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Between Ethno-nationalism and Pathological Critique:

Critical Theory as Critique and Defense of the Western Tradition

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Abstract

Critical Theory in the West today is philosophically situated between two polarizing extremes: (1) the Far Right's retreat into ethno-nationalism, and (2) an authoritarian form of Leftist "heretic hunting" that I call "pathological critique." While both are responses to the inadequacies of liberal democracy and the failure of the Enlightenment to fulfill its stated promises, the first seeks to obtain *ethnic purity* within the historical European and North American ethnospheres, while the second attempt to obtain *intellectual purity* among the political Left. I argue that both forms of domination must be opposed by the non-conforming Critical Theory. While both seek to abstractly negate that which they deem non-identical, heterodox, and/or unwanted, Critical Theory must remain recalcitrant, and committed to dialectical logic – the logic of determinate negation, wherein the Critical Theorist critically engages with both trends, accesses their claims, and preserves that which can be preserved while negating that which belongs to the dustbin of history.

 Key Words: Ethno-nationalism, Pathological Critique, Whiteness, Dialectics, Western Classics.

Introduction

Critical Theory is in a precarious state at the moment. It finds itself caught between two destructive social-political forces that are currently metastasizing within American civil society (and Western civil societies generally): first, the growing lure of aggressive forms of ethno-nationalism, which seeks to right the perceived wrongs of cultural liberalism, multiculturalism, and globalization, and second, the growing entrenchment of what I call "pathological critique," which seeks to aggressively exorcise the perceived wrongs of a hypocritical Enlightenment, which failed to realize its promises of liberté, égalité, fraternité. Recently exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the four-year presidency of the aspirational fascist, Donald Trump, as well as the proliferation of online conspiracy theories, these two destructive forces have created mass psychoses in American civil society that appears to be self-perpetuating, self-sustaining, and ultimately self-destructive. Critical Theory, which often stands accused by the European New Right and the American Far-Right of being the initiator of this frenzied condition, in reality stands critically between ethno-nationalism and pathological critique. It is the purpose of this short essay to locate Critical Theory between the two and demonstrate why it must remain recalcitrant to them both.[1]

Ethno-nationalism – Return to Ethnos as Identity

America's inability to realize the full universality of its stated Enlightenment creed is no secret. Systemic racism, exploitative capitalistic class antagonisms, gender inequality, and explicit attempts to marginalize the "non-identical" (*das Nichtidentische*), have all been well documented. Eruption of racist violence against ethnic minorities is as frequent in America as the pogroms against the Jews of Medieval Europe. However, with the increasing racial, cultural, and religious diversification of the America citizenry, i.e., the expansion of the "willed-community" (*willensgemeinschaft*) beyond the various European ethnoi, has strained the concept of *E Pluribus Unum* beyond conceivability for many. The modern concept of the democratic citizen, rooted in constitutional political foundations, as opposed to ethnic foundations, challenges the sense of identity of those who cling to pre-political ethnic foundations as being the basis of the organic "people's community" (*volksgemeinschaft*) (Habermas, 2009: 59-77).[2] It has become fashionable among many in the Far-Right to claim that America is not a "nation" of people, as traditional "nations" are only formed on the basis of ethnicity,

shared language, shared history, shared geographical space, shared religion and/or cultural traditions (Dugin, 2018). Civil citizenship, a "willed nation" of people bearing ascribed membership within a community, cannot last, for politics and political ideals lack the material adhesives that traditional ethnic identities provide. The willed-community is a false-kinship, one that may have had some possibility when constituted within *similar* ethnic groups, but impossible to maintain within a country that embraces the full diversity of humanity. Due to this perceived collapse in American identity, brought on by over-diversification – or *überfremdung* (overforeignization) as contemporary German critics of immigration call it – a retreat into ethno-nationalism is called for. This reconnection of the sacred bond between *blut* to *boden* within the historical European ethnosphere and the colonial territories of North America and Australia, seeks to overcome what the Far Right perceives as a collapse of the distinctiveness of Western society: the loss of its unique identity.

The notion of population "replacement" bears heavy on the minds of those who have turned towards ethno-nationalism. Rooted in the works of Renaud Camus, the author of *You Will Not Replace Us,* and many other anti-immigration books, the Euro-nationalists, White Nationalists, and European Identitarians, argue that mass immigration and cultural diversification within the traditional European ethnosphere is "replacing" the native-born Europeans and White Americans (Camus, 2018). While this idea is derided by the political Left as a paranoid "conspiracy theory," the reality of population replacement has numerous historical precedents: Europeans replacing Native Americans; Europeans replacing Australian Aboriginals; Israelis replacing Palestinians, and Western capitalist culture saturating and forever transforming the traditional cultures of the world. Additionally, Western demographics demonstrates that throughout the Western nations, "population collapse" is an acute problem. Since more people are dying than are being born, the only way to stabilize the prosperity of the West is the continual "importation" of others via immigration. Even the United Nations, which has studied the problem of "replacement migration," estimates that the major nations of the West will need "replacement populations" to fill the labor void left by low fertility rates (United Nations).

The fear of population replacement and cultural displacement that follows it is acute amongst those in the Far-Right because, unlike their liberal counterparts who celebrate intra-national diversity, the Far-Right remembers, but inwardly suppresses, the bloody and brutal historical memory of European expansionism as

not to succumb to a guilty conscious for being the actual replacement population. While on the one hand, the Far-Right cheers for the European legacy of conquest, they now see that the West itself may be the new territory subject to conquest. The idea that this "new colonialism" (as mass immigration and multiculturalism is often called), perpetrated by globalists, Leftists, Jews, and the "lesser" peoples of the world, is a global conspiracy against the West, is surely fanciful. Nevertheless, the rapidity of demographic change in the West will continue to produce severe bouts of social angst and cultural anxiety, which will inevitably lay the groundwork for internal conflicts within Western states, just as we saw in America during the Obama, Trump, and Biden administrations.

In order to overcome such angst and anxiety, and reestablish their "lost identity," many Europeans and Euro-Americans have joined the growing swells of Far-Right ethno-nationalist political and para-military groups. In distinction to historical forms of fascism, many of these new groups assert not their genocidal hatred for the mere existence of the "others," but rather their hatred for the others' *presence* within their exclusive ethnosphere. Most of these Far-Right groups reject the idea of genocide. They claim to want to preserve the true diversity of humanity, not destroy any segment of it. While the term "diversity" in the liberal sense is the praise of diversity within a single society or nation, this is the form of diversity that the Far-Right believes is actually destroying human diversity, for it miscegenates ethnoi within a single geographical space. To preserve Europe's native diversity, as well as the diversity of others, the Occident must divest from its cosmopolitanism, since cosmopolitanism is the doorway for non-European elements to enter into its exclusive ethnosphere. De-diversification, the act of removing all that doesn't inherently belong to the European and Euro-American ethnosphere, must be enacted in order to rescue European native diversity.

This isolationist approach to ethnicity and identity goes beyond the European ethnosphere. "Ethno-pluralism," or the "right to differ," which all peoples have, demands the establishment of ethnostates in European and North America, as well as throughout the rest of the world. For many Far-Right thinkers, the enforced ghettoization of national cultures is the only way to protect the diversity of the human population. Just as Europeans have the right not to be integrated into other people and cultures, the others have the right not to be integrated into Western culture and peoples. To achieve the proliferation of *ethnocracy* – the rule of a single ethnic group within a clearly defined and historically connected space – one must practice the Spartan tradition of *xenelasia* (ξενηλασία) – the periodic and forcible

removal of all *anatopists* (those living in the wrong place) from the exclusive ethnosphere, which, according to the Far-Right, must begin in the West, since it is the primary destination for global immigration. Those belonging to non-European ethnicities; those bearing religions other than Christianity; the "foreign born" who immigrated to the West, must "remigrate" to their ancestral lands, as their continual exile from the land of their origins contributes to both the de-diversification of humanity and the hated liberal form of diversity that is currently fashionable in the West. For the ethno-pluralist, this nationalistic segregation of global ethnoi need not imply pathological hostility towards the others. In fact, to their thinking, it will lessen the hostility among peoples, as nations will not feel the need to defend their own identity, precisely because their identity will be secured within their own tightly protected ethnosphere. It is only when the identity of one people is felt to be under threat by another that hostility becomes inevitable.

This global vision, which seeks to restore and revitalize the West within its own historical ethnosphere, instills a renewed sense of identity among Westerners, who have long felt bewildered by the rapid demographic change, who have witnessed the collapse in their traditional identity, and who have sensed that their lands and nations no longer belong to them. Nevertheless, upon this "purifying" ideology, Critical Theory casts a skeptical eye, for the echoes of the last outburst of nationalist "purifying fever" led to the murder of millions.

Pathological Critique –Abstract Negation as "Anti-Whiteness"

On the other end of the political spectrum, we find the growing tendency by many Leftist scholars, academics, and activists to engage in what I call "pathological critique." "Pathological critique" is born out of the same failure to realize the full potential of the Enlightenment, particularly its promises of liberté, égalité, fraternité. However true their critique of the Enlightenment is, pathological critique itself is wholly myopic – a form of one-dimensional fanaticism, wherein the totality of a given individual's intellectual energies are focused on negation, deconstructism, and the tearing down of society for the sake of past sins.

Those that practice pathological critique fail to separate the good from the bad; the ugly from the beautiful, the true from the false. The mere presence of the bad, the ugly, and the false is justification for the destruction of the totality, no matter if the totality would in other ways be beneficial or truthful. That which is true in a given nation, philosophy, movement, religion, etc., is negated alongside that which

is false, especially if it shared the same intellectual space or origins as the offending idea. As such, pathological critique is a compulsive failure to think dialectically, a compulsive failure to think synthetically, and a compulsive failure to think in contradictions. It is a retreat from self-critique, and compulsion to annihilate in the other that which offends.

The world appears Manichaean to the pathological critic, wholly good or wholly bad; the grey of reality is denied for the "purity" of binary oppositions, for the grey is anxiety inducing and challenging. Its existence causes bout of insecurity and the feeling of potentially being wrong. To avoid such angst, pathological critique faithfully follows the binary logic of Carl Schmitt, who argued that the essence of politics is the *identification of the enemy* (Schmitt, 1996). For the pathological critic, once the enemy is identified, they are transformed into a *persona non grata.* Nevertheless, the pathological critic remains dependent on that which they attempt to disappear. The presence of the hated otherness is necessary for the existence of the identity of the pathological critic themselves, for it is against the "enemy" that they distinguish themselves as being other than the *persona non grata.* This is especially the case for White pathological critics who deems themselves anti-racists. In their cases, the most effective psychological tool for the overcoming of their own hated "whiteness," is the aggressive identification of "whiteness" within other Whites. Attacking the sinister White other allows the pathological critic to suppress, sublate, or even deny their own inherent whiteness. Their private guilt for their own overt whiteness is camouflaged by the public virtue of their anti-whiteness. Thus, the public identification of the enemy and their heterodox positions provides psychological cover for the White pathological critic. Without the public target, they are forced to turn their critique inward, a fearful prospect for those attempting to suppress their own secret enjoyment of whiteness. Ethnomasochism, as the Far-Right often accuses Liberals and Leftists of practicing, is not simply the denigration of one's own ethnos, but rather is the "identification of the enemy within," out of fear that that enemy within will be exposed to public scrutiny. To compensate for such an unconscious and sometimes very conscious fear, pathological critics publicly engage in masochistic flagellations of the ethnos to which they belong, in an attempt to convince others that they have fully renounced their own whiteness. Nevertheless, the compulsive need to continue to flagellate their "whiteness" via the identification of the enemy demonstrates their own continue struggle with their whiteness – proof that it still remains a potent enemy within – a specter haunting their moral and ethical universe.

In no way are pathological critics interested in learning from those they've declared "impure," those they've deemed worthy of *damnatio memoriae*. Their punishment is immediate banishment, never to spoken of again, like Tutankhamun's attempt to erase his father Akhenaton from Egyptian history, for the father transgressed the son's worldview. Because the "sin" of the banished is so obvious and egregious to the pathological critic, they cannot entertain any of the ideas of the banished, for all is tainted with the sin. Even the mentioning of the name of the sinner will send the pathological critic into a rage, followed by the demand to never mention their name again, so thorough was their transgressions. Now that the pathological critic has spoken, it is the job of the rest to follow suit and banished the offender from their consciousness, or risk ostracization, exile, or even permanent banishment as well.

Pathological critique is intolerant, as it establishes new dogmas and punishes those it deems to be unfaithful to those dogmas. It breeds a climate of paranoia, fear of the other, and fear of the free exchange of ideas, and ultimately self-censorship. It compulsively engages in authoritarian heretic-hunting, which is its preferred method of suppression of free-thought, free inquiry, and rational discourse (Versluis, 2006).

Those who engage in pathological critique see Western Civilization only through the prisms of that which ought to be negated, most often due to the West's long history of racism, gender domination, worker exploitation, slavery, and the tendency for religious institutions to justify, legitimate, and sanctify the unjust status quo of the slave societies, the feudal system, and now neoliberal capitalism. Indeed, this "night side" of Western history casts its darkness far and wide. Much of the world today has been determined by the darkness that emanated from the West's treatment of the rest of the world. This reality has a profound effect on pathological critique. Because the interlocutors of the West's night side have often been people of darker ethnoi, the West's ugly history, when examined through pathological critique, assumes a *biological* component: Western history is the history of "white people," not of particular Western nations. To find oneself being "White" is to find oneself an incarnate representative of the totality systems of oppression, regardless from which Western ethnoi or nation one derives from or belongs to. The pathology of this form of critique, i.e., that which makes it a sickness, a malady, a neurosis, is that like all forms of non-dialectical critique, it fails to distinguish between that which is salvageable, rescuable, and good within the Western tradition, Western civilization, and that which ought to be negated. Proceeding from the pathological

critic's comprehensive biologization of the West, through its "whitenization" – the process by which all aspects of the Western tradition take on the sins of the most deleterious parts of Western history – an *abstract negation* is called for. Such a wholesale negation serves as a means of cleansing the West of its "whiteness," forever expunging the vestiges of culture, thought, religion, philosophy, literature, etc., that the pathological critic deems unacceptably associated with the impurity of heterodox ideology.

We must make an important distinction here: White Supremacy is a pathological form of thought that privileges "White" ethnoi above all other; it is an apotheosis of European ethnoi. As a value judgment, it believes all that is good in the world is due to European civilization, which has blessed the "lesser" peoples of the world with its bountiful gifts. This pathology is a failure to see the "night side" of Western civilization, to render a rational critique of that night side, and to strive to overcome the potential for the night side to continue. On the other hand, the pathological form of critique that we've discussed here is likewise a one-dimensional form of thought, the mirror opposite of White Supremacy, for it *debases* and *demonizes* all that is associated with European ethnoi as being inherently oppressive, tainted with racism and hate, and therefore worthy of a complete and total cancelation. While it is clear that White Supremacy has historically been a much more destructive force in the world, both forms of thought share a similar pathology: the authoritarian spirit, the will-to-dominance, and the desire to expunge the non-identical in the name of purity. They are both self-reverential, intolerant of dissent, and ready to ostracize anyone that fails to submit to their dogmas.

While White Supremacy has been around for centuries, the pathological critique of regressive Leftism is relatively new, and has of late made its way into academia. Heretic-hunting has now met the Ivory Tower. For example, numerous American universities have recently announced that they would exclude various "Classics" of Western literature from their curriculum, arguing that such Classics have prepared the way for White Supremacy, colonialism, and the continual psychological slavery of non-Whites. The historian of ancient Rome, Dr. Dan-el Padilla Peralta, who teaches at Princeton University, is fully prepared to sacrifice his own discipline of Classical Studies to save it from its assumed inherent "whiteness" (Poser, 2021). "Far from being extrinsic to the study of Greco-Roman antiquity," he writes, "the production of whiteness turns on closer examination to reside in the very marrow of classics" (Ibid.). All Classical works of Western literature are anachronistically infected with the racial ideologies of centuries later. Padilla Peralta is not alone.

Faculty at some of the most prestigious universities in America have championed the idea that in order for the West to truly become anti-racist, multicultural, and tolerant, the study of ancient Greco-Roman history and society must be abandoned, for it privileges White history over the history of non-White others, which continues the sense that the West is the only civilization that matters. As such, so it is thought, the Classics must die "as swiftly as possible" (Ibid.). Liberational patricide is the only means to cleans the West of its past sinners.

In response to such dire proposals, in April of 2021, the Black Christian philosopher Dr. Cornel West argued in a Washington Post op-ed that Howard University's recent dissolution of its Classics Department was a "spiritual catastrophe," one that demonstrates that "we, as a culture, have embraced from the youngest age utilitarian schooling at the expense of soul-forming education" (West, 2021). Dr. West goes on to say that, "Academia's continual campaign to disregard or neglect the classics is a sign of spiritual decay, moral decline and a deep intellectual narrowness running amok in American culture. Those who commit this terrible act treat Western civilization as either irrelevant and not worthy of prioritization or as a harmful and worthy only of condemnation" (Ibid.). Dr. West does not deny the long history of White Supremacy; in fact, teaching about it and working against it is a core constitutional element of Dr. West's "prophetic" mission. Yet, he rejects the pathological critique that inspired the idea of simply banishing the Classics of Western literature to the dustbin of history. To do so would deprive Westerners of all cultures, ethnoi, and religions, the chance to study, learn from, and grapple with the legacy that they inherited by virtue of being a Westerner. *Banishing* the Classics from future study merely cuts off present-day Westerners from past-Westerners who determined the conditions of the West today. The present becomes amnesic about the past. *Demonizing* the Classics, the first step towards banishing the Classics, permanently severs present day Westerners from the very roots of their existence, as it absolutizes the Classics as being inseparable from White Supremacy and therefore worthy of only derision – a claim that Dr. West rejects.

Anti-Racism and anti-colonialism, as well as anti-gender inequality, when *pathologized*, calls not only for the *abstract negation* of the Classics, but also of some of the most influential of modern philosophers, such as Immanuel Kant and Georg W.F. Hegel, for they both have made remarks deemed "racist" and/or "sexist" by 21st century readers (Bolz, 2020; Alpert, 2020). Despite the historical context, such remarks are unforgiveable, and therefore they must be removed from

sight. One cannot even begin to fathom how to remove Kant's influence from philosophy, especially in ethics, epistemology, political philosophy, and the philosophy of religion. The same is true for Hegel, whose work in those same areas of philosophy has influenced philosophy immeasurably. Not only has philosophy post-Kant and post-Hegel been mere commentary to their works, but the predecessors of Kant and Hegel have been reevaluated based on the works of Kant and Hegel, which is precisely how philosophy gets itself done – through the dialectical interrogation and dialectical imagination. However, even the most formal aspects of philosophy are not spared the aggressive cancelling of pathological critique: Hegel's dialectical logic, which is nearly devoid of all positive content, is somehow tainted with White racism because of how it has been applied historically by racists (Alpert, 2020). Hegel, therefore, must be banished; he is *persona non grata*.

Karl Marx too, for the most extreme of the pathological critics, has come under the gun for his seemingly anti-Semitic remarks in his 1844, *Zur Judenfrage* (On the Jewish Question). Freud too must be cancelled; his psychoanalysis, although admittedly is saturated with Freud's own biases, seems especially demeaning to women, etc., and must now, over hundred years after the birth of psychoanalysis, be cancelled; banished to the dung heap of historical "bad" ideas. No attempt to rescued that which is true in Freud is allowable; he has been deemed unworthy of the 21st century and thus must be immediately forgotten.

Recently, I read a claim by a fellow academic who off-handedly stated that the "scientific method" itself was a "White invention" and thus tainted with White Supremacy – it is institutional racism. As such, non-White scholars should reject the scientific method. While it is true that the scientific method has been utilized and/or abused to justify any number of racist ideologies and fascistic pseudo-scientific endeavors, the method itself does not belong to "White society," as the scientific method was used outside of the Western world long before Copernicus and Galileo.

In another social media post that I recently read, a young scholar claimed that she regards formal academic writing as a form of White Supremacy, because people of color don't naturally write like that. "The demand that writing by hyper rational, soulless, and devoid of passion," she wrote, "as far as I'm concerned is a white supremacist demand" (Tor, 2021) Because the authors she named, "James Baldwin, Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, Gibran Khalil Gibran, CLR James, Fanon, DuBois, and so on," included humorous, poetic, and humanistic language in their writings, they were representatives of another form of writing that was alien to White

academic writing (Ibid.). Without seeing the irony of claiming that people of color cannot – or would not unless made to – write in an "academic" manner, she claimed that she would fight against this newly discovered White Supremacy by writing the way non-Whites inherently write: academic standards be damned. Again, she follows pathological critique and biologizes, in this case, writing, reducing writing styles to biological factors. Because "hyper rational, soulless, and devoid of passion" writing is associated with "White Supremacy," which is a dubious claim at best, it must be rejected. The question of whether academic writing can be considered a "White style" of writing, is not investigated; it is merely assumed. Of course, most White Supremacists don't write in an academic manner; they write mostly in rhetorical ways, much the same as the authors she noted.

The call for the abstract negation of modern science, Western philosophy, Western Classics, and other forms of thought that were cultivated within the historical Western ethnosphere, continues unabated. Those on the Left who have articulated their disagreement with such a non-critical critique of the totality of Western society and history have been drowned out, and/or accused of secretly harboring sympathies for White Nationalism and White Supremacy. Just as the White Nationalist yearn for racial and ethnic purity within the Western ethnosphere, many of those practicing pathological critique yearn for an intellectual purity: a Spartan xenelasia all that they deem to be incurably "White."

Critical Theory as Critique of Ethno-Nationalism and Pathological Critique

Of course, as a Critical Theorist, I recognize the trepidation in describing another form of critique as being "pathological," which denotes irrationality, sickness, and neuroses, but I think my claim is defensible. I argue that there is a distinguishable element between the rational *determinate negation* that is inherent within Critical Theory's critique of the given, and the irrational *abstract negation* that has become pathological within certain sectors of the Left today. In determinate negation, that material from the past that is intellectually and morally salvageable and consequently translatable into a modern idiom, ought to be rescued, fulfilled, and advanced. That which belongs to the dustbin of history ought to be relegated to the dustbin of history through the process of rational critique. Irrational critique, on the other hand, makes no distinction.

Where does Critical Theory stand in regard to this struggle between ethno-nationalism and pathological critique? It appears to me that Critical Theory, at least that which proceeds from the first and second generation of the Frankfurt School, is situated *between* ethno-nationalism and pathological critique, and must continue to do so if it is to remain true to its dialectical method (Horkheimer, 2002: 188-243). Critical Theory shares with the Right, especially the New Right, its critique of capitalism, the meaninglessness and shallowness of the culture industry, as well as the concern that the false needs and imperatives of the market trump the true needs of humanity. However, Critical Theory cannot accept the biologized nationalism that animates the Far-Right; neither can it accept its demonization of the others, refugees, anatopists, and those who appear non-identical to the ideal type of a "White" Westerner. Such politics is anathema to Critical Theory.

On the other hand, Critical Theory shares with other forms of Leftist thought the desire to dismantle forms of oppression, whether it is racism, class domination, gender inequality, capitalist exploitation of labor, and all forms of fascism. However, Critical Theory, rooted well within Western philosophical, theological, and sociological traditions, cannot engage in the irrationality of pathological critique, wherein their own philosophical foundations are undermined wholesale in the quest of intellectual and/or ideological purity. The very philosophical and secularized-theological assumptions that guide Critical Theory itself are subject to "cancellation" via pathological critique – a move that if successful, would make Critical Theory itself toothless, for it would be drained of its own intellectual resources. Additionally, the earliest Critical Theorist witnessed first-hand, and literally fled from, the tyranny and oppression that grew out of pathological conformity to ideological hegemony, wherein all that was heterodox, or non-identical, to the prevailing ideology was suppressed, targeted, and eventually made subject of extermination. Critical Theorists today, even when they join other forms of Leftist thought in opposition to totalitarian and authoritarian tendencies, cannot join in the production of new forms of totalitarian and authoritarian ideologies, for those "liberational" tendencies, once formulated within a new positively articulated dogma, become the future systems of oppression: new dogmas to be obeyed. Critical Theory, in this regard, must remain apophatic.

Additionally, Critical Theorists remember Nietzsche's critique of what he called the *Letzter Mensch* (The Last Man): a form of humanity that wished to live without transgressions, to live without hardships, to live without anything that disturbed their quiet, safe, and unimposing life of stability and security, including ideas that

challenge the unarticulated biases and assumptions. This is the condition of hegemonic mediocrity – the tyranny of nothingness – longed for by the fearful, the xenophobic (both intellectual and physical), and the authoritarian. It is clear from both pathologies – White Nationalism and Pathological Critique – that both aim at the construction of a condition wherein the hated "otherness" does not offend, disturb, or deny them the homogenous mediocrity that they so desire. As such, a being-towards-*Letzter-Mensch* mentality animates both mentalities and worldviews, as they are both feeble attempts to flee from the difficult, the ugly, the other, the transgressive, the unorthodox, and the heretical. Both would happily abandon mankind's autonomy to the rule of the same, the identical, and the routine, and enforce that sameness with whatever tools they have available.

Critical Theory as Dialectics, not Pathological Negation

From the standpoint of history, the Frankfurt School has always been rooted in Hegel's logic of determinate negation (*aufhaben*), which they applied to the work of Feuerbach, Kant, Marx, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Freud, and the rest of the philosophical pantheon (Byrd, 2020a). This dialectical logic allowed them to rescue certain semantic and semiotics materials from the intellectual tradition that came before them, while simultaneously allowing that which proved to be false to be left behind as mere relics of history (Ibid.). Because this dialectical process was not well understood by their intellectual enemies, conservatives, including the conservative philosopher Roger Scruton, accused the Frankfurt School as being wholly negative – they themselves were viewed as the irrational dismantlers of the Western civilization – offering nothing but a void in the place of that which was dismantled (Scruton, 2016: 115-158). It is true that the Frankfurt School offered no "blueprint" for what should surpass industrial capitalist society; no image of a future utopia was furnished. They did not what to create a utopian system that could later be imposed upon future generations as a new system of domination. As such, they remained "negative," developing a method of ideology critique as opposed to building ideological edifices. Nevertheless, Scruton and others were wrong; the Frankfurt School's determinate negation was not *entirely* negative; the positive, if the positive was to be discovered, was discovered within the negation of the negative (Byrd, 2020b). Only rarely were "negative dialectics" the outcome of critique, even though it was increasingly so within the context of modernity (Adorno, 1999). Yet, Scruton's misdiagnosis leads us to a real problem: It is often unclear what exactly is preserved within Critical Theory, thus making Critical Theory appear to be

precisely what it constitutionally is not: *pathological critique*. The essence of Critical Theory remains dialectical, but it appears to many to be abstract – a wholesale attack on the Western tradition in the name of the non-identical: Jews, African Americans, Muslims, LGBTQ+, etc. It is assumed that since Critical Theory stands with those who have been historically marginalized within Western society, that the Critical Theorists' critique of the West is meant to destroy the West, undermine its inheritance, and create something else in its place. Anti-Semites are fond of reminding their audiences that the Frankfurt School began as a school of thought primarily populated by Jews, who developed a metapolitical critique of the West that was designed to weaken the West's intellectual and cultural heritage, making a safe space for those whose existence was precarious within the West. While it is true that the Critical Theorist critiqued all forms of oppression, suppression, exploitation, and injustice, especially when justified, legitimated, and sanctified by Western cultural norms and values, but the object was never the destruction of the West. Rather, it sought to rescue the promises of the Enlightenment, which itself was the rescued promise of Christianity and Judaism. This is precisely why Critical Theorists of the first generation returned to Germany after World War II; there was still hope that the Enlightenment could be saved, embodied, and fulfilled in a post-fascist Europe. In order to do this, the Critical Theorists did not attempt to supplant and/or impose an alien culture on the West. It did not advocate for Buddhism, Hinduism, or any other "Oriental" ideologies, imported to create a new civilization. Rather, the Critical Theorists remained rooted in the West, i.e., in Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Meister Eckhart, Kant, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and many others within the Western pantheon, despite the pantheon's numerous ethical flaws and now unacceptable philosophical and moral presuppositions. Critical Theory does not close itself up fundamentalistically; it has always been open to learn from the others, while guarding closely its own philosophical foundations. From the perspective of a now globalized Critical Theory, which has interlocutors throughout the globe, Critical Theory itself will continue to become more globalized, more diverse, more multicultural, in ways that the first generation of Critical Theorists may not have foreseen. In my view, Critical Theory must reject those tendencies to limit its scope and influence merely to the Western ethnosphere, and it must encourage newer generations of Critical Theorists to expand their analyses into parts of the world outside of the West, and to learn from the philosophical and religious traditions of those non-Western worlds.

In the end, I argue that Critical Theory must go to school with scholars from the global South, with Muslim theologians, Hindu philosophers, Iranian sociologists,

Chinese theorists, etc. The Greek Plato has to go to school with the Martiniquais Frantz Fanon; The French Jean-Jacque Rousseau has to go to school with the Andalusian Ibn Rushd; The German Karl Marx has to go to school with Iranian Ali Shariati; and the German Jew Theodor W. Adorno has to go to school with the Malaysian Muslim Syed Hussein Alatas, etc. This is not to divorce and/or "replace" the Frankfurt School's deep roots within Western culture, philosophy, history, literature, and experience, but rather to augment its approach, fertilize its analysis, and broader its critical analyses with perspectives and philosophies that have been either wholly ignored and/or marginalized in the West due to their origins in the Restern world. The goal of Critical Theory is not to cancel the culture from which Critical Theory is born, but rather to sharpen its consciousness, rescue that which ought to be rescued, negate what ought to be negated, and create the geography for a more reconciled global society, which does not denigrate nor deify the West, but rather provides a much-needed renovation of the Western tradition and intellectual inheritance (Byrd, 2020b). Simultaneously, such a renovation must remain recalcitrantly opposed to all forms of human degradation, demonization, and oppression, both in the Western world and the Restern world. It cannot ossify into a new dogma, looking askance at others. Rather, Critical Theory must make world emancipation its project as well. As it did during the Shoah, the culture wars of the 1960s, and Reagan's war on indigenous peoples in Central America in the 1980s, etc., it must always stand on the side of the innocent victims, no matter where the innocent victims are. Furthermore, it must understand that emancipation is contested; Western notions of emancipation are a systems of domination in other parts of the world, just as systems of emancipation from the non-Western world are incompatible with the Western *sonderweg* (Habermas, 2009). Nevertheless, as Adorno says, "the need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth"; Critical Theorist must listen to the global polyphony of the suffering voices (Adorno, 1999: 17-18).

It is my thought that if Critical Theory is to remain relevant within the globalized 21st century, it must rescue the Western tradition from both the White Nationalists, who wish to use it as a weapon against the non-identical, as well as rescue the Western tradition from the irrationality of pathological critique, who wish to cancel the Western tradition due to its historical flaws in a false hope that such a demise of the West will redeem the historical victims of the West. When the broader Left abandons the Western intellectual pantheon in pursuit of 21st century ideological purity, it leaves on the table a powerful weapon to those who would wield it as a weapon against those who struggle against the ills of Western

domination, as well as the victims of that domination. Those that champion the cause of the marginalized, the non-identical, the *pleb miseris,* undermine their own cause when they cut themselves off from the intellectual and political resources that developed within the West itself. A move towards the others does not imply a wholesale destruction of the Occident, nor does it mean an inauthentic imitation of the others. Rather, the Occidental world must reach into its own history, its own literature, its own philosophy, its own traditions, and from there create a Western world worthy of its best traditions, ideals, and values. Critical Theory has an important role in this endeavor. As such, it must remain deeply entrenched within the Western tradition, committed to dialectical logic, wherein it can both identify and critique the ills of the Western tradition, and in consort with the rest of the world, create a space for global reconciliation.

Note

1. This essay derives from a shorter presentation I made for a roundtable discussion entitled, "Critical Theory Today: Heritage and Usage," on April 26th, 2021, sponsored by St. Petersburg State University, Russia.
2.   For a discussion of this problem in regard to how it manifests in Europe, see Jürgen Habermas' essay, "What is Meant by a 'Post-Secular Society'? A Discussion of Islam in Europe," in *Europe: The Faltering Project*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009), 59-77.

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Reimagining the Universal Language of Sufism

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Abstract

In this article the author is attempting to problematize the universal significance of Sufism. It is argued that the intellectual elites of the Islamicate World have over the course of history created three forms of epistemes; i.e. the discourse of Philosophy; the discourse of Jurisprudence; and the discourse of Sufism. But the question is that only the episteme of Sufism has achieved a global position and the two other forms of knowledge systems in the Islamicate World have solely kept their local appeal. Why is this so? Why has Sufism travelled the boundaries of time and space or overcome the obstacles of language and culture? Why has the discourse of Sufism become universally appealing? Is there anything in the grammar of Sufism which enables the instructors of this paradigm to reach out beyond the contingent differences? The author has argued that the reason that Sufism has been more successful than philosophy and jurisprudence is due to the grammar of Sufism which is based on the concept of **Love** rather than **Demonstration** (Burhan in philosophy) and **Obligation** (Taklif in jurisprudence). However, it is argued that love in the parlance of Sufism is not equivalent to sensual feeling but an active form of being towards others. In other words, love is not a noun but an active verb where the subject is enacting the principles of this mode of being in practice.

Keywords: Love, Sufism, Philosophy, Jurisprudence, Active Verb.

Introduction

When we look at the Islamic World, we can see three grand narratives of Philosophy, Jurisprudence and Sufism. Each of these meta-narratives has influenced the Muslim Mind in various degrees and different forms but only Sufism has been able to capture the attention of humanity at large. This epistemological situation begs an existential question and it needs to be inquired upon. Why is that so? If we would like to take a theoretical position in analyzing this phenomenon then we need to problematize the universal significance of Sufism in contrast to local importance of both philosophy and Jurisprudence. I am not arguing that philosophy as such does not have global significance but I am arguing that the philosophical traditions (conceptualized as Islamic Philosophy by Orientalists) within the Islamicate World have not been able to express their forms of ideas in a universal fashion which could be welcomed by the global audience. Now the locality of Jurisprudence-cum-Philosophy versus universality of Sufism is a question which needs to be studied as the answer to this question is not only of theoretical significance but it could have practical consequences for us in the *southern* part of the Globe who are divided badly and live under constant state of war.

In other words, why has Sufism been able to cross over the borders of nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, denomination, culture and civilization? What is there in the *Grammar of Sufism* which has enabled it to overcome differences and find a universal mode of solidarizing expression? Here we need to pose a fundamental question about the nodal point of Sufism. What is the focal point of Sufistic frame of reference?

Velaya as a form of charity

In order to answer this question, we need to have a meta-theoretical point of departure as this is not a question which could be tackled through intra-Sufism positions. By intra-Sufism positions I mean that we cannot answer this issue by reference to what practitioners of various Sufi Orders state as each of these orders may believe that their respective position is the only valid form of Sufism. But we need to have a sociological approach to this question and a sociological perspective means to have an *etic viewpoint*. In my view, the epi-center of Sufism, regardless of the differences between various orders, is the concept of *Velaya*, i.e. love, affection, kindness or charity. This is to contend that a Sufi is someone who practices love and kindness towards God's creatures in all its diversities and forms without classifying

them in accordance to ethnicity, nationality, religion, race, denomination or tribal affiliations. When a Sufi reaches to this level of consciousness then s/he be-comes a Safi, i.e. pure and in the state of purity.

In a world that is divided by bitter conflicts which each party brags on their respective differences, Sufism offers a path towards unity based on our *Shared Humanity* as Sufis consider humanity as the *Family of God* or as Prophet Muhammad puts it, i.e. عائلة الله.

I think these wonderful concepts along with practical observations and their implementations into one's daily life and in regard to others have provided Sufism with a Universal Language of Love which has influenced the Grammar of Human Existence in an unprecedented fashion at a global level.

Rumi and Love

How should we understand the universal language of Sufism? One of the most visionaries of this tradition is Mulana Jalal al-Din Rumi. In his philosophical poetry this question has been eloquently conceptualized. In Section 36 in his *magnum opus* work of *Mathnavi Ma'navi* Rumi speaks of the concept of ملت عشق (1971. 287-288) Rumi composes this idea as follows

<div dir="rtl">

ملت عشق از همه دینها جداست

عاشقان را ملت و مذهب خداست

</div>

The translation of this poem goes as follows

Those who belong to the "Order of Love"

Their path is distinct from all kinds of religions

Those who fell in love, rest assured that

Their order and path is God.

But the concept which is employed by Rumi may create some misunderstandings for us who have experienced the rapture and rupture of modernity.

Love as a path

Rumi speaks of مِلّهٔ عشق and the concept of "Milla" in modern times has been used to conceptualize the *imagined community* of contemporary nation-state-system in the modern world order of capitalism. However what Rumi intends by this concept is far from modern connotations of this term. We need to reconstruct the key concept of Rumi in terms of a non-modernistic frame of reference as the notion of "Milla' in the Rumian socio-historical context did not refer to the ideology of Nationalism. This is to argue that the concept of "Milla" cannot be translated as "Nation" which is a eurocentric formulation of the modern imagined community in the 19ᵗʰ century. (Benedict, 1983). The concept of nation within discourses of nationalism refers to a large body of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular country or territory. But the concept of "Milla" in the Rumian philosophy has nothing to do with territory or political affiliations and any translation of his pivotal concept into modern terminologies would be fundamentally misleading. Now one may wonder if the translation of the concept of Milla into Nation is wrong then, how this concept should be translated. Rumi's concept of "Milla" is closer to the concept of *path* rather than *nation*.

To put it differently, the concept of "Milla" is neither equivalent to Nation nor Religion. None of these modern and colonial concepts could do justice to the concept coined by Rumi. (Cantwell, 1991) As Strenski argues we should have a critical attitude about the categories and concepts we use. (Strenski, 2015. 244) Rumi employs the concept of "Milla" in connection to love, lovers and Sufis who do not belong to any tribe, clan, nationality, race, state or religion. Of course, they are born into these forms of social settings in different historical epochs but Sufis consider these forms as *accidents* (عرض/اعراض) rather than *essences* (جوهر/جواهر).

By doing so, Sufis are deconstructionists *par excellence* in practice which means they do not accept or submit to any form of loyalty but the loyalty imposed upon them by the *Grammars of Love*. However, what does the Grammar of Love mean? Jerome A. Travers argues poignantly on what Love is not and how the grammar of this concept has been lost in modern times. He argues

> *"There was once a school of thought in epistemology, a branch of philosophy, during the late Middle Ages called* Nominalism. *The Nominalists believed that concepts were devoid of content, that universal ideas did not exist and that only by attaching a name to a thing does its reality come into being. To*

> *these skeptics all naming is relative and individualistic; so that the fruit that you will call an apple I might call an orange, and each of us is equally correct an each name is true. What a person call love does not make it love just because they say so. It is a perversion of language to agree with a client in therapy that their adolescent infatuations, narcissistic questing, infantile craving or masturbatory indulgences are love. Is it not intellectually dishonest to say, for the sake of total client acceptance, "Who am I to say ...?" Things do not exist in themselves. Snow is not sand and trees are not cars. To call love a feeling is a perversion of language, an umbrella term which signifies and clarifies nothing. Love is not a feeling but a verb, and active verb at that"* (Travers, 1991. 25).

Here Travers talks about Love as an active verb which has its *specific locus* within the grammar of English language. In the grammatical frame of English language there is a difference between an active verb and a passive verb. An active verb is a word that fundamentally demonstrates an **action** within a sentence. In an **active** sentence, the subject of the sentence is the thing or the person executing the **action**, while, in a passive sentence, the thing being acted upon is the subject of the sentence. Travers contends that romantic fluttering is a feeling but love is not a feeling and if we see it is not employed correctly this is a sign of perversion of language and we should not forget that the linguistic perversion is not solely a *lingual problem* but it is rooted in the soil of ontology. In other words, the *Grammars of Love* refers to one's existential position in life and how one enacts in accordance to the requirements of this grammar which is consisted of kindness, charity, grace, benevolence, empathy, compassion, honesty, integrity, chivalry, nobility in character, decency in spirit, gallantry in personality and courage to be.

To put it differently, the world seen through the eyes of a Sufi is an inter-connected living-being that cannot be treated discriminatory. I think this non-discriminatory attitude needs to be reflected upon. What does it mean to treat others equally?

In order to understand the position of Sufism we need to grasp the conceptual framework and the concepts which are employed by a Sufi in contrast to other schools of thought. The existential gamut of engagement of Sufism is not the concept of *society* or *humanity* but the concept of *creation* and *creature*. Sufis view life as a created being by the Living Creator and all that is created is a wonder that

should be appreciated and cherished. This attitude of non-discrimination is evident in the worldview of Sufism since its inception as a *mystic approach* in the world of humanity through various names and epithets. An example of this non-discriminatory approach of Sufism is the Iranian Sufi, i.e. Abul-Hassan Kharaghani (963-1033) who put this philosophy in an eloquent fashion in the 11ᵗʰ century as follows

<div dir="rtl">
هر که در این سرا درآید نانش دهید

نانش دهید و از ایمانش مپرسید

چه آنکس که بدرگاه باریتعالی به جانی ارزد

البته بر خوان بوالحسن به نانی ارزد
</div>

The translation of this passage goes as follows

> *"Whoever enters this convent; Give him bread and do not ask about his/her faith; if s/he is worthy of being endowed or given life by God, surely, s/he is worthy of having a piece of bread at the table of Bolhasan"* (Miri, 2016. 83).

This is to argue; in the eyes of a Sufi unconditional love towards the "other" is the Alpha and Omega of Sufism. Of course, I am not simplistically contending that the historical forms of Sufism are all following this creed in action but the very idea of Sufism as an esoteric interpretation of creation (as the incessant act of God) preconditions an active charity towards all that emanates from God (in the form of creatures or sentient beings). This is the approach which is missing in our civilization today and, as a matter of fact, through this grammar of existential empathy of Sufism humanity may have a future as a species.

Conclusion

Why is it important to revisit the significance of the universal language of Sufism during this current situation? This is a valid question and we should try to give a brief answer to this fundamental inquiry. One of the grave side-effects of current global pandemic is estrangement of human beings from each other. This pandemic has brought a network of practices and one of the deadliest of all is the *practice of social distancing*.

For years sociologists in the school of Symbolic Interactionism taught us that an individual's personality is formed within a human community. They rightly argued

that a pivotal feature of human communities is *interaction* and through human interactions life is created and recreated. But now due to the practice of social distancing the very symbolic creation of human beings (i.e. the social) has been suspended and this suspension puts a great toll on human psyche by vacating the interior qualities of human spirit which solely get enriched through interactions. Now the question is how could Sufism contribute positively in these turbulent periods of humanity where human beings have become estranged to an unprecedented degree?

In Sufi weltanschauuq God's most beautiful name is *al-Rafiq al-A'la* (الرفيـق الاعلـى) i.e. the Exalted Companion or Supreme Friend. For a Sufi God is a friend who helps him/her to embark on the path of love and teaches him/her to cherish others through charity, kindness, grace, and compassion. In other words, in this time and era where people have forcefully been distancing from each other what is needed is *Friendship*. The God of Sufism is based on the notion of *Friendship* and if we agree that humanity is a Family of God then you have to treat one another with the spirit of friendship. Here again one may ask what is the definition of friendship? Is this concept a noun or an active verb? Friendship is not a noun but an active verb which Sufis live by it. Of course, you may research about the correct lingual definition of friendship but this will not lead you to cherish humanity through the spirit of friendship as researching on God will not make you conscious about God as a *Supreme Friend*. On the contrary, Sufis hold that you may realize God as an *Ultimate Friend* when you actualize good qualities such as compassion, kindness, charity and love in your being as a human person.

To put it differently, there is a deep distinction between *Living Sufism* and *Researching Sufism*. Poverty and class divisions have ruined human communities around the Globe and now the long-term effects of the pandemic are appearing before us. If we would like to have a Sufi approach to the current state of affairs then the Grammar of Sufism encourages us to get engaged with others through charity, benevolence and rectifying all forms of poverty without taking into consideration nationality, ethnicity, religion, denomination, race or any kinds of accidental affiliations. Those who are engaged in this form of action belong to what Rumi terms as Millat Eshgh or those who have embarked upon the *Path of Love*. (Chittik, 1984)

In other words, the Rumian concept is an *imagined community* of like-hearted people who have reached a certain level of cosmic consciousness. In this *order of love* affiliations are not based on accidental indices but rooted in the primordial

essence of humanity. How should this *primordial essence of humanity* be reimagined in reference to Sufism? This is a question which we shall focus upon in our next inquiry.

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The Success of Failure:

The Cairo Declaration of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on Human Rights

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Abstract[1]

Since the adoption of the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI) in 1990, there was an ongoing debate between Western and Muslim states regarding the compatibility of its provisions with human rights standards. The cultural divide reached its zenith when the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC, since 2008, Organization of Islamic Cooperation) sponsored a series of resolutions on the prohibition of defamation of religions in Human Rights Council. However, there appeared to be a paradigm shift in the OIC human rights discourse when it adopted a Ten-Year Program of Action (TYPoA-2005). Accordingly, the statute of organization was amended in 2008, and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms were incorporated into its objectives. The OIC, consequently, compromised with Western states on the notion of defamation of religions in the Human Rights Council.

Moreover, the establishment of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) in 2011 paved the way for the revision of the CDHRI which materialized as the Cairo Declaration of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on Human Rights (CDOHR) in 2020. This article shall review the background and the internal and external factors of paradigm shift in OIC human rights politics with a descriptive and analytical method. The paper finally concludes that the paradigm change may seemingly bring OIC human

rights rhetoric in alignment with UN human rights language, but it is less likely to improve human rights situation in member states.

Introduction

Since the adoption of the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI, 1990), there has been an ongoing debate between the Western and Muslim states regarding the compatibility of provisions set forth in the CDHRI with human rights standards. This process of the cultural divide and civilizational clash reached its zenith when the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC, since 2008, Organization of Islamic Cooperation) sponsored a series of resolutions on the prohibition of defamation of religions in Human Rights Council, turning various organs of the UN into the frontline for legal and political battles between the two sides of the debate. Interestingly, almost at the same time when the dispute was being intensified at international forums, developments inside the OIC seemingly started to move in another direction. A paradigm shift seemed inevitable when the OIC adopted the Ten-Year Program of Action (TYPoA-2005). Unlike the CDHRI which deliberately avoided making any reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), TYPoA-2005 ironically focused much of its attention on international human rights language. As a result, the promotion of human rights increased significantly in the OIC programs and activities.

The reforms that were introduced in TYPoA-2005 led to drastic changes in the structure of the organization and resulted in a paradigm shift in its human rights agenda. It called upon the Council of Foreign Minister (CFM) to "*consider the possibility of establishing an independent permanent body to promote human rights in the Member States, in accordance with the provisions of the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam and also call for the elaboration of an OIC Charter for Human Rights*" (TYPoA-2005, Section VIII, para. 2). Thus, the TYPoA-2005 inevitably required a Twin Pillars Arrangement (TPA) necessary for a paradigm shift in the OIC approach to human rights: elaboration and adoption of the OIC Charter of Human Rights as a binding instrument and the establishment of regional arrangement of human rights as an observatory mechanism.

According to the TYPoA-2005, the Charter of the Islamic Conference (Charter-1972) was amended in 2008 and therein, promotion of human rights and protection of fundamental freedoms were incorporated into its objectives. In 2011, the OIC finally decided to make a compromise with Western states when it ceased to insist on resolutions on the prohibition of defamation of religions by the adoption of a resolution on *combating intolerance, discrimination, and violence against individuals on the basis of religion or belief*" (Res. 16/18, 2011). The compromise laid the ground for more major reforms especially when an Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) was established (Statute of IPHRC, 2011). On the 30th anniversary of the CDHRI, the Cairo Declaration of OIC on Human Rights (CDOHR) was revised by the IPHRC and submitted to the CFM. The Revised Declaration was eventually adopted on 28 November 2020 and it was described as a "*monumental success for the OIC and member states*" (The 47th Sess. of CFM, 2020).

This paper looks at the background and the process that eventually led to the adoption of the CDOHR and it might be, however, difficult to assess whether the adoption of the CDOHR is a "monumental success" that will actually lead to the promotion of human rights in member states or it is merely a change of the OIC human rights rhetoric. It aims to scrutinize the internal and external contexts of the process of paradigm change in the OIC human rights discourse and will highlight the points that have not been accounted for by the existing literature. It will not only demonstrate that the highlighted points are significant from the procedural aspects of the OIC human rights agenda, but it will more importantly elaborate its main features of the new declaration and its challenges in promoting human rights in member states. First, I will examine the process of change that was demonstrated in TYPA-2005 that established the Twin Pillars Arrangement. Then, I will offer some preliminary discussions of certain controversial aspects that resulted in the collapse of the Twin Pillars Arrangement. In particular, I will discuss the issues surrounding the revision of the CDHRI and the shift from Islamic Shari'a to the principles of Islam to re-engage with international human rights standards.

The Process of Change

During the drafting process of the UDHR, Muslim states were not in a position to form a political camp in the UN and religious affiliation could hardly have an impact on the political positions of Muslim states. It should also be pointed out that only 10 Muslim states were among 58 members of the UN at the time of adoption

of UDHR and with the exception of Saudi Arabia (abstained) and Yemen (absent), Muslim states voted in favor of the UDHR. Notwithstanding, in the 1980s the UN human rights agenda has helped them take a unified approach on human rights issues in accordance with their common historical, cultural and religious background. This outlook toward the UN human rights system was not essentially affirmative and surrounded with uncertainty and suspicion. The failing attempts of Muslim states to make a constructive contribution to the UN human rights system persuaded them to strive for separate human rights agenda.

Indeed, the OIC human rights agenda was primarily delineated in 1980 when the CFM decided to develop a human rights declaration in Islam (The 11th Sess. of CFM, 1980 at 108). The adoption of the CDHRI was an attempt to establish a separate human rights system in parallel to the UN human rights system. The OIC managed to create an alternative discourse at triple layers of conceptual, normative, and structural levels which was not in alignment with international human rights discourse. After the adoption of CDHRI in 1990, the CFM decided to retain the CDHRI in the agenda of its regular session and called the Member States and the General Secretariat "*to facilitate the promotion of all Islamic values in the field of human rights*" and also "*to coordinate their positions during the World Conference on Human Rights to be held in 1993 on the basis of the guidelines contained in the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam*" (The 20th Sess. of CFM, 1991 at 54). It was implied that the OIC decided to develop a human rights arrangement in parallel to the UN human rights system. The concerted efforts of OIC member States during the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna emphasized the recognition of the CDHRI as an alternative to the UDHR and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) consented to the inclusion of the CDHRI in the Regional Instruments that was published before the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of 1998 (OHCHR, Human Rights, A Compilation of International Instruments, 1997).

After the Golden Jubilee Celebrations, in the next session of CFM, they urged the need to "*formulate and codify Islamic standards and values in Islamic conventions on human rights*" (The 26th Sess. of CFM, 1999, at 121). Then, from 2000 to 2005, it was retained in the Agenda of CFM and had repeatedly called on the Inter-governmental Group of Experts "*to start drawing up Islamic Conventions on Human Rights*" on the basis of the provisions of the CDHRI (The 27th Sess. of CFM, 2000, at 123). A sub-committee was formed in order to draft human rights covenants in Islam (The 29th Sess. of CFM, 2002, at 65) and, the draft of the

Convention on the Rights of Child in Islam (CRCI) was endorsed in 2005 (The 32ⁿᵈ Sess. of CFM, 2005, at 63). It indicates that the idea of drafting a Human Rights Charter in Islam has been on the Agenda of the CFM for several years and subsequently, penetrated the TYPoA-2005.

However, the competing forces within the OIC obstructed the progressive development of the process. The internal rivalries along with external pressure eventually resulted in the paradigm change in the OIC human rights politics that shaped a complementary approach. The paradigm shift initially emerged in the TYPoA-2005 which envisioned a TPA consisting of a human rights commission and a human rights charter. According to TYPoA-2005, the OIC Charter was amended in 2008, and therein, the promotion of human rights and protection of fundamental freedoms were incorporated into its objectives.

The process of paradigm change in the OIC human rights agenda was initiated in 2005 and has gradually developed over one and a half decades. The process is consummated when *CDOHR* was adopted in 2020 by the 47ᵗʰ Session of the CFM and it is called "*a monumental success for protection and promotion of human rights*" (OIC-IPHRC Website 2020-11-28). The CDOHR is regarded as a significant development in many respects. At the conceptual level, the CDOHR has shifted from religious notions to human rights language. At the normative level, it moved from Sharia-based particularism to an inclusive universalism. At the structural level, it abandoned the parallel arrangement to the UN human rights system and defined a complementary function for OIC human rights arrangement which might lead to the coexistence of regional and international systems.

The unfolding events demonstrated that the competing forces within the OIC along with the external pressure eventually interrupted the process. The conflicting views led to the emergence of a complementary approach in post-2005 that intended to bring the OIC human rights arrangement in alignment with the UN human rights system. On the occasion of Human Rights Day celebrations in 2007, the Ambassador of Pakistan claimed that the CDHRI "*is not an alternative, competing worldview on human rights. It complements the Universal Declaration as it addresses religious and cultural specificity of the Muslim countries*" (UN A/HRC/7/NGO/96).[2]

There have been two significant competing trends within the OIC member states that gradually shaped the process of the OIC paradigmatic shift in human rights discourse: while the forceful Endogenously-Oriented Trend attempted to indigenize

international standards in the form of a Charter to advance human rights in member states, the rival force of Exogenously-Oriented Trend wanted to revise the CDHRI. The latter trend had a vision of bringing the OIC human rights norms in alignment with international standards perhaps to mitigate the external criticisms. The Endogenously-Oriented Trend was leading the process of human rights development from 1980 up until the establishment of IPHRC in 2011. The idea of drafting Islamic human rights conventions in parallel to those of the UN human rights system has been frequently emphasized in the CFM decisions. However, when the Exogenously-Oriented Trend took the lead, a drastic turn has occurred that interrupted the progressive development of drafting a charter and replaced it with the idea of thoroughly revising the CDHRI. In the following, it will be illustrated that the Secretary-General made a crucial decision when he attempted to dismantle the TPA by not complying with the provisions that were meticulously defined in the TYPoA-2005 for the promotion of human rights in member states.

Despite the consolidated efforts of the OIC Secretary-General in the post-2005 to reconcile with the UN human rights system, there is a considerable lack of transparency in the process of decision-making in the OIC that casts serious doubt on the optimistic expectations that celebrated the adoption of CDOHR as a monumental achievement. The real reforms in the human rights agenda cannot be achieved unless the participation of civil society is genuinely provided. There is no doubt that the OIC is a state-centric organization, but ironically even the participation of government delegations is not conducted in a democratic process. The adoption of CDOHR has blatantly demonstrated the lack of clarity and non-existence of the democratic process. While the IPHRC has enthusiastically celebrated the adoption of CDOHR, the CFM has announced:

> *Given the absence of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the last meeting of the OIC intergovernmental Working Group to review the Draft Cairo Declaration on Human Rights due to the non-issuance of entry visas for the members of the Iranian delegation by the host country, Iran was not able to submit its comments and amendments on the draft text of the CDOHR. Therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran is not in a position to join consensus on the resolution No.63/47 PO* (The 47th Sess. of CFM, 2020, at 21).

Therefore, it was not clear for a couple of months, whether the CDOHR has been adopted or it was under consideration for further elaboration. This is the reason why the CFM had not attached the text of the Revised Declaration when the

final communique was adopted. More importantly, it has attached the revised OIC Convention on the Rights of the Child which has not been adopted yet. The IPHRC has reported that:

> *Furthermore, the CFM acknowledged the revised draft of the 'OIC Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam' prepared by IPHRC and tasked the OIC General Secretariat to constitute an Intergovernmental group to discuss the revised draft for subsequent adoption during the next CFM Session (The 47th Sess. of CFM, 2020, at 21).*

It is undeniably clear that the Secretariat is routinely interfering in the function of specialized agencies, a situation which has been surrounded by suspicious activities and lacks the minimum clarity. Because it can easily announce the adoption of a declaration that has not been adopted yet or it can replace an adopted declaration with a convention that is going to be adopted in the next session. However, neither member states, nor specialized agencies are entitled to object, or their objections are not considered.

The Collapse of Twin Pillars Arrangement

The main objective of regional human rights arrangements is basically to facilitate the implementation of human rights standards at the regional level. It is typically implemented through indigenization of the conceptions, values, and norms to decrease the resistance against incorporating external values and norms into the domestic legal systems. Also, a supervisory body is usually established to ensure the implementation of human rights standards. There is also a common procedure in human rights systems that the indigenization and standard-setting are carried out at the first stage by the adoption of a declaration. Then, this process is completed by the adoption of a covenant on human rights and the creation of an observatory body.

Hence, the TYPoA-2005 introduced the TPA comprising of Human Rights Charter and Commission, and the CFM called upon the sub-committee to continue its work during the year 2006 to prepare the "*Islamic Charter on Human Rights*" and "*the Covenant on the Rights of Women in Islam*" and also to consider the possibility of establishing an independent body to promote human rights in member States. The OIC, therefore, followed a similar procedure for its human rights arrangement and it was widely expected that the OIC would elaborate on a Human

Rights Charter as a main component of the Twin-Pillars Arrangement. In addition, according to a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2006 between the OIC and the OHCHR, it was agreed that they would cooperate to draft the OIC Human Rights Charter (Hashemi, 2009, 103).

The Idea of TPA was truly a turning point in the OIC human rights agenda and could make major improvements if it was to be implemented accordingly. Perhaps, none of the scholars participating in drafting the TYPoA-2005 would imagine that the inclusion of two paragraphs in TYPoA-2005 would bring about such dramatic developments in the OIC human rights agenda. It is most unfortunate; however, that the decision to revise the CDHRI interrupted the process of drafting the Human Rights Charter. The alternative process involved non-compliance conduct concerning the provisions of the TYPoA-2005 and an illegitimate measure in revising the CDHRI. We will elaborate on both accounts to check the legitimacy of the measures that have interrupted the realization of a relatively effective human rights arrangement.

It is not clear, however, what was the real cause that ultimately led to the collapse of the TPA. Even though it is impossible to pinpoint a single cause, it could be argued that the following developments were the real reason behind this significant decision. Even though the Secretary-General boldly turned a blind eye to the provisions of the TYPoA-2005 that were adopted by the Islamic Summit as the highest authority of the Organization, neither the IPHRC nor human rights institutions of member states objected to the ill-fated decision. Also, the Secretary-General ignored the promise he made with the High Commissioner for Human Rights for drafting a human rights charter. Furthermore, the TYPoA-2005 also mandated the CFM with the task of "*elaboration of an OIC Charter for Human Rights*." But the CFM not only did not accomplish the mandated task, but it approved the replacement of drafting the Charter of Human Rights with the project of revising the CDHRI. Afterward, the IPHRC prepared the Draft Declaration and it was submitted to the CFM for adoption.

Thus, the legitimacy of decisions made by the Secretary-General and the IPHRC is highly disputed in two respects: non-compliance with the provisions of TYPoA-2005 in respect to the human rights charter, and replacing the charter with a declaratory instrument. According to the provisions of the OIC Charter, "[*The*] *Islamic Summit shall deliberate, take policy decisions and provide guidance on all issues pertaining to the realization of the objectives as provided for in the Charter*" (The OIC Charter, 2008, art. 7) and it is also obvious that the CFM is responsible

"*for the implementation of the general policy of the Organization*" (The OIC Charter, 2008, art. 10.4). Therefore, the CFM also did not comply with the provisions that were adopted by the Islamic Summit concerning Human Rights Charter.

The OIC's reluctance to prepare the human rights charter as instructed by the TYPoA-2005 indicates the futility of the attempts to create a regional arrangement. Because the most important task of a regional human rights arrangement is to advance human rights in member states. However, not only the OIC failed to accomplish its obligations as articulated in its Charter and other instruments, but also the IPHRC's conduct in the almost past decade has proved that it has adroitly disguised its failure in masterful diplomacy and political maneuvers. Even though the real cause of non-compliance behavior is not clear, the subsequent events provide substantial evidence that might just explain the real reason behind the ill-fated decision. Undoubtedly, once the implementation mechanism is taken away, the proliferation of declaratory instruments would be devoid of any substance and will turn the paradigm change into new rhetoric that might only engage human rights scholars for another thirty years with a boring academic exercise.

Hence, there is a considerable degree of uncertainty about the legitimacy of the actions taken by the CFM and by the OIC Secretary-General about the provisions of the TYPoA-2005. As noted earlier, it had instructed the CFM to establish IPHRC with the task of promoting human rights in the Member States "*in accordance with the provisions of the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam*" (The OIC TYPoA-2005). Even though the CFM carried out the mandated task by creating the IPHRC, it also adopted the IPHRC's Statute (OIC RESOLUTION No. 2/38-LEG, 2011) which has granted it the authority to refine the CDHRI, instead of observing its provisions. In the next part, we will look at some challenges that have occurred in the process of the adoption of CDOHR and its implication for the advancement of human rights in member states.

Confusing in Between

The structural reforms described so far have significantly speeded up the process of paradigm change that started since the adoption of TYPOA-2005. However, there seem to be various inconsistencies in the post-2005 OIC instruments, leaving human rights standards to oscillate between contradictory requirements. Contrary to the CDHRI which subjected human rights to Islamic Shari'a, the provisions of

subsequent instruments have not coherently drafted. Yet, the TYPOA-2005 mandated IPHRC to "*promote human rights in the Member States, in accordance with the provisions of CDHRI*" (TYPoA-2005) which did not depart much from the traditional approach. However, where the TYPOA-2005 deals with the "*Rights of Women, Youth, Children, and the Family in the Muslim World*", it advances the idea of protecting the rights of women in accordance with Islamic values and by "*adhering to the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), in line with the Islamic values of justice and equality*" (TYPoA-2005). Similarly, it encourages Member States to ratify the CRCI and "*the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol with regard to the Girl Child*" (TYPoA-2005). It seems that the drafters believed that human rights standards enshrined in CEDAW can be reconciled with Islamic values and the OIC Human Rights instruments.

The new OIC human rights outlook of post-2005 is based on a hybrid form, wandering between human rights standards and Islamic values. This hybrid form of discourse has continued to dominate the OIC subsequent instruments. The confusing provisions have then penetrated the provisions of the revised Charter. The preamble of OIC Charter-2008 has emphasized that it would promote human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Member States "*in accordance with their constitutional and legal systems*." Again, when we look more closely at Article 15 of the OIC Charter-2008, it stipulates that IPHRC "*shall promote the civil, political, social and economic rights enshrined in the organization's covenants and declarations and in universally agreed human rights instruments, in conformity with Islamic values*" (The OIC Charter, art. 15).

It should also be noted that both the TYPoA-2005 and the Charter-2008 have been adopted by the Islamic Summit, the highest authority of the Organization. It is, therefore, important to recognize and resolve the apparently contradictory requirements that have been stipulated in different instruments, particularly the variety of requirements of the Charter-2008. Once, we summarize and combine the variety of requirements, it might be assumed that international human rights are recognized as accepted norms if they can pass through a triple test of compatibility with national constitutions and legal systems, compliance with the provisions of Islamic covenants and declarations, and conformity with Islamic values. If these variations are examined more thoroughly, it becomes obvious that a wide range of requirements have been developed in different instruments which make them

difficult to perceive or understand, and one might be well confused about the possibility of reconciling some highly irreconcilable criteria and different formulations ranging from the provisions of the national constitutions to OIC human rights instruments.

While acknowledging the contradictory requirements, certain OIC organs attempted to justify and explain the contradictory criteria prevailing in various instruments. In a document on OIC human rights standards and institutions, it has been argued that *"[The] trend of placing Sharia at the center of OIC's human rights documents declined and an approach of compatibility of Islamic values with universal human rights gained prominence*" (SESRIC, 2019, 7). It is, therefore, beyond the shadow of a doubt that the post-2005 discourse has shifted from Islamic Shari'a rhetoric to the discourse of compatibility with Islamic values. But the question remains unresolved in consideration of the contradictory formulations that have remained in the Charter-2008. On the occasion of the adoption of the IPHRC statute, the OIC Secretary-General, emphasized that the statute seeks "*to strike a delicate balance between Islamic human Rights instruments, notably the Cairo Declaration and CRCI and international human rights instruments"* (Cismas, 2014, 296). This statement indicates that he was fully aware of the contradictory formulations that exist in the OIC different instruments and attempted to suggest a mechanism that might remove the apparent contradiction. But, the simplicity of the formula for a rather complex task is misleading. It is certainly desirable and even inevitable *"to strike a delicate balance"* between different requirements, but the main difficulty is to explain how the IPHRC can make a balance between contradictory requirements. Again, the TYPoA-2025 continued to emphasize the importance of balancing Islamic values to flow together with human rights:

> *It is important that the observance of all human universal rights and freedoms flow together with Islamic values thus offering a coherent and strong system aimed at facilitating the full enjoyment of all human rights"* (TYPoA-2025).

It seems that the TYPoA-2025 employed a rhetorical irony to specify how this hypothetical conflict between human rights norms and Islamic values will be resolved. It is, however, obvious that the new rhetoric cannot resolve the paradoxes prevalent in the OIC core instruments. Thus, the CDOHR has attempted to develop a new formula for resolving the apparent paradox by shifting from Islamic Shari'a to the principles of Islam.

Does New Rhetoric matter?

It was noted that the CDOHR has attempted to overcome the hybrid form of discourse that fluctuates between Islamic values and human rights standards. Therefore, in the final draft of the RD, it replaced "Islamic Sharia" with the "Principles of Islamic Sharia". The new prescription is well explained in the preamble of the Draft Declaration in the following words: *"[The] Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), proceeding from the deep belief in human dignity and respect for human rights, and from the commitment to ensuring and protecting these rights as safeguarded by the principles of Islamic Shari'ah*" (The preamble of the Draft Declaration). In the final text of CDOHR, "*the principles of Islamic Shari'ah*" was substituted with "*the principles of Islam".* However, it is evident that the replacement of "*Islamic Shari'ah*" with "*the principles of Islamic Shari'ah*" or "*principles of Islam*" will not eliminate the ambiguities of the post-2005 instruments, but indeed, it does add a general criterion which now seem only to increase obscurity.

In comparison with the preamble of OIC Charter-2008 which subjected human rights to the conformity with "*constitutional and legal systems*" of member states, and also by analogy with Article 15 of the Charter-2008 that recognized the human rights as *"enshrined in the organization's covenants and declarations and in universally agreed human rights instruments, in conformity with Islamic values*" (The OIC Charter-2008, art. 15), a significant development can be observed in relation to the Charter and other post-2005 instruments. Even though, it might be a matter of debate in consideration of the strict meaning of the term "refine", it is expected, however, that the new rhetoric can be described as a departure from the hybrid form that was predominant in the post-2005 instruments. But it immediately returns to the specific formula which indicates that the commitment will be carried out by:

> *Reaffirming the OIC Charter which provides for the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms [...] in Member States in accordance with their constitutional and legal systems, their international human rights obligations*" (The preamble of the CDOHR).

It is unclear yet to tell whether the new prescription is a cure for the complex multiple criteria or the remedy is worse than the problem. Although the debate over the principles of Islamic Shari'ah has surfaced in the constitutional change after the

Arab Spring, this formula is a new penetration into the OIC human rights instruments. It is, thus, imperative to discover its historical background to explore its relevance to human rights discourse. The problem of conformity of the positive legislation with Islamic Shari'a initially emerged during the constitutional movement in Iran. Article 2 of the amendment of the Constitution of Iran stipulates that "*at no time in the ages should the legislations of the National Assembly be contrary to the sacred rules of Islam*" (The amendment of 1906 Constitution of Iran, Art. 2). Also, Article 72 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran articulates that enactments of the parliament should not be in contradiction with the laws and principles of the official religion of the country (The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Art. 72).

With the independence of the Muslim territories and the development of the constitutional movement, other Islamic countries also followed the Iranian Constitution by incorporating the repugnancy clause into their constitution. For example, in the first constitution of Pakistan (1956) the issue of conformity of the enactments with Islamic law was included, and with minor modifications, maintained in Article 227 of the 1973 Pakistan Constitution. Article 2 of the constitution of Iraq stipulates that Islam is the source of legislation and the positive laws must not conflict with Islamic law (Shaheen, 2016, 54-65). However, Hamoudi has subtly argued that the place of Islamic law in the legal system of many Islamic countries is "*chiefly symbolic*" and hardly constrain the legislation activity (Hamoudi, 2012, 431). It seems that this argument is rather evident in the legal jurisprudence of some Islamic countries where Islam is recognized as the official religion within the framework of a secular legal system or an authoritarian political system.

The debate over Islamic Shari'a in the Constitution resurfaced in the Arab world in the course of Arab spring. It is worth mentioning that the Egyptian 1971 constitution was amended in 1980 which recognized the principles of Islamic Sharia (مبادئ الشريعة الإسلامية) as the main source (and not the only source) of legislation (The Egyptian Constitution 1971 as amended in 1980, Art. 2).[3] However, it was not an easy task to ascertain what constitutes the principles of Islamic Sharia until the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) of Egypt developed a theory that provides legislator with a wide margin of appreciation to harmonize the positive legislation with the principles of Islamic Shari'a. In a ruling in 1993, the SCC declared that principles of Islamic Shari'a are those rules that "strives to protect religion, life,

reason, honor, and property […] basic objectives of the Shari'a (مقاصد الشريعة الإسلامية)" (Vogel, 1999, 535).

After the Arab Spring, the Egyptian constitution has been frequently amended, and even though the 2012 Constitution maintained Article 2 which declared the principles of Islamic Shari'a as the main source of legislation, it had essentially expanded the domain of the principles of Islamic Shari'a in opposition to the opinion of the SCC. When the Salafists failed to have the 'principles' (مبادئ) removed from Article 2, they insisted to add another article (Article 219) in the Constitution which interpreted the principles of Islamic Shari'a to include "*general evidence, foundational rules, rules of jurisprudence, and credible sources accepted in Sunni doctrines and by the larger community*" (The Egyptian Constitution 2012, Art. 219).[4] It goes without saying that if the principles of the Shari'a are interpreted to mean general evidence, the basic rules, and the rules of jurisprudence, then they cannot be applied to authentic sources of Shari'a. Consequently, when the new constitution finally was adopted in 2014, Article 2 was retained and Article 219 was deleted from the Constitution. It appears that the opinion of the SCC which made a distinction between religious rulings and the principles of Islamic Shari'a will remain valid in the Egyptian legal system (Nisrine, 2008), 47-48).

In opposition to the CDHRI which had subjected human rights to Islamic Shari'a, the Draft Declaration had borrowed the idea from the constitutional developments in the post-Arab spring to harmonize human rights with the principles of Islamic Shari'a. While the repugnancy clause in the Constitution of Islamic countries tries to bring positive legislation in conformity with Islamic norms, the CDOHR attempts to bring human rights standards in conformity with the principles of Islam. However, contrary to the domestic legislation, the shift from Islamic shari'a to the principles of Islamic shari'a or the principles of Islam will not eliminate the confusing criteria. Because several terms are associated with shari'a in the provisions of CDHRI that makes such a distinction meaningless.

Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam			
Shari'a	art 2. a - art. 2. C - art. 2. D	art. 12	art. 19. D
Islamic shari'a	Preambel Para. 2	art 24	art 25
Tenet of shari'a	art. 7. C		
Framework of shari'a	art. 12		
Principles of shari'a	art 7. B		
Provisions of Islamic shari'a	art. 23. b		
Norms of Islamic shari'a	art. 22. b		
Principles of Islamic shari'a	art. 16	art. 22. A	

The phrase "principles of Islamic shari'a" was used twice in the preamble of the Draft Declaration and once in Article 22 (a). However, the Revised Declaration replaced the "Principles of Islamic Sharia" with the "Principles of Islam" and this phrase has been used once in the preamble and once in Article 25 (a). The terms such as "Islamic teachings" and "Islamic principles and values" are also mentioned in the preamble. Regardless of several terms that were used in CDHRI, they all represent the same meaning in the context of the OIC core instruments, Thus, not only the use of "principles of Islam" does not remove the ambiguity of the multiple criteria, but it complicates the existing ambiguity by introducing a new criterion. Therefore, the phrase "principles of Islam" must be interpreted in the context of the OIC core instruments, instead of referring to the national legal systems. The new formula i.e. the reference to "Principles of Islam, could only complicate the existing multiple criteria.

Furthermore, the function of the repugnancy clause in the legal system of some Islamic countries, to borrow from Hamoudi, is "*chiefly symbolic*" (Hamoudi, 2012, 431) and, the same argument seems to be applicable to OIC human rights instruments. Article 25(a) of the CDOHR stipulates that: "*[E]very one has the right to exercise and enjoy the rights and freedoms set out in the present declaration, without prejudice to the principles of Islam and national legislation*". There can be no denying that the "*the principles of Islam"* clause in Article 25(a) is considered superfluous. Because, if the law of the land recognized Islamic Shari'a as the source of legislation, the observance of human rights standards in the domestic law –under Article 25(a)- are subjected to Islamic Shari'a. On the other hand, if the legal system of a member state is not derived from Islamic Shari'a, the "principles of Islam" clause in this article is still superfluous. Because, according to Article 25 (b) *"[Nothing] in this declaration may be interpreted in such a way as to undermine the rights and freedoms safeguarded by the national legislation or the obligations of the Member States under international and regional human rights treaties*". As a result, the phrase "principles of Islam" clause is superfluous and would make no sense either under Article 25 (a) or under Article 25 (b).

The brief review of the provision of various OIC instruments demonstrates the difficulty surrounding the task of the IPHRC to understand the various terms in the post-2005 instruments. The efforts have been made to define the OIC objectives by striking a balance between international discourse such as the principles of the UN Charter, international law, and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms with Islamic values. However, the OIC instruments neither defined the

theories that can be applied to resolve the conflict of values nor explained the mechanisms of striking a balance and making the compromise between the conflicting values. Therefore, it is necessary to elaborate on the theories of resolving the existing conflict and the mechanisms devised for maintaining the balance in human rights matters.

The publicists usually discuss the conflict of norms in both private and public international law. The International Law Commission has specifically addressed the three-dimensional conflict of principles, norms, and concepts of human rights at the regional and international levels (Koskenniemi, 2007, 102-103). This is the reason why Sir Robert Jennings has noted that the public international law has a universal quality and it applies to all countries irrespective of their cultural and religious background and socio-political conditions. He however, reiterated that:

> "*[Universality] does not mean uniformity. It does mean, however, variant is part of the system as a whole, and not a separate system, and it ultimately derives its validity from the system as a whole*" (Jennings, 1998, 341).

The International Law Commission, therefore, proposed the idea of the coexistence of legal systems in human rights debates. Any regional international law must be considered within the system as a whole and it is not tantamount to zero "regional variation" and absolute "uniformity". Another dimension of the conflict will probably emerge when a universal or a regional norm is to be applied at domestic level. There are a variety of procedures for resolving the conflict. For instance, at the regional level the European Court of Human Rights has followed an established procedure that allows the application of regional norms with a "*wide margin of appreciation*" when the conflict exists between the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and domestic laws (Legg, 2012, 70-73).

There is also the possibility of borrowing the idea from private international law. If we seek to apply the theories of conflict resolution in private international law, the enforcement of foreign judgments in a legal system is based on the principle of courtesy, and the decision of a foreign court is applied if it does not conflict with the fundamental principles and essential values of the domestic legal system (Michaels, 2019, 150-158). Thus, the departure from Islamic Shari'a to the principles of Islamic Shari'a, or the principles of Islam is expected to settle the three-dimensional conflict of principles, norms, and concepts of human rights at

regional and international levels. Nonetheless, its application by member states involves the domestic legal systems that must independently be addressed.

The importance of this debate lies in the fact that the preamble of the OIC Charter-2008 as well as many other OIC instruments emphasizes reconciliation between human rights standards and Islamic values. It has been presumed that the fundamental norms of human rights are not in direct conflict with the essential values of Islam or if so can be reconciled. Notwithstanding, the failure to explain the theories of resolving this conflict makes the task of reconciliation more complicated. Therefore, the impacts of this negligence are conspicuous in the implementation program of the TYPOA-2025 in the human rights section which fluctuates between the two discourses, in spite of underlining that the international human rights law will be implemented in harmony with Islamic values (TYPoA-2025).

It appears that the IPHRC failed to theorize the OIC human rights rhetoric after the adoption of the CDOHR. Because it has blatantly reversed its invented formula in the opposite direction. While appreciating "*the adoption of 'Cairo Declaration of the OIC on Human Rights'*" the IPHRC declared that "*the normative structure of the OIC human rights framework [...] established the compatibility of the Islamic values and norms with the universal human rights standards*" (The webpage of the IPHRC, 28/11/2020). In contrast to theories that emphasized that "universality does not mean uniformity" (Jennings, 1998, 341) and, in opposition of the provisions of the OIC Charter, the IPHRC celebrated the idea of "*compatibility of the Islamic values and norms with the universal human rights standards*" (TYPoA-2025). To conclude, not only the new prescription of replacing "Islamic Sharia" with the "Principles of Islam" cannot resolve the multiple criteria that dominate the core OIC instrument, but it added an extra criterion that exacerbated the terms for reconciliation where it lacks a theory for resolving the conflict of values.

Conclusion

It might be difficult to assess whether the adoption of the CDOHR is considered to be a paradigm change that will lead to the promotion of human rights in member states or it is merely a change within OIC human rights rhetoric. Even though the OIC post-2005 instruments employed new rhetoric that might bring it in alignment with the international human rights system, a multitude of requirements have been introduced, ranging from national legislation to Islamic values, that make the

reconciliation a particularly challenging task. To resolve the problem, the CDOHR has attempted to develop a new formula by shifting from Islamic Shari'a to the principles of Islam. This new rhetoric will not only resolve the prevalent paradoxes but also will add another requirement that complicates the problem.

Looking through a cynical lens, one might see it little more than window dressing as it lacks genuine substance. More importantly, the ambiguities surrounding the adoption of CDOHR cast doubt on the validity of the Revised Declaration as it was not adopted by required consensus among the member-states nor by majority vote and, therefore, its validity is open to deliberation (The 47th Sess. of the CFM, 2020) at 21). To remove such negative impressions, it is imperative to address the many unique challenges of standard-setting at the regional level and accelerating efforts to devise adequate mechanisms for the advancement of human rights in member states. Being hopeful or cynical of these efforts depends on the conduct of the IPHRC and the following suggestions are proposed to improve its conduct:

1. At the normative level, the IPHRC has been accredited with two distinct mandates that can rarely be found in other regional systems. It has been mandated with the main task of advancing human rights in member states and also with a subordinate task of protecting human rights of Muslim minorities in non-member states. While the IPHRC has the authority to monitor the human rights violations of Muslim minorities residing in non-member states, its jurisdiction over member states is limited only to consultative function. It is imperative to find a procedure for conducting the main task of the Commission. It has demonstrated that the legitimate ground for conducting the neglected task was provided for in the TYPoA-2025.

2. At the structural level, the IPHRC has established a mechanism for monitoring human rights violations in non-member states, but it is failing to devise a procedure for protecting human rights in member states. While considering the reluctance of member states to give monitoring authority to the IPHRC, it is imperative to engage national human rights institutions in member states to make use of other means and mechanisms for the accomplishment of its main task.

3. At the practical level, the IPHRC spared no effort to remove the Human Rights Charter from its agenda through conducting diplomatic maneuvers, including revising the CDHRI. Even though it is imperative to take into consideration the remaining tasks provided for in the TYPoA-2025 to ensure that human rights

commitments "*are translated into concrete actions on the ground*". To this end, the IPHRC should return the human rights charter to its agenda to revive the TPA.

4. One important challenge to the function of IPHRC is its engagement with the proliferation of human rights instruments. It seems more appropriate if the IPHRC move from standard-setting to implementation process. Otherwise, the possibility of writing and revising human rights instruments might put the OIC in a sequence of reciprocal trends and a series of adopting and revising processes with no genuine outcomes.

5. Another challenge to the effective functioning of the OIC human rights system is the lack of transparency which harms public trust. It is imperative to shift from human rights diplomacy and window dressing to genuine human rights commitment. The OIC might have used adroit diplomacy in cooperation with the UN human rights system, but it cannot impact the public opinion of Muslim nations unless the civil society of member states is actively engaged.

Note

1. This paper is a revised and abridged version of a research work under the title "OIC DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS: CHANGING THE NAME OR A PARADIGM CHANGE?" which was carried out by the researcher at RAOUL WALLENBERG INATITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW, University of Lund, Sweden, from March to December 2020. I thank Professor Radu Mars, Acting Research Director, and Head of Economic Globalization and Human Rights Thematic Area at RAOUL WALLENBERG INATITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW for his comments on the earlier draft of this article. However, the responsibility of the claims, arguments, and theories advanced in this paper rests on the author's shoulder.

2. The Ambassador of Pakistan on Human Rights Day in 2007 claimed that the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam "is not an alternative, competing worldview on human rights. It complements the Universal Declaration as it addresses religious and cultural specificity of the Muslim countries". Found in: A/HRC/7/NGO/96, available at (accessed on 20/2/2021):

https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/7/NGO/96

3. The Egyptian Constitution 1971 as amended in 1980, Art. 2: Islam is the religion of the State and Arabic is its official language. The principles of Islamic Sharia are the main source of legislation. But the Arabic version is subject to interpretation:

المادة ٢: الإسلام دين الدولة، واللغة العربية لغتها الرسمية، ومبادئ الشريعة الإسلامية المصدر الرئيسي للتشريع.

4. The Egyptian Constitution 2012, Art. 219:

مبادئ الشريعة الاسلامية تشمل أدلتها الكلية وقواعدها الأصولية والفقهية ومصادرها المعتبرة في مذاهب أهل السنة والجماعة.

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Ali Shariati, or the Intellectual in Pursuit of Justice

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> "Government can endure with unbelief, but not with injustice."
>
> Imam ʿAli (as quoted in Ernst, 2003. 118)

Abstract

This essay, drawing on 'Ali Shari'ati's most important works on what is an Intellectual and what is Justice, will try to address how he conceived the role of the intellect and of the intellectual in the pursuit of justice. For Imam ʿAli, the 'true intellectual' (al-aqil) is one who not only thinks correctly but also acts ethically, and, at the deepest level, one who seeks to realize the ultimate Reality. The intellectual is defined as one who 'puts all things in their proper place', which is the very definition of justice also. Only the true intellectual can, therefore, be fully 'just', for only one who sees things as they truly are is able to put them in their right place. Thought, action and realization are all the concern of the true intellectual, the aqil. With this text, I hope to show how 'Ali Shari'ati emphasised both the harmony between intellect and revelation, and the distinction (though not conflict) between intellect and reason, and how his intellectual endeavours were, ultimately, a pursuit for Justice. Shari'ati, in particular, criticised the Western project of positivism for falsely proclaiming the ability to separate knowledge from its human context. He also argued that all science should actively affirm its human interests, rather than pretending to rise above them. Human knowledge should thus always be recognised as having been produced through human social relations.

Key Words: Intellect; Justice; Knowledge; *Al-aqil*; *Adl*

Introduction

What is an intellectual? Who is an intellectual? What is Justice? As Reza Shah-Kazemi explains (Shah-Kazemi, 2006. 35), being true to one's intellect, to the treasures buried deep within it and not just to the rational functions operative on its surface, is tantamount to being "spiritual". For Imam ʿAli, the "true intellectual" (al-aqil) is one who not only thinks correctly but also acts ethically, and, at the deepest level, one who seeks to realise the ultimate Reality. The intellectual is defined as one who "puts all things in their proper place", which is also the very definition of justice; only the true intellectual can, therefore, be fully "just", for only one who sees things as they truly are is able to put them in their right place. Thought, action and realisation are all the concern of the true intellectual, the aqil. Correct thinking, impeccable virtue and authentic being are inextricably tied up with the intellect, in the spiritual ethos being considered here.

This essay, drawing on Ali Shariati's most important works on what is an Intellectual and what is Justice, will try to address how he conceived the role of the intellect and of the intellectual in the pursuit of justice, and hopes to show how Ali Shariati emphasised both the harmony between intellect and revelation, and the distinction, not conflict, between intellect and reason, and how his intellectual endeavours were, ultimately, a pursuit for Justice. Shariati criticised the Western project of positivism for falsely proclaiming the ability to separate knowledge from its human context, arguing that all science should actively affirm its human interests, rather than pretending to rise above them. Human knowledge should thus always be recognised as having been produced through human social relations.[1]

The Pursuit of Justice through the Intellect

An important subject that Ali Shariati approached was the debate on culture and barbarism, or the question of who is civilised and who is modern[2], discussing it in the light of Islamic doctrine, and stressing that this point had to be kept in mind, particularly as a matter of concern for individuals within the educated classes of Islamic societies upon whom laid the burden of responsibility and leadership of the *ummah*.

Modernity was one of the most delicate and vital issues confronting the people of non-European countries and Islamic societies. A more important issue was the relationship between an imposed modernisation and genuine civilisation. One had to discover if modernity – as was claimed – was a synonym for being civilised, or if

it was an altogether different issue and social phenomenon having no relation to civilisation at all. Unfortunately, modernity had been imposed on non-European nations under the guise of civilisation. The intellectuals should have understood years ago and made people realise the difference between civilisation and modernity, but they failed to do so.

Shariati defined certain terms on which he intended to concentrate, which, if left ambiguous would render the discussion vague:

Intellectual: An intellectual is one who is conscious of his own "humanistic status" in a specific social and historical time and place. His self-awareness lays upon him the burden of responsibility. He responsibly, and self-consciously, leads his people in scientific, social and revolutionary action.

Assimilation: This was at the root of all the troubles and constraints facing the non-western and Muslim countries, applying to the conduct of an individual who, intentionally or unintentionally, starts imitating the mannerisms of someone else. A person exhibiting this weakness forgets his own background, national character and culture, or, if he remembered them at all, recalled them with contempt. Obsessively, and with no reservation, he denied himself in order to transform his identity. Hoping to attain the distinctions and the grandeur which he saw in another, the assimilator attempted to rid himself of perceived shameful associations with his original society and culture.

Alienation: The process of forgetting or becoming unfamiliar with or indifferent to one's self, *i.e.*, one loses the self and directs their perceptions from within another person or thing. This grave social and spiritual illness manifested itself in many different shapes and forms depending on various factors. A factor which contributed to the alienation of the human being was the tools with which someone worked. It is seen as another kind of "control by jinns," which possessed humanity and alienated individual or even an entire class from itself. Yet, that which was more real, more frightening, and more damaging, was the omnipresent form of alienation; such alienation thoroughly affected the Iranians, the Muslims, the Asians, and the Africans: that is, "cultural alienation." Non-European societies became alienated by European societies; their intellectuals no longer felt eastern, groaned like an eastern person or aspired to be eastern people. The intellectual did not suffer because of his own social problems, rather he conceived of the pain, sufferings, feelings and needs of a European in the final stage of capitalistic and materialistic success and enjoyment.[3]

The problem concerned making people in Asia and Africa consumers of European products. Their societies had to be structured so they would buy European products. That meant changing a nation literally. They had to change the nation, and they had to transform the man in order to change his clothing, his consumption pattern, his adornment, his abode and his city. The first part of him which needed to be changed was his morale and his thinking. Who could change the spirit of a society, the morale of a society and the way of thinking of a nation? In this respect, there was little the European capitalist, engineer or producer could do. Rather, it was the business of the enlightened European intellectuals to plan a special method of perverting the mind, the taste and lifestyle of the non-European, not in a way that he himself chooses – since the change he desires might not necessitate the consumption of European products – rather his desires, his choices, his suffering, his sorrow, his tastes, his ideals, his sense of beauty, his tradition, his social relations, his amusements, all had to be changed so that he could be coerced into becoming a consumer of European industrial products. Thus, the big producers and big European capitalists of the 18th and 19th centuries let the intellectuals handle this project. This was the project: all the people of the world had to become uniform. They had to live alike and they had to think alike. However, it was practically impossible for all the nations to think in the same way. What structural elements go into the personality and spirit of a man and nation? Religion, history, culture, past civilisation, education and tradition – all of these are the structural elements of a man's personality and spirit and, in its general term, of a nation. Clearly, these elements differed from one society to another. They resulted in a European form, while another developed in Asia and in Africa. Yet, according to the European capitalist, they all had to become the same. The differences in spirits, as well as intellectual traditions, of the nations of the world had to be destroyed in order for men to become uniform. They had to conform, wherever they were, to a single pattern, a pattern provided by Europe: it showed all Easterners, Asians, Africans, how to think, how to dress, how to desire, how to grieve, how to build their houses, how to establish their social relations, how to consume, how to express their view, and finally how to like and what to like. Soon it was realised that a new culture called "modernisation" was presented to the whole world. Modernity was the best method of diverting the non-European world from its own moulds, thoughts and personalities. It became the sole task of Europeans to place the temptation of "modernisation" before the non-European societies of any complexion.

For Shariati, strictly speaking, "modernised" meant modernised in the realm of consumption. One who became modernised was one whose tastes desired "modern"

items to satisfy his wants. In other words, he imported from Europe new forms of living as well as modern products, and he refused to use new types of products and lifestyles developed from his own national past. Westerners, however, could not just tell others they were going to reshape their intellect, mind and personality for fear of awakening resistance. Therefore, the Europeans had to make non-Europeans equate "modernisation" with "civilisation" to impose the new consumption pattern upon them, capitalising on the universal desire for civilisation. "Modernisation" was defined as "civilisation," and thus people cooperated with the European plans to modernise. Even more than the bourgeois and capitalist, the non-European intellectual laboured mightily to change consumption patterns and lifestyles in their societies. Modernisation changed traditions, mode of consumption and material life from old to new. People made the old ways; machines produce the new.

To make all the non-Europeans modernised, they first had to overcome the influence of religion, since religion caused any given society to feel a distinctive individuality. Religion postulated an exalted intellectuality to which everyone related intellectually. If this intellect was crushed and humiliated, the one who identified himself with it felt also crushed and humiliated. So, native intellectuals began a movement against "fanaticism." As Frantz Fanon said: 'Europe intended to captivate the non-European by the machine. Can a human or society be enslaved by a machine or certain European product without taking away or depriving him of his personality?'[4] No, it could not. The personality had to be wiped out first. Since religion, history, culture, as a totality of intellect, thought, amassed art and literature gave personality to a society, they all had to be destroyed, too. They would deprive him of his personality. He had to be dispossessed of all the "I's" he felt within. He had to be forced to believe himself related to a humbler civilisation, a humbler social order, and accept that European civilisation, western civilisation and the European race were superior, and the non-European societies themselves strove to become modernised under the leadership of their sophisticated intellectuals.[5]

As Jean-Paul Sartre, in the preface to Fanon's *the Wretched of the Earth*, pointed out,

We would bring a group of African or Asian youth to Amsterdam, Paris, London… for a few months, take them around, change their clothes and adornments, teach them etiquette and social manners as well as some fragment of language. In short, we would empty them of their own cultural values and then send them back to their own countries. They would no longer be the kind of person to speak their own mind; rather they would be our mouthpieces. We would cry the

slogans of humanity and equality and then they would echo our voice in Africa and Asia.[6]

These were the persons who convinced people to lay aside their orthodoxy, discard their religion, get rid of native culture (as these had kept them behind the modern European societies) and become westernised from the tip of the toe to the top of the head. But it was not so simple to civilise a nation or a society. Civilisation and culture were not European-made products whose ownership made anyone civilised. But they had to make believe that all modernisation nonsense was a manifestation of civilisation, and 'we eagerly threw away everything we had, even our social prestige, morality and intellect, to become thirsty suckers of what Europe was eager to trickle into our mouths'. This is what modernity really means. Thus a being was created devoid of any background, alienated from his history and religion, and a stranger to whatever his race, his history and his forefathers had built in this world; alienated from his own human characteristics, a second-hand personality whose mode of consumption had been changed, whose mind had been changed, who had lost his old precious thoughts, his glorious past and intellectual qualities and had now become empty within. As Jean Paul Sartre put it: 'In these societies an "assimilate" – meaning a quasi-thinker and quasi-educated person – was created, not a real thinker or intellectual.'[7] For Shariati, a *real* intellectual was one who knew his society, was aware of its problems, could determine its fate, was knowledgeable about its past and who could decide for himself. However, those quasi-intellectuals in non-European societies succeeded in influencing the people by being intermediaries between those who had the products and those who had to consume it. Aquainted both with the Europeans and with his own people, the mediator eased the way of colonisation and exploitation, and that was why they created native intellectuals who did not dare to choose for themselves, who did not have the courage to maintain their own opinions and who could not decide for themselves.

They had created a people who did not know their own culture, but still were ready to despise it. They knew nothing about Islam but said bad things about it. They could not understand a simple poem but criticised it with poorly chosen words. They did not understand their history but were ready to condemn it. On the other hand, without reservation they admired all that was imported from Europe. Consequently, a being was created who, first became alienated from his religion, culture, history and background, and then came to despise them. He was convinced he was inferior to the European, and when such a belief took root in him, he tried to refute himself, to sever his connections with all the objects attached to him, and

consequently tried to make himself into a European, who was not despised and looked down upon.

In *Where shall we begin?*[8], Ali Shariati wanted to draw the attention to where one should strategically proceed in a particular society, in a given period of time, in order to achieve the shared objectives and to protect the values which were at the time subject to cultural, intellectual and social onslaughts. The gravest tragedy in traditional societies in general, and in the Muslim societies in particular, was that there was a lack of communication and a difference of outlook between the masses and the educated class. Due to the broad influence of mass media, literacy, and education in the industrial countries of the West, the masses and the intellectuals understood each other rather well and shared a relatively similar outlook. Unfortunately, under the modern culture and educational system, the young people of non-western countries were being educated and trained inside invincible and fortified fortresses. Once they reentered the society, they were placed in certain occupational and social positions completely isolated from the masses. In effect, the new intelligentsia lived and moved alongside the people, but in a closed "golden cage" of exclusive circles. As a result, on the one hand, the intelligentsia pursued life in an ivory tower without having any understanding of their own society, and on the other hand, the uneducated masses were deprived of the wisdom and knowledge of the very same intellectuals whom the masses had sponsored (albeit indirectly) and whose flourishing they had provided for.

The greatest responsibility of those who wished to rebuild their society and bring together the unintegrated, and at times, antagonistic elements of the society into a harmonious whole was to bridge the gap between those two poles – the pole of theory and the pole of practice – and to fill that great abyss of alienation between the masses and the intellectuals. For any responsible enlightened soul who wanted to achieve something, regardless of his ideological conviction, it was a duty to build a bridge between the beautiful, valuable, and the mysterious (in the mind of the masses) island of the intellectuals and the land of the masses; a bridge across which both the intellectuals and the masses could interact. Regardless of any answer to the question 'Where shall we begin,' and regardless of the agreement with Shariati's answer, one could not help but accept and agree with that fundamental principle: the first step was to build such a bridge.

Implicit in the question 'Where shall we begin?' there was an understanding on the part of the audience, and the person who posed such a question, that two prior questions namely, '*Who* should begin?' and 'For *what* purpose?' had already been

answered. Obviously, the question of where to begin was asked by those who had a sense of responsibility with regard to their time and society and wished to do something about it. Undoubtedly, they were the enlightened souls, for only such individuals felt a social responsibility and had a sense of social mission. One who was not enlightened was not responsible either.

Shariati notes that he stresses "enlightened souls" and not those who had obtained degrees. "Enlightened" did not mean "intellectual," a word which had incorrectly been translated into Persian as "enlightened" (*roshan fekr*), and which referred to a person who did mental (as opposed to manual) work. Such an individual may or may not be an enlightened soul. Conversely, a person may not be an intellectual if he worked in a factory for example – but he may nevertheless be an enlightened soul. The relation between the two was not that of two interrelated concepts. Not every intellectual was enlightened and vice versa. The enlightened soul was a person who was self-conscious of his "human condition" in his time and historical and social setting, and whose awareness inevitably and necessarily gave him a sense of social responsibility. And if he happened to be educated, he may be more effective; if not, perhaps less so. But this was not a general rule, for sometimes an uneducated individual may play a much more important role.

In the modern time, when man had reached a dead end within his evolving society, and when the underdeveloped countries were struggling with numerous difficulties and shortcomings, an enlightened soul was one who could generate responsibility and awareness and give intellectual and social direction to the masses. Accordingly, an enlightened person was not necessarily one who had inherited and continued the works of Galileo, Copernicus, Socrates, Aristotle, and Ibn-Sina. Modern scientists such as Einstein and Von Braun complemented and continued their achievements. In principle, the responsibility and the rule of contemporary enlightened souls of the world resembled that of the prophets and the founders of the great religions – revolutionary leaders who promoted fundamental structural changes in the past. Prophets were not in the same category as philosophers, scientists, technicians or artists. The prophets often emerged from among the masses and were able to communicate with the masses, introducing new mottos, projecting new visions, starting new movements, and begetting new energies in the conscience of the peoples of their particular time and places. The great revolutionary *uprooting* – and yet *constructive* – movements of the prophets caused frozen, static and stagnant societies to change their directions, life-styles, outlooks, cultures and destinies. Those prophets were therefore neither in the category of the past scientists or philosophers, nor were they in the category of unaware common

people. Rather, they belonged to a category of their own. They neither belonged to the commoners, who were usually the products and captives of ancient traditions and social structures, nor did they belong to the community of the scientists, philosophers, artists, mystics, monks or clergymen, who were captives of abstract concepts and often overwhelmed with their own scientific or inner explorations and discoveries.

Similar to the prophets, the enlightened souls also neither belonged to the community of scientists, nor to the camp of the unaware and stagnant masses. They were aware and responsible individuals whose most important objective and responsibility was to bestow the great God-given gift of "self-awareness" (*khod agahi*) to the general public. Only self-awareness transformed the static and corrupt masses into a dynamic and creative cantor, which fostered genius and gave rise to great leaps, which in turn became the springboard for the emergence of civilisation, culture and great heroes. Clearly then, it was the enlightened soul who should begin preaching the call for awareness, freedom and salvation, to the deaf and unhearing ears of the people; it is the enlightened souls who should inflame the fire of a new faith in the hearts of the masses, and show them a new social direction in their stagnant society. This was not a job for the scientists, because they had a clear-cut responsibility: understanding the status quo as well as discovering and employing the forces of nature and of man for the betterment of the material life of the people. Scientists, technicians and artists provided scientific assistance to their nations, or to the human race, in order to help them to improve their lot and be better at what they are. Enlightened souls, on the other hand, taught their society how to "change" and provided the orientation of that change. They fostered a mission of "becoming" and paved the way by providing an answer to the question, 'What should we become?'

A scientist justifies, explains, and creates the conditions for producing as affluent, comfortable, strong, and leisurely life as possible. At most, he discovers the "facts," whereas an enlightened person identifies the "truth." A scientist produces light, which may be utilised either for right or wrong objectives; an enlightened person, analogous to a "tribal guide" (*ra'id*), is the vanguard of the caravan of humanity, showing society the right path; he invites us to initiate a journey, and leads us to our final destination. Since science is power and enlightenment light, from time to time, the scientist serves the interests of oppression and ignorance, but the enlightened person, of necessity and by definition, opposes tyranny and darkness.

Shariati then explores the word *hekmat* (wisdom), which is often used in the Qurʾan and within the Islamic cultural milieu. It conveyed the same meaning he had attributed to enlightenment. Even when there was a discussion of knowledge (ʿ*elm*), it did not refer to technical, scientific or philosophical learnings. It meant neither "religious knowledge" (those disciplines which a religious student studied, *i.e.*, jurisprudence, tradition, life of the Prophet, the Qurʾanic interpretation, ethics, theology etc.) nor "temporal knowledge" (those disciplines which were pursued by social and/or natural science students, *i.e.*, physics, medicine, sociology, literature, psychology, history, etc.). These were collections of specialised information and cultural knowledge, which were taught particularly as courses in a specific educational system. While religious and secular knowledge could be helpful for enlightened awareness (*agahi-e-roshanfekri*), and may serve as valuable tools at the disposal of the enlightened individuals, they were not in-and-of-themselves the desired "light" or awareness. That kind of knowledge (ʿ*elm*), which was emphasised in Islam, was an awareness unique to man, a divine light and a source of consciousness of the social conscience. As the famous tradition put it, 'Knowledge is a light which God shines in the heart of whomever He desires.' It was this awakening, illuminating, guiding and responsibility-generating knowledge which Shariati called the "divine light," not the teachings of physics, chemistry, literature jurisprudence, etc.: the goal of the enlightened soul was to bestow upon their contemporaries a common and dynamic faith, as well as to help them acquire self-awareness and formulate their ideals. The greatest responsibility of the enlightened soul was to identify the real causes of the backwardness of his society and discover the real cause of the stagnation and degeneration of his people. Moreover, he should educate his slumbering and ignorant society as to the basic reasons for its ominous historical and social destiny. Then, based on the resources, responsibilities, needs and suffering of his society, he should identify the rational solutions, which would enable his people to emancipate themselves from the status quo. Based on appropriate utilisation of the resources of his society and an accurate diagnosis of its suffering, an enlightened person should try to find out the true causal relationships between misery, social illness and abnormalities, and the various internal and external factors. Finally, an enlightened person would transfer this understanding beyond the limited group of his colleagues to the society as a whole.

Contemporary "intellectuals" generally believe that dialectical contradictions at work in any society, of necessity, move the society forward toward freedom and revolution, and give birth to a new state of being. According to this logic, mere "poverty" or "class diferences," which symbolised the existence of social conflicts,

inevitably lead to a dialectical contradiction, which in turn create motion in the society. In reality, however, this is no more than a big illusion. No society would be mobilised to obtain its freedom merely because of the existence of class difference or tragic disparity between rich and poor. Poverty and class conflict may exist in a society for thousands of years without causing any structural transformation. Dialectics has no *intrinsic* motion. Considering that motion in any given society is the product of transformation of the social conflict from within the society into the conscience of its members, the responsibility of the enlightened person is obvious. Briefly, it is 'to transfer the shortcomings and abnormalities of his society into the mind and conscience of the members of that society.' Then, the society would take it from there. Another definition of the enlightened person was that he was one who was aware of the existing social conflicts and their real causes, who knew the needs of his age and his generation, who accepted responsibility for providing solutions as to how his society could be emancipated, who helped his society to shape and define its collective goals and objectives and, finally, who took part in mobilising and educating his static ignorant society. In a word, a contemporary enlightened person should continue in the path of the prophets. His mission is to "guide" and work for justice, his language is compatible with his time, and his proposed solutions conform to cultural values of his specificity.[9] Opposition to religion by the enlightened person deprived society of the possibility of becoming aware of the benefits of its young and enlightened generation. Due to their unique worldviews and awareness, enlightened individuals can play the most effective and long-lasting role in educating and mobilising the masses of their society. With great intensity, the society expected its enlightened persons to educate it concerning various elements of danger, reactionism, corruption, anachronism and confusion. To emancipate and guide the people, to give birth to a new love, faith, and dynamism, and to shed light on people's hearts and minds and make them aware of various elements of ignorance, superstition, cruelty and degeneration in contemporary Islamic societies, an enlightened person should start with "religion." By that Shariati meant 'our peculiar religious culture and not the one predominant today.'[10]

Such a movement would unleash energies that would enable the enlightened Muslim to:

1 – Extract and refine the enormous resources of the society and convert the degenerating agents into energy and movement;

2 – Transform the existing social and class conflicts into conscious awareness of social responsibility, by using artistic, literary and speaking abilities, as well as other possibilities at hand;

3 – Bridge the ever-widening gap between the "island of the enlightened person" and the "shore of the masses" by establishing kinship links, fostering understanding between them, thus putting the religion, which came about to revive and generate movement [in the sense of action], at the service of the people;

4 – Make the weapon of religion inaccessible to those who had undeservedly armed themselves with it and whose purpose was to use religion for personal reasons, thereby acquiring the necessary energy to motivate people;

5 – Launch a religious renaissance through which, by returning to the religion of life and motion, power and justice, would on the one hand incapacitate the reactionary agents of the society and, on the other hand, save the people from those elements which were used to narcotise them. By launching such a renaissance, these hitherto narcotising elements would be used to revitalise society, give awareness [in the psychological sense, as a first step to empowerment], and fight superstition. Furthermore, returning to and relying on the authentic culture of the society would allow the revival and rebirth of cultural independence in the face of western cultural onslaught;

6 – And finally, eliminate the spirit of imitation and obedience, which was the hallmark of the popular religion, and replace it with a critical revolutionary, aggressive spirit of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*). All of these may be accomplished through a religious reformist movement, which would extract and refine the enormous accumulation of energy in the society, enlighten the era, and awaken the present generation. It was for the above reasons that Shariati, 'as a conscientious teacher who has risen from the depth of pains and experience of his people and history, hope that the enlightened person will reach a progressive self-awareness. For whereas our masses need self-awareness, our enlightened intellectuals are in need of "faith".'[11]

Conclusion

As Dawud Reznik asserts[12], epistemologically one must be aware of Shariati's critique of Cartesian dualism. He describes the Islamic worldview as fundamentally anti-dualist, since it is impossible for humans to access the unmediated realm of absolute Knowledge, which is only God's to behold. For Shariati, attempts at

achieving epistemological objectivity, contingency-less truth, and factual purity are misguided and idolatrous. In particular, Shariati criticises the western project of positivism as falsely proclaiming its ability to separate knowledge from its human context. He describes this deceit as a sinful skirting of social responsibility; science has been separated from the fabric of society, and, as such, it has lost touch with people's thoughts. Not being able to criticise the present situation, it no longer helps solve life's problems. It no longer concerns itself with the fate of society and its ability to control its own destiny and achieve its ideals.

Shariati chastises the *mala,* or intellectuals, for aligning themselves with the *mutrif*, or exploiting classes, arguing that all science should actively affirm its human interests, rather than pretending to rise above them. Human knowledge should thus always be recognised as having been produced through human social relations. What separates Shariati's epistemological perspective from other critiques of Cartesian dualism made by the *Geisteswissenschaften* schools of pragmatism, phenomenology, and postmodernism, is his emphasis on the inherent axiological quality of knowledge. He sees the inextricable link between subject and object as judgment. In this regard, he believes that humanity's defining feature is its ability to approach the world in terms of value, which consists of the link that exists between man and any phenomenon, behaviour, act, or condition where a motive higher than that of utility is at issue; it might be called a sacred tie, as it is bound up with reverence and worship to the extent that people feel it justifiable to devote or sacrifice their very lives to this tie. What grants man, a non-material being, an *independence* from – as well as a *superiority* over – all other natural beings, is his high regard for value. Shariati has thus introduced a new co-founding principle to the standard existentialist doctrine: it is an *ethical* existence that precedes essence. All human knowledge, including basic self-awareness, emerges from a fundamental position relative the universal values of Good and Evil, or as Shariati calls them the "infinitely exalted plus" and "infinitely vile minus" (Shariati, 1979. 88-97).

Using this epistemological framework, Shariati argues that all developments in knowledge, even the supposedly secular rationalism of the Enlightenment, represent a form of religion as an ethical proposition of faith: history knows no era or society which lacks religion. That is, there is no historical precedence of a non-religious society. There has been no non-religious human being in any race, in any era, in any phase of social change on any part of the earth. Since all human knowledge is intrinsically tied to the human knower, and all humans are religious, all knowledge is thereby necessarily religious. In short, Shariati views the history of thought as a struggle of religious concerns. Specifically, epistemological conflict through the

ages has symbolised the struggle between the religion of legitimation (*shirk*/polytheism) and the religion of revolution (*tawhid*/monotheism). Multitheism is characterised by idolatry, beliefs in various forms of determinism and predetermination, and reactionary attempts to conserve the conditions of dualism and inequality that have pervaded human societies throughout history. Monotheism reflects the prophetic attempt to destroy all idols, abolish all social hierarchy, and thus construct the Kingdom of God on earth. Within this context, Shariati distinguishes between Good and Evil using the transcendental dimension of human existence as his defining criteria. The evil multitheists worship the idols of either the measurably physical (materialism) or the manifestly thinkable (idealism), without recognising that neither is as virtuous as the supernatural and supra-logical spirit of God that can never be fully begotten; man's propensity for what actually exists degrades him. By pursuing values that do not exist in nature, he is lifted above nature, and the spiritual and essential development of the species is secured. In other words, Good knowledge emerges from love of existence as a dynamic movement oriented towards the future, rather than servitude to the idols of the present-past.[13]

Methodologically, and consistent with the axiological anti-dualism of his epistemology, Shariati prescribes a methodology of critical hermeneutics. Because only God has universal knowledge of cause and effect, any attempts at unearthing an absolute semiotics is futile and impossible. Instead, Shariati argues that the only appropriate model for advancing human knowledge is the continuous interpretation of facts relative to their social construction and religious politics. Broken down into its constituent parts, Shariati's hermeneutical method involves 'objection, criticism, and the inner choice or selection of the individual'.[14]

This process of negative dialectics emerges from the idol-destroying tradition in Islamic monotheism; one must seek out and supersede the fundamental contradictions of human thought, since only God's thought is complete, infinite, and limitless. The first part of Shariati's method calls for objecting to any human knowledge that claims to be universal and free from interpretation: 'the necessity of the religion of monotheism is rebellion, denial, and saying "no" before any other power.'[15]

The point here is that Godly knowledge cannot be humanly beholden, and so any human attempts to build Godly knowledge must be resolutely rejected as the construction of a temple of idolatry. In Shariati's words, 'How disgraceful… are all fixed standards. Who can ever fix a standard?' (Shariati, 1979. 94) Following the

objection to supposedly pure knowledge, human agency must be recognised as the basis for the production of all human knowledge. Hence Shariati advocates a line of interpretive criticism that traces the construction of knowledge back to the human presence and power relations. He calls on all monotheists to recognise that 'the course… [a multitheist] has chosen for our humiliation is the best guide for us to choose as the way to our glory: Returning from the same way that he has led us' (Shariati, 1992. 34).

The negation of God that the multitheist has promoted through an idolatrous claim to value-freedom, must thus be itself negated. Criticism can only be accomplished by discovering the contradictions and limits of the knowledge in question, particularly with reference to its axiological quality; fixed and motionless forms that have become crystallised into ineffective "sacred" institutions should be transformed into moving and active elements, with a clearly defined role in the existential movement of society. This process, of recognising the qualitative aspects of knowledge, allows for a nuanced understanding of the history of any knowledge. In particular, Shariati urges the situating of knowledge relative to the political struggle between multitheists and monotheists. These combined efforts of both objection and criticism ultimately result in a religiously-vital democratisation of knowledge, as persons can only begin to make informed decisions about faith when idols have been destroyed. Citing the example of the Prophet and his companions, Shariati encourages all to become conscious self-aware *mujahideen*. Shariati asserts true belief in God can only be actualised through this process, which comes as a result of critically interpreting all knowledge: Correct thought is the prelude to correct knowledge, and correct knowledge is the prelude to belief. These three taken together are the necessary attributes of an aware conscience and of any movement that strives in practice and theory for the attainment of perfection. When knowledge has been negated, critiqued, and situated relative its axiological-religious roots, the enlightened individual can perform his/her prophetic-like duty of shining the light of revelation on others so they too can begin to 'discern things as they really are.'[16] Representing a truly democratic understanding of religious faith, Shariati's method calls for criticism of all knowledge in order to attain consciousness of its limitations and ethical implications, and only then can the individual make the 'dutiful and aggressive passage' (Shariati, 1992. 207) to monotheistic faith.

Finally, in what refers to social ontology, Shariati's imagery for social order is perhaps the most important element of his liberation theology. Much of his writings are dedicated to detailing the subtle nuances of *tawhid*, or the Islamic concept for the absolute unity of God, as a social ontology. This metaphor allows for the

indivisibility of humanity without the imposition of abstract structural mechanisms or systemic metaphors, since all humans are understood to be God's creation. As with his discussions of epistemology and methodology, Shariati describes *tawhid* first by contrasting it from its opposite, *shirk*, or the legitimation of social inequality based on multitheistic beliefs and idolatry. *Shirk* rears its ugly head in realism and nominalism, the traditional social ontologies of western mainstream thought. Realists conceive of society as a structural whole requiring the assimilation and integration of its individual parts according to an abstract, mechanistic logic that is supposedly divorced from human agency.

This imagery of society as an autonomous system *sui generis* has historically been used by social theorists as a way to control what they perceive to be the innate chaos and disorder of individuals if left to their "human nature." Employing his critical hermeneutical method, Shariati rebukes realist social imagery. He points out the political interests of multitheism as the axiological underpinnings of realist ontologies that legitimate an assimilatory social order; it is multitheism which continuously denies social power, social control, and the responsibility of human beings in their fate, their expectations and the physical, spiritual, and instinctive needs of individuals, all to the advantage of the coercive and wealthy forces. Hence Shariati highlights the power interests involved in the western realist tradition, including the neo-liberal ideal of the capitalist market as a supposedly neutral arbiter of social life. Nominalism, on the other hand, posits that only the individual is existentially real, and thus social ties are simply utilitarian means for achieving self-centered, egocentric ends. This social Darwinist image of society legitimates a survival of the fittest scenario, whereby individuals compete for a scarce quantity of resources to survive. Shariati shrewdly points out that the same multitheist interests involved in realism are at play in promoting nominalism. In his eyes, individualistic social imagery is used as a means to divide-and-conquer the masses and reinforce the inequalities in society produced by *shirk*; it is also multitheism which opens separate metaphysical accounts for each of its members so that, through this means, the assembling of people would be transformed into dispersion and isolation. His point here is that a religion of revolution is thoroughly undermined when the masses are viewed as self-interested monads competing for individual salvation. Shariati also identifies the undemocratic nature of realist conceptions of history, which are supposedly driven spontaneously or by elites. This contradicts the model set forth in the Qurʾan, which posits that *al-nas*, or "the masses," are actually the ones behind historical change. Thus, according to Shariati, the religion of legitimation offers two contradictory images of social order to keep persons from recognising their inherent

equality as common creations from God: society as a structural whole constraining its individual parts and society as an aggregation of autonomous, sovereign atoms. Both of these social ontologies are used by those who profit from an alienated, fragmented, and unequal society to keep the masses from recognising their common existential ancestry in God and consequently effecting revolution. In opposition to the realist and nominalist metaphors of *shirk*, Shariati defines *tawhid* as simply 'the unity of nature with metanature, of man with nature, of man with man, of God with the world and with man.'[17]

Shariati describes the personage of society as the "Household of God," a metaphor which asserts the existential equality of all humanity as the common product of the divine realm of creation. *Tawhid* also mandates the liberating framework of praxis, or the unity and simultaneity of thought and action. Shariati again cites the example of the Prophet and his companions, who did not 'divide up life into two sections, the first consisting exclusively of talk and the second, exclusively of action' (Shariati, 1979. 41).

With *tawhid*, social order is presupposed between persons without having to resort to the assimilatory ideals, contractual obligations, or other structural props of realist social imagery. In other words, humans need not belittle or deny themselves to fit into an autonomous social totality. Instead, as Shariati points out, the relation of God and man is one of reciprocity, where self-knowledge and knowledge of God come to be synonymous, or, alternatively, where the former functions as a preliminary to the latter. Hence in *tawhid,* true actualisation of one's individuality reinforces the inherent sociality of human existence and the essential unity-in-diversity of God's creation. At the same time, however, Shariati describes the individual in *tawhid* as fundamentally different from the nominalist notion of atomistic, zero-sum sovereignty. In *tawhid*, the individual can only recognise his/her uniqueness relative to another, which means having to always see oneself in reference to the totality of God's creation. In this manner, Shariati argues that to the extent that the man of *tawhid* perceives his poverty, he perceives his wealth; to the extent that he feels humility, he feels a pride, a glory, within himself; to the extent that he has surrendered to the service of God, he rises against whatever powers, systems, and relations exist.[18]

Note

1. This essay is based on a previous paper of mine, Mohomed 2017.

2. Ali   Shariati.   Reflections   of   Humanity.   Available   at http://www.iranchamber.com/personalities/ashariati/works/reflections_of_h umanity.php.

3. Ali Shariati. Reflections of Humanity.

4. As quoted by Ali Shariati in Reflections of Humanity.

5. Ali Shariati. Reflections of Humanity.

6. As quoted by Ali Shariati in Reflections of Humanity. First published in French in 1961, Frantz Fanon's Les Damnés de la Terre had a preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, and has been translated into many languages, including Persian by Ali Shariati.

7. Ali Shariati. Reflections of Humanity.

8. Ali   Shariati.   Where   shall   we   begin?   Available   at http://www.shariati.com/english/begin/begin7.html.

9. Ali Shariati. Where shall we begin? For further details on Shariati and Justice, see Vakily 1991.

10. Ali Shariati. Where shall we begin? second paragraph.

11. Ali Shariati. Where shall we begin, last paragraph.

12. Robert Heck and Dawud Reznik. "The Islamic Thought of Ali Shariati and Sayyid Qutb", available at https://pt.scribd.com/document/28702122/The-Islamic-Thought-of-Ali-Shariati-and-Sayyid-Qutb.

13. For further details on Shariati's conception of monotheism and multitheism, see his "The World-View of Tauhid" in On the Sociology of Islam (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1979), pp. 82-87, and particularly to his lectures which were published in Religion vs. Religion. Translated from the Persian by Laleh Bakhtiar and foreword by Andrew Burgess. Albuquerque: Abjad, [1988?], p. 47.

14. Ali Shariati. Religion vs. Religion, p. 52.

15. Ali Shariati. Religion vs Religion, p. 39.

16. Ali Shariati. Religion vs. Religion, p. 12.

17. For further details on Shariati's conception of the masses (al-nas), see his "The Philosophy of History: Cain and Abel", and, especially, "The Dialectic of Sociology" in On the Sociology of Islam (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1979). Also useful is Gabrani 1987.

18. Ali Shariati. "Mysticism, Equality, and Freedom" in Marxism and other Western Fallacies: an Islamic Critique. Translated by R. Campbell. N.p.: Islamic Foundation Press, n.d., p. 76.

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What is Iranian Islamism?
A Genealogy of Political Islam in Iran

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Abstract

Challenging the dominant perception of the term "Islamism" as a fundamentalist longing for the enforcement of sharia law through state seizure, this article offers an alternative definition of the concept, using Iran as a case study. By referring to both liberal Mehdi Bazargan of Iran and members of post-revolutionary clerical state apparatus as "Islamists," current literature on Iranian and Islamic studies fails to specify an array of differences, points of origins, and political movements and identities being formed in late modernity in the name of Islam. Identifying four

different expressions of political Islam—Salafism, Islamism, Usulism, and neo-Islamism—this article distinguishes Islamism from movements and subjectivities that, despite their similarities, adopt radically different interpretations of Islam and modes of interaction with modernity. This paper then draws on primary sources of Iranian Islamists and scholarly literature on political Islam to present a genealogy of Iranian Islamism by locating moments of "emergence" of various qualities of Islamism in Iran. This article demonstrates that a range of factors played a role in the making of political Islam in Iran: the rise of the nation-state, discursive exchange with neighbouring discourses such as Sunni, Babi, liberal and Marxist political thought and a quest for making Islam compatible with modernity, among others. Also, a distinction must be made, this article argues, between

Islamism before and after the Islamic Revolution, hence differentiating Islamism as a liberation theology from an ideology of state control.

What is Iranian Islamism?

A few decades before the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979), there emerged a social crystallization of a certain oppositional discourse to the state with a religious flavour. This discourse, which partly had its roots in the national political parties supporting Mohammad Mosaddeq (1882–1967), was anti-imperialist, anti-despotic and mildly anti-capitalist. Proponents of this discourse were nationalist and socialist Muslims, an identity radicalized after a CIA sponsored coup d'état (1953) that removed Mosaddeq from office and restored authoritarian monarchism in Iran. Depending on the political and social crisis at stake, Marxist, nationalist, and religious discourses were mixed together producing various groups and organizations similar in strategy but different in tactics. Some opted for a more Marxist orientation, hence becoming Islamic Marxists, and some became Muslim liberal nationalists, and those from highly traditional religious backgrounds but inclined towards metropolitan politics found themselves either supporting these groups or at least sympathizing with them. This Muslim-socialist-nationalist oppositional discourse may be called *Islamism.*

The choice of the word "Islamism" here follows Oliver Roy, the author of the seminal *The Failure of Political Islam* where he distinguishes the politics of Islamism from those of the traditional *ulama* and the Salafists (Roy 1992:46). Roy stresses that while Islamism aims to bring Islam and modernity together, for the Salafists and traditional *ulama*, modernity remains a "purely external phenomenon" (Ibid., 21). With this outlook, Roy views Islamism as a latently anti-clerical movement and differentiates between Islamism and Wahhabism (Ibid., 87). For Roy, unlike the *ulama* and those with Salafi-Wahhabi leanings, Islamists are not after strict implementation of the *shari'a* law. In fact, Islamists "are rarely Mullahs…They receive their political education not in religious schools but on college and university campuses where they rubbed shoulders with militant Marxists, whose concepts they often borrowed." Roy ensures to differentiate Islamists from rigid Shi'i *Usuli* orthodoxy, as Islamists "do not advocate a return to

what existed before, as do fundamentalists in the strict sense of the word, but a re-appropriation of society and modern technology based on politics." According to Roy, the base that engages with Islamists discourse "are not traditional or traditionalists either; they live with the values of the modern city—consumerism and upward social mobility... they live in a world of movie theaters, café, jeans video and sports… [Indeed] the guerrillas of the contemporary Muslim world are city dwellers" (Ibid., 3-4).

For Roy, therefore, Islamism, is only one among other expressions of political Islam and this article is dedicated to elucidating features of Iranian Islamism. The method employed here is Foucauldian genealogy in which Islamism is not treated as a "ready-made object," rather Islamism as a historical phenomenon is perceived to have its own history of evolution (Foucault 2007: 118)[1]. Genealogy encourages not searching for the "origins" nor to think of a concept as something "already existing" that "precede the external world of accident and succession" (Foucault 1984: 78). Rather through genealogy, Islamism is assumed to have being "fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms" through historical accidents and therefore one must locate "myriad of events through which- thanks to which, against which, …[Islamism was] formed" (Ibid., 78, 81). Therefore, in response to the question of "What is Iranian Islamism?" one must not search for a pure essence of Islamism, rather, the objective becomes the exact opposite: showing that while there are essential qualities to Islamism, even those "essential" qualities are contingent and product of various historical formations.

Posing questions about features of Iranian Islamism was initially inspired by Mehdi Mozaffari's article: *What is Islamism? History and Definition of the Concept,* in which he discusses various features of Islamism in an attempt to provide a definition for the concept (Mozaffari 2007: 17-33). At the level of form, we have adopted a similar style in this article as discussing various features of Iranian Islamism can shed light on our genealogical investigation. We have also arrived a definition for Iranian Islamism but offering a definition is not the ultimate objective here. As it shall be seen the merit of our analysis must lie on its genealogical inquiry and not on the raw attempt at offering a definition. But what is Iranian Islamism after all?

"Islam is nothing but a movement; Islam is a social movement for change and transformation of society and people living in that society. In general, an Islamic movement has two qualities: it operates at the level of society and it is also a revolutionary movement" (Yazdi year of publication unknown: 33). These words

were uttered by the Islamist Ebrahim Yazdi (1931–2017) in 1977 in a speech addressed to Muslim students abroad. Here, Yazdi provides an oral history of modern Islamic movements in Iran and describes the ideological tenets of the movement. The content of speech, which was later published as a pamphlet, reflects very well the characteristics of Islamist discourse at the time. Yazdi was a member of *Nehzat-e Azadi* (Freedom Front), a pro-Mosaddeq Muslim nationalist party, whose members had supported Ayatollah Khomeini in their struggle against the Shah. The objective of the speech, as Yazdi himself declares, is to show that the Islamic movement in Iran has a history of at least a hundred years, hence he offered support for the credibility of Islamism as an oppositional discourse. In the speech, Yazdi appreciates the revolutionary activities of the left but stresses that the radicalism and sacrifice of Islamists have equaled that of Marxist elements, if not exceeded them. Much like Ali Shariati, Yazdi's discourse is under the influence of Marxism, though he labels the Muslim converts to Marxism in the later stage in the Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) *monafeghin* (the hypocrites). Yazdi sets out to draw attention to contributions made by some members of the clergy in the movement, but constantly ensures to differentiate between the uncompromising revolutionary clergy and the reactionary, conservative, pro-despotic, state-sponsored clergy. He even mentions the concept *velayat-e faqih* in passing; he understands the concept not as the rulership of a *faqih* but as a progressive politicization of the clergy. Yazdi despises traditional Islam for its mere concern with religious rituals and support for despotism and differentiates this Islam from the modern quality of the Islamic movement that opposes *Tashayyo'-e Safavi* (Safavid Shi'ism), a term coined by Ali Shariati to describe Shi'ism as an ideology of power, not resistance. Yazdi traces the history of Islamism to Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839–1897), who encouraged Mirza Shirazi (1814–1895) to issue a *fatwa* opposing Naser al-Din Shah's concession of tobacco rights to the British. He then traces the movement to the Constitutional Revolution and then the anti-British nationalist activism of Mosaddeq. In general, Yazdi mentions various anti-despotic, anti-imperialist, and anti-exploitative struggles to make a case for the presence of a progressive religious ideology in all these movements. Yazdi highlights the importance of self-purification (*tazkiyeh*) but does not shy away from declaring his statist aspirations. While appreciating, he critiques the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jama'at-i Islami in Pakistan for failing to aspire to state power. In his account, Yazdi is by no means scholastic. He draws an image of the Prophet as a democratic and fallible being; Yazdi openly says that even the Prophet made mistakes, and not only did he not impose his will on others, he did not oppose the

consensus of the majority. Yazdi invokes the Prophet and the free government (*hukumat-e azad*) and society he created in Medina as role models for state building and stresses the importance of Islamists' taking charge of the state apparatus. In his account, Yazdi draws on Quranic verses and the tradition of the Prophet to provide an Islamist philosophy of history in which people are required to be in a constant state of movement through awareness and self-purification. According to Yazdi, the Quran opposes a static society.

Drawing on the case of Yazdi, it is apparent that Islamism is a complex system of thought. This discourse is religious, yet it is modern and anti-scholastic. It is a specific interpretation of a religion, one that emphasizes a search for social justice, political egalitarianism, spirituality, and national independence. The Islamism that Yazdi expounds does not seek to implement *shari'a* law; or at the least that is not its primary objective, rather it aspires to turn traditional Islam into a "liberation theology," a theology that seeks to rely on prophetic traditions to solve the problems of the modern world. Most importantly, Islamism has a "history," one that, as Yazdi mentions a few times in his speech, has dark moments. "There is still much that we don't know about the movement," Yazdi exclaims, and he believes that further discovery of that history only better situates the position and aspirations of Islamism (Ibid., 76). The Islamist discourse, as explained by Yazdi, is a modern theology of liberation with its own history and philosophy of history.

Yazdi's account of the Iranian Islamist movement is notable because it acts as both primary and secondary source. One may read Yazdi's account as a brief history of the rise of Islamist discourse and the way this discourse was internalized and disseminated through Islamist actors. Yazdi is correct that the evolution of Islamist discourse owes much to the activism and the wirings of the Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani on the wake of Muslim's intellectual response to the modernity. This discourse experienced various re-articulation but its underlying tenets remained consistent until the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

The events following the Islamic Revolution may be seen as the beginning of the appropriation of Islamism by the modern state apparatus, hence the demise of Islamism as an oppositional discourse and its transformation to a state discourse of control and subjugation. What prompts in the post-revolutionary situation in Iran may have similarities in terms of tone and choice of signifiers with Islamism but as Sami Zubaida shows overall state discourse resonates more with realities of biopower in the context of the nation-state than the core of Islamism as an oppositional discourse. Zubaida concludes that "the basic process of modernity in

socioeconomic and cultural fields, as well as in government, subverts and subordinate Islamization" in post-revolutionary Iran (Zubaida 1997: 105). Other than the rhetorical gestures of the state, "the form of organization of the state and its institutions have no particularly Islamic features," and Muslim authorities are "often forced to adapt their policies and discourses to practical considerations" of the modern state (Ibid., 118, 105). Therefore, one must differentiate between Islamism before and after the Revolution; the post-revolutionary state-oriented manifestation of political Islam must be called something other than Islamism, perhaps *neo-Islamism*, and the term Islamism, at least in this study, is reserved for manifestations of political Islam as a critical ideology that has yet to be seized by the state apparatus. In other words, Islamism is an expression of a movement (*nihzat*) while neo-Islamism describes a situation in which Muslims are in charge of state institutions (*nahad*). Neo-Islamists are Muslim ideologues who find themselves not in opposition to, but in charge of, the modern state, while Islamists find their class, cultural and political interests at adds with state institutions.

Invoking Roy, once again, it may be stated that despise some common features Islamism shares little in terms of quality and aspirations with the other three expressions of political Islam: Salafism, *Usulism* of the Shi'i ulama and neo-Islamism. With these distinctions one may see the difference between Navvab Safavi (1924–1956) and Ayatollah Boroujerdi (1875–1961), Mehdi Bazargan (1907–1995) and strict *Usuli* figures such as Ayatollah Golpaygani (1899–1993) and Ayatollah Khomeini before and after the Islamic Revolution. Islamism here is not a signifier pointing to all expressions of political Islam; rather, as stated before, it is only *one* among others. Also differentiating between *Islamism*, *Salafism*, and *Usulism* does not necessarily mean that these discourses have always remained apart. In the case of Iran, Islamism of metropolitan centers came in contact with the politics of rationalist *Usulis* and their long ambition for political power and that led to the hybrid of Islamist-Usulism or Usuli-Islamism, depending on which discourse held the upper hand. A prime example here is Ayatollah Khomeini. He had training in scholastic *Usuli* dogma, yet he was a master of Islamic mysticism and philosophy and had an appreciation for Sayyid Jamal al-Afghani (Khomeini 2000: 286).[2] Scholars have also registered facts about the influence that he received from figures such as Ali Shariati (1933–1977), Jalaleddin Farsi, and Jalal-e Ale-Ahmad (1923–1969) (Jafariyan 2012: 738). So, Khomeini's thought may be seen as an expression of Islamist-*Usulism*. One of Khomeini's role models, Navvab Safavi, must be seen in the same vein. Navvab Safavi was a young political activist with *Usuli* clerical training who was also influenced by the writings of Al-Afghani (Davani 2018). The

fusion of these influences led his religious movement, Fada'iyan-e Islam, to have strong political implications in the history of modern Iran, the most important of which was helping Mohammad Mosaddeq (1882–1967) come to power in 1951.

Therefore, one may refer to Iranian Islamism as those discursive regimes and movements that are identified as employing Islamic concepts to further their activist cause in the period roughly between the Constitutional and Islamic Revolutions. This means that discursively and temporally, Iranian Islamism starts with the writings of Sayyid Jamal al-Afghani and continues with the works of Abdolkarim Soroush making Iranian Islamism about a century old. In order to arrive at a definition of Iranian Islamism, there is a need for its qualities to be elucidated. Here attention must be paid to the works of Islamist theorists (primary sources) and the works of scholars who have studied both Iranian and non-Iranian Islamism (secondary sources). Relying on scholars of Islamism is useful, as they have often conducted comparative studies of Iranian, Turkish and Arab Islamism, and although the frameworks employed in their works may differ, often their results do shed light on the particularities of Iran. Similarly, critical engagement with scholars who have studied political Islam in Iran contributes to a better understanding of Iranian Islamism. Here, features of Iranian Islamism will be introduced under a heading and discussed in detail in order to finally forge a definition of the concept while interrogating Iranian Islamism at the level of geneology.

Modernity

There is a consensus among scholars about the *modernity* of Iranian Islamism, both as a sociological phenomenon and as an ideological construct (Roy 1992: 195; Rajaee 2007: 5). The sociological approach to Islamism argues that adherents of Islamism emerged not in rural and village areas but in modern metropolitan centres (Skocpol 1982: 271; Roy 1992: 53). Islamism found roots among the "young intellectuals, educated in government schools following a westernized curriculum and in many cases … recently urbanized families," and they were able to "offer the oppressed … the dream of access to the world of development and consumption, from which they feel excluded" (Ibid., 49, 52). Roy has best summarized the promise of and condition of Islamism: "*shari'a* plus electricity" (Ibid). An anthropologist undertaking field research in Iran in the aftermath of the Shah's aggressive modernization program known as the White Revolution was able to identify the rise of a new educated middle class whose loyalties were not directed towards Western values, but towards the "religious and cultural tradition of the old

Iran" (Gastil 1958: 325). Identifying with "old Iran," however, must not be mistaken as a desire to return to the past. In fact, the children of this new middle class attended engineering programs in universities and were eager to adopt technology and modern sciences (Roy 1992: 52). They wrote a great deal on the compatibility between Islam and modern sciences, and they were keen to adopt technology for Islamist ends.[3] It is true that Islamists were "very vocal in their opposition to the [modernizing] government" of Iran, but their problem was less the modernity of the Shah's program than the way in which the plan was implemented (Gastil 1958: 325). In fact, the last generation of Islamists partaking in the Iranian Revolution was the product of the Shah's White Revolution, and in that sense, "rather than a reaction against the modernization of Muslim societies, [one may say that] Islamism is a product of it" (Roy 1992. 50). It is therefore wrong to think of the advent of Islamism as a "return of a medieval, obscurantist clergy crusading against modernity" (Ibid). Islamists' main outcry was not against the achievements of Western civilization but aggressive Westernization, a theme that is best illustrated in Jalale Ale-Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi.* In *Gharbzadegi*, Ale-Ahmad laments Iranians' lack of agency in relation to Western modernity. According to Ale-Ahmad, a subservient relation to the West, embodied in power relations, cultural norms, and technological innovations, must be identified as "being stricken" by the West. He prescribes not countering modernity but adopting its elements such that it will not cause the complete erosion of local cultural values. He writes:

We are not talking about the abolition of machines or their rejection, i.e. what supporters of utopian societies in the beginning of the nineteenth century fancied. Never! The world is caught up in the machines of historical determinism. Our discussion, rather, is on the way we deal with machines and technology... The fact is that until we have actually grasped the essence, basis, and philosophy of Western civilization and no longer superficially mimic the West in our consumption of Western products, we shall be just like the ass who wore a lion skin (Ale-Ahmad 1982. 346).

"The disease" then, is not the West, but a blind imitation of the West without an exercise of agency on the part of Muslims. For Islamists, the West had come to "represent a denial of Islam, imperialism, state repression, economic mismanagement [and] cultural erosion" that must be countered through the use of modern machines (Sayyid 2003: 119). In fact, Islamists leaned towards a critique of the West, ironically invoking postmodern thinkers such as Fredrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger in order to respond to questions concerning "which type of

modernization strategy to pursue," and on how to turn Muslims into subjects within the history of modernity (Mirsepassi 2011: 6; Sayyid 2003: 98). Islamism therefore deprived the West of an exclusive claim to modernity, and through decentring the West it opened up a space for Islam in the vessel of the Enlightenment project (Ibid., 110). This process, however, did not take place without Islam having to give concessions to modernity. The Islam of the traditional seminary schools needed to be transformed to not only comply with the realities of the modern world, but also to provide solutions to its crises. In other words, Islam must be reformed.

Reformism

Islamism and Islamic reformism are synonymous.[4] This means that Islamists of various generations found themselves countering a certain version of Islam that they deemed either traditional or regressive hence in need of "reform", although reforming Islam was not necessarily focal in their discursive pronouncements. An Islamist ideologue always found him/herself rejecting one form or interpretation of Islam deemed as socially unproductive or politically imponent hence simultaneously calling for political Islam while implicitly or explicitly making clear the need for a degree of reform within the Islamic canon. In fact, it may be stated that Islamism is a by-product of Islamic reformism. Sayyid Jamal al-Afghani was among the first generation of Islamic reformists whose ideas had great political ramifications and acted as precursors to the rise of Islamism. What Al-Afghani initiated became a trend in the twentieth century to the extent that one is not able to locate an example of a prominent Islamist thinker whose main preoccupation has not involved reformulating Islamic discourse such that it is attentive to contemporary perspectives. Charles Adams, an early observer of Islamic reformism, has defined the trend as:

an attempt to free the religion of Islam from the shackles of a too rigid orthodoxy, and to accomplish reforms which will render it adaptable to the complex demands of modern life. Its prevailing character is that of religious reform; it is inspired and dominated chiefly by theological considerations (Jahanbakhsh 2001:51).

The evolution of Islamic reform, however, went in a slightly different direction in Shi'i Iran in comparison to the Sunni world, tough they did not remain completely distinct from each other. In Shi'i Iran, influenced by Wahabbi ideology, a Quran scholar known as Shariati Sanlagji (1892–1943) attempted at purifying Shi'ism from what he perceived as *ghuluww* or exaggerated tendencies. Sanlagji's

teachings appeared to be very influential in the next generation of Muslim minded Iranian thinkers such as Mahmoud Taleghani (1911–1979), Mehdi Bazargan (1907–1995), Ezatollah Sahabi (1930–2011), and Heidar Ali Qalamdaran (1913–1989), all important figures in the making of Islamist thought and practice. Sanglaji encouraged a generation of Muslim thinkers and activists to not only ponder reforming Islam but also the social and political relevance of the religious text (Richard 1988: 159-178). Ali Shariati, an indirect heir to Shariat's reformist project, spoke of Islamic Protestantism two decades later (Rahnema 2019). He stated:

To emancipate and guide the people, to give birth to a new love, faith, and dynamism, and to shed light on people's hearts and minds and make them aware of various elements of ignorance, superstition, cruelty and degeneration in contemporary Islamic societies, an enlightened person should start … an Islamic Protestantism similar to that of Christianity in the Middle Ages, destroying all the degenerating factors which, in the name of Islam, have stymied and stupefied the process of thinking and the fate of the society, and giving birth to new thoughts and new movements... Such a movement will unleash great energies and enable the enlightened Muslim to: 1-Extract and refine the enormous resources of our society and convert the degenerating and jamming agents into energy and movement… And finally, eliminates the spirit of imitation and obedience, which is the hallmark of the popular religion, and replaces it with a critical revolutionary, aggressive spirit of independent reasoning (Ijtihad). All of these may be accomplished through a religious reformist movement, which will extract and refine the enormous accumulation of energy in the society, and will enlighten the era and will awaken the present generation. It is for the above reasons that I, as a conscientious teacher who has risen from the depth of pains and experience of his people and history, hope that the enlightened person will reach a progressive self-awareness. For whereas our masses need self-awareness, our enlightened intellectuals are in need of "faith" (Shariati 2018).

Shariati views Islamic reform as a precursor to political activism, and his project is concerned less with strict observance of religion and more with offering a socially relevant reading of Islam. Shariati notes that while the clerical interpretation of religion does not provide a religious basis for social and political activism, secular intellectuals see religion as an obstacle for progressive social change. In order to resolve the problem, Shariati calls for a new interpretation of religion, hence, reforming Islam, that neither suits the conservative agenda of the clerics nor the secular pursuits of the secular intellectuals. Ali Mirsepassi notes a similar project in his study of the series of reformist attempts on the part of the Iranian clergy that

operated as counterparts to Shariati's project. These clergy members, who may be referred to as *Islamist-Usulists* or *Usuli-Islamists*, depending on their prevailing discourse, sought to reform traditional Shi'i institutions in response to the secular and Islamist impulses of the day. Mirsepassi conducts a close reading of two journals, *Maktab-e-Tashayyo'* and *The Monthly Religious Societies*, and concludes that contributors "paid little attention to the Koran and the Prophet's tradition. They were evidently more concerned with increasing the attractiveness of Shi'ism for youth and in making a political impact rather than merely spreading religious propaganda" (Mirsepassi 2000: 91). Mohamamad Tavakoli Targhi identifies a similar approach in his discursive analysis of Islamist reformist projects. He sees the process through which Islamists adopted the discourse of modern medicine in their attempt at making Islamism a socially and politically relevant discourse (Tavakoli Targhi 2008: 420-458). He shows how Islamists borrowed from the scientific achievements of Louis Pasteur and framed Islam as a "cure" for the social and political "disease" of a society in transition from tradition to modernity (Ibid). "In the constitutionalist discourse, critics identified and cured the disease of *the nation*, and in the discourse that led to Islamism, intellectuals attempted to diagnose and treat the disease of *society*" (Ibid). Hence the rise of Islamist discourse became possible "through the invocation of health and medical concepts" (Ibid). Both Mirsepassi's and Tavakoli Targhi's research reveal a much more creative and complex process of Islamic reformism from that adopted by Shariat Sanglaji in the early stages. Despite its nuances and different manifestations, however, the ethos of Islamic reform remained consistent, and it was able to construct a middle ground between staunch secularism and traditional scholasticism, therefore making Islam attentive to the social and political questions of the time. Through reform, Islam was no longer a discourse monopolized by the clergy and only suitable for rituals and daily functions; rather, Islam was to be seen as the answer to "to problems facing Iranian individual[s] and society at the time" (Mirsepassi 2000: 90). It is here that Islam moves "closer to the concept [of] ideology in a secular sense than to a religious promise of human eternal salvation" (Ibid). At the heart of Sanglaji's project, one sees a transformation of Islam from religion to an ideology.

Ideology

If there is one theme that all scholars of modern political Islam agree on, it is the ideological quality of Islamism. They argue that that Islamism is not only a religion but an ideology (Rajaee 2007: 4). Some would even go further and deny its

religious character and merely characterize it as a modern ideology comparable with Marxism, fascism and the like (Desai 2007: 45). While scholars have often ascribed a negative connotation to the ideological quality of Islamism, for Islamists themselves, ideological Islam was seen as a sign of its progressive character and relevance to the modern world.[5] Shariati is famous for offering an ideological reading of Islam, and he himself saw that as the strength of his project. Shariati differentiated between Islam as an ideology and Islam as culture: "Islam as an ideology produces Abu-Dar, and Islam as culture produces Avicenna. Islam as an ideology produces a militant, whereas Islam as culture produces *mujtahed*. Islam as an ideology produces an intellectual and Islam as culture produces a mere scholar" (Shariati 1981: 209). Shariati specifically referred to ideology as a "technique" of social organization inspired by Islam (Shariati 2000: 333). Mehdi Bazargan, while defining ideology as a "goal, path, method, tactic, plan and a dominant criterion of thought and social actions," ensured that "the only credible and sustainable ideology is the one inspired by religion and the divine" (Hosseinizadeh 2006: 197). Presupposed in the ideological interpretation of Islam was a sense of universalism ascribed to religious teachings. In this framework, Islam is viewed as a comprehensive blueprint for social and political objectives; one "that claims to possess all the answers" and it "provides assurance because it offers easy answers to the most difficult and fundamental questions" (Rajaee 2007:4). Ayatollah Khomeini, for instance, spoke of the comprehensive nature of the Islamic canon. In his famous *Velayat-e Faqih* he argued:

The laws of the shari'a embrace a diverse body of laws and regulations, which amounts to a complete social system. In this system of law, all the needs of man have been met: his dealings with neighbors, fellow citizens, and clan as well as children and relatives; the concerns of private and martial life; regulations concerning war and peace and intercourse with other nations, penal and commercial law; and regulations pertaining to trade and agriculture (Khomeini 1981:43).

What one identifies here is a flavour of universalism that, according to Roy, stems from the "modernity of Islamist thought" and not so much from the universalist claims of the religious texts (Roy 1992: 20). Surely, the Quran had made it clear that its message is universal for all people and all times, but the claim that Islam is the solution to all wordily affairs is certainly a modern phenomenon arguably rooted in the universalist qualities of the Enlightenment as reflected in "the militant rationalism" of Islamists (Ibid., 21). After all, for centuries the *ulama* saw the function of religion as specific to the domain of the holy, and they were willing to relegate the profane to heads of states, but the need for Muslim reformists to

reform Islam necessitated the adoption of modern reason as a mode for thinking through worldly concerns (Amir Arjomand 1984: 99). All modern ideologies, such as Marxism, liberalism, and fascism, were founded through the use of modern reason, hence it was natural for Islamists, who believed their ideology to be based on the same structure of thought, to claim that they possessed all the answers and to use Islam as "a clear blueprint that requires only mechanical implementation" (Rajaee 2007: 4).

While many critics of Islamism have held Bazargan, Khomeini, and, most important of all, Shariati responsible for turning Islam into an ideology, and have thus implicitly denoted the ideological quality of Islamism as a relatively recent invention, a further look at the history of Iranian Islamism indicates that the ideological qualities of Islamism were embedded into the very ethos of this modern discourse at its moment of its inception (Soroush 2001: 97). The attempt to make Islam and modernity compatible already implied the ideologization of the faith, which means that Islam could not have resisted becoming an ideology if it were to survive as a force within modernity. In addition, turning Islam into an ideology was not a conscious project taken up by group of opportunists using religion for political ends, as some scholars are inclined to argue; rather, as the case of Iran shows, any bold participation of religious forces in contemporary events would have rendered the metamorphosis of the faith into an ideology (Tibi 2012).

In Iran, Shi'i clergy played an influential role in the making of the Constitutional Revolution. Assadollah Kharaghani (1838–1937), a *faqih* from the city of Kharaghan and an associate of Al-Afghani, was among the active clergy members in the Revolution whose reformist ideas gave birth to the rise of ideological Islam. Influenced by Al-Afghani, Kharaghani played a key role in encouraging the clerical forces in Najaf to support the Constitutional Revolution (Razavi 2014: 63; Jafariyan 2003:72). Satisfied with the process in the beginning, he was eventually dismayed with the Revolution due to its secular outcome. However, he did not abandon his constitutionalist convictions and continued the project of reconciling Islam with modern *raison d'Etat*. He was perhaps the first to speak of an "Islamic democracy" in order to resolve the situation wherein "if one spoke of *Islamiyyat* [Islamism], he would be associated with despotism, and if one spoke of freedom, he would be associated with secularism" (Jafariyan 2003: 82). Kharaghani stressed that he saw this antagonism as a construct and as "fundamentally anti-Islamic, and if some Muslims are playing a part in this antagonism, that is either because of their ignorance, or desire for powerful or personal complexities" (Ibid., 144). Reacting against the *Usuli* figures that rejected

constitutionalist values and against the secular forces that saw Islam as outdated, Kharaghani sought to draw out Islamic conceptions of political freedom. But first he had to refute stances that did not see any political potential in Islam. He wrote: "That people say religion has nothing to do with politics, is a false statement … and I acknowledge that some tend to reduce Islam to ablution, prayers and fasting … but that is not the case with Islam and all its political rulings" (Ibid., 158). With this assumption, he boldly argued that democracy was a gift from Islam to the world. He wrote:

From the perspective of politics, Islam competes with all scholars and books written on the subject of politics in the world. And one must state with a loud voice that: the spirit of Islamic politics consists of freedom, equality and equity and the faith preserves the laws comparable with all national states and democracies in the world. This means, the equality before the rule of law, which is the precondition for democratic states, was in fact extracted from Islam. The spread of democracy was the fruit of Islam and that is what distinguishes Islam from other religions. One may go as far and state that the rise of a national state was a promise of the twelfth hidden Imam and this is by no means an erroneous claim (Ibid., 153).

Kharaghani's stance regarding the universality of Islam is not limited to politics. Similar to later Islamists, he introduced Islam as a comprehensive system of knowledge with specific instructions in matters related to law, politics, society, justice, wealth, and economics (Ibid., 124).

What explains this urge for universality is undoubtedly the hostile secular environment created in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution. From the stance of the secular elite, the Revolution was seen to have failed, and the religious establishment, best exemplified in the character of Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri (1843–1909), was to take the blame.[6] A few years later, Ahmad Kasravi and Ali Akbar Hakamizadeh, both secular thinkers, became the voice of the secular elite and published a series of treatises and articles challenging clerical authority.[7] Ali Akbar Hakamizadeh wrote the famous *Asrar-e Hezar Saleh*, in which he harshly criticized the *ulama* for their authoritarianism, promotion of superstitious beliefs and apathy regarding the masses (Ibid). Hakamizadeh's stance was met with different reactions from religious figures, two of whom were Ayatollah Khomeini and Sheikh Mohammad Khalesizadeh (1891–1963) (Ibid, 51). Ayatollah Khomeini wrote *Kashful-Asrar* in 1943 and refuted Hakamizadeh's assertion by making a case for Islam as a comprehensive religion. He stressed that Islam had answers for modern problems, and this marked the beginning of a project that later culminated in

Velayat-e Faqih. Khalesizadeh also reacted to Hakamizadeh, though he adopted a middle ground between the secular and clerical positions in a way similar to Kharaghani, and for this reason his response was not received well by the *Usulis* (Ibid).[8] Nonetheless, similar claims for the universality of Islam are identifiable in his work. He too held that "only Islam can manage the world and bring humanity to ultimate happiness" (Hosseinizadeh 2006: 515).

Hence, Kharaghani's project to universalize Islam was doomed to repeat itself in the following generation.[9] Kharaghani's antagonists, aside from *Usuli* clerics, were the secular constitutionalist activists and later on Iranian Marxists who entered the scene and issued new challenges to the world of Islamists. In the process, these challenges brought Islamists to the realization that in "order to become politically and ideologically competitive with the secular forces," they had to undertake the "the task of politicizing Islam" (Jahanbakhsh 2001: 55). Islam becoming ideology, then, was a reaction against secularism and also a desire to forge a Muslim subjectivity in Iranian modernity. The secular intelligentsia framed Islam as a metaphor for tradition, primitivism, and anti-modernity in order to depoliticize Islam, but as Sayyid puts it, "by removing it from the center of their constructions of political order, they politicize it; unsettling it and disseminating it into the general culture, where it became available for re-inscription" (Sayyid 2003: 73). This process began with Kharaghani, if not Al-Afghani, and Shariati was not the last to take up this project. The modernity of Islamism, its reformist project, and its competition with secular ideologies left Islamism with no choice but to make claims for the universality of its doctrine and thus to turn religion into an ideology.

But the case of Kharaghani provides other clues about the qualities of Islamism. Though a Shi'i cleric, Kharaghani did not share the contemptuous view that Shi'i orthodoxy conventionally holds toward the first three Rashidun caliphs, and that brought him closer to the Sunni position. In fact, Shariat Sanglaji was a student of Kharaghani and it is probable that his teacher inspired Shariat's Sunni inclination. Also, in Kharaghani's Islamist discourse, one sees constant reference to modern concepts such as a "national state," or "democracy," which speaks to his discursive exchange with other modern liberation discourses. A strict implementation of *shari'a* does not seem to be the main concern of Kharaghani's writings; rather, his defense of the notion of Islamic politics puts the emphasis on the egalitarian aspects of the Islamic polity. For him, Islamic politics means good democratic government. This Sunni-inclined, discursively facile, and non-fundamentalist denotation of Islamic politics that one identifies in Kharaghani's discourse was also found in the texts produced by future generations of Iranian Islamists.

Sunni Inclination

Influenced by Al-Afghani, Kharaghani pondered the question of Muslims' civilizational decline and concluded that "abandoning the political ordinance of Islam" had led to the declining status of Islam relative to the West (Jafariyan 2003: 119). He held the silence of the *ulama* and their tacit support of despotic kings responsible, and argued that kings not only lost their status as protectors of the religion, they were the embodiment of *taghut* (Ibid., 128).[10] To better craft his argument, Kharaghani drew on the early history of Islam and argued that Islamic decline happened once before, and that was when Muslims abandoned the egalitarian ethos of the religion upon the rise of the Umayyad dynasty (Kharaghani year of publication unknown: 150-151). He saw the reign of the first four Rashidun caliphs as the embodiment of Muslim democracy, wherein Islamic teachings pertaining to equality were implemented at their best. In particular, he believed the rule of Abu-Bakr and Umar acted in accordance with the "justice-oriented tradition of the Prophet" and emphasized that it was after the first forty years that the Muslim political community experienced a gradual decline (Ibid; Jafariyan 2003: 73). With this stance, Kharaghani distanced himself from the orthodox Shi'i position known for its uncompromising criticism of the first three Caliphs. Kharaghani even went further and critiqued the doctrine of waiting for the appearance of the twelfth Imam and argued that the famous authority verse in the Quran had to be interpreted beyond the status of infallible Shi'i Imams (Jafariyan 2003: 120-121). In fact, he invoked the early Sunni political experience in order to draw a model for Muslim politics and provide a solution for the declining status of Muslims in the modern period.

With Kharaghani one begins to see a slight shift from the orthodox *Usuli* Shi'i position to what may be called a *Sunni political episteme*. Khalesizadeh held similar views to that of Kharaghani and became very influential for a young thinker named Heidar Qalamdaran, who combined the teachings of Kharaghani, Khalesizadeh, and Sanglaji, and boldly defended the Rashidun's model as a paradigm for an ideal Islamic state (Jafariyan 2012: 903). Like Sanglaji, Qalamdaran saw the elements of exaggeration (*ghuluww*) in popular Shi'ism as the root cause of civilizational decay, and with militant language he called for purifying the religion of non-rational teachings (Qalamdaran ٢٠١٢).[11] He framed *inhetat* (decline) as his main concern and argued that Muslim progress would not be possible without seriously engaging with the question of the state (Qalamdaran 2010: 219). He then critiqued the Shi'i position that reserves authority only for the infallible Imams (Ibid). He assessed the

implication of this Shi'i stance as negative, because according to him, subjects are encouraged not to obey their rulers, which leads to anarchy and opposition and forces rulers to go on the offensive. He held Imam Ali in high regard, yet he adopted Sunni-style pragmatist language and defended the affairs of the community upon the Prophet's death (Ibid., 55). Qalamdaran differentiated the Shi'i concept of *Imamat* from the practical implementation of religious law and held that the latter was more pertinent in the contemporary context:

We shall here explain the concept of Imam that has recently found a particular meaning among the Shi'is (Ibid., 63).

[Imam] means a political leader, one who can implement the permissible and forbid the impermissible; one that can implement the *hudud* and protect God's religion. From the hadith one may dissect the importance of government, and this is against the teachings that views the state authority as only the provision of the infallible Imam and argues that since the Imam is absent, we must abandon the implementation of the religious law. There is no doubt that the governor of Muslims must first and foremost be an infallible person, but in case that he was not present or he was not willing to hold political power, this incumbent duty of state affairs must not be abandoned and it is essential for the community to help the qualified individual and bring him to power and … obey him in affairs related to the religious law (Ibid., 72).

Coming very close to a classic Sunni position, Qalamdaran held matters of the community and state affairs above the supernatural qualities of Shi'i Imams. Contrary to the orthodox Shi'i position that held the execution of religious law by the first three Rashidun caliphs as illegitimate, for Qalamdaran the implementation of religious law had priority over the executor of the law (Ibid., 63). This position reminds one of similar assertions made by Ayatollah Khomeini in *Velayat-e Faqih*, where he assigned more weight to the law than to the executor of the law, and went as far as to implicitly assume an equal status between the Prophet, Imam Ali, the Rashidun and the *faqih.* Khomeini wrote:

Can there be any distinction in … respect [to religious law] between the Most Noble Messenger, the Imam and the *faqih*? Will the *faqih* inflict fewer lashes because his rank is lower? ... The ruler supervises the executive power and had the duty of implementing God's laws; it makes no difference if he is the Most Noble Messenger, the Commander of the Faithful or the representative of the judge he appointed to Basra or Kufa, or a *faqih* in the present age (Khomeini 1981: 63).

It is evident, then, that to assume the function of government is to acquire a means and not a spiritual station, for if government were a spiritual station, nobody would be able to either usurp it or abandon it. Government and the exercise of command acquire value only when they become the means for implementing the law of Islam and establishing the just Islamic order; then the person in charge of government may also earn some additional virtue and merit (Ibid., 66).

But this is not the only area in which Khomeini's and Qalamdaran's thinking overlaps. Qalamdaran reserved the position of the ruler for a *faqih* who has knowledge of God's laws. As with Khomeini, for Qalamdaran, the *faqih*-ruler must be in charge of executing religious duties such as *jihad* (holy war) and *shura* (consultation), and his religious righteousness will protect him from turning despotic (Ibid., 66; Qalamdaran 2010: 192). Comparing Qalamdaran and Khomeini illuminates strong similarities between the two authors, although Qalamdaran's account is argued in much more detail. There is no evidence whether Qalamdaran influenced Ayatollah Khomeini, but scholars have noted Qalamdaran's influence on Ayatollah Montazeri (1922–2009), Khomeini's student and a developer of the thesis of *velayat-e faqih* (Jafariyan 2012: 905). Qalamdaran is also said to have influenced Islamists such as Mehdi Bazargan and Ali Shariati (Ibid).

In the popular Iranian Islamists' scene, Qalamdaraan did not leave a broad impact, but his influence on the elite must not be disregarded. What appeared more influential in the line of Qalamdaran's project was Iranian Islamists' direct access to the translated works of Sunni political thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb and Mawdudi. Iranian Islamists showed little concern towards the Sunni background of these authors, mainly because they were more interested in the political and social ideas developed in these texts than their doctrinal differences (Ibid., 381). Ayatollah Khameini was a reader of Mohammad Iqbal and Sayyid Qutb, and his brother, Mohammad Khamenei, translated the works of Sayyid Qutb into Farsi (Ibid., 383).

Besides political relevance, there was another factor that brought Shi'i and Sunni thinkers together, and that was the concept of Muslim unity advocated by Al-Afghani. His pan-Islamist ideas were never realized, but they encouraged both Shi'i and Sunni sides to downplay their sectarian differences and imagine themselves as a united *umma* fighting the imperialist powers. For instance, in Egypt, rather than "adopting an official school of jurisprudential thought (one of four Sunni *madhahib*), Banna and the MB [Muslim Brotherhood] instead disavowed these as unnecessary obstacles to the singularity of" Islamism (Mandeville 2014: 91). A similar stance was adopted in Iran, and an Iranian Islamist, Navvab Safavi, made

alliances with the Muslim Brotherhood and travelled to Egypt and supported their cause in the face of opposition from Nasser's regime (Jafariyan 2012: 381). The two strands of Islamism, Egyptian and Iranian, came close together, and the issue of Palestine and anti-Zionism became the hallmark of global Islamist discourse (Ibid). After all, the members of these movements identified more with Islamism as a global ideology instead of focusing on their sectarian inclinations.

Henceforth, Kharaghani's positive invocation of Rashidun's Caliph, the priority of the implementation of religious laws over Shi'i Imams on the part of Khomeini and Qalamdaran, the import of the works of Sunni Islamist thinkers, and pan-Islamists' stress on the concept of unity brought about a slow transition of Iranian Islamism towards a Sunni political episteme. One must note that these Sunni-inclined Iranian thinkers never abandoned Shi'ism, in fact they remained very devout to their own interpretation of Shi'ism, yet their attempt at reconciling Shi'i doctrinal heritage with Islamic statism—the process that Ernest Gellner calls the transition from Low Islam to High Islam—brought them closer to Sunni political thought (Gellner 1992).[12] This inclination towards Sunni political episteme, however, did not go unchallenged. Traditional *Usuli* authorities who did not approve of the direction adopted by Iranian Islamism labeled Islamists "Wahhabis" or "Sunnis" and stirred various campaigns against them, to the extent that there was almost no influential Islamist figure who was able to escape being labelled as a Sunni or a Wahhabi.[13]

Similar to the case of Sanglaji, Sunni concepts such as the Islamic state were imported to Shi'i Iran in the context of a rising urban middle class, and Islamic concepts were juxtaposed against various emerging discourses such as constitutionalism, nationalism, and Marxism, which thus made Islamism active in a discursive exchange with other modern discourses.

Discursive Exchange

Qalamdaran's teacher, Khalesizadeh, wrote in defense of what he called a "national government" and "freedom," but as Hosseinizadeh points out, he was never clear as to what he meant by these concepts (Hosseinizadeh 2006: 515). What is evident is that for Khalesizadeh, a national government was synonymous with an Islamic order in which its ruler "can unite the country and bring about a true national unity" (Hosseinizadeh 2006: 517). For Khalesizadeh, "it is then that a true national government will be formed and a national government will focus on the national economy" (Ibid). Throughout his writings and activism, Khalesizadeh aligned

modern concepts such as national government, national economy and freedom to Islamic concepts, thus making his Islamism open to signifiers from other non-Islamist discourses. In fact, critics mockingly called him (whose last name literally means "being born pure") *Makhlootizadeh* (literally meaning being born impure; *makhloot* meaning mixture) for his perceived borrowing of concepts from discourses other than Islam (Jafariyan 2012: 901). Setting aside the intended irony of Khalesizadeh's critics, this accusation of *makhloot* operates as an effective metaphor here for the discursive status of Islamism.

Understanding Islamism as a modern discourse, as scholars of discourse analysis indicate, already implies the non-fundamentalist, mobile, and unfixed nature of Islamism and its openness to exchange signifiers from discourses with which it comes into contact. As Marianne Jorgensen and Louise Philips show: "Discourses are incomplete structures in the same un-decidable terrain that never quite become completely structured" (Jorgensen & Philips 2002: 29). Within the Iranian context, Islamists "were influenced by the discourse they set out to challenge, [while] incorporating certain of its crucial elements," making "analysis of revolutionary thought and practices" a rather delicate task (Vahdat 2002: 132). As is evident in the cases of Kharaghani and Khalesizadeh, in its initial stages Islamism was influenced by constitutionalist and nationalist discourses, but as many scholars have pointed out, with the advent of Marxist and Third World discourses in Iran, Islamism gained a new momentum. Hosseinizadeh argues that Marxism had a great influence on Iranian Islamism, and Roy goes so far as to frame the discourse of the Iranian Revolution as a "Third World continuity of the Islamist movement by expressing the North-South opposition in religious terms" (Hosseinizadeh 2006: 191; Roy 1992: 4). Shariati, as a theorist, and Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO), as an Islamist movement, are useful examples mentioned by scholars for studying the incorporation of Marxist signifiers into Islamist discourse (Abrahamian 1982: 467). Through discursive analysis, one is able to identify many concepts that originally belonged to Marxist or other liberation discourses which were later imported into Islamist discourse.

A similar but lesser known example of the importation of signifiers into Islamist discourse is found in the work of Jalal-e-din-Farsi. A Muslim activist and theorist, Farsi traveled widely to countries in the Middle East and was a reader of Marx and Arab political thinkers (Jafariyan 2012: 737).[14] During the coup in Iran he was a follower of Mohammad Mosaddeq and a member of the Muslim constitutionalist-leaning party, *Nehzat-e Azadi* (Freedom Front) (Ibid). In his influential *Enqelab-e-Takamoli-e-Islam,* Farsi combined democratic and Marxist concepts, and made a

case for the revolutionary character of Islam and its evolution throughout history. Teleologically, befitting the Marxist and Hegelian influence on his work, he made a case for an Islamic state by drawing on the early history of Islam. He writes:

In the history of politics and society, two competing political systems have been recognized: one is *Royal Despotism* and the other one is *Constitutional Republicanism* (Farsi 1965: 117).

We are set out to show how the political order of Islam was able to dismantle Royal Despotism and bring about an order that contains elements of Constitutional Republicanism, if not more [advanced than constitutionalist features] … In order to succeed in a political revolution, the *revolutionary* movement of Islam first set out to change the *superstructure* of society embodied in beliefs and values before attending the question of *base* … The *ideological* essence of Royal Despotism was polytheism and ignorance and through a revolutionary change, the political system underwent a transition (Ibid., 121).

[After that] the state that was dominated by authoritarian or colonial groups transformed and served the cause of the *oppressed* and it enforced justice. With this transition, the features of [an] Islamic state appeared very different from other states. In contrast to an authoritarian, profit-seeking, slave-oriented state, Islam brought about a *constitutional state* in which consultation, kindness, altruism and brotherhood were the defining values of the state (Ibid., 132).

Farsi's language demonstrates how signifiers from various modern liberation discourses made their way into Islamist discourse.

Ayatollah Khomeini was a reader of Farsi's works, and upon Khomeini's request, Farsi compiled Khomeini's lectures on *velayat-e faqih*, edited the texts, added two chapters, and published it under Khomeini's name (Jafariyan 2012: 740). Therefore, the text known today as *Velayat-e Faqih* was co-authored by Khomeini and Farsi, and in sections where the text turns from theology toward contemporary political themes, Farsi's influence, if not authorship, is quite evident. But Farsi was not the only influence on Khomeini's discourse. The Ayatollah was also a reader of Shariati and Ale-Ahmad, among many others, and his discourse did not contain traditional religious concepts.[15] Hosseinizadeh has conducted an analysis of Khomeini's writings and speeches in the years between 1978 and 1979, and locates the following concepts in Khomeini's discourse: "freedom," "welfare", "democracy", "women's rights", "ethnic rights", "independence", "land reform", "reviving the industrial sector", "eradication of poverty", "equitable distribution of wealth" and "economic growth" (Hosseinizadeh 2006: 191).

The implication of this discursive relation of Islamism with other modern liberation discourses is twofold. First, Islamism was not stagnant, fundamentalist religious dogma drawing solely on signifiers from a religious discourse. Second, specifically concerning the question of the state, Islamism did not seek to dismantle all modern institutions and go back to the past to implement a strict *shari'a* state modeled on the rule of the Prophet. Also, the concept of an Islamic state or Islamic Republic was not a call for the clergy to take over the state and enforce *shari'a* law; instead it embodied "an empty signifier, one that contain[ed] the dreams of all in [a] repressed nation" (Ibid., 264).[16] Hosseinizadeh writes: "On the one hand, Islamic state signified the progress of political and economic institutions, welfare and overall condition of life, and on the other hand, it meant an urge for Iranians to go beyond the material and bring about a spirit in a spiritless world" (Ibid). The modern and worldly desires for an Islamic state were not a recent invention; as early as the 1950s, when Fada'iyan-e Islam first began to publicly call for *hukumat-e Islami*, their demands were not solely constructed on religious terms. In advocating for an Islamic state, they envisioned a society in which all forms of corruption could be eradicated, and then the state would operate in an efficient and healthy manner (Jafariyan 2012: 229). They in fact wrote policy sheets for each government ministry and most of their prescriptions assumed the ethics of biopower (bid.,228).[17]

"Thus when Islamists claim that the best government is an Islamic government, here Islamic refers to the incarnation of goodness, so that the claim becomes: the best government is the good government," writes Sayyid. He continues: "it is precisely at this point where Islam is strongest, because, for a majority of Muslims, Islam must be the definition of good," and *hukumat-e Islami* becomes the embodiment of an efficient constitutionalist modern state that will allow good ethics and spirituality to reign (Sayyid 2003: 48).

In the Usuli clerical mindset, though, the meaning of *hukumat-e Islami* was rather different. For them a strict implementation of *shari'a* while preserving the monarchy was a priority, and this position made them appear as enemies of the Islamists. It is here that Roy stresses that "there was an anticlerical tendency in Iranian Islamism that contested the clergy's religious monopoly; this tendency was embodied in the thinker Ali Shariati and in extremist groups such as People's Mujahidin" (Roy 1992: 169).

Non-clerical

Though most Islamist ideas originated from people and places outside the established religious apparatus of Shi'i clerics, and they often took an anti-clerical position, there were still Islamists among the clergy; Usulis either became hostile to Islamism or they joined the movement. Similar to the Babi movement of the nineteenth century, clergy forces either converted to the new movement or they found it heretical and hence worthy of *takfir* (excommunication). The difference was that this time Islamism was able to formulate its language in a rather conventional Islamic discourse, though the social and political aspirations of Islamists were still in contrast with that of Usulis. It may be said that the Islamists' agenda was heretical from the Usuli stance but not its language. And this indeed left traditional Usulis in a rather ambiguous position as to how to relate to Islamists.

While Shariati's famous slogan "Islam minus the clergy" is the most prominent example of the hostility between Islamism and Usuli clericalism, one must note that the non-clerical stance of Islamism preceded Shariati (Hunter 2014: 75). Besides early figures such as Kharaghani, Khalesizadeh, and Sanglaji, whose ideas were not welcomed by the Usuli clerics, the next generation of Islamists too found themselves in a rather antagonistic relationship with the Usulis. From an Islamist stance, clerics were the embodiment of the status quo, which manifested itself in support of an oppressive, despotic king, social conservatism, political expediency and medieval scholasticism (Jafariyan 2012: 878-881). For instance, when Fada'iyan-e Islam found themselves in the midst of radical Islamist activism, not only did they not receive the support of the Usuli apparatus, their movement was barely even recognized as Islamic by Ayatollah Boroujerdi (1875–1961) (Ibid., 209). Fighting back, a section of a Fada'iyan-e Islam newsletter spoke directly to Ayatollah Boroujerdi in rather offensive language:

Oh, you so called scholar of Islam! Oh, you disloyal friends of ours! ... Alas, a dog is more loyal than you, I wish you had learned loyalty from a dog. You have worked so hard for your religious position, but you have not put a fraction of that endeavor to protect the basis of Islam. You are not even willing to undertake the slightest risk for your position and put yourself amidst all kinds of charges, *takfirs* and excommunications. Unless you find your own position at risk, you would not take a position even if the worst tragedies will be inflicted upon those who are the followers of the Prophet (Ibid).

This hostility was not only exercised at a rhetorical level. Strategically, Islamist elites distanced themselves from Usulis in order to secure prestige in the eyes of

their followers and secular intellectuals. Part of this cleavage was due to the fact that Islamists found clerical teachings incapable of producing social and political mobility (Hunter 2014: 74). They took up the reformist heritage of Islamism and relied solely on the Quran and *Nahj-ul Balagha*, and thus undermined the hadiths as a source of religious inspiration (Jafariyan 2012: 472). They referred to clerics as forces of *irtija* (regression) and ensured that they would not receive credit for the revolutionary momentum of Islamism. In a pamphlet published by an Islamist organization after the Revolution, the author attempts to frame Ayatollah Taleqani as an Islamist in the face of what the author views as attempts to appropriate his credentials as a Usuli clergy:

The thoughts and activism of Taleqani had roots in the movement initiated by Sayyid Jamal [Al-Afghani] … Taleqani [similar to Al-Afghani] was present in all anti-colonial and anti-despotic struggles and after the Revolution he was able to locate the forces of *irtija* and stand against them. Taleqani started his activism at a time when religion was a monopoly of clerics; those clergy who did not bother with true struggle and even sent "May God Protect the King" to the Shah after the coup d'état. … It is obvious then that the background and ideological struggles of Taleqani had nothing to do with the clerics (Author Unknown 1981: 33).

Here the distinctions that Islamists made between their movement and that of the clergy are quite evident. Islamists themselves understood Al-Afghani as their main source of inspiration and saw Islamism as a non-clerical movement. It was in this context that Islamists debated the case of Ayatollah Khomeini. The author of the lines above continued by analyzing Khomeini's status:

It is obvious for us that the dogmatic Islam of the clergy is in no way qualified to enter society … and galvanize the mass to peruse human ideals. The dogmatic Islam of the clergy does not contain the science of struggle, life and movement; it is the opposite, and history has shown that the clergy has been the cause of stagnation, intellectual downfall and cultural backwardness. It is here that similar to the question of Taleghani one may ask: how was Khomeini who emerged from dogmatic Islam able to become a supporter of the oppressed and become an anti-imperialist militant? Is it not the case that the dogmatic Islam of the clergy has produced figures such as Boroujerdi, Khansari, Khoei and Shariatmadari? Is it not the case that these figures are the opposite to struggle and movement and even today they stand against Khomeini? ... It is therefore, obvious that the seminaries are not able to create a figure like Khomeini, but they can certainly create figures

like Khoei and Shariatmadari. What made Khomeini was not the Islam of the clergy but his personal qualities… (Ibid).

While there is an excessive stress on the personal qualities of Ayatollah Khomeini, the author has a point in differentiating Ayatollah Khomeini from the mainstream clerical establishment. On a number of occasions throughout his career, Khomeini had expressed discontent with his religious counterparts, and his inclination towards mysticism and philosophy was also highly frowned upon in the traditional setting of religious seminaries (Moazami 2009: 60). Unlike Boroujerdi, Khomeini was fond of Fada'iyan-e Islam and, as one of his students observed, he carried both the qualities of the Islamism of Fada'iyan-e Islam and the status of *marja'iyyat* (source of emulation) (Jafariyan 2012: 213).

At best it may stated that Khomeini was an Islamist-Usuli, with his Usulism playing a lesser role in making him the leader of one of the biggest Islamist movements of the twentieth century. One of the events that best exemplified the rift between the Islamism of Khomeini and the clerical establishment was the quarrel over a book published by Salehi Najafabadi, a student of Khomeini, titled *Shahid-e Javid*. This book depicted Imam Hussein, the third Shi'i Imam, as a rational individual in search of the creation of an Islamic state, a narrative that certainly challenged the Shi'i scholastic position on the status of Imams with semi-divine qualities (Ibid., 933-948).[18] Many clerics who did not approve of the text removed themselves from revolutionary Islamist activities and came to view Islamism as being at odds with classic Shi'i clerical teachings (Ibid., 937). A person sympathetic with Khomeini's cause but worried about religious issues sent the following message to Khomeini:

Please let Mr. Khomeini know that some are promoting Wahhabism under the guise of supporting him … please let him know that Khomeini's supporters disapprove visiting the shrines, *rowzeh-khani*, and other holy affairs … to sum [up], I should say that those who like you and support you promote Wahhabism, Marxism and anti-religious creeds. Please ask him to take these points into account (Ibid).

The sender of this message had correctly identified the contrast between the Islamist momentum of Khomeini and the traditional religious teachings of *Usuli* clerics. He had also identified rationalism, inclination toward Sunnism, and the discursive exchange of Islamism with Marxism and other "anti-religious creeds." Roy is correct to state that "Khomeini never favored the clergy as an institution: on

the contrary he sought the support of Islamists … rather than that of high clergy" (Roy 1992: 173).

It must be stated, however, that Islamists did appreciate clerical authorities on one issue: the anti-imperialism and anti-authoritarianism of some Shi'i clerics (Jafariyan 2012: 739).[19] Arjomand notes that Islamists "were aware of the influence of Shi'i hierocracy on the masses and sought to use it against the Pahlavi regime... [In addition,] they were impressed by the oppositional role of the *ulama* to the state in recent Iranian history and [they were] full of unrequited admiration for them" (Amir Arjomand 1988: 98). Ale-Ahmad acknowledged the historical role of the *ulama* "as a base and danger against imperialisms," Shariati appreciated their standing against imperialism, and Farsi appreciated their oppositional role towards state power (Al-e Ahmad 1982: 256; Shariati year of publication unknown). Islamists were careful not to offend the clerics when unnecessary so as to not exhaust their oppositional potential for their own Islamist cause. Though Islamists ideologically distanced themselves from Usulis, they did not fail to see the clerics as tactical allies in their political agenda. Hence, through acknowledging Usulis' strength in anti-authoritarian struggles, Islamists aimed to appropriate the Usulis' clerical oppositional credentials for their own agenda while maintaining a line between themselves and the Usulis.

Theology of the nation state

Aware of the anti-clerical tendencies of Islamists, Ayatollah Khomeini not only put a ban on clerics' involvement with state power in the early stages of the Islamic Revolution, he also approved the first draft of the constitution, which made no mention of *velayat-e faqih* (Amir Arjomand 1988: 150). It was later on and due to contingent circumstances, mostly related to crises of state sovereignty, that Khomeini revoked his initial stance and appeared as an ardent advocate of *velayat-e faqih* (Ibid). This post-revolutionary contingency refutes the position taken by scholars such as Bayat who define Islamism in relation to an authoritarian desire on the part of Iranian Islamists to constitute the state based on *velayat-e faqih*. This is not to deny the fact that Islamists did pursue the creation of an Islamic state, but, as alluded to before, not only were they very vague as to what exactly that constituted. At best, what they had in mind was a socialist-leaning constitutionalist state that observed the religious and spiritual values of its constituents (Afary & Anderson 2005: 206). Islamists did not call for a rejection of the modern nation-state, and to use Piscatori's words, they sought an "Islamicized nation-state" (Piscatori 1986:

140). It is this statism on the part of Islamists that encourages Roy to view Islamism as a movement with the sole agenda of state capture. But what Roy and others do not take into account is the fact that Islamism was not only a by-product of the rise of the nation state, it had a role to play in its making.

As Mandaville correctly points out, it is "in the aftermath of the establishment of nation-states in the Muslim World that we can begin to speak of the emergence of Islamism as a distinctive form of Muslim politics" (Mandaville 2014: 74). The reverse is also the case, as one is able to identify a process in which Islamists participated in the making of the nation-state. In the case of Iran, it was the activism of Al-Afghani, Kharaghani, and Islamist clerics that had a huge part in the initial success of the Constitutional Revolution and the birth of Iranian *raision d'Etat*. Later on, however, clerics appeared as an obstacle in the making of the modern state, and with the failure of the secular nationalist front to secure a constitutionalist state, Islamists distanced themselves from the Usulis and forged an Islamic-Marxist constitutionalist discourse. With this non-clerical Marxist-constitutionalist discourse, Islamists appeared to cultivate the strongest anti-Shah position and presented an unbeatable discursive candidate to rule the post-revolutionary state.

Of course, the post-revolutionary state eliminated both radical Marxists and constitutionalist Islamists and made concessions to clerical authority, but the nation-state was able to claim full authority in the Iranian territory while enjoying a modern division of power: the legislative, the executive, and the judicial branches of government (Zubaida 1997: 109). Post-revolutionary Iran recognized elements of a free market economy, suppressed Marxist forces, and held presidential and parliament elections every four years, all of which solidified the modern state and its ethics of biopower. Clerics did little to disrupt the affairs of the state. The element of *shari'a* played only one role among many "other secular legal provisions and government." The post-revolutionary state was even allowed "to disregard shari'a provisions in legislation and policy 'in the interests of the Islamic community,'" which meant that "secularization ha[d] not been reversed, but disguised behind imposed symbols and empty rhetoric" (Ibid., 119, 105). Paradoxically, this implies that Islamism was helping the rise and maintenance of a secular project of the nation state. Hence, what Roy undermines is the reverse relationship between Islamism and the nation state and the way that Islamists contributed to the making of the nation state in Iran. Both Islamism and the Iranian nation state were not separate ready-made objects waiting for one to claim the other. They were coproduced; at times they cancelled each other out, but eventually they came to one another's assistance. One, however, must not forget that Islamists

would not have been able to take over the state by means of a popular revolution without first constructing hegemony in civil society.

Liberation Theology

Frederic Volpi is correct to assert that the political nature of Islamism "must be seen as a re-interpretation of various social activities that were previously not considered to be political, by the state authorities and by those analyzing social life from a statist perspective" (Volpi 2010: 12). In other words, as Sayyid has put it, "The political is the moment of the institution of the social. It may involve the capture of the state apparatus by a dedicated vanguard, but it may also include a more diffused strategy of intellectual reform of civil society as a precursor to acquiring state power" (Sayyid 2003: 17). Having the Iranian case in mind, one may even go a step further and identify Islamist currents whose ideology forbade capturing the state. The anarchist-leaning Islamist group *Forqan*, appropriating Shariati's slogan of "Islam minus the clergy" went as far as to assassinate clerics whom they associated with the new Islamic state (Renon 2015: 12). They had also did a recast of Shariati's doctrine of "perpetual revolution" in their own terms and remained unimpressed with the democratic referendum and the empowering of the Iranian army in post-revolutionary conditions (Ibid., 14). They saw themselves as the embodiment of the red, or Alavid Shi'ism, opposing the power apparatus that they associated with Safavid Shi'ism. Rightfully or wrongfully, they took these concepts too from Shariati, who also believed that:

Islam is a religion which makes its appearance in the history of mankind with the "no" of Mohammad (PBUH)... Shi'ism is the Islam which distinguishes itself and determines its direction in the history of Islam with the "no" of the great Ali (as) ... a "no" which he gives to the council for the election of the caliphate in answer to Abdul Rahman, who was the manifestation of Islamic aristocracy and compromise. This "no," up until pre-Safavid times, is recognized to be part of the Shi'a movement in the history of Islam, an indicator of the social and political role of a group who are the followers of Ali, known for their attachment to the kindness of the family of the Prophet. It is a party based upon the Quran and the Traditions, not the Quran and the traditions proclaimed by the dynasties of the Umayyads, Abbasids, Ghaznavids, Seljuks, Mongols and Timurids, but the one proclaimed by the family of Mohammad. The history of Islam follows a strange path; a path in which hoodlums and ruffians from the Arab, Persian, Turk, Tartar and Mongol dynasties all enjoy the right of the leadership of the Moslem community and the

caliphate of the Prophet of Islam, to the exclusion of the family of the Prophet and the rightful Imams of Islam. And Shi'ism, which begins with a "no," a "no" which opposes the path chosen by history, rebels against history. It rebels against a history which, in the name of the Quran, Kings and Caesars, follows the path of ignorance and in the name of tradition, sacrifices those brought up in the house of the Quran and the Traditions! Shi'is do not accept the path chosen by history (Shariati 2018).

Comparing Shariati's prose—notably, in the way he confronts authority—with his Christian liberation counterparts in South America, Dabashi frames Islamist discourse as a "liberation theology." Dabashi identifies similarities between the two theologies, specifically in their struggles against "colonial and imperial savageries," and "their respective conversations with nationalist and socialist ideas in general and with Marxism in particular—so much [so] that ideas and aspiration of Gustavo Gutierrez are almost identical with those of Ali Shari'ati" (Dabashi 2008: 49). Dabashi mentions nationalist and socialist ideas, but in his framing of Islamism as a liberation theology, he remains focused on the anti-colonial aspect of Islamism. Here one may expand the scope of Islamic liberation theology to include struggles within the nation state and thus view it as a set of various religiously inspired "counter-conducts" or resistance to authorities and relations of power deemed oppressive or illegitimate within the boundaries of the nation state (Foucault 2007: 356). According to Foucault, the history of state power "and the history of counter-conducts opposed to it, are inseparable from each other," and various counter-conducts make possible the decentralization of the state and that paradoxically leads to more efficient control of the population by the state (Ibid., 357). Through discursive exchange with other liberation discourses such as Marxism, constitutionalism, nationalism, and even secularism (in the case of anti-clericalism), Islamism appeared as a counter-conduct to various sites of power that the Iranian masses identified as authoritarian and hegemonic. These various counter-conducts invoked an Islamist discursive regime that elevated Islamism into an inflated oppositional discourse capable of creating social solidarity contesting the Shah's power.

Islamism had the upper hand in comparison with other liberation discourses because of its spiritual potential. Islamists were able to bring "mysticism and western philosophy together to form a powerful revolutionary discourse" (Varzi 2011: 54). This discourse brought together post-modern, post-colonial and mystical potentials and produced a subject with radical, revolutionary, and mystical potentials. That is perhaps why Michel Foucault found the Islamist movement and its liberation theology impressive. The emergence of a spiritual form of counter-

conduct to an authoritarian regime led Foucault to describe Iranian Islamism as "the spirit of the world without spirit" (Afary & Anderson 2005: 250). He identified Islamists' politics as "political spirituality," and of course by politics—to take his famous assertion that power is dispersed—he did not only have the state in mind (Afary & Anderson 2005: 209, 207).

Surveying various currents of Islamism throughout the early and mid-twentieth century, one sees numerous Islamic civil institutions, NGOs and social movements, one of which in fact impressed Foucault, which did not have capture of the state as their main agenda (Foucault 1978). Rather, these movements focused on cultural and social affairs such as raising historical awareness, promoting education, pursuing charity activities, fighting corruption, ensuring health and housing, and calling for national unity (Jafariyan 2012: 94, 81, 85, 67, 95, 111, 127, 67). Two figures that engaged in such activities were Seraj Ansari (1895–1961) and Mohammad Taghi Shariati (father of Ali Shariati) (1907–1987). Seraj Ansari, comparable with Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949) in Egypt, was a Muslim reformer and journalist and an active contributor to Muslim publications in the early stages of Islamism (Ibid). He also founded *Jam'iat-e Mobarezeh ba Bidini* (The Society of Fighting Irreligiosity), which moved beyond religious concerns to place issues such as education, social solidarity and charity activities at the top of its social agenda (Ibid., 66). Taghi Shariati founded *Kanoon-e Nashr-e Haghayegh-e Islami* (The Centre for Propagation of Religious Truth), also known as *Kanoon*, in 1942, with the aim of framing Islam as a practical and socially relevant religion (Ibid., 111). Reviewing the objectives of *Kanoon* provides a useful snapshot for understanding the ethos of Islamism as a social and cultural movement in its middle stage. The objectives of *Kanoon* were:

Proving the necessity of religion and its this-worldy benefits; proving the truth of Islam and the fact that implementing Islam is the only path to human salvation; proving the wrong approach adopted by Muslims for not making their religion practical and making a case for the essential and urgent need for abandoning the dominant apathy; enticing religious energy; encouraging social solidarity among Muslims, engaging in a war struggle against all kinds of corruptions that have endangered national and religious foundations of society; promoting and teaching the Quran and its interpretation; promotion of encouraging good and forbidding evil; reviving religious symbols, proving the compatibility of Islam and true [modern] science and civilization and responding to hostile forces, raising the level of public opinion, introducing the status of clergy to society and have people ...

respect the clergy that truly deserve this title, centralizing sporadic activities and organizing lecture and debating sessions (Ibid).

With minor divergence, the next generation of Islamists adopted the same core principles, making their discourse appealing to a modern Muslim middle class that emerged after the Shah's White Revolution. As alluded to before, the members of this middle class were educated in modern institutions, and for them Islamism operated as a liberation theology promising to free religion from the scholasticism of Usuli clerics, and the nation from oppressive secular despotism. In the process, Islamism was also expected to bring about not only a free Muslim democracy but also an ethical and spiritual society (Hosseinizadeh 2006: 496). It almost goes without saying that the objectives pursued by Taghi Shariati in *Kanoon* were not supported by Usuli figures (Jafariyan 2012: 112). Taghi Shariati was frowned upon for dressing up in suits and wearing a tie and a hat, and "traditional clerics in Mashhad spread rumors that Taghi Shariati was a Sunni, a 'Wahhabi' and perhaps even a 'Babi'" (Abrahamian 1989: 106). Besides Sunnism, Babism was the most common epithet ascribed to early Islamists in order to discredit their new liberation theology. After all, the Islamists' theology of liberation competed with Usuli theology at some level, and Usulis did not hesitate to use any propaganda tactic at their disposal in their rivalry with Islamists. But was the charge of a Babi inclination totally flawed and baseless? This question opens inquiries into the genealogy of Islamism: Islamism at its point of "emergence."

Babi Influence?

Morteza Motahhari (1919–1979), an Usuli-Islamist thinker and theorist, had once compared Ali Shariati and his followers to the Babi movement of the nineteenth century (Jafaraian 2012:584).[20] While this comparison may have been motivated by the rivalry of the two thinkers, the resonance Motahhari identified was not historically baseless.

Beside Taghi Shariati, Kharaghani was also charged with Babi inclinations, a fact that raises questions about the relevance of Babism to Islamism (Jafaraian 2003: 54). Of course, Kharaghani's ideas were rather avant-garde for his time, and while the Babi label was a convenient outlet for his critics to discredit his convictions, early Islamists undoubtedly left clues about the influence they received from Babism.

In addition to Sayyid Jamal al-Afghani, Kharaghani was influenced by a controversial Shi'i scholar named Hadi Najmabadi (1871–1941) (N. Razavi 2014: 63). Although a clergy member, Najmabadi had a mass following among members of various creeds, and his footsteps were traceable in both the assassination of Neser al-Din Shah (1831–1896) and also the making of the Constitutional Revolution (Ha'iri 1977: 73-77). Najmabadi was friends with Al-Afghani and Malkum Khan, and was highly respected by radical Babi figures whose activism was directed against the Qajar dynasty (Ibid; Rahnema 2015: 13). He was also known for his "liberal" attitude and receiving "people of all classes and all faiths, statesmen and scholars, princes and poets, Sunnis, Shi'is, Babis, Armenians, Jews, Ali-Ilahis, etc., with all of whom he discussed all sorts of topics with the utmost freedom" (Browne 1910: 406).
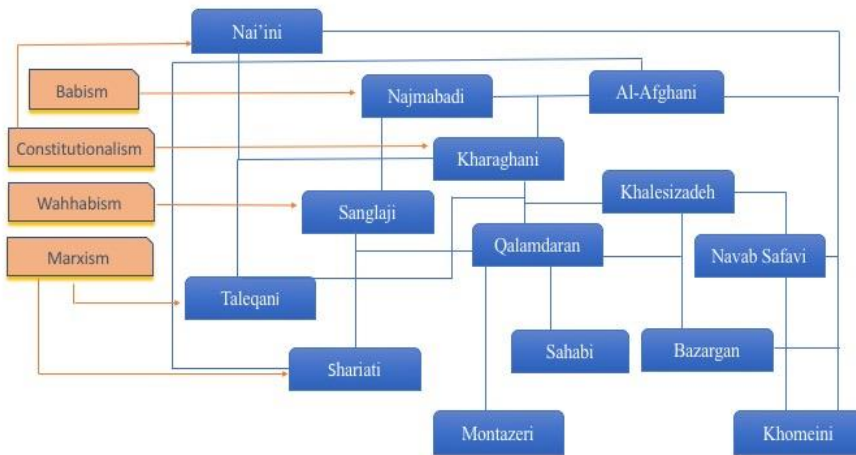
There are speculations that Najmabadi was a Babi in disguise given some of his odd theological maneuvers and the close network of Babi activists who regarded him with utmost respect (N. Razavi 2014: 67).[21] Whether Najmabadi was in fact a full convert to the Babi creed remains a subject of historical inquiry, and somewhat irrelevant to this study, but what is certain is that there is a close alliance to be identified between the Pan Islamist ideas of Al-Afghani, the unconventional theological stance of Najmabadi, and the radical Babi elements fighting the Qajar and liberal intellectuals such as Mirza Malkam Khan (1834–1908) in the years prior to the Constitutional Revolution in Iran (Ibid., 111). Babi intellectuals and activists saw the Qajar dynasty as the embodiment of the Umayyad rule which, once toppled, would be replaced with a fusion of enlightened despotism and republicanism (Ibid., 20). In a Babi political manifesto known as *Hasht-Behesht* (Eight Heavens), the authors borrowed from Islamic and modern political concepts to make a case for their ideal political system. They wrote:

A despotic regime is the embodiment of domination and a republican government is the embodiment of representation. Both are problematic and forbidden. The solution then is something in between as has been instructed in *Bayan* [the Babi holy book]. The instruction is that the power of the state and the power of the nation must be equal and they must stand steadfast. The head of the state must be infallible and he must be cleansed from error in rulings that are his provision. In private and other matters, affairs must be governed with the vote of the majority (Ibid., 32).

Without knowing the Babi conviction of the authors, one could imagine the lines above to have been written by either an Islamist figure in the 1960s or a theorist of

an Islamic Republic headed by a *faqih*. What may explain this line of continuity is drawing a branch chart of Islamist figures and their influences with Sayyid Jamal al-Afghani and Hadi Najmabadi at the top beside Na'ini.

Islamists
Influences:

To be sure, the chart above does by no means suggest the direct emergence of Islamism from Babism. What it does suggest, however, is that given the close alliance of Babi, Islamist, and liberal figures, an outright denial of any resonances between Babism and Islamism in the last stage of the latter and the early stages of the former is rather naive. In fact, they anti-Shah and the anti-clerical stance of both Babism and Isalmism draws comparable lines between the two movements in terms of social and political functioning. As Keddie suggests, Al-Afghani's activism was certainly inspired by the radical and revolutionary posture of Babis of the nineteenth century. "Babism was one of several activist religious movements that Afghani had a chance to witness in the Muslim world, and which probably contributed to his understanding of the power of religious appeals to the Muslim masses" (Keddie & Afghani 1983: 11). Moreover, Babism "appealed to 'craftsmen and merchants,' namely city-dwellers and artisans," the same class that later on adopted the liberation theology of Islamism (Dabashi 2011: 200). In addition, Hadi Najmabadi was perhaps the first Muslim reformer to launch a campaign against Shi'i

scholasticism and popular Shi'i beliefs, particularly *ghuluww*, for which he received the *takfir* of Usulis (N. Razavi 2014: 259). Despite this censure, his rejection of hadith and reliance on the Quran inspired the young Sanglaji, and set the tone for future Islamist reformist thinkers (Razavi year of publication unknown: 249-271). And the political imagination of Babis, in viewing a combination of spiritual despotism and republicanism as an alternative to the Umayyad-like Qajar, certainly did influence Kharaghani; it was an influence that Kharaghani carried to Usuli figures in Najaf so that they might back the Constitutional Revolution (N. Razavi 2014: 262).

There is also one more fact to be considered, notably, that "Bab was a student of Sayyid Kazem Rashti, who was a student of Shaikh Ahmad Ahsa'i, who was a student of … Mulla Sadra (1572–1640)," and that "his epistemic fusion of mysticism and philosophy on Shi'i jurisprudential and doctrinal grounds" must be taken into account. Al-Afghani too was a student of Islamic mysticism, as was Ayatollah Khomeini (Dabashi 2011: 200, 175; Mottahedeh 1985: 183). The leader of the Islamic Revolution was an avid reader of Islamic mysticism and philosophy, and he too was fond of Mulla Sadra's mystical philosophy (Ibid). At the heart of mysticism is the "destruction of the distinction between subject and object," the implication of which is "a sense of fearlessness toward everything external, including all the seemingly coercive political powers of the world" (Ibid). These trends may indicate that in situations in which mysticism is politically charged, the quietist awaiting of the hidden Imam calls for its representative to act on his behalf in order to bring about a government suitable to the Imams' teachings and become a precursor to the hidden Imam's immediate rise (Dabashi 2011: 137). It is for this reason that an "activist response to bad government cannot easily be divorced from the problem of justification through the advent of the Imam or his representative," and the concept of *na'ib al-imam* played a role in both Babi and Islamist activism (McEoin 1984:26). In that sense, as Dabashi argues, "Babism was the link that brought medieval Shi'i revolutionary reason to meet the evident fact of a public reason," and it set the stage for the "anticipation of the anticolonial Tobacco Revolt of 1891, and then the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911" (Dabashi 2011: 200). The same logic may be applied to Islamism, as Shariati and his concept of Red Shi'ism reproduced medieval Shi'i revolutionary momentum in the twentieth century, and Ayatollah Khomeini acted as *na'ib al-imam* and led an Islamist Revolution to create a Muslim state in order to set the stage for the rise of the Mahdi. In both Babism and Islamism, Mulla Sadra did not sit still.

Conclusion

The above-mentioned qualities provide an overall image of Islamism not often discussed or categorized in discussions of political Islam. With this account, one may venture the following definition:

> *Islamism is a Shi'i-inspired, Sunni-inclined, modern, reformist, non-clerical, non-fundamentalist, universalist, anti-authoritarian liberation theology that emerges within the nation state with the objective not of implementing shari'a law, but of creating a fusion of anti-imperialist, Marxist, constitutionalist, nationalist and Islamic discourse; the implication of which was the rise of a modern Muslim subjectivity and the solidification of the Muslim nation state.*

The above definition has the following merits. First, it is not too broad and ambitious so as to include other expressions of political Islam such as Salafism and Usulism. Second, it resists simply depicting a group of authoritarian Muslims who hope to Islamicize society through state capture. Third, it recognizes the contribution of Islamism in the making of the nation state and vice versa. Fourth, it differentiates Islamism as a movement from a religious discourse as an ideology of state control. And finally, this definition remains attentive to the counter-intuitive, paradoxical, complex and collage-like image that emerges only with a genealogical investigation of Islamism. In this approach, one is not in the search of locating a certain "essence" for Islamism, rather, the investigation becomes cantered around identifying "the accidents, the minute deviations---or conversely, the complete reversals---the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth" to Iranian Islamism (Foucault 1984:81).

Note

1. Here Foucault expands on his method of historical inquiry. He explains that throughout his work he has refused to take historical objects as given. He instead sets out to search for origins and the evolution of objects. Having Foucault's method in mind, one may state that in most academic deployments of "Islamism" the concept is treated as a given.

2. Speaking to a university professor from the United States, Ayatollah Khomeini says: "Al-Afghani was an able person, but he lacked a national and religious base".

3. The young Mehdi Bazargan is a good example here.

4. There is a perception among reformist Muslim elites that Islamism is a regressive ideology. This stance forgets that the birth of political Islam and the reformist Muslim agenda were very much concurrent. In fact, one led to the other, making the distinction between the two rather difficult.

5. For a negative characterization of Islamism as a political ideology see Bassam Tibi, *Islamism and Islam* (Yale University Press, 2012). On page seven he writes: "[T]he politicization of Islam is a process by which this religion is used for the articulation of political concerns that are not in line with Islamic faith. Political religion becomes a means for the pursuit of nonreligious ends. I keep repeating that Islamism is not Islam." Tibi's assertion best exemplifies the perspective that does not recognize the inevitably of Islam adopting ideological positions upon its encounter with modernity.

6. Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri was a prominent and controversial clerical figure during the course of the Constitutional Revolution who supported the Revolution in its initial stage but later on deemed constitutionalist ideals heretical. He was eventually hanged by the secularist supporters of the Revolution.

7. Both Kasravi and Hakamizadeh had clerical training and. initially had strong religious beliefs, but later on they abandoned their convictions and turned secular.

8. Mohammad Khalesizadeh was an anti-British and anti-Reza Shah activist who was among the early defenders of the notion of Islamic Government. While holding firm convictions on the role of *fuqaha* in politics, he held unconventional views on the women's headscarf, arguing that it should not be compulsory. Similar to Sanglaji and Kharaghani, he rejected some Shi'i popular beliefs, deeming them superstitious. He wrote *Kashful-Astar in response to Kasravi, but distribution of his book was restricted by the clergy in Qom due to some of its anti-clerical content. He was also known for his staunch anti-Bah*a'i stance.
   For more on Khalesizadeh see: Encyclopedia Iranica entry on Khalesizadeh, accessed Sept 1, 2018, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/khalesizada

9. Kharaghani hugely influenced Mahmoud Taleghani. Dissatisfied with the autocracy of Mohammd Reza Shah and the silence of the religious establishment, Taleghani edited and published the work of another influential figure of the Constitutional Revolution, Ayatollah Nai'ini (1860–1936). Similar to Kharaghani, Nai'ini held that that Western civilization extracted its foundation from the laws of Islam, a position that seems to capture the views of progressive Muslim constitutionalists. In the introduction of Nai'ini's book, entitled *Tanbih Al-Umah va Tanzih Al-Mellah Ya Hukumat Az Naza-re Islam* [*State from Islamic Perspective*], Taleghani highlighted the importance of anti-

despotic activism with religious motivation; the same stance was adopted by Kharaghani a few decades before.

10. *Taghut* is a Quranic concept that denotes a person or an entity that rebels against God. In Islamist literature the concept was invoked to refer to an illegitimate government. During the course of the Islamic Revolution, the Shah's regime was referred to as "regim-e taqhut".

11. www.aqeedah.com is an online Farsi library with a Sunni missionary agenda that contains books written by Shi'i authors who were critical of aspects of Shi'ism. In the "About Us" section the website specifically justifies inclusion of Qalamdaran's works in the library. The website mentions censorship and the labeling of authors as "Wahabis" in Iran as reasons why works of authors such as Qalamdaran have been included in the website.

12. See pages 12, 14, 11 for the following quotes. For Gellner, High Islam is the religion of "scholastic theology, legal casuistry," and "puritanism and scripturalism" espoused by "urban scholars, recruited largely from the trading bourgeoisie…[and that] reflects the natural tastes and values of urban middle class," and Low Islam is the religion of "hysteria, religious brotherhood and fraternities" and that "provide[s] invaluable services in the semi-anarchic rural conditions."[12] Gellner then applies these concepts to various expressions of the two sects and identifies Sunni and Shi'i Islam with High and Low Islam respectively. Forgiving Gellner's essentialism and orientalism, and accepting his rather general dichotomy at face value, one may state that the rational, modernist, and urban quality of Islamism brought the Islamist discourse in greater resonance with the High Islam of Sunnism than the esoteric, mystical qualities of Shi'ism. Finding themselves in the middle of a very rationalist environment, Iranian Islamists had to cleanse Shi'ism of its romantic and *ghuluww* qualities and forge a discourse suitable to the predicament of the Muslim middle class, which struggled to remain religious in modern Iran. This new discourse had to meet questions related to power and state, and the non-elite and popular Shi'i history of esoteric quietism and abstention from worldly power did not lend itself as a fully available resource. It is here that Shi'i Islamists became inclined towards Sunni political thought, and Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamism "shifted Iranian Shi'ism firmly in the direction of a kind of Sunnification ... [and he] took it very close to the puritan version of Sunni High Islam."[12] Islamism was the embodiment of High Islam and it needed to invoke medieval instances of High Islam in order to survive, and that was made possible through a rather subtle Sunnification of Shi'ism.

13. A prime example here is the case of Ne'matollah Salehi Najaf-Abadi, which will be discussed later. Even Ayatollah Khomeini and Ali Shariati did not escape being labeled as Wahhabis.

14. Farsi made multiple trips to Iraq, Syria and Lebanon beginning in 1960 and made contacts with activists and intellectual circles in the Sunni world.

15. For instance, Ayatollah Khomeini borrowed the concept *gharbzadeh* from Ale-Ahmad.

16. The case of Ayatollah Khomeini's *Velayat-e-faqih* may counter the claims made here. One has to note, however, that Khomeini was both an *Usuli* and an Islamist and that is why we previously referred to him as Islamist-*Usuli*. Also, the text *Velayat-e-faqih* was crafted at least 10 years prior to the Revolution and while the text was read in the seminary context, it did not receive wide attention, particularly among Islamists. Indeed, Islamists were aware of Khomeini's novel ideas, but by no means did *Velayat-e faqih* function as the inspiring book of the Revolution during 1978-79. Furthermore, on the wake of the Revolution and in the discussions pertaining to the Assembling of Experts, while the concept *velayat-e faqih* was evoked, its jurisprudential connotation was mostly sidelined and actors defended the concept to express their loyalty to Khomeini, not the concept in and of itself.

17. The content of the policy proposals made to the government on the part of Fada'iyan-e Islam stresses the well-being of the population and not so much ideological considerations. It is in this context that a Foucauldian concept of bio-power finds relevance.

18. From the perspective of the scholastic Shi'i position, Imam Hussein was an all-knowing individual who anticipated his martyrdom. Najafabadi's account suggested that the Imam had a worldly pursuit, that is: creation of an Islamic state. Hence, according to Najafabadi, if the Imam knew that martyrdom was his fate he would have not embarked in such political struggle. Despising Najafabadi's account, many Shi'i scholars, denounced his book. It is stated that the Shah's secret service (SAVAK) reprinted copies of the book in order to create a rift in the Muslim community.

19. Previously it was mentioned that Usuli clerics were despised by Islamists for their authoritarianism, and here it is stated that the anti-authoritarianism of some clergy was appreciated by Islamists; these assertions may suggest a contradiction. To be clear, Islamists were aware of the oppositional role of a fraction of religious authorities in anti-colonial and anti-despotic movements. Yet Islamists were also aware of a charge put forward, particularly by secular elites, that behind ulama's political struggle lay a pursuit of state power and the goal of enforcing strict *shari'a* law. Islamists, henceforth, adopted a middle position. They distanced themselves from the ideological and political agenda of the clergy, yet they did not deprive themselves of taking advantage of ulama's influences on the masses. Further, Islamists only supported the political clergy or those with a radical anti-state stance.

20. Babism was a messianic religio-political movement in nineteenth century Iran and Iraq. It was founded by Mohammad Ali Shirazi, who claimed to be the gate (Bab) to the twelfth Shi'i Imam. Babism was initially characterized as a Shi'i movement but later on developed its own theology, holy book, and following. Babism challenged both the reign of Shah and the authority of Usuli Shi'i clergy, and its followers were consequently identified as "heretical" by the adherents of popular Shi'ism. Fearing *takfir* and political persecution, some later radical Babi elements known as Azalis kept their Babi convictions private.

21. Some have seen Najmabadi's style of writing in *Tahrir al-Uqala* [The Liberation of Wisemen] very similar to, and in support of, Babi discourse despite the passages critical of Babi beliefs. Whether Najmabadi was in fact a Babi is open to historical speculation, but the formidable contacts between him and the radical anti-Shah Babi elements, and his open defiance of both the Shah and the clerical discourse, greatly differentiates him from the conventional Shi'i clerical discourse.

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Shariati: Religion Vs. Religion

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"Worship you what you yourself carve (Q 37: 95)."

Abstract

Ali Shariati (d. 1977), the famous Iranian sociologist, has deep insights into the histories of religions. Among other insights, his insight that religion has always fought religion and not non-religion is particularly important for the reconstruction of the religious thought in Islam today. It has important implications for intra-faith and interfaith, in general for all religions, but for Islam in particular. If religion has always fought religion, at the intra-faith level, Shariati's insight implies that different Islamic sects may consider if their sect is fighting the Qur'anic religion which has been always the same without any deviation, starting from Adam and will remain the same till last person on the earth. Secondly, they may consider that in the presence of the Book (Qur'an) which calls itself *furqan* (criterion to judge right and wrong; Q 2: 185), is it possible to retrieve Qur'anic religion from the Book *only*, as the Book came to teach and perfect our religion among other things. At the interfaith level, the Qur'anic religion as understood by Shariati, the analysis of this paper's semantic field analysis of *ad-Din* (the Religion) and *din* (religion), and Muhammad Shahrur's analysis of *al-Islam* (universal submission) and *al-Iman* (submission with belief in the Prophet Muhammad(pbuh)) allows the existence of believers of different kinds who can work together in inviting humankind to right and prohibiting wrong. A side note to Shariati's insight will explore how the Qur'an should be read to engage atheists/secularists/non-religious who emerged for the first time in the humankind's history after the European renascence and reformation, fourteenth and sixteenth century ago respectively, if religion has fought religion and not non-religion before that.

Key Words: ad-Din, Din, The Religion, Religion, History of Religions, al-Islam, al-Iman, Ali Shariati, Muhammad Shahrur, Kufr, Shirk, Tawheed, Multitheism.

Introduction

In his August 12and 13, 1970 two lectures at the Husayniyah Center in Tehran, Ali Shariati (d. 1977), famous Iranian sociologist, believed with "clarity and precision" that throughout humankind's history "religion has fought against religion" and not non-religion (Shariati, 2003. 12). In the twenty-first century, at first this may seem a strange proposition. Today, in general, we believe religion's enemy is non-religion/anti-religion/secularism. According to Shariati, the idea of non-religion is only two or three centuries old. It developed when "European intellectuals and seekers of liberation undertook" a "struggle with the church" which liberated "European thought after 1000 years of stagnation" (Shariati, 2003. 69). For Shariati this exception, since the dawn of humankind's social life, about 20,000 or 40,000 years ago, the human story is the story of religion fighting religion.

Shariati's proof for the above fact is history: "there is no historical precedence of a non-religious society. There has been no non-religious human being in any race, in any era, in any phase of social change on any part of the earth" (Shariati, 2003. 22). Alexis Carrel (d. 1944), French surgeon, sociologist, and biologist, confirms Shariati's position: the "history has continuously consisted of societies and these societies were, in a general sense, religiously structured. The pivot, heart and basis of every society was a deity, a religious faith, a prophet or a religious book and even the physical form of every city was a sign of the spiritual condition of the society" (Shariati, 2003. 22)." Since all human societies were religious, therefore, only religion fought religion.

For Shariati the western civilization's exception is due to an error on behalf of the European intellectuals, and now most of the intellectuals of the world. He accepts European intellectuals' judgment about religion as something which "opposes civilization, progress, people and liberty or that it is inattentive to them." The judgment is "based upon objective and precise scholarly studies of the realities and continuous experiences" (Shariati, 2003. 25). Their error is that they "observed religion as being practiced through what sociology of religions calls its "priestly function" of celebrating the status quo, whatever it happens to be, without regard to its being in the right or in the wrong" (Shariati, 2003. 12). As opposed to priestly function of religion, the "prophetic function" of religion came through divinely

selected prophets who acted "as a vehicle of protest against accepted values and present policies of the dominant society" (McNamara, 1996. 31). The Europeans "were not able to separate these two religions from each other whereas these two religions not only have no resemblance to each other, but they are even hostile and contradictory to one another, they continuously, without interruption, throughout history, fought with each other, still do and will continue to do so" (Shariati, 2003. 25-6). Hence, according to Shariati, while Karl Marx may be correct when he observes priestly religion and calls it "opium of the people." However, Andrew Burgess notes in the foreword of *Religion vs. Religion*, Classical Marxism "does not quite know how to account for Islam. By Marxist theory the ideal state is not supposed to be claimed in the Arabian deserts during the seventh century A.D., and a proletarian revolution should not erupt there either" (Shariati, 2003. 7).

The Priestly Function of Religion

Shariati calls the priestly function of religion the "religion of legitimation" or the "religion of multitheism." It legitimates and defends the status quo. It is a religion of discrimination which divides and defends the status quo of "noble and unnoble, master and slave, abased and enslaving, ruler and ruled, captive and free, a group which has an essence, roots, race and is of golden extraction and another group which lacks these. A nation which is more virtuous than another nation. A class which is continuously superior and has preference over another class" (Shariati, 2003. 37-8). The religion of legitimation takes two forms – the first form is of "straight path," and the second form is of multitheism hidden behind the mask of monotheism. The straight path form in the history of religions is "the religion of the worship of beads, the worship of something which is taboo, the worship of Magi, the worship of new lords, the worship of several gods and the worship of spirits" (Shariati, 2003. 41). This form is obvious and easy to detect in the history of religions. The second form is more potent and dangerous. This form appeared whenever "the prophets of monotheism arose and confronted multitheism, multitheism stood against them." If the prophets won, "then multitheism would continue in its hidden form through the followers, successors and those who continued its way in the shape of monotheism" (Shariati, 2003. 41).

The root of the religion of legitimation is economic, i.e., "the ownership of a minority over the abased majority." To maintain the structure of economy in the favor of minority requires this "religion in order to preserve and legitimate itself and eternalize its way of life" (Shariati, 2003. 39-40). It facilitates masses of the people

to "surrender to their abjectness, difficulties, wretchedness and ignorance, surrender to the static situation which they are obliged to have, surrender to the disgraceful fate which they and their ancestors were obliged to have and still have – an inner, ideological surrender" (Shariati, 2003. 40). This religion "continuously denies social power, social control, the responsibility of human beings in their fate, their expectations and the physical, spiritual and instinctive needs of individuals, all to the advantage of the coercive and wealthy forces or holds them in a situation which is continuously oppressive" (Shariati, 2003. 68).[1] Another implication of the religion of legitimation is withholding responsibility. According to Shariati, the responsibility for calling a wrong out is thwarted using the argument: "When He [God] is the judge, then you should not speak. What's it to you who is in the right and who is in the wrong. You carry on with your life" (Shariati, 2003. 40-1).

Throughout the lectures, Shariati brings examples from the history of religions. For example, according to him, in the Sassanian era the Zoroastrian priests, Magis, "dominated over the princes and the military." In this era, "more land was in the hands of the priests than any other landowner." The same is the case with European Christian priests who at times controlled more than seventy percent of the lands. Similar is the case with rabbis of the Israeli tribes, idolatrous tribes, African and Australian witch doctors, "who spoke of the unseen, the astrologers, those who claimed to be the preservers of the existing religion" (Shariati, 2003. 39)." According to Shariati, they all had one thing in common: "They all held hands and moved alongside with the rulers or else they dominated over them." In its second form, multitheism disguised as monotheism, it "rules in the Middle Ages in the name of Jesus and in the name of Moses." In their names "the religion of legitimation, the religion of narcosis, the religion of statics and immobility, the religion of limitations, the religion which is indifferent to the life situation of people which always dominated over human societies throughout history" (Shariati, 2003. 39). In the case of Islam, this deception started very early in Islamic history where most monotheistic rulers, who went to *jihad* and *hajj*, hid their religion of multitheism.

The Prophetic Religion

Shariati terms the prophetic religion a "revolutionary religion." In its Islamic or Abrahamic context, he calls it Monotheism (*tawheed*). While the idea of monotheism is not new, it is the social dimension of *tawheed* which Shariati is more concerned with. According to him, *tawheed* "is the worship of One God, God in the

Name of Awake, Willed, Creator and Determiner of the universe." Among these another quality of the One God "is that which rules over existence and which has Vision and Absolute Awareness of all the universe. At the same time, God is the direction towards which existence and creation moves and He determines the goal of the universe" (Shariati, 2003. 29). Stated negatively, *tawheed* means "all powers, symbols, manifestations, values and signs must be destroyed before Him." Submission to Him alone and not to anything or any person.

The social dimension of *tawheed* then means One God, One Universe, and One Humanity. One humanity implies "a belief in the unity of humanity, the unity of all races, all classes, all families and all individuals, the unity of rights and the unity of honor" (Shariati, 2003. 31). Whereas submission to One God is an invitation to humanity, it is also "to rebel against anything that is other than He." This rebellion is against, "Worship you what you yourself carve out" (Q 37: 95).[2] It may be carving out "Lat or Uzza or a machine or virtues or capital, whether blood or ancestor, whatever it is in any period, these are the idols before Allah, before God." This revolutionary call requires "the ability to criticize life in all its material, spiritual and social aspects. It gives the mission and duty to destroy, to change and to eliminate that which does not accept and believes to be invalid and replaces it with which one knows and recognizes as being truth" (Shariati, 2003. 35). It takes "the form of a movement against the status quo, takes the form of rebellion against defilement and oppression, a rebellion which announces servitude to the creator" (Shariati, 2003. 36).

Hence the two religions, the priestly religion, and the prophetic religion, have always existed in history in conflict with each other. They are two fronts and not allies. "One front has been oppressive, an enemy of progress, truth, justice, the freedom of people, development and civilization." It legitimates greed "to establish its domination over the people and to abase others was itself a religion, not disbelief or non-religion. And the other front was that of the rightful religion and it was revealed to destroy the opposite front" (Shariati, 2003. 70-1). Shariati concludes, "The jihad of history has been the *jihad* of the religion of monotheism which says: '*For you is your religion and for me is my religion*,' against a religion which developed so that the hungry will remain hungry, so that other may continue to plunder their bread by rendering people senseless or insensitive to the plight of their fellow human being" (Shariati, 2003. 71-2).

Psychological Idols at Individual Level

According to Shariati, psychological idols are not status that one carves. Rather, it is carving out, "Your rank? Your reputation? Your position? Your wealth? Your home? Your garden? Your automobile? Your beloved? Your family? Your knowledge? Your title? Your art? Your spirituality? Your dress? Your fame? Your sign? Your soul? Your youth? Your beauty" (Shariati, 2003. 14). All these are idols as they hold back your full attachment to God: "weakens you upon the way of faith;" "calls you to stop in your movement" towards God; "brings doubt to your responsibility;" sets "your heart upon which does not allow you to hear the message in order to admit the Truth;" "causes you to flee;" "leads towards justification, legitimation and compromise-seeking hermeneutics and love which makes you blind and deaf" (Shariati, 2003. 14,).[3] In short, uttering belief in one God is easy but to actualize it in one's life is full of difficulties. These are not external difficulties, but the difficulties are within oneself. We can say there is a god in our self that wants us to obey it. Breaking this god first is required before one could attempt to break gods at the socio-political level.

Idols at Social and Political Level

For Shariati, social multitheism "refers to numerous races, groups, classes and families in human society. Each family, race and nation had an idol, a god who belonged particularly to them. The worship of these various gods, that is, the belief that society is built upon races, classes, groups and various clans, means each have their exclusive rights, their own authenticity" (Shariati, 2003. 54).

At the political level, the real issue is the lordship or sovereignty over people and not on God as the creator God. According to Shariati, "Even people like Nimrod, the Pharaoh, etc. did not claim to be the Creator but rather claimed to be the lord or sovereign of the people" (Shariati, 2003. 55). He asks why is it like that? It is so to dominate fellow human beings. Domination over other human beings brings extra benefits to the powerful. It requires to "separate humanity," divide human race "in order to divide up the unity of human society or a tribal society and a nation into classes and groups which were polarized into the form of ruler and ruled, those who have and those who are abased" (Shariati, 2003. 55).

In conclusion, Shariati believes, "Two basic religions have existed in history, two groups, two fronts." One front has been to "legitimate greed and deviated instincts and to establish its domination over the people" and is a religion on its

own. It is not a non-religion or disbelief but requires servitude of idols that human beings carve out themselves or societies carve out for them. The other front is "the rightful religion and it was revealed to destroy the opposite front" (Shariati, 2003. 70-1). It is the religion of the prophets who brought it through divine revelations. The essence of the prophetic religion is no god but one God. It requires the servitude (*'abudiat*) of one God only and frees humanity from all manmade servitudes – psychological or domination and oppression of one group of humans over the others at the socio-political level. It is a message of absolute freedom for humanity with only submission to one God – the creator, owner, and regulator of the whole creation.

The Qur'anic ad-Din Vs. Din

In the following we will look at the Qur'anic concept of *ad-Din* (the Religion) and deviations from it. Based on this discussion we will show that Shariati's insight, religion has always fought religion, is supported by the Qur'an through the analysis of the Qur'anic term *ad-Din* and *din*. The triliteral root *da ya nun* is used one hundred one times in the Qur'an. We will concentrate on *din* in the sense of religion as opposed to the Day of Judgment. *Din* in the sense of religion is used seventy-nine times in the Qur'an. In the following we will analyze its use in all seventy-nine places.

The Qur'anic Rational about *ad-Din*

The Qur'anic rational about *ad-Din* is simple. God is the Lord of all the worlds (Q 1: 2), therefore everything submits to Him. Human beings are His creation therefore they should also submit to Him. "To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and earth; His is the religion forever. Then will you fear other than God" (Q 16: 52). The context of this ayah is: has humankind "not regarded all things that God has created casting their shadows to the right and to the left, bowing themselves before God in all lowliness? To God bows everything in the heavens, and every creature crawling on the earth, and the angels. They have not waxed proud" (*yastakbiroon*; Q 16: 49). God asks in amazement, "What, do they desire another religion than God's, and to Him has surrendered whoso is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they shall be returned" (Q 3: 83); or "have they associates who have laid down for them as religion that for which God gave not leave (Q 42: 21);" or "Say [Muhammad (pbuh)[4]]: 'What, would you teach God what your religion is, and God knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth? And God has knowledge of everything'" (Q 49: 16). From this, we have three

important ideas about *din* in its conception of *tawheed* (oneness of God). First, *tawheed* requires complete submission to one God in all dimensions of humankind's affairs. That is, not only the human beings as individuals must submit to one God but the whole society must also submit to God's commands; second, the biggest hurdle in submitting to God as a person or as a society is humankind's *istikbar* (being proud or having hubris). Most human beings consider themselves independent beings rather than dependent beings on God and do not take the attitude of humility; they fear the powerful in the human world instead of fearing God. Hence, while submitting to one God may be an easy proposition, it is filled with internal and external resistive forces. That is why "every nation purposed against their Messenger to seize him, and disputed with falsehood that they might rebut thereby the truth" (Q 40: 5)!

The Qur'anic Concept of The Religion (*ad-Din*) and religion(s) (*din*, pl. *adyan*)

The complete submission to one God is the Religion (*ad-Din*). Any deviation from the Religion creates a religion (*din*). Therefore, the Religion has always remained one while religions have been many. For example, God "laid down for you as religion that He charged Noah with, and that We have revealed to thee, and that We charged Abraham with, Moses and Jesus" (Q 42: 13); "being the creed of your father Abraham; He named you Muslims" (Q 22: 7); "And Abraham charged his sons with this and Jacob likewise: 'My sons, God has chosen for you the [R]eligion; see that you die not save in surrender'" (Q 2: 172). Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was asked to declare, "my Lord has guided me to a straight path, a right religion, the creed of Abraham, a man of pure faith; he was no idolater (*mushriq*)" (Q 6: 161).[5] From this, those who submit to one God are called Muslims. The submitters to one God can be of many types. For example, the submitters who believe in the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) ("Muslim"[6] believers), the submitters who believe in the prophethood of all prophets before Jesus (Jews), the submitters who believe in Jesus and all prophets before him (Christians), etc.[7] One key point to note here is that the submitters to one God who believe in the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) are called Muslims, and not Salafi, ahl-Hadith, Hanafi, Deobandi, Sunni, or Shi'a, etc.

All Humanity is Born on The Religion

The Qur'an calls the Religion: Islam (Q 3: 19) or *Din al-Qayyam* (straight or true *din*; Q 9: 36)[8] or *Din al-Haqq* (the religion of Truth) or *Din* Allah. All humanity is born on this religion: "So set thy face to the [R]eligion, a man of pure faith [*hanif*] – God's original upon which He originated mankind. There is no changing God's

creation. That is the right religion; but most men know it not" (Q 30: 30). Though the Religion has always remained the same, it has gone through a process of perfection. With the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), God "perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam for your religion" (Q 5: 3). The *ayah* (verse) is in the context of certain legal injunctions. These injunctions include: "Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which hath been invoked the name of other than Allah; that which hath been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by being gored to death; that which hath been (partly) eaten by a wild animal; unless ye are able to slaughter it (in due form); that which is sacrificed on stone (altars); (forbidden) also is the division (of meat) by raffling with arrows: that is impiety" (Q 30: 30). Therefore, the perfection of the Religion is in terms of legal injunctions but not the core of the Religion, i.e., submission to only one God. The sovereignty of God at the political level requires submission to God in legal injunctions.[9] This dimension of the Religion becomes clear in the story of the prophet Yousuf (pbuh). When Yousuf (pbuh) held his younger brother hostage in his court acting as the manager of the Egyptian king, he is presented in the Qur'an as acting upon the religion of the king (*ad-Din al-Malik*, Q 12: 76). Therefore, *Din al-Haqq* requires its authority and supremacy over law making in the human world.

The Religion and Believers

The submitters to one God who also believe in the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the last prophet are called believers (*mu'minun*) in the Qur'an. They are empathetically ordered, "set thy face to the true religion [*Din al Qayyam*] before there comes a day from God that cannot be turned back; on that day they shall be sundered apart" (Q 30: 43);[10] "Say, [O Muhammad], 'Indeed, I have been commanded to worship [*a'buda*] Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion'" (Q 39: 11). The sincerity should be of the quality like, "when the waves cover them like shadows [in their ships in sea] they call upon God, making their religion sincerely His" (Q 31: 32). The one who has the best Religion is "he who submits his will to God being a good-doer, and who follows the creed of Abraham, a man of pure faith" (Q 4: 125)? God asks, "It is not for the believers to go forth totally [in fight with those who fight them in their Religion]; but why should not a party of every section of them go forth, to become learned in religion, and to warn their people when they return to them, that haply they may beware. In the case of hypocrites (those who profess to believe but do not actually believe) if they "repent, and make amends, and hold fast to God, and make their religion sincerely God's; those are with the believers" (Q 4: 146). Same is the case with idolaters (*musrikun*), "Yet if

they repent, and perform the prayer, and pay the alms, then they are your brothers in religion" (Q 9: 11). The believers are not to believe "any but him who follows your religion" (Q 3: 73). Hence, believers have no choice but to follow the Religion while also believing in the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Their identity and existence are at stake if they do not submit to God with complete sincerity, no matter what the whole world may think about them.

Negatively, there are dire consequences for the believers if they do not follow the Religion sincerely. At the individual level, if they turn from their Religion, and die "disbelieving – their works have failed in this world and the next; those are the inhabitants of the Fire; therein they shall dwell forever" (Q 2: 217). At the collective level, "whosoever of you [believer] turns from his religion, God will assuredly bring a people He loves, and who love Him, humble towards the believers, disdainful towards the unbelievers (*kafirun*), men who struggle in the path of God, not fearing the reproach of any reproacher" (Q 5: 54). The believers can be replaced by other believers if they do not struggle in the path of God and make His name the highest in the human world as it is in the heavens. Believers shall not take the attitude of previous Muslim *ummah* (nation; the Jews and Christians). For example, they should not believe, "The Fire shall not touch us, except for a number of days; and the lies they forged has deluded them in their religion" (Q 3: 24); do not "pervert words from their meanings, … twisting with their tongues and traducing religion" (Q 4: 46); do not go "beyond the bounds in your religion, and say not as to God but the truth" (Q 4: 171), e.g., do not say Jesus is three in one; do not follow "the caprices of a people who went astray before, and led astray many, and now again have gone astray from the right way" (Q 5: 77); do not take "as your friends [*awlia*, upon whom one depends] those of them, who were given the Book before you, and the unbelievers [*kafirun*], who take your religion in mockery and as a sport" (Q 5: 57); "Leave alone those who take their religion for a sport and a diversion, and whom the present life has deluded" (Q 6: 70, 7: 51); they should not make "divisions in their religion and become sects" (Q 6: 159); or "of those who have divided up their religion, and become sects, each several party rejoicing in what is theirs" (Q 30: 32); or "Perform the religion, and scatter not regarding it" (Q 42: 13); and finally, they should not become the like of multitheists whose associates "have decked out fair to many idolaters to slay their children, to destroy them, and to confuse their religion for them" (Q 6: 137). That is, something so horrible to instinctive human nature that their associates have made it look fair to them in their eyes or confuse them in their religion. The conclusion is the same, the believers have committed to God, even if the whole world may not submit to God.

The Only Choice for the Believers

Based upon the above, the believers have *no choice* but to set their "face to the religion, [and become] a man [woman] of pure faith," and be not of the like of idolaters (Q 10: 105).[11] It does not matter if the whole world criticizes them or fights them in following their religion, they are ordained to live their life based on the Religion. There could be *no compromise on this matter* as far as believers are concerned. So, the believers should not be shy about it and declare their commitment to God openly and freely. However, there is no compulsion in the Religion for others to follow the Religion because "[r]ectitude has become clear from error" (Q 2: 256). Hence, the believers should follow their religion and let non-believers follow their religion: "To you your religion, and to me my religion" (Q 109: 6)! Though humankind must remember, "Whoso desires another religion than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him; in the next world he shall be among the losers" (Q 3: 85). The Qur'an makes it very clear that the Religion needs domination (in a society where believers are in majority): "It is He who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth (*Din al-Haqq*), that He may uplift it above every religion, though the unbelievers be averse" (Q 9: 33).[12] In this regard, the believers may face four kinds of people who oppose their submission to God: i) *Kafirun* who are also *Zalimun* (unjust), ii) *Kafirun* who do not forbid believers following the Religion, iii) the people of the Book who do not follow their religion, iv) the people of the Book who follow their religion, and v) people who accept the political domination of the believers but *iman* (belief) has not entered their heart (Q 49: 14). The first group, the *kafirun* who are *zalimun*, "will never cease fighting you until they turn you back from your religion (Islamic Monotheism) if they can" (Q 2: 217). Therefore, conflict with them is unavoidable. In this case, God forbids that "who have fought you in *religion's cause* [e.g. not let you practice your religion; my emphasis], and expelled you from your habitations, and have supported in your expulsion, that you should take them for friends" (Q 60: 9); the believers should "Fight them, till there is no persecution and the religion is God's; then if they give over, there shall be no enmity save for evildoers [*zalimun*]" (Q 2: 193).[13] The second group of *kafirun* "who have not fought you in *religion's cause,* nor expelled you from your habitations, that you should be kind to them, and act justly towards them; surely God loves the just" (Q 60: 9). The third group, the people of the Book who do not follow their religion, i.e., "who believe not in God and the Last Day and do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden," the believers should fight them till "they pay the tribute out of hand and have been humbled" (Q 9: 29). The fourth group, the people of the Book who believe in God,

Day of Judgement, and who forbid what God and his messenger has forbidden, may not have to pay the tribute as they are already part of the *Muslimun* (submitters to God). The last category of submitters is interesting. They are the people who have politically submitted in a state where God is sovereign but *iman* has not entered their heart, are treated as the allies of the believers with the hope that eventually their hearts will turn towards the Religion. The case of Bedouins seems to fit this category: "The Bedouins say, 'We believe.' Say: 'You do not believe; rather say, 'We surrender'; for belief has not yet entered your hearts" (Q 49: 14). At the time of the Prophet this group included most of the Arab tribes who entered Islam towards the end of the Prophet's mission (Q 110: 2). Finally, the Qur'an makes it binding upon the believers that if "they [the believers in another country] seek help of you for *the religion*, then you must help, except against a people between yourselves and whom is a treaty" (Q 8: 72). From the above it is clear that for believers acting and establishing the Religion is a serious matter and they cannot accept any compromise in the case of their religion.

Implications of The Religion vs. religions in Intra-faith and Interfaith

i)   Intra-faith

From Shariati's insight and Qur'anic use of the Religion one thing is clear: when the prophets and their followers call for and practice the Religion, the *mala'* ("The wealthy aristocrats who are representative of the coercive forces in society. It refers to people who walk with arrogance and haughtiness" (Shariati, 2003. 78)) or *mutrifs* ("Insatiable people who live in ease and luxury who accept no religious, human or ethical responsibility for society because their arrogance which is born from their wealth puts them above any sense of responsibility" (Shariati, 2003. 78-9)) fight them to the point of their annihilation. Today, then the question is why in the presence of 1.8 billion Muslims confessing the Religion do not face the same fate as the prophets and their companions or why they are unable to dominate the Religion in their society where they are in a majority as the Qur'an requires? Is the problem in their acting upon the Religion or if their concepts of religion are deviations from the Religion? Historically, the "Muslim" answer has been, at least for the last three hundred years[14] in South Asian Islam, that "Muslims" are morally and spiritually weak or they are not acting upon their religion properly or fully. The solution: try to make them "good or practicing Muslims." For example, the two giants of Islamic reform in India, Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanvi (d. 1943) and Mawlana Ahmad Raza

Khan Barelvi (d. 1921), both scholars' reform agenda was based on an "'inward turn' focusing on cultivating a perfect Islamic life and practice instead of involving themselves with the external exigencies of British rule and impending modernity" (Naeem, 2009. 438).[15] Though they continued their public role outwardly as "a dialectic of internalization and externalization. The psyche, or in Sufi parlance, *nafs*, the soul or self, internalizes what it receives from the outward and then, in turn, externalizes that into the *polis*, or society, and the process keeps repeating itself" (Naeem, 2009. 438). Thanvi and Barelvi both are essentially scholars of fiqh who turned towards Sufism for the spiritual and moral purification of the Muslim masses of India. This created what Fuad S. Naeem, a Georgetown University scholar, calls "alim-Sufi amalgam" that formed "the *''Ulama''*" and the Sufis into a synthesis where they are devolved into a single person who is both fully an "alim and fully a Sufi" (Naeem, 2009. 436). However, even the end of legal and spiritual bifurcation failed to change the "Muslim" moral and spiritual condition. As a matter of fact, it resulted in sectarianism of the worse kind in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. This forces us to consider the possibility of deviation in the belief system of the "Muslims," i.e., a deviation from The Religion. As we noted in the above, the Qur'an is not ambiguous in identifying what it means by the Religion. Therefore, the "Muslim" *ummah* has a standard to compare their imaginaries of religion with the Religion and correct what they carve out with their own hands (Q 37: 95). There can be no "Muslim" unity unless there is unity on what the Religion is and what it asks of us.

Naeem believes "similar examples can be found in many other areas of the Islamic world where Islamic revivalism has been spearheaded by figures deeply immersed in and informed by Sufi discourses" (Naeem, 2009. 437). I may point out one exception to this rule. In the Arab world *'Ulama'* reform movement took the shape of Salafism, an anti-Sufi movement. The movement calls for a return to the tradition of *salaf* (ancestors), particularly the first three generations of "Muslims" after the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). To them, this represents the most pure and pristine Islam. The school emerged in the middle of nineteenth century.[16] It finds it roots in the thought of Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328), Ibn Qayyim (d. 1350), Ibn Kathir (d. 1373), etc.[17] The movement spread throughout the "Muslim" world, including the west with the help of Arab financial resources. Muhammad Shahrur, a contemporary Syrian Muslim scholar, has a particular critique of this movement which supports Shariati's insight and the Qur'anic conception of the Religion. In the introduction to *The Essential Muhammad Shahrur* by Andreas Christmann, he points out that for Shahrur "Looking nostalgically backwards to the time of

Muhammad, *Salafi* Islam is non-ethical *al-iman*[18] [it has only beliefs but no ethical values and hence non-ethical] that clouds people's rational minds and obscures their moral understanding of life. But ethical religion is rational, concerned with humankind's future, and composed of human values that are intrinsic to human nature" (Christmann, 2009. xxix). To prove his point, Shahrur considers *al-Islam*[19] a universal (the Religion) and *al-Iman* a particular expression of *al-Islam* in the time of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in his space, time, and socio-historic context.

Though Shahrur's proposition is controversial, in its extreme form, as it may end up restricting the traditional five pillars of Islam to the time of the Prophet Muhammad, we do need to pay attention to his rational with the objective to reject controversial aspect of his thought. For Shahrur, *al-Islam* is a religion shared by the entire universe (and not just by the inhabitants of our globe); The religion of al-Islam and life as a muslim cannot be identified with Muhammad's (s) messengerhood, nor with any other prophetical message: We hear that Noah was a muslim, as were Abraham, Joseph, Jacob, Solomon, Moses, and Jesus. They all were muslims in spite of the fact that they were not contemporaries of Muhammad (s) and never performed the rituals he prescribed.; *Al-Islam* is the only heavenly religion that humankind has ever known; 41:33 tells us that al-Islam is based on the axiomatic truth of Allah's existence and belief in the Hereafter. It is linked to 'doing what is righteous' (*al- 'Amal al-Salih*) and, because *al-Islam* is the generic term that includes the particular, to 'doing what is fair and just' (*al-Ihsan*), the pillar of *al-Iman*. If someone 'does what is righteous' he is one of the *musliman* ('those who assent to God'), and it does not matter whether he is – as 2:62 says – a follower of Muhammad (s) ('the believers'), a follower of Moses ('the Jews'), a follower of Jesus ('the Christians'), or whether he follows any other religious creed or religious community of whatever name ('the Sabians'), (Christmann, 2009. 30).

The above essentially is what we found in our study of the Religion in the Qur'an in this paper. Thus, for Shahrur, the pillars of *al-Islam* are: "1) Belief in the existence of one God, 2) Belief in the Hereafter 3. 'Doing what is righteous' (*al- 'Amal al-Salih*)." For him, the conventional five pillars of Islam as argued by the "Muslim" tradition, are the pillars of *al-Iman*. They are so as *al-Islam* with the belief in the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) becomes a particularity in the universality of *al-Islam*.

Thus, as far as intra-faith is concerned at least for the "Muslim" believers, the Book of God is present among them. It is the criterion (*furqan*) for deciding what is right and what is wrong (Q 2: 185). Shariati's insight, the semantic study of *ad-Din*

and *din* in the Qur'an, and Shahror's analysis clearly show that "Muslims" should consider the possibility that their sectarian understandings of Islam may be deviations from the Religion. The presence of the Book implies that all "Muslims" can gather on the Book's conception of the Religion and become submitters only to God than to their commitment to any sect.

ii)   Interfaith

The Qur'anic notion of the Religion can bring believers of different kinds into submitters of one God, if they believe in one God, the Day of Judgement, and doing good works. These believers can come together to join hands in doing good and forbidding bad. But what shall we call those who are not submitters? We find no Qur'anic word that describes the atheists or secularists as Shariati demonstrated there existed no society which did not believe in god(s). *Kafir* is the closest name that can be given to an atheist. However, the Qur'anic use of *kafir* involves a religious person though such person's idea of deity is questionable. A *kafir* in its Qur'anic use is a *mushriq* (a polytheist). For example, "'They [the believers] shall serve Me [*yabadooni*], not associating [doing *shirk*] with Me anything.' Whoso disbelieves [*kafara*] after that, those - they are the ungodly [*fasiqoon*; "rebellious," "disobedient to God"]. Similarly, the Qur'an calls the people of Mecca who did not follow the Religion of the Prophet, *kafiroon*, while the Meccans believed in Allah and considered themselves religious people (Q 109: 1-6). Hence, accor*din*g to the Qur'an, the only choice for a human being is either to be a submitter to one God (the Religion), or else a *mushriq*, i.e., having a version of a religion deviated from the Religion. Shariati defines a *kafir* as someone who denies or covers "over the truth of religion and [that] is itself a kind of religion." Therefore, it can be "translated as ingratitude, disbelief, infidelity or atheism" (Sharaiti, 2003. 78). However, since there is no compulsion in the Religion, not all *kuffar* (sing. *kafir*) are equal. Some of them or may be most of them use their right not to believe in God or gods but they let other believe in and act upon whatever they want to believe. There is though a minority among the *kuffar* who do not believe in God and declare that they would not allow others to believe in God. It is these *kuffar* the Qur'an calls *al-mujrimoon* (from *al-Ijram*, a dissent from God) which is the opposite of *al-musliman* (those who assent to God).

Conclusion

Shariati's insight that the Religion is one and religions are many along with the idea that it is religion that has always fought the Religion requires the "Muslims" to re-

evaluate their beliefs and practices in the light of The Religion and entertain the notion that the real cause of their downfall is not that they are not good "Muslims" but that what they think is the Religion may mistakenly be a religion. They may also consider that they have a perfect tool in the form of the Qur'an that is the criterion *furqan* which can bring them back to the Religion of the Book. In this way they may stop believing what they carve from their own hands or invent names that are just names (Q 12: 40).

Note

1. Irfan A. Khan (d. 2018), a "Muslim" philosopher and significant Qur'anic scholar, calls the social responsibility of submission to one God: social dimension of *tawheed*. By this he means no servitude (*'abudiah*) of man over man is acceptable as servitude belongs to God only, in *Reflections on the Qur'an: Understanding Surahs Al-Fatihah and Al-Baqarah* (Leicestershire, UK: Islamic Foundation, 2005).

2. All translations of Qur'anic verses are from Arthur John Arberry; https://corpus.quran.com/.

3. Ali Shariati, *Hajj Reflection on Its Rituals*, trans. Laleh Bakhtiar (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2007).

4. Peace be upon him (pbuh), customary salutations for the Prophet.

5. Also, Q 42: 13, 22: 78, 2: 132, and 6: 161. The reward in the world if a people follow the Religion: they will be made rulers in the world (Q 24: 55).

6. Muslim is a generic term in the Qur'an for anyone who submits to one God. When I use "Muslim" it means a particular group of believers who became submitters after believing in the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), i.e., the current Muslim *ummah* (nation).

7. Also see, Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (MA: Harvard University Press, 2012). Donner proposes that the

Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) movement was a call to monotheism and good behavior which included other believers like the Jews and Christians.

8. For *Din al Qiyyam* also see: Q 12: 40, 98: 5, 30: 30, and 30: 43.

9. Q 5: 3, 9: 36 & 24: 2 are also some injunctions tied to the Religion.

10. Also see: Q 10: 22, 7: 29, 29: 65, 31: 32, 39: 2-3, 39: 11, 39: 14, 40: 14, 40: 65, and 98: 5.

11. Also see Q 10: 104, 12: 40, 109: 6, and 16: 52.

12. Also see Q 48: 28 and 61: 9.

13. Also see Q 8: 39 and 9: 12.

14. I take the movement of Shah Wali Ullah Delhawali (d.1762 CE) as the starting point of reform in South East Asia in our context.

15. Fuad S. Naeem, "Sufism and Revivalism in South Asia: Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanvi of Deoband and Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan of Bareilly and Their Paradigms of Islamic Revivalism," *The Muslim World*, V. 99, pp. 435-51.

16. Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trial of Political Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

17. Oliver Leaman, *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia* (Liden: Brill, 2006), 632.

18. By unethical *al-iman*, Shahrur means traditional tenants of *iman*, i.e., belief in "Allah, His angels, His books and messengers, The Hereafter, Allah's divine predestination and His power over good and evil" (Christmann, 2009. 22).

19. For Shahrur, the pillars of universal *al-Islam* are three: "the axiomatic truth of Allah's existence and belief in the Hereafter. It is linked to 'doing what is righteous' (*al- 'amal al-salih*) and, because *al-Islam* is the generic term that includes the particular, to 'doing what is fair and just' (*al-Ihsan*)" (Christmann, 2009. 30). He believes the traditional pillars of Islam are actually pillars of *al-Iman* (*al-Islam* with belief in the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)), i.e., "The *shahada*: the creedal statement that 'there is no god but God' and that 'Muhammad is the Messenger of God'; 2. *salah*: the ritual to pray five times a day; 3. *zakah*: the duty to donate money as a 'poor due' or 'alms tax'; 4. *saum*: the fast during the month of Ramadan; 5. *Hajj*: the pilgrimage to Mecca 'for those who have the means to do so' (3:97)" (Christmann, 2009. 30).

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