of a divine/Islamic state and discards the Shari'a-based and/or the jurist/*Fuqaha*'s literalist reading of religion, but admires a civil and progressive role of reformed religious values in civil society.

The post-Islamist discourse symbolizes a critical negotiation between tradition and modernity, religion and reason, faith and freedom, sacred and secular, and particular and universal.[48] It is an attempt to make modernity while it critically reinvents and reforms tradition. "The notion of tradition," as Chantal Mouffe argues, "has to be distinguished from that of

traditionalism."[49] A modern vision of tradition remains in a critical dialogue with "tradition" but rejects "traditionalism." It is through articulation and de-articulation, development and deconstruction of tradition that one actively participates in the making of modernity and democracy. The goal of a critical dialogue with culture and mining the tradition is not to reclaim "traditionalism" or to claim that all universal values derive from a local culture; the goal instead is to show that values such as democracy and human rights have deep native roots in the local intellectual soil. By uncovering the local roots of such ideas, democracy, human rights, and social justice will be seen as ideas that are at once deeply local and global; they are genuinely *glocal*. The challenge of post-Islamism is to make a clear distinction between an *alternative modernity* and an *alternative to modernity*. While the former is conducive to the development of a critical *glocal* third way, the latter, Ernesto Laclau argues, is no less than "self-defeating."[50] In other words, "this is the route to self-apartheid." Nostalgic traditionalism is narcissistic retirement within oneself, which can only lead to a suicidal exile and self-marginalization.[51]

The post-Islamist Muslim Left in postrevolutionary Iran clearly acknowledges the limits of the idea of "guided/committed democracy" in Shariati's *Ummat va Emmamat*. It admires and acknowledges a post-Islamist polity, and the necessity of a secular state in Iran.

Moreover, it has shown its commitment to give some thought about unthought in this tradition, namely gender justice (women and LGBTQ) and environmental justice, as well as a radical critique of Islamism/Islamic state, clarifying differences between Islamism as a regressive discourse and a progressive post-Islamist discourse of liberation theology. There is also a debate about whether and to what extent the same methods of religious reform are applicable to the current post-Islamist conditions in Iran.

Furthermore, the neo-Shariati intellectuals have spoken about deepening the philosophical foundations of the Muslim Left. This includes theorizing the idea of radical consultative democratic socialism inspired by spiritual/ethical ontology, and developing a humanist/spiritual epistemic alternative to both nativist Islamism and a market-driven discourse of neoliberalism and other forms of hegemonic modernity.[52]

CONCLUSIONS

"Contemporaries," argues Agamben, "are rare. And for this reason, to be contemporary is, first and foremost, a question of courage, because it means being able not only to firmly fix your gaze on the darkness of the epoch, but also to perceive in this darkness a light that, while directed toward us, infinitely distance itself from us."[53]

The neo-Shariati discourse/movement seems to have taken up the mantle of critical "contemporary" Muslim intellectuals in the tradition of Nakhshab-Shariati. They are post-Islamist Muslim social democrats, critical of religious oligarchy and neoliberalism—religious and market fundamentalism. They belong to Iran's deep and diverse tradition of *indigenous humanist social democracy*, critiquing Soviet and autocratic Third World socialism. Their sociocultural approach to societal change would make them a good fit to a "Gramscian moment in contemporary Iranian politics." One could argue that the neo-Shariati's progressive post-Islamist stance and its quest for a homegrown *democratic socialism* would make it a potential "contemporary" alternative to the "exhausted epistemics" of nativist Islamism, hyperethnic nationalism, right-wing populism, militant secularism, autocratic and state-centered socialism, and neoliberal capitalism.

Nonetheless, to be contemporary, this discourse/movement needs "courage" of being "untimely"—the ability to know how to observe the "obscurity" and the "darkness" of our time, disallowing "to be blinded by the lights" of the epoch. More specifically, there remains much unthought and work ahead of this "contemporary" discourse/movement in order to remain an influential progressive trend/force in the twenty-first-century Iran, and possibly in the larger Muslim contexts.

The first task is to clearly and completely confront *Islamism*. We know that Shariati blamed the religious clerical establishment of *ulama* for its regressive and reactionary outlook, looking backward to a mythical glorious age. It is evident from Shariati's writings that he visualized an Islam without the clergy's monopoly of religious inspiration and interpretation. Iran's clerical authority and organized religion (*ruh'aniyyat*), Shariati argued, represented "Safavid Shiism": a passive, apolitical, and distorted version of revolutionary progressive "Alavid Shiism." Organized clerical Islam, he argued, has served as a sociocultural base of political despotism by withdrawing religion from its public responsibilities, depoliticizing it except for legitimizing the current social order, and transforming it into individual piety and asceticism.[54] An Islamic liberation theology and an Islamic renaissance/reformation, he thought, would be a solution to Iran's stagnation and social status quo.[55]

However, the rise of *revolutionary Islamism* in postrevolutionary Iran is probably one of the most significant *unthought* in Shariati's thought. The question is whether Shariati underestimated the socio-organizational power of the clergy and the rise of radical Islamism in postrevolutionary Iran. He seems never anticipated the return and reincarnation of the same regressive and conservative clerical Islam of Safavid Shiism but masked with a revolutionary Alavid Shiism, that is, revolutionary Islamism. Islamism was unthought in Shariati's thought. Hence, the postrevolutionary context requires new thinking about how to challenge Islamist hegemony and its

complex mode of domination, or to use Michel Foucault's concept, an *Islamist* "governmentality."[56] This new condition may also require rethinking about the nature and methods of an Islamic reformation.

The second task is theorizing an *indigenous democratic socialism* driven by a *spiritual ontology*. The neo-Shariati discourse explicitly rejects the concept of an Islamic state and advocates a secular/civil or *urfi* democracy. For Ehsan Shariati, state is a neutral secular entity and must remain neutral to all religions and ideologies. The state's legitimacy derives from public reason and the free collective will of the people. As such, a new reading of Ali Shariati's discourse would affirm political secularism, but remain critical of ontological secularism, and the positivist rationalism of secular modernity. Moreover, to use Mohammad Iqbal Lahouri's concept, this reading would advocate "spiritual democracy," not religious democracy.[57] In the same way, Hassan Yusefi-Eshkevari argues that from a purely Islamic perspective, it may be argued that political power is an *urfi* and worldly question. He explicitly challenges two pillars of the Islamic state, namely, the "divine legitimacy of power" and "full implementation of Shari'a." Political power including "the Prophet's rule in Medina was the result of a social contract." Neither the power of the state nor the Shari'a is divine. An Islamic state is an Islamist human construction.[58] Similarly, Reza Alijani advocates democratic secularism. He identifies two types of religiosity and two types of secularism. While the Shari'a-based religion and radical/fundamentalist secularism are not compatible, the human-based religion and democratic secularism are compatible.[59] Democratic secularization separates the religious and political institutions, but highlights the normative value of religion in the individual, social, and political spheres. Nonetheless, the idea of an *indigenous democratic socialism driven by a spiritual ontology* still needs further clarification. More specifically, the abstract idea of a spiritual ontology and its impact on state and society needs to be contextualized, operationalized, and articulated.

The third task involves the role of *civil progressive spirituality* in the public sphere. Shariati's trinity of freedom (*azadi*), equality (*barabari*), and civil spirituality (*erfan*) is a novel contribution to the idea of an "alternative modernity," or "multiple modernities." It problematizes the conventional discourses, but offers little a clear alternative theory or a practical road map. What is the contribution of *erfan* in the public sphere, and how does this shape or inform the other two pillars, *azadi* and *barabari*? How does such a critical constructive erfan translate into a workable progressive sociopolitical project? More specifically, the question is whether and how the "trinity theory" translates into a workable synthetic political model of *spiritual social democracy*.[60]

Last but certainly not the least task is to devote much thought to develop new and original ideas *about gender, environmental, racial, ethnic, and*

all other forms of justice in the context of an indigenous and progressive discourse of a "contemporary" Muslims of the twenty-first-century Iran—a *glocal* discourse of *comprehensive* social justice informed by progressive ontology of civil spirituality. This is how neo-Shariati public intellectuals would become, in the Agambenean tradition, "truly contemporary," as they "neither perfectly coincide" with "their time nor adjust themselves to its demands." They maintain a "relationship with time that adhere to it through a disjunction and an anachronism."[61]

Feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins has famously coined the concept of "Matrix of Domination" and oppression, referring to the intersectionality of gender, race, class, and other social factors in oppression and domination.[62] In other words, because there are multiple and interconnected sources of social injustice, critical and contemporary organic public intellectuals must acknowledge and challenge such a complex and multifaceted "matrix of oppression," by contributing to the development of a discourse and praxis of comprehensive social justice, or a *Matrix of Emancipation*. It remains to be seen to what extent the neo-Shariati discourse is capable of providing a comprehensive and yet practical progressive post-Islamist alternative to Iran's matrix of religious, gender, class, environmental, ethnic, and political injustice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

NOTES

1. Gorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus*? (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 41–45, emphasis added.
2. Ibid., 41.
3. Ibid., 45.
4. Ibid., 50.
5. Hamid Dabashi, *Can Non-European Think?* (London: Zed Books, 2015).
6. Shireen T. Hunter, *Iran Divided: The Historical Roots of Iranian Debates on Identity, Culture, and Governance in the Twentieth-First Century* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 72; Seyed Mohammad Ali Taghavi, *The Flourishing*

of Islamic Reformism in Iran: Political Islamic Groups in Iran 1941–1961 (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 13–15.

7. Hunter, *Iran Divided*, 72.

8. Mohammad Nakhshab, *Majmu'eh-ye asar-e Mohammad Nakhshab* [The Collected Works of Mohammad Nakhshab] (Tehran: Chapakhsh, 2002); Mahmoud Nekuruh, *Nehzat-e khodaparastan-e sosiyalist* [The Movement of Socialist Theists] (Tehran: Entesharat-e Chappakhsh, 1997).

9. Hunter, *Iran Divided*, 72; Taghavi, *The Flourishing of Islamic Reformism in Iran*, 27.

10. Hunter, *Iran Divided*, 72.

11. Ali Rahnama, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shariati* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 25.

12. Yadollah Shahibzadeh, *The Iranian Political Language: From the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present* (New York, NY: Palgrave McMillan, 2015).

13. Jalal ed-Din Ashtiyani quoted in Hunter, *Iran Divided*, 73; Taghavi, *The Flourishing of Islamic Reformism in Iran*, 32–33, original emphasis.

14. Hunter, *Iran Divided*, 73.

15. Mojtaba Mahdavi, "Iran: Multiple Sources of a Grassroots Social Democracy?" in *Iran's Struggles for Social Justice: Economics, Agency, Justice, Activism*, ed. Peyman Vahabzadeh (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 271–88, 276–78.

16. Mojtaba Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 31, no. 1 (2011): 94–109, 102.

17. Ali Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 16 [in Persian] (Tehran: Ershad, 1981), 30, original emphasis.

18. Ali Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22 [in Persian] (Tehran: Chapakhsh, 1998) quoted in Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends," 102–6, original emphasis.

19. Ernst Bloch, *The Principles of Hope*, 3 Vols., trans. N. Plaice, St. Plaice, and P. Knight (Boston, MA: MIT Press, 1954/1995); Michael Lowy, "Romanticism, Marxism and Religion in 'The Principles of Hope' of Ernst Bloch," trans. Rodrigo Gonsalves, *Crisis & Critique*, 2, no. 1 (2015): 350–55.

20. Ali Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4 [in Persian] (Tehran: Elham, 1998) quoted in Mahdavi, "Iran: Multiple Sources," 281.

21. Ali Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2 [in Persian] (Tehran: Ershad, 1982), Mahdavi, "Iran: Multiple Sources", 281; Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends," 102–6.

22. Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 37.

23. Ibid., 85–90, Abbas Manoochehri, "Critical Religious Reason: Ali Shari'ati on Religion, Philosophy and Emancipation," *Polylog* (2003), Retrieved 12 April 2016, http://them.polylog.org/4/fma-en.htm; Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends," 102–6; Mahdavi, "Iran: Multiple Sources", 282; emphasis added.

24. Ali Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26 [in Persian] (Tehran: Amoun, 1993), 461–634.

25. Ali Rahnema and Farhad Nomani, *The Secular Miracle: Religion, Politics and Economic Policy in Iran* (London: Zed Books, 1990), 67.

26. Ibid.

27. Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 94, 4257–58, 342.

28. Ali Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 20 [in Persian] (Tehran: Ghalam, 1995), 49–108.

29. Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 153, emphasis added.

30. Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22.

31. Ibid.

32. Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 107.

33. Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, "Contentious Public Religion: Two Conceptions of Islam in Revolutionary Iran: Ali Shari`ati and Abdolkarim Soroush," *International Sociology*, 19, no. 4 (December 2004): 512.

34. Ali Shariati quoted in Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1992), 143.

35. Ali Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33 [in Persian] (Tehran: Agaah, 1995), 1266, emphasis added.

36. Ibid.

37. Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 52, 60, emphasis added.

38. Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends," 102–6.

39. Mahdavi, "Iran: Multiple Sources", 282–83; Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends," 102–6.

40. Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989/2012).

41. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 2001), 124; Dabashi, *Can Non-European Think?*, 20.

42. Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4.

43. Walter Mignolo, "Foreword: Yes, We Can," in Hamid Dabashi, *Can Non-European Think?* (London: Zed Books, 2015), viii–xlii.

44. Mahdavi, "Iran: Multiple Sources," 284.

45. They include intellectuals, scholars, and activists such as Ehsan, Susan, and Sara Shariati, Hashem Aghajari, Hossein Mesbahian, Reza Alijani, Hassan Yusefi-Eshkevari, Taghi Rahmani, Alireza Rajai, Mohammad Javad Kashi, Abbas Manoochehri, Ali Ghasemi, and Arman Zakeri, among many others. One could caustically add to the list sociologist Yusef Abazari, political scientist Ahmad Zeidabadi, and other scholars and activists sympathetic to a new reading of Shariati, which challenges clerical oligarchy, shallow reformism, violent/militant path toward social change, and neoliberal capitalist path of development. Sociologist Yusef Abazari and historian Hashim Aghajari have called this a *Re-Turn to Shariati*! Such return, however, addresses and acknowledges differences between NOW-and-HERE and the Shariati's era. Hence, there has been an intellectual critique of Shariati's legacy, giving some serious thought to Shariati's *unthought*. In 2017 and 2018, the neo-Shariati intellectuals organized two symposiums in Iran to examine Shariati's legacy in the postrevolutionary context and to conceptualize the discourse of neo-Shariati. More information is available here: *Now, Us and Shariati*, 22–23 November 2017, http://drshariati.org/?p=14967; *Neo-Shariati and the project of Invention of the Self*, 12 December 2018, http://drshariati.org/?p=20837#more-20837.

46. Ehsan Shariati, "Justice under Freedom," Interview with *Ta'adol Daily*, 19 June 2014.

47. Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends."

48. Asef Bayat, *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends."

49. Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*: *Thinking in Action* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 16.

50. Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London and New York, NY: Verso, 1996), 26, 32.

51. Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends," 106–7.

52. Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends."

53. Agamben, *What is an Apparatus*?, 46.

54. Ali Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9 [in Persian] (Tehran: Chapakhsh, 1998).

55. Shariati, *Collected Works*, Vol. 20.

56. Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

57. Ehsan Shariati, "Interview with Sharhrvand," *Shahrvand*, 12, no. 714 (2002): 3–5.

58. Hassan Yusefi-Eshkevari (2011).

59. Reza Alijani, "Pre-secular Iranians in a Post-secular Age: The Death of God, the Resurgent of God," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 31, no. 1 (2011): 27–33.

60. Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends."

61. Agamben, *What is an Apparatus*?, 41–45.

62. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002).

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The Neo-Mutazilites in Contemporary Iran

Two Generations of Muslim Intellectuals

Farhad Khosrokhavar and Mohsen Mottaghi

INTRODUCTION

With the victory of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the rise of a particular version of Islam based on Shi'a jurisprudence, Muslim intellectuals were faced with a new ordeal, and the idea of the relationship between Islam and politics was brought to a new predicament. Many Muslims who had advocated a political interpretation of Islam found themselves in a new situation and had to rethink their intellectual foundations in the face of the ruling political power that became theocratic. Some of those who advocated the politicization of Islam soon realized that the politicization of religion and its entry into all spheres of political and social life would lead to the denial of religion as a spiritual pillar of the society and therefore put into question the close association between Islam and politics in the name of Islam.

We mainly focus on two generations of religious intellectuals in Iran[1] and will show the fundamental changes in their conception of religion and, in particular, its relation to politics in comparison to the preceding generation embodied in Shariati, Motahhari, and ayatollah Khomeini. We will use the term "neo-Mutazilite" to name this current in reference to the eight- and ninth-century Mutazilites for whom reference to reason and an exegesis of the Koran as the word of the Prophet (and not God's) were the two major hallmarks. Other qualifying words were used in the last two decades to characterize these intellectuals. They were called "New religious thinkers" (now-andishmandan-e dini) in Iran, or "post-islamist intellectuals" by Farhad Khosrokhavar in two articles, respectively, in 1993 and 1996.[2] While adhering to a religion, these intellectuals attempted to critique many

of the religion's past beliefs, and they devised a new religiosity, whose most prominent feature was the separation of politics and religion. The title of neo-Mutazilite has also been applied to the new Sunni religious thinkers (Hamed Abuzeid, Mahmud Mohamed Taha, Ali Abderraziq, and so on).

THE FIRST- AND SECOND-GENERATION NEO-MUTAZILITE THEOLOGIANS

The triumph of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the establishment of Shiite theocracy in Iran brought a new era of religious thought in Iran. The reign of a theocratic narrative of religion (*Velayat-e Faqih*, the Government of the Islamic Jurist), the rise of the clergy, and the dominance of the jurisprudential narrative (Fiqh) of Islam after the establishment of the Islamic Theocracy in Iran raised the thorny question of the relationship of religion and politics in a new fashion. During the first decade of the Islamic regime, Muslim intellectuals were almost silent; the long war initiated by Iraq (1980–1988) and revolutionary turmoil, the overwhelming charisma of ayatollah Khomeyni as the head of the state, and the total devotion of a significant part of the youth to him made impossible critical reflections on religion and politics within the Iranian society. After the death of ayatollah Khomeini (1989), the Iranian intellectuals entered a new era. New religious thinkers emerged or changed their previous perspective and put into question the legitimacy of theocracy in the name of Islam. In particular, they disputed the subordination of politics to religion, questioning the pillar of the Islamic regime, namely the Supremacy of the Islamic Jurist (*Velayat-e Faqih*). Among them, Abdolkarim Soroush, Mojtahed Shabestari, Mohsen Kadivar, Mostafa Malekian, Hassan Yousefi Eshkevari, and few others were the avant-garde.[3] They were close to the circle known as Kian, including Saeed Hajjarian, Alireza Alavi Tabar, Hamidreza Jalaiepour, Mohammad Javad Gholamreza Kashi, and so on. Among them, Abdolkarim Soroush stood out, as one of the most prominent neo-Mutazilite thinkers in postrevolutionary Iran. Soroush, like many others, was a staunch supporter of the Revolution led by ayatollah Khomeyni on the eve of the Revolution. Gradually, he became critical in his writings and conferences toward the theocratic regime. Other Muslim intellectuals such as Shabestari, and later on Kadivar, and Eshkavari also began to criticize the theocratic version of Islam.

The second-generation encompasses people like Arash Naraghi, Abolghassem Fanaee, Soroush Dabbagh, Sedigheh Vasmaqi (one of the few neo-Mutazilite women), Hassan Ferechtian, and some of the first-generation neo-Mutazilites like Mohsen Kadivar in his late thought after he migrated to the United States. The statement is also true about Hasan Yousefi Eshkavari

who changed after his establishment in Europe (he spent six years in prison for having denounced the Islamic regime and was denied by the Islamic regime the right to wear the clerical garb).

THE NEW THEMATICS AMONG THE IRANIAN NEO-MUTAZILITES: RELIGION AND POLITICS, DEMOCRACY AND ITS COMPATIBILITY WITH ISLAM, THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE KORAN

One of the concerns of Iranian neo-Mutazilites was to propose a non-Jihadist, non-maryrist understanding of the Koran and provide an interpretation in agreement with the modern liberal values, particularly within the Islamic regime in Iran, based on the Velayat-e Faqih, a theocracy in which the Supreme Leader (the vali-e faqih) plays an autocratic role.

Intellectuals such as Abdolkarim Soroush, Mojtahed Shabestari, Hassan Yousefi Eshkevari, Mostafa Malekian, Mohsen Kadivar, and Habibollah Peyman, among the first generation of neo-Mutazilites,[4] and among the second generation, Arash Naraghi, Abolghasem Fanaei, Soroush Dabbagh, and Hassan Ferechtian sought to propose a new interpretation of the Koran as well as the Prophet's mission in opposition to the Islamic theocracy.

Soroush

Among the religious scholars of the postrevolutionary period, the writings of Abdul Karim Soroush, and especially his theory of "contraction and expansion" (*qabz o bast*) of religion,[5] have been of crucial importance. This book can be considered as the manifesto of religious neo-Mutazilism in postrevolutionary Iran. Soroush believes that religious knowledge is human knowledge and has no sacredness. Another point is the impact of the evolution of science and its role in the understanding of the sacred texts, which means that the understanding of human beings is from the modern text.

Later on, Soroush developed further his view by writing "Expanding the Prophetic Experience"[6] and interpreting it in a way that further denies sacredness to the Koranic text. He shows that along with the divine aspects of the Koran and the Prophet's personality, his human aspects must also be emphasized. Soroush believes in the gradual prophetic experience of the Prophet and claims that the religion we know in the name of Islam did not descend upon the Prophet once and for all, but gradually, and it evolved during that time. In following reformist intellectuals, Soroush claims that some of the verses of the Koran concern the daily life of the Prophet, for example, if Aisha had not been slandered about an illicit relationship with another

man, the early verses of the Surat Noor might not have been revealed in that fashion. One can distinguish between the inner experience of the Prophet and its external manifestation, and in Medina the latter was instrumental in wars. While accepting the sacredness of the Koran, Soroush claimed that Muhammad was the creator of the Koran and regarded the experience of the Prophet as a kind of poetic experience (in that case, following sound logic one should deny sacredness to the Koran, but Soroush refuses to go that far). He believes that Muhammad's personality was influential in shaping the Koran because he was not a passive receptor of revelation. Soroush's comments can be summarized in the following points:

First, to understand the message of the Koran one has to distinguish between the essence of a religion and its manifestations (this is the classical distinction between the essence and the accidents in Aristotelian and Islamic philosophy). He has provided a number of criteria for distinguishing between the essentials of Koranic passages: Arabic language, Arabic culture, Islamic lexical apparatus, Arabia's geography, events in Islamic history, and so on. The second point in the theory of "Revelation as the Word of Muhammad" emphasizes the comparison between the experience of the Prophet and the experience of the poet. Third, the Prophet is the creator and producer of the Koran. The Koran was revealed by God, but it came from the mouth of Muhammad to his followers, and in so doing the Prophet was by no means inactive (this was also the position of the Mutazilites in the eighth and ninth centuries). Fourth, the conditions governing the life of the Prophet played an crucial role in producing the Koran. And finally, understanding the essence of the Koran over the accidents is the mission of Muslim scholars.

Soroush published a series of articles abroad last year, revisiting the issue. These articles have been published under the title "Prophetic Dreams of the Prophet" (ro'ya-ye rasulane-ye payaambar).[7] In these articles, Soroush comes up with a new interpretation of the Revelation in relation to Muhammad. To understand the Prophet's message and to understand the Revelation of the verses and its "confused order" they should be treated as dreamed by the Prophet. One must now, therefore, apply the science of interpreting sleep. In other words, as much as an oral revelation, one should pay attention to the dreamlike visual revelation.

On democracy, Soroush's ideas were initially published under the heading of "Religious Democratic Governance" in Kian magazine[8] and aroused much controversy.

In confronting religion and ideology, he criticized Shariati's views and defended democracy in the Islamic society. Criticizing official stances on religion, he argued that religions, contrary to ideologies, have not promised paradise on earth (critique of eschatology used by Shariati to give a revolutionary interpretation of Islam), and the role of religion is to provide a system

of values and norms for human social behavior. In essence, in his view, religious governments do not differ from nonreligious ones that are based on rational consultation with the citizens, so the main difference between religious and nonreligious governments is not in their form but the end.

The peak of Soroush's intellectual developments on religion and democracy can be found in his speech in Paris in 2006 in which he criticized the politicization of the clergy in an attempt to show that traditional Shi'ism, especially its jurisprudential and Mahdist narratives, is opposed to democracy and the ruling jurists (and in particular, those supporting the *Velayat-e Faqih*) are anti-democratically minded. Governing through the traditional Fiqh is incompatible with the principles of democracy, and religious democracy can only be achieved by adopting universal values based on human rights. Soroush regards the establishment of democracy based on religion as irrational and impossible. What remains to be done is to prepare Muslims for the acceptance of democratic values. Does the government have the right to make religious laws? Soroush's answer is definite, but with two important restrictions: first, these laws must come from below, the private sphere, to the public sphere through customary processes and not from above, by the state. On top of it, these laws should not conflict with human rights standards.

Mojtahed Shabestari

In 2007, Mojtahed Shabestari, in an interview,[9] attempted to reveal aspects of his hermeneutical view of the Koran. He is one of the first postrevolutionary religious scholars who both criticized the formal understanding of religion and sought to find a new solution to Muslim life in the modern world in the face of the dilemmas and problems arising from the establishment of Islamic rule in Iran. His answer is to rethink the foundations of Islamic theology, relying on science that has been called hermeneutics in the West. Shortly after the victory of the Revolution, Shabestari became convinced of the inefficiency of Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh) in answering questions about human rights, liberty, democracy, apostasy, polygamy, and so on. In his view, it is necessary to show that the text of the Koran, while of divine origin, is also expressed in human words, proffered by the Prophet, as stated by the Mutazilites, in the eighth and ninth centuries. In his view, the Koran is the Book of God that came to us through the mouth of Muhammad. In order to understand the Koran, it is necessary to study the environment and the society of that time in Arabia, and to understand that many of those laws promulgated at that time cannot be applied in today's world. Sharia laws' purpose in Islam was to improve the situation of Muslim communities and make it more consistent with God's view. In the modern world, in order to achieve this goal, one has to abandon those religious laws that command physical violence.

The Islamic laws of Talion (*qisas*, an eye for an eye) were promulgated, not for the sake of retribution, not from a punitive view, but in view of pardon, from a moral perspective. In order to understand it, we have to analyze the sociopolitical and economic commandments of Islam in their historical context. This implies that they cannot be applied all the times. In particular, the jurisprudential commandments do not belong to the essence of the religious message of Islam (*zaatiyaat*) but to the nonsacred part of them, dependent of the historical context of the Arab society at those times (*arziyaat*).[10]

Shabestari's conception of the compatibility of Islam and democracy has to be analyzed in light of his hermeneutics, in his book *The Human Reading of Religion*.[11] He believes that Muslims must turn to human achievements in order to manage their affairs and build upon common sense, not religion. The purpose of the prophets was not the establishment of a state but spreading faith, entrusting the political affairs to the common sense of the people. Of course, religion should morally inspire political action, but it should not be used as the tool by rulers.[12] The Prophet's mission was promoting faith and not establishing a theocratic state. Democracy, according to him, is the most appropriate system for Muslims in the present day, because it is the only political system under which freedom and justice can be achieved. Another aspect of Shabestari's separation of religion and politics is that Islam does not have solutions for all the problems of modern life. Deducing them by analogy (qias) or religious legal notice (fatwa) does not fundamentally change the situation. The best solution is to disconnect religion from politics and give full autonomy to the latter. In 2007, in an interview with the Madresseh Magazine,[13] Shabestari attempted to make explicit his hermeneutical view of the Koran. For him, the text of the Koran, while having a divine origin, is also a human word (the Prophet's). The Koran is the Book of God that came to us from the mouth of the Prophet Mohammad (in that respect, he is a Mutazilite stricto sensu). As for Sharia laws in Islam, Shabestari argues that their purpose and the social role was to change the social realities of the Prophet's contemporaries for the better, replacing group-based punishment by individual ones, avoiding any collective punishment as was practiced at that time. Due to the change in the mores and customs in the modern world, today we should abandon the laws that prompted physical violence in order to tackle the problems arising at the dawn of Islam.

Hassan Yousefi Eshkevari

Hassan Yousefi Eshkevari, a neo-Mutazilite cleric who has been "defrocked" by the Islamic regime in Iran (he was denied the right to wear the religious Shiite garb), has sought to provide an interpretation that is, in his eyes, consistent with the values of the modern world and, in particular, with human rights.

In his writings, he has critically reinterpreted Islamic values. For him, the best type of government is a democracy, based on the vote of the people, and he has tried to show its consistency with Islamic precepts. In his view, absolute rule belongs only to God, who has delegated his power to man. As a result, the government is earthly in its nature, and democracy is the most appropriate type of government, and Muslims have to choose it. Otherwise, living under autocracy, even in the name of religion, means usurping the power of God. Like many neo-Mutazilites, Eshkevari believes that government and power in Islam have not a heavenly but an earthly origin. No one is inherently and unilaterally commissioned by God to rule in the name of Allah (*velayat*), but the government should be based on a representative system (*vekalat*),[14] according to his exegesis of the Koran. He denies in this way the legitimacy to ayatollah Khomeini's *Velayat-e Faqih*, based on the government of the Islamic Jurist in the name of God.

While defending Shariati's views, Eshkavari argues that the Prophet's rule was no longer his prophecy or interpretation. The Prophet's government was not part of his mission, that is, if the Prophet did not come to Medina (where he became a community leader) and had died in Mecca, his prophetic assignment would have been fulfilled. In reference to the verses of the Koran, he points out that there are a small number of verses on government and politics. Out of the 6,600 verses in the Koran, about 500 relate to practical injunctions, including prayer, fasting, zakat (Islamic tax), inheritance laws and penal laws, and so on. Were the 500 verses sufficient for even the administration of the Muslims in Medina at the time of the Prophet? They were certainly not enough. The total population of Medina at that time was probably about 1,000. Accordingly, the phenomenon of power and government is a human and social issue, not a religious one, and it is necessary for the Muslims to distinguish between the Prophet's rule in Medina and his mission as the Messenger of God.[15]

Mohsen Kadivar

Mohsen Kadivar is another neo-Mutazilite with a clerical background. He has sought to propose a consistent interpretation of the modern values in the religious texts, an interpretation of Islamic tradition, and the application of sharia in today's world. One can speak of two major periods in Kadivar's thought. "Kadivar I" extended to the first two decades after the 1979 Iranian Revolution and continued until 2001. At this stage, Kadivar, while adhering to the official religious system and accepting Islamic jurisprudential criteria, attempted to show in reference to the standards of the traditional Fiqh that the *Velayat-e Faqih* had no deep foundation in it.[16] In two books, *Theories of State in Shi'a Jurisprudence* and *Velayat-e Faqih*,[17] he highlighted the fact

that *Velayat-e Faqih* was based on relatively recent interpretations of the role of the Islamic ruler in society (which denies its being based on those Hadith that are called Sahih, that is, close to the Origin of Shiism), and second, that this view is by no means sacred. Referring to Mehdi Haeri Yazdi's book *Wisdom and Governance*, Kadivar showed how the latter defended the theory of *Vekalat* (the ruler as the representative of the people, chosen by them) by criticizing the *Velayat* (the ruler as designed by the Sharia, beyond the will of the people). In those years, Kadivar still adhered to the traditional Fiqh. The essay "From Historical Islam to Spiritual Islam"[18] was a turning point in his theological leanings and a break with his former jurisprudential views. Accepting the significant changes that Islamic societies have gone through, he stated that transformation within Islamic societies is possible by means of the critique of fundamentalist Islam, which calls for the application of Sharia laws at all times and places. He imposes on the Fiqh a criterion of validity based on fairness (justice) and rationality. All those religious laws that do not subscribe to these norms are to be rejected in his view. More generally, no religious injunction can go beyond the criteria of rationality and justice and one cannot refer to any infallible religious law in absolute terms. In other words, being just (moral view) and rational (reason as the decisive criteria) determine the religious laws and they take precedence over any claim to sacredness or infallibility. In this respect, the second Kadivar (Kadivar II) is a neo-Mutazilite in so far as he imposes rationality as the foundation of any religious law.

Mostafa Malekian

Neo-Mutazilite theologians reflect on the relationship between the modern world and the religious thought; a Malekian has attempted to provide a typology of Islam in order to propose his own answer. He has distinguished three conceptions of Islam:

- Islam I, exclusively based on sacred religious texts we call the Book (the Koran) and the Tradition (Sunnat).
- Islam II, encompassing the commentaries, interpretations, and explanations that include the works of theologians, jurists, scholars, philosophers, and mystics.
- -Finally, Islam III meaning a historical realization and a set of actions and reactions enacted by Muslims in the last 1,400 years, and the effects of those actions and reactions on Islam. According to him, depending of the version of Islam we choose, the answer to the question of the relationship between Islam and modernity, liberalism, or Islam and violence would be different.[19]

Like many intellectuals in the Muslim world, Malekian has neither offered a specific interpretation theory of the Koran nor interpreted the Koranic verses in a unified approach. In some of his writings, however, he has commented on the Koran and its interpretation. He has identified several ways to understand the Koran. First, he contends that the Koran has no internal consistency. Second, the Koran is in conflicts at least with parts of today's sciences and thoughts. Third, in the Koran, the beliefs attributed to the Jews and the Christians are contested by the believers of those religions. Fourth, the value system of the Koran is in conflicts with those of the modern world (Human rights, and so on). For example, it is difficult to accept the law of talion (*qisas*, an eye for an eye), violence, women's rights, and apostasy as treated in the Koran. Fifth, the Koran is not the word of God but the word of Muhammad. In an interview with Faraa-Raah magazine,[20] Malekian has attempted to express his view of hermeneutics and the conflict between modern rationality and Revelation (*vah'y*). He argues that we should abandon the literalist view of the Koran and grasp the spirit of the Sacred Text rather than its literal sense. However, the hermeneutics of the Koran is not an easy task for many Muslims, because they believe that the Koran is the word of God and it has been inspired to the Prophet in a manner that has not been influenced by his psychology or culture. In this view, chronology and, more generally, history play no role.

Another controversial issue in the Muslim world is the interpretation of the Koran, which is traditionally forbidden by Muslims. They believe that it can be done through the consensus of the ulama, but this consensus does not exist, and it is at best a wishful thinking. Malekian believes that the literalist interpretation of the Koran is unacceptable to the modern man; believing everything in the Koran and being convinced that it has an answer for all the problems of modern life makes us think that in the past there was some knowledge that is inaccessible to modern man: it has been forgotten or lost sight of (which is unacceptable). The third assessment is to renounce referring to the Koran for all the problems encountered in our world. Religion has no answer to all the problems of modern life and we should recognize it as an insuperable fact. The Koran brings spiritual answers and modern man needs rationality and spirituality, and none can be sacrificed to the other. Malekian's answer is ambivalent, he does not offer a global hermeneutics of the Sacred Text, but he puts into question holistic views of religion and rejects fundamentalism and those understandings that "resolve" the hermeneutic circle in a simplistic way. For Malekian, the purpose of rationality and spirituality is to prepare people for an ideal life. For him, the main features of this ideal life are goodness and joy and a life worth living, those criteria being autonomous toward religion.[21] He believes that these components help us seek the best pleasure and least suffering for ourselves, on the one hand, and alleviate the

suffering of the others, on the other. For him, spirituality does not necessarily imply religion, and a religious person is not necessarily spiritual, the reverse being also true: a spiritual person is not necessarily religious. This opens the way for the recognition of a secular spirituality, independently of any religion. The fundamentalist view of religion embodied in *Velayat-e Faqih* denies "spirituality" to those who do not consider themselves as Muslims. Malekian introduces a kind of spirituality that is autonomous toward religion and, in so doing, rehabilitates secular views that are denied legitimacy by traditional and radical Islam.

Arash Naraghi

Among the second-generation neo-Mutazilites, Arash Naraghi is a seminal figure. He dared rise the issues like the gay rights within Islam. After leaving Iran and teaching in the United States, he wrote Persian articles dealing with Islamic mysticism (Sufism) and Iranian poets. The book *Mirror of Life* (ayeneh-ye jan), written about Rumi's thoughts and ideas, discusses his spiritual development and in the final chapter of his book "Thinking about Death and Nothing,"[22] he compared Rumi, Hafiz, and Khayyam. Naraqi has attempted to present a new paradigm by criticizing religious modernism and traditionalism. He bases his claims on the Koran in order to examine the relationship between religion and the modern world. The Islamic legal system is based on inequality between human beings, Muslims and non-Muslims, believers and nonbelievers. This has to be put into question. For him, the Koran is not a book of law but a book of spiritual guidance. Second, the sources of Islamic narrative must also be critically assessed. Third, in understanding the Koranic commandments and the prophetic traditions, one should not overlook the historical context of those commandments. Historical contextualization of the Koran is what characterizes Arash Naraghi and some other neo-Mutazilites. Like Kadivar, he makes the exegesis of the Sharia contingent on the following conditions:

First, the legal and religious system should not be incompatible with the general living conditions of the religious community. One cannot ask a whole community's death in order to preserve religion (martyrdom as an ideal for the genuine believers could be of that type of stipulation). Second, religious legitimacy must be dependent on moral legitimacy and not the opposite. Fundamentalists and the supporters of the *Velayat-e Faqih* believe that morals are subordinated to religion. Neo-Mutazilites invert this relationship and proclaim the absolute supremacy of ethics over faith.

Third, a legitimate and ethical religious system is to be respected by the voluntary followers of that religion and should not be imposed to the others, who should not be coerced into it. Here too, contrary to the Islamic regimes

that impose their norms to the others (also to nonbelievers and non-Muslims), neo-Mutazilites in general interpret religion as being personal, and therefore, not to be imposed against the will of the individual.

In his essay "The Sacred Text and the Hermeneutic Exegesis,"[23] Naraghi attempted to present his own understanding of the Koran. Naraghi believes that the Scripture consists of two worlds: the first, the world of the Revelation, and the second, the meanings contained in the Text, which are the primary purpose of God in revealing the Book. From the Naraghi's point of view, the First World has no sacredness, and Koranic vocabulary has a purely instrumental role and is a bridge that leads the reader into the world of the deep meaning of the Text. The second world is the recognition of the deep spirit of the Revelation through the Book. Modern man is confronted with a mystery in the face of the sacred text, which he calls the "hermeneutical dilemma," which is the profound epistemic divide that has taken place between the reader and the sacred Book's original world. In the premodern world, the two worlds were largely identical. But in the modern world, there is "an epistemic rift" between the first and second worlds, and the modern reader faces difficult questions on gender issues (the juridical inequality of men and women in the Koran), the slavery (tolerated by the Koran in its literalist interpretation), the scientific and cosmological theories, and the human rights issues. Modern man is now confronted with the sacred text and how this hermeneutic rift must be handled. In Naraghi's view, modern interpreters of the Koran must first distinguish between Arabic and Koranic culture, noting that obsolete Arab culture in the Age of Revelation does not mean obsolete Koranic message. Second, modern audiences have to understand that their end should be to enter the second world of the Text (its spiritual meaning), and therefore, by necessity, they should adopt a critical attitude toward the original Arab culture within which the Revelation was made. The Koranic message should be separated from the former Arab culture and be inserted into the present cultural horizon of modern culture. This goes against the Salafist and the theocratic views that prevail in many Muslim societies. He underlines the primacy of spirituality (the deep meaning of the Koran) over the literary understanding of the Koran.

Abolghassem Fanaee

Fanaee's project, like many neo-Mutazilite Muslim religious intellectuals and theologians, revolves around the relationship between religion and modernity, the place of faith in a secularized world, the relationship between religion and ethics, the place of Sharia in modern Muslim societies, the relationship between religion and politics and, in particular, the type of rationality that could be compatible with spirituality, which is, according to him, at the heart

of the Muslim religion, as Soroush and Shabestari have already asserted it. His work focuses on the relationship between religion and ethics as it is clearly stated in his first book, "Religion in the balance of ethics. Research on the relationship between religious ethics and secular ethics".[24] For him, religion must remain within the limits of ethics while recognizing that the first can participate in the enrichment of the second. Fanaee's purpose is to find a reasonable and satisfactory way to resolve the conflict between Islamic ethics (Fiqh) and secular ethics. Subsequently, he radicalizes his point of view and engages in a critique of Islamic law (Fiqh) and the methods used by the doctors of Islamic law. For him, the Fiqh is confronted today with the challenge of the modern world and in this context the religious sciences, as they are taught in the traditional Shiite theological schools (howzeh), are not able to provide adequate answers to the issues raised by the contemporary condition of man. He focuses in particular on the problematic of rationality by distinguishing Fiqh-based rationality (aghlaniaté féghi) and secular rationality (*aghlaaniaté orfi*). The first is to justify religion while modern reason is a tool for organizing life in society. In particular, he considers following Soroush the necessary "shrinking" (ghabz, "contraction") of Islamic law in the modern world.

The hard core of Fanaï's thesis is the priority of ethics over religion. This does not mean the ethicization of religion but rather the ethicization of religious knowledge. In other words, his project is to question the legitimacy of those who affirm the primacy of Islam over secular ethics.

To defend a secular morality a literal and static vision of sharia, he introduces certain number of distinctions, aiming to show what differentiates an ethical vision from a maximalist conception of Islam that claims to have an answer to all questions posed to the modern man.

The first distinction is between the applied Fiqh (*Fiqhé karbordi*) and the normative Fiqh (*Feqhé hanjâri*). The second is to raise all the religious norms for which there are acceptable reasons in the fundamental texts of Islam. According to Fanaee, following Shabestari, to establish norms in human societies with the sole reference to the founding texts of Islam is not possible. After the death of the Prophet of Islam, given the diversity of human societies and the emergence of new problems, religious laws were no longer sufficient to organize the believers' existence in society. The purpose of the applied Fiqh was to seek answers not only in the founding texts but especially in the sciences of the time, Fiqh not being able to answer on its own all the legal questions in more and more complex societies. It would, therefore, be urgent to inject a dose of ethics and rationality into the existing Fiqh.

One solution is to resort to *Ijtihad*, that is, the theologian's personal effort to propose solutions to the problems encountered by the believers in the legal field. Fanaee introduces a distinction between what he calls "traditional ijtihad" practiced by a majority of theologians and "modern ijtihad" based

on secular human reason, in relation to the reference to the prophetic model, actualized in light of modernity. In traditional ijtihad the central element is the religious law and the necessity to apply it in all contexts, whereas in modern ijtihad the central element is the reference the motivations of the Prophet in promulgating religious prescriptions, taking account of the world evolution since then. Traditional ijtihad does not understand the modern world and relies on a set of legal commands that have become irrelevant. It denies legitimacy to the evolution of human societies and the diversity of cultures and practices, the Fiqh being decreed eternally valid. Contemporary ijtihad takes prophetic experience as a model to inspire believers by its intentionality rather than blindly applying it to the modern world. Fanaee enlarges the question and asks: how to remain a believer and modern in a world where religion has become more or less marginal in citizens' life? The solution for him is to reconcile religious spirituality, which remains a fundamental need of the man, with secular rationality. This reconciliation is obviously problematic, and Fanaee distinguishes three stances regarding the conflict between religious spirituality and secular rationality. The first, supported by the traditionalists, is to claim that there is no possibility of reconciliation or compatibility between the two, the traditionalists opting for Islam and rejecting secular reason. The second position supports the idea of a secular spirituality articulated with an updated mysticism. In this perspective, lay people can recover spirituality, which would be close to a "spirituality without God" or a form of secular spirituality, proposed by modern secularized thinkers of Christian inspiration. These two solutions do not satisfy Fanaee. He proposes a new conception of spirituality that is not in contradiction with rationality, while being respectful of religion. He proposes the concept of "sacral spirituality" (*ma'naviate ghodsi*). For him, faith is the fundamental element of religiosity; it has been forgotten and marginalized by modern man. "Sacred spirituality" is an attempt to reconcile faith and rationality. His interpretation of spirituality rests on three characteristics: it is religious, it is theocentric (khoda mehvar), and it conforms to a rational framework (charchub-e aghlaani). Spirituality and rationality are two indispensable elements in constructing the identity of the believing individual in the modern world. One cannot sacrifice neither of them; it is necessary to rearticulate them. Sacred rationality is an interpretation of religion so that it is not in conflict with reason, science, or morality. At the same time, it is meant to be a return to the Golden Age of faith, that is to say, the time when believers felt connected to a present and living God, a living and present Prophet, and a living Koran. It was also a time when religion was a way of life and was not transformed into a set of beliefs, attitudes, and habits. We often talk about God, but what is important is talking *with* God. Our relationship with the absent God is between I and He while it should be between I and You, in other words, a relationship with

a present God. The relation between the I and the He is monological, while between I and you is dialogical. Fanaee draws inspiration here from various modern Christian theological currents, in which the existential dimension of the faith is emphasized.[25]

One can establish the same kind of attitude toward the Prophet. To speak of the Prophet is different from speaking *to* the Prophet. The same observation is valid in relation to the Koran. Knowing the Koran is different from living with the Koran: it is the book of life and for life, of practice and action, and not a book of science, of history.

The Prophet, in his perfection, made a synthesis of rationality and revelation according to the society of his time. By entering a living dialogue with him, we must apply what is right in our world and time. What is rational is to be privileged nowadays, just as in the time of the Prophet, with his presence and his relationship to God in the form of revelation. The dialogical relationship with the Prophet, the Koran, and God induces a hiero-subjectivity in which reason and ethics take precedence over tradition and its dead religiosity. Fanaee thus privileges reason in an imaginary relationship to God and the Prophet, as well as to the Koranic text, according to intuition and interpellation. He rejects what history has sedimented in the form of Muslim law (Fiqh) and, more generally, religion through a religious tradition (Sharia). Only in this way can we achieve the "sacred spirituality" that reconciles modern rationality and the originary Prophetic experience.

Fanaee tackles the gender issue, ignored by many first-generation neo-Mutazilites. For the question of women in general and inheritance in particular (for the traditional Fiqh women's inheritance is half of men's), Fanaee considers that one should not follow the Prophet in his laws but rather follow the model he has proposed. For him in the context of fourteen centuries ago, when women had no rights, Islam's proposals were a step toward justice and the reduction of inequalities. In today's world, we must not reproduce the laws that the Prophet put in place, but follow his inspiration to reduce gender inequality. He proposes a kind of ijtihad inspired by the model of the Prophet, which will aim at just laws, true to the requirements of the modern world. He thinks the Prophet would behave differently if he lived today and would have approved human rights-based laws and gender equality.

Soroush Dabbagh

Soroush Dabbagh has attempted to formulate his approach to religion on the basis of the existential concerns of man and the pursuit of meaning (issues such as sorrow, pain, death). In this context, he is influenced by the works

of Gabriel Marcel, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, and the theological reflections of Abdul Karim Soroush, his father, and, in particular, Mojtahed Shabestari.

A modern approach to mysticism in today's disenchanted world is one of his significant tendencies. He has devoted an important part of his intellectual work in recent years to contemplating mystical conduct in the modern world. His acquaintance with the modern Iranian painter and poet Sohrab Sepehri has made Dabbagh realize that Sepihri's life and works are a reflection of the existential concerns of modern humans and the need for a mystical view in a world without gods.

The place of ethics in the modern world. Like many neo-Mutazilite intellectuals, Dabbagh has attempted to examine the relation of religion to ethics and the importance of a moral approach in many issues of Muslim life. He believes like many second-generation neo-Mutazilites in the primacy of ethics over religion and, especially, over jurisprudential Islam (Fiqh), and he has applied such an approach to issues such as hijab and apostasy in Islam.

He defends the freedom of women to wear or lift the veil,[26] tackling frontally an issue that had been at best marginal, like other gender issues, among the first-generation Mutazilites.

To defend women's right toward the veil, he refers to the minimalist theory of divine command based on the supremacy of ethics over religious prescriptions and the work of some Iranian scholars like Amir Hossein Turkashvand,[27] Ahmad Ghaleb,[28] Mohsen Kadivar, and Abdolali Bazargan. Dabbagh believes that rulings such as those on hijab have a rather humane and ethical nature, and concludes that wearing it in modern time is not compulsory, and at the same time, not wearing does not imply defecting God's command and purpose ignoring the Koranic injunctions.

After the Iranian Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic state, the issue of apostasy was raised again in the field of theology. Ayatollah Montazeri and Abdul Karim Soroush debated the matter. While defending the principle of apostate punishment, Montazeri believed that the Islamic state's duty was to provide a ground for nonreligious conversion. Soroush believed that in the modern world, one could not be killed because of a change of opinion. Dabbagh argues that anyone who abandons some of his beliefs and even his religion has committed no moral offense and is not entitled to any judicial punishment.

Although Dabbagh considers himself indebted to the first-generation neo-Mutazilites, his writing is a turning point in the religious intellectual tradition. By introducing poetry and literature into a new project of religiosity, he has attempted to transform the mystical tradition and to draw upon some philosophers, psychoanalysts, poets, and novelists in order to develop a kind

of mystical conduct in a new and different form. The construction of concepts such as "modern seeker" (*saalek-e modern*), "wishful faith" (*imaan-e aaezu-mandaaneh*), and "blindness to death" (*kur margi*) suggests this shift.

Sedigheh Vasmaghi

Sedigheh Vasmaghi is one of the rare Shia theologians who defend women's rights in the name of Islam. She has published several books, one of which is about women and Islamic law (Fiqh). His competence in Islamic law was institutionally recognized not only by her PhD but also by her teaching at the University of Tehran. She has made several publications in Persian, including her recent book on the rereading of Shari'a but also a text on the reinterpretation of the law of Islamic retribution (Qisas, Talion) where she refutes the point of view that Qisas in Islam aimed primarily at punishing. According to her, this law sought above all to weight the punishment by putting it at the maximum level harm suffered by the victim, the preferred path suggested by several Koranic verses being forgiveness and clemency. Her book on women's rights challenges the inequality between man and woman according to the Koran, attributing most inequalities to a patriarchal tradition that has nothing Koranic about it. As for certain gender-unequal Koranic prescriptions, they intended to alleviate a much more flagrant gender inequality at the time of the Prophet. According to Vasmaghi, we must dissociate the legal commandments from the essence of the Islamic faith and reinterpret all the legal commandments in the light of modernity. Many of the judicial practices that claim to be Islam, she notes, are linked to ossified traditions, among them, stoning (it has no Koranic base) or apostasy or so-called "Spreading corruption on earth" (*fisad fil ardh*). An example that she willingly develops in her interviews is that of the death sentence for consumers and drug traffickers that are made in reference to this notion. She shows the undue extension of this concept to modern transgressions that should not have been logically entailed death sentence. She distinguishes the specific punishments mentioned in the Koran or the Sunna (the Hadiths) and all of the *hudud* and those, which are like a deduction or an extension of the first (*ta'zir*), the latter never having to be harsher than the first. The undue application of notions derived from Islamic jurisprudence or the Koran without a consequent reflection on their adaptation to the modern world leads to a fixed Islamic law that has only traditional legitimacy, while it is largely devoid of authentic Islamic legitimacy. This same type of prescription about women introduces inequalities that have no Islamic justification according to her, in reference to the spirit of Islam.

The case of Vasmaghi is one of the rare examples where a woman, competent in Islamic jurisprudence, stands against the hegemony of unequal and

cruel law entailing the execution of several hundred drug smugglers and even addicts a year (many addicts, by necessity, become drug dealers).

THE IDEOLOGICAL RUPTURE BETWEEN NEO-MUTAZILITES AND REVOLUTIONARY ISLAMIC INTELLECTUALS

There is a major rupture among the neo-Mutazilites and the former generation of religious intellectuals like Shariati, Motahhari, and, more generally, Third-Worldist Iranian intellectuals. One can summarize them as follows:

• Whereas, religious (Shariati) or secular (Jalal Ale-Ahmad), Third-Worldist Iranian intellectuals believed in revolution, the neo-Mutazilites are prone to a nonrevolutionary, reformist attitude toward social issues. Major Iranian Third-Worldist intellectuals accepted the fusion of politics and religion in the name of the forthcoming revolution that would promote the anti-imperialist proletariat (although Iran was devoid of a significant working class); Shariati thought that genuine Shiism was "Ali's Shiism" (*tashayyo-e alavi*), against the quietist and passive "Safavid Shiism" (*tashayyo-e safavi*). For the neo-Mutazilites, the blending of politics and religion is denounced by the neo-Mutazilites as a harmful confusion that ends up in autocracy and engenders distrust toward religion among religious-minded people, thus weakening Islam rather than strengthening it.
• Third-Worldist intellectuals, religious or secular, believed mostly in an eschatology (Marxist eschatology of classless society or chiliastic ideology of the end of times embodied in the twelfth occulted Imam), whereas neo-Mutazilites reject wild utopias like classless society or paradise on earth visions or the end of time imaginaries; in this respect, a major anthropological change has occurred: whereas Shariati insisted on eschatological awaiting (*entezar*[29]), the neo-Mutazilites simply ignore it and eschatology, be it religious or Marxist, has become invisible in their religiosity.
• Third-Worldist intellectuals rejected democracy as a fake by-product of imperialism, whereas neo-Mutazilites are prone to it in the name of the people's sovereignty in matters related to civil society and politics.
• Third-Worldist intellectuals, secular (like Jalal Ale-Ahmad) or religious (like Shariati), viewed revolutionary violence as not only legitimate but also desirable. The leitmotiv by Shariati, "Martyrdom is an invitation in all the eras and all the generations: if you can put to death (jihad) and if you cannot, die (martyrdom)."[30]

Some Reformists, following the neo-Mutazilites, inverted that leitmotiv: "Neither die nor kill (*na bemir, na bemiraan*)."

Neo-Mutazilites reject the romantic view of violence and promote a non-violent civil society vision that has found its social expression in the Green Movement in July 2009.

- Third-Worldist intellectuals, be they religious or secular, promoted a heroic individualism: one should sacrifice oneself in the name of martyrdom (Shariati's "red Shiism" (*tashayyo-e sorkh*) against "black Shiism" (*tashayyo-e siaah*)) or for the sake of the anti-imperialist class struggle. In contrast to them, for neo-Mutazilites martyrdom becomes at best a marginal topic (often ignored in their writings), and normal citizenship gains the upper hand. They promote a life-centered individualism, whereas death-centered individualism was the ideal of Shariati and Marxist revolutionaries like Golsorkhi and the leftist Mujahedeen of the People.
- Iranian Third-Worldists subordinated ethics, human right's issues, and all nonpolitical considerations to their revolutionary view of society; neo-Mutazilites proclaim the supremacy of ethics and in particular human rights over any religious claim in an unambiguous manner among their second generation.
- New topics like civil sphere, democracy, nonpolitical spirituality, and a "peaceful" citizenship based on nonviolence replace the warrior-like vision of the major Iranian Third-Worldist intellectuals who believed in wild utopias in the name of the indefatigable fight against imperialism or, as Shariati put it, *estekbar*, imperialist "arrogance."
- Neo-Mutazilite thinkers have paved the way to a mutual understanding with secular intellectuals in Iran. By declaring the autonomy of the politics toward religion in an ambiguous (first-generation neo-Mutazilites) and unambiguous manner (second-generation neo-Mutazilites), they have overcome the major stumbling block toward secular government. The divide is henceforth between the religious fundamentalists and the neo-Mutazilites within the religious sphere, rather than the latter and the secular thinkers in Iran.

Common Features between the First- and Second-Generation Neo-Mutazilites

These intellectuals share few basic features:

Their questioning of the Islamic regime through the critique of Islamic theocracy (Velayat-e Faqih).

Their attempts at separating politics and religion in different fashions (Soroush and Shabestari refer to Islamic mysticism [Sufism], Kadivar through historical analysis, Eshkavari through a critical reading of Shariati, and so on).

Breaking away from a militant, heroic, and revolutionary conception of Shiism, embodied in the cult of martyrdom. If Shariati's writings were focused on martyrdom, the first generation of neo-Mutazilites marginalized it and made prominent notions like Islamic civil society (djame'eye madanie dini), and focused, instead, on spirituality (Soroush, Shabestari), democracy, and a peaceful secularization instead of a revolutionary change (Shariati).

Declaring autonomous the realm of politics, religion having to be "restricted" to the spiritual realm, its "expansion" after the 1979 revolution has led to its distortion, according to Soroush and Shabestari.[31] This indirectly contributes to democracy, in so far as the citizens' vote determines politics and not theocratic rule.

Proclaiming the preponderance of ethics toward the Sharia and, in particular, the explicit subordination of Islamic jurisprudence to the universal ethics, mainly based on human rights and the right to be religiously-minded or agnostic, believer or non-believer, the freedom to change religion (*ertedad*) or even to reject it (a new word, not derogatory as the world *molhed* is coined by them (*degar andishan-e dini*, differently-thinkers in religious matters). The criticism of Shariati's theories by Soroush and the challenge of Shariati's theory of Ummah and Imamat[32] and the subordination of religion to ethics in Malikian's and the late Kadivar's views provide the basis for a "peaceful" religious individualism, in contrast to Shariati's "effervescent" one.

Proclaiming the autonomy of the social and political life toward religion: Eshkevari[33] believes that people in society have the right to organize themselves as they please, and to create any kind of government and political system they wish, and no one, nor any authority—religious or not—can put it into question. He goes so far as to state that the right to be a human being is separate and superior to one's religion, race, class, and sex, and this right is only dependent on one's humanity.

The disappearance, total or partial, of the Imams as inspiring models of "extraordinary" behavior. Shariati referred to the third Imam, Hossein, for heroic attitudes toward death as a martyr. He referred to Ali, the first Imam and fourth Caliph, for inflexible justice; the twelfth Imam was the paragon of the Final Fight against the illegitimate rulers. Other seminal figures of Islam, like Balal the Ethiopian, Fatemeh the daughter of the Prophet and the wife of Ali, Talhe and Zobeir as deviant disciples, Abu Zar as the inflexible follower of the Prophet rejecting the luxury of the newborn empire, and so on, were mobilized in order to propose a model of courageous, even intrepid conduct to the believers who should not fear death. Neo-Mutazilites have a much more detached attitude toward the Imams: they sometimes criticize them (as did Soroush toward Ali, the first Imam, for his misogyny[34]). The second generation even goes further: religion is for them somehow autonomous toward the traditionally seminal figures of the Imams. Shariati made many Imams

revolutionaries; Soroush and Shabestari referred mainly to the mystical Iranian poets (Rumi, Hafez, and so on) rather than the Imams; the second-generation neo-Mutazilites build up a religiosity that is not tied to the Imams. In a way, they put into question the "Imamology" and the role of the Imams within Shiism, as mediators between God and human beings. Henri Corbin's assessment[35] as to the supreme role of the Imams within Shiism that distinguishes the latter from Sunnism is fading among the neo-Mutazilite figures, particularly in the second generation. On the whole, the way neo-Mutazilites look at Shiism brings it much closer to Sunnism than before. They either ignore or greatly reduce the role of the Imams in Shiism.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES BETWEEN THE FIRST- AND SECOND-GENERATION NEO-MUTAZILITES: GENDER, APOSTASY, HOMOSEXUALITY, THE RIGHT TO BE A NONBELIEVER

First-generation neo-Mutazilites in Iran introduced a major intellectual rupture with the former, Third-Worldist generation, particularly the religious ones, among whom the figure of Shariati was paramount. The first- and second-generation neo-Mutazilites have many common features as described above. But between them, there are also major differences.

The first one is the fact that many first-generation neo-Mutazilites avoided to bring up some topics that were almost taboo. The gender question was not usually raised (very few references in Soroush or Mojtahed Shabestari, gender being occulted by them, and its treatment being at best marginal among them).

Second-generation neo-Mutazilites do not have the same attitude. Many have raised the gender issue and what it entails, namely the veil, the inheritance, the gender equality, among others. According to Soroush Dabbagh, one of the prominent second-generation neo-Mutazilites who has devoted many articles to this issue, not covering the hair by a veil is not transgressive of the norms of good behavior for Muslim women in the contemporary world. The Koranic verses are not explicit on veiling and the verses that concern it do not belong to those for which there is a clear prescription (*mansous*), according to Dabbagh.[36]

Arash Naraghi but also Sedigheh Vasmaqi have extensively discussed the gender issue.

The first generation did not mention topics like apostasy, homosexuality, or the problem of nonrecognized religions like Bahaism, new forms of religiosity and, in particular, Buddhism or Pentecostalism (different from the Christian tradition in Iran among the Assyrians and Armenians, making

adepts among Muslims). These topics became subjects of debate among the second-generation neo-Mutazilites like Naraghi, Soroush Dabbagh (son of Abdolkarim Soroush), Fanaee, and the others.

The second feature is their insistence on ethics and human rights as determining the place of religion in society. The first generation presented this view, but it was put within a framework that either belittled the role of ethics or made it more ambiguous. The new generation asserts explicitly the preponderant role of ethics in religion, the second being subordinated to the first.

Another feature of the second generation toward the first is the full assumption of secularization and its consequences. The generation of Shariati justified secularization in terms of heroic and death-prone attitudes: everyday was supposed to be Ashura (the day Hossein was martyred by the Yazid army) and everywhere was supposed to be Karbela (the venue of the martyrdom of Hossein in today's Iraq), according to a slogan after Shariati's slogans. Young men pursued the goal of resembling Hossein through martyrdom; they became secularized not in normal life, but in pursuance of sacred death.[37] First-generation neo-Mutazilites assumed an ambivalent attitude toward secular societies. Soroush rejected Islamic fundamentalism but he did not unequivocally recognize the legitimacy of a secular order. He assumed a type of attitude that was ambivalent toward secularization and its consequences (no formal recognition for religion). The new generation of neo-Mutazilites (the second Kadivar, the late Eshkavari, Naraghi, Soroush Dabbagh, and so on) unambiguously endorse secular society's rule and place religion on the private sphere, with no claim toward any legitimacy other than the subjective identification of the believers to their faith.

CONCLUSION

Neo-Mutazilite intellectuals and theologians have played a significant role in modernizing Shiism and, beyond it, Islam. Due to the crisis in Muslim societies, their influence is still more or less marginal in many fields, but they have proposed a whole new framework against the radicalized view of Islam (jihadism, Islamic fundamentalism, Salafism in its pietistic or violent versions, and so on). They have humanized and modernized many Islamic tenets, but their problem is to connect to Muslim societies, and not to be cloistered in ivory towers. Their success in Iran among the new generations is undeniable, but they are at pains to open up the Islamic institutional gates (in Iran the Howzeh-ye elmiyeh, the theological schools based in Qom and other major cities). They have been able to deconstruct the theological-juridical foundations of Shiite theocracy and propose a tolerant, "modest" version of Islam.

NOTES

1. This article synthetizes parts of our common book, to be published in French; Farhad Khosrokhavar and Mohsen Mottaghi, *L'islam et le christianisme: le défi des theologies* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2020).

2. See Farhad Khosrokhavar, Les intellectuels post-islamistes en Iran, *Awal*, n° 11, 1993, pp. 47–59; Les intellectuels post-islamistes en Iran revisités, *Trimestre du Monde*, 1st quarter, 1996, pp. 53–62.

3. See Mohsen Mottaghi, *La pensée chiite contemporaine à l'épreuve de la révolution iranienne* (Paris: L'Harmattan Publishers, 2012).

4. There is a vast literature on the first-generation Iranian neo-Mutazilites, but very few on the second generation. We can mention for the first generation Mehrzad Broujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Navitism* (New York, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996); Ali Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals in the Twentieth Century* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1997); Lioyd Ridgeon, ed., *Iranian Intellectuals: 1997–2007* (Routledge, 2008).

5. Abdolkarim Soroush, *Ghabz o bast-e teorik-e shariat* (Theoretical Contraction and Expansion of Religion), Eighth edition (Tehran: Sarat Publishers, 1372 (1993)).

6. Abdolkarim Soroush, *Bast-e tajrobeh-ye nabavi* (Expansion of the Prophetic Experience) (Tehran: Sarat Publishers, 1378, (2009)).

7. Abdolkarim Soroush, Mohammad Sal-Allah: raavi-ye ro'yaa-haye rasulaaneh (Mohammad, Peace Upon Him, the Counter of the Prophetic Dreams), *Soroush Website*.

8. Ibid.

9. Mojtahed Shabestari, *Journal, dar josteju-ye ma'naaye ma'naa-haa* (Looking for the Meaning of the Meanings), second year, sixth issue, 1386 (2007).

10. Mojtahed Shabestari, *Naqdi bar qara'at-e rasmi az deen* (A Critique of the Official Understanding of Religion) (Tehran: Tarhe Now, 1379 (2000)).

11. Mojtahed Shabestari, *Ta'amolaati dar qara'at-e ensaani az deen* (Reflections on the Human Understanding of Religion), Second edition (Tehran: Tarhe Now, 1384 (2005)).

12. Shabestari, *Naqdi*, op.cit.

13. Shabestari, *Madresseh*, op.cit.

14. Hasan Yusefi Eshkavari, *kherad dar ziyaafat-e deen* (Reason in the Symposium of Religion), Third edition (Qassideh Publishers, 1380 (2001)).

15. Hasan Yusefi Eshkavari, Hoquq-e bashar va ahkam-e ejtema'i-ye eslam (Human Rights in the social Commandments of Islam, *Eshkavari's Website*, 1389 (2010); Tarikh-mandi-ye vahye va nabovvat (The Historicity of Revelation and Prophethood), *Jaras Website*, 1390 (2011).

16. Mohsen Kadivar, *Nazariyeh-haye dowlat dar feqh-e shi'eh* (The Theories of Government in the Shiite Fiqh) (Tehran: Nashr Ney, 1376 (1997)).

17. Mohsen Kadivar, *Haq ol naas, eslam va hoquq-e bashar* (The Right of the People, Islam and the Human Rights) (Tehran: Kavir Publishers, 1378 (1999)).

18. Ibid., op.cit.

19. Mostafa Malekian, *Baayasteh-haa-ye pajuheshi-ye qor'ani, raahi beh rahaa'i-ye jostaar-haa-ee dar aqlaaniyat va ma'naviyat* (Normativity in the Koranic Research …) (Tehran: Nashr Mo'aser, 1381 (2002)).

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Arash Naraghi, Sonnat gara'i-ye enteqadi dar qalamro-e deen (Critical Traditionalism in the Realm of Religion), in *Sonnat va ofoq haa-ye goshudeh* (Tradition and the Opened Horizons) (Negah Mo'aser, 1395 (2016)).

23. Arash Naraghi, *Hadisse hazer va ghayeb* (The Story of the Present and the Absent …) (Tehran: Nashr Negahe Mo'aser, 1390 (2011)).

24. Abolghassem Fanaee, *Akhlaaq-e deen shenaasi-ye pajooheshi dar mabaani-ye ma'refati va akhlaaqi-ye feqh* (The Ethics of Scholarly Theology in the Field of Gnoseology and Ethics of Fiqh), Second edition (Negah Mo'aser Publishers, 1392 (2013)); Abolghassem Fanaee, *deen dar taraazu-ye akhlaaq* (Religion in the Balance of Ethics), Fourth edition (Sarat Publishers, 1395 (2016)).

25. See Khorokhavar and Mottaghi, *L'islam et le christianisme*, op.cit.

26. Soroush Dabbagh Hejaab dar Tarazool, *Hijab on the Balance* (London: H&S Media, 1396 (2017)).

27. Amir Hossein Turkashvand, *hejaab-e shar'i dar asre payaambar* (The Religious Hijab in the Era of the Prophet) (Electronic Publisher, 1390 (2011)).

28. Ahmad Ghabel, ahkaam-e baanovaan dar shari'at-e mohamadi (The Commandments on Women in the Mohamedan Religion), in *Collective Works*, vol. 9 (Electronic Publishers, 1392 (2013)).

29. Ali Shariati, *entezaar* (Expectations, Awaiting), https://storefiles.ir/downloads/.

30. Ali Shariati, Collective Works, 19, Hossein vaares-e aadam (Hossein, the Heir to Adam), *The Conference Shahaadat* (Martyrdom) (Qalam Publishers, 1361 (1982)), p. 195.

31. Soroush's main work (on the restriction and expansion of religion) dates back to more than two decades ago.

32. Ali Shariati, Ommat va Emaamat, Made of a *Series of Conferences* on 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th Farvardin 1348 (April 1969) in Hosseinieh Ershad, Tehran.

33. Eshkavari, *kherad dar ziafat-e deen*, op.cit.

34. Abdolkarim Soroush, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeKbcyyv11Q.

35. Henry Corbin, *En islam iranien: aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, Seconde édition (Paris: Gallimard, 1978).

36. Soroush Dabbagh, *hejab dar taraazu-ye akhlaq* (The Veil on the Scale of Ethiks), op.cit.

Mas'ale-ye hejab va fahm-e ravesh-mand az ghor'an (The Issue of Veil and Methodological Understanding of the Koran), in *hejab dar taraazu*, op.cit.

37. See Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Inside Jihadism: Understanding Jihadi Movements Worldwide (Yale Cultural Sociology Series)* (Paradigm Publishers, 2009).

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