Islamic Perspective

Journal of the Islamic Studies and Humanities

Volume 28, Winter 2022

The Institute for Critical Social Theory

Manuscript Submission

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Aims & Scope

The Journal of Islamic Perspective is a peer reviewed publication of the Institute for Critical Social Theory, and aims to create a dialogue between intellectuals, thinkers and writers from the Islamic World and academics, intellectuals, thinkers and writers from other parts of the Globe. Issues in the context of Culture, Islamic Thoughts & Civilizations, and other relevant areas of social sciences, humanities and cultural studies are of interest and we hope to create a global platform to deepen and develop these issues in the frame of a Critical Perspective. Our motto is homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto. Contributions to Islamic Perspective do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial board or the Center for Humanities and Sociological Studies. The mailing address of the journal is:

Dr. S. J. Miri Institute for Critical Social Theory, 320 S. Main St, Olivet, MI, 49076,
Tel: +1-279-749-7382,

This Journal was printed in USA.
ISSN-2046-8946

To order additional copies of this Journal, contact

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Islamic Perspective
Journal of the Islamic Studies and Humanities
Volume 28, Winter 2022

Contents

Articles

Islamic Perspective, Vol. 28 1-38
The Institute for Critical Social Theory, 2022

Neo-Eurasianism as Ideology of Empire:

Alexander Dugin and Russia's War on Ukraine

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Abstract

Russia's war on Ukraine is more than just a territorial dispute between two former Soviet Republics. It is a war born of religious and philosophical significance. For Russia, this greater spiritual importance is rooted in the political philosophy and political theology of Neo-Eurasianism. Not only did this ideology take the place of Marxism as the guiding political thought of the Russian state after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but it also currently animates Putin's territorial claims upon Russia's neighboring states, most importantly Ukraine. The most influential and prolific Neo-Eurasianist thinker is the Moscow-based philosopher, Alexander Dugin, who developed his version of Neo-Eurasianism from a variety of sources, most of which can be located within the intellectual pantheon of the Far-Right, including many thinkers associated with Germany's Third Reich. I claim that Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism, which via metapolitics has profoundly affected Putin's Kremlin, is a form of Russian imperialist fascism. In this essay, I trace the sources of Neo-Eurasianism within a variety of far-right and fascist thinkers, including Martin Heidegger, Carl Schmitt, Julius Evola, René Guénon, and Alain de Benoist, demonstrating that the geist of Russia's war on Ukraine is a war of fascist aggression against an emerging liberal-democratic state in an attempt to reconstruct the territorial borders of the former Russian Empire in order to fulfill Russia's self-declared messianic role in the world.[1]

Key Words: Alexander Dugin, Vladimir Putin, Neo-Eurasianism, Fascism, Carl Schmitt, Julius Evola, René Guénon, Martin Heidegger, Alain de Benoist.

War on Ukraine

On February 24, 2022, the armed forces of the Russian Federation invaded its neighboring country, the independent democratic Republic of Ukraine. From their training grounds in Alexander Lukashenko's Belarus, Vladimir Putin's army cross the Ukrainian border and attempted to seize the capitol of Kyiv. With their special forces, the Russian regime sought to decapitate the Ukrainian government by removing the democratically elected President, Volodymyr Zelensky. Many Western analysts were taken aback by Putin's audacious invasion. They refused to believe that he would follow through with his threats, choosing to take comfort in the Russian propaganda that denied the imminent invasion. While Putin and his administration, including his truculent Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, denied that their military buildup to the north, east, and south (in the Crimea) of Ukraine was an invasion force, others who had studied the prevailing political philosophy of Putin's Kremlin were positive of the opposite: Putin was going to attack, and we knew why. The date for commencement of the "Special Military Operation," as it was called in Moscow, had already been set: it would occur immediately after the end of the Winter Olympics in China. And so, it did.

Why was it that some political philosophers and political scientists could see through the Kremlin's invasion denials while others, including many European heads-of-state, could not see the reality of war right before their eyes? Why did these analysts agree with the U.S. President Joe Biden when he warned repeatedly of Russia's imminent attack, whereas other prominent voices in the U.S. and Europe argued that Putin was not "crazy" enough to invade? They said it would be "too costly for Russia"; Putin is only "bluffing"; it is merely Russia attempting to "intimidate" a young and inexperienced Ukrainian president. They were wrong, and some of us knew they were wrong. The war was coming, and indeed it came on that cold day in February.

What disclosed to these political analysts the reality of Russia's oncoming war on Ukraine? From my experience as a political philosopher, keenly interested in the Slavic world, understanding the Kremlin's prevailing political philosophy and the *necessity* for territorial expansion it imposes on Vladimir Putin was key to accurately predicting the war. The war came because it *had to come*; it was the

necessity of history as understood by Neo-Eurasianist philosophy, and therefore by Putin. It was only a matter of choosing the right time to invade the former Soviet Republic of Ukraine.

Crimea

I first came into contact with Neo-Eurasianist thought when I traveled to Ukraine as a graduate student in 2003 for a conference on "Religion and Civil Society" in Yalta, Crimea. I didn't know much about Ukraine at the time, other than the fact that only twelve years prior it was an integral part of the Soviet Union, that it now was a struggling democracy in which corruption seemed to be endemic throughout society. Over the years, I and my colleagues, including my *doktorvater*, Prof. Dr. Rudolf J. Siebert, had to bribe Ukrainian police officers just to do basic things like park our car at Alupka Palace. We surmised that if it was this corrupt at the lowest levels of civil society, then corruption must be cancerous in the state as well. Despite the annoyances we endured, along with the flight debacles in Kyiv, as well as the lack of pedestal toilets in some places, I returned to Ukraine many times between 2003 and 2013, all the time having our conference at the Sanatorium Pogranichnik, perched in the mountains overlooking Yalta. With each trip, we visited various places, including Simferopol, Sevastopol, Alushta, the Artek (a famous Soviet Young Pioneer camp), where one year I met traumatized students who had survived the 2004 Beslan massacre. Our guides brought us to Livadia Palace, Vorontsov (Alupka) Palace, the Bakhchisaray, the Swallow's Nest (castle), a Tartar cultural center, and the botanical gardens, among many other places on the sub-tropical Peninsula. We dined on wonderful food from the Black Sea and enjoyed the wine from the famous Massandra Winery. Our experiences were enriched by the company of professors, students, musicians, and translators that always surrounded us. In 2003, I lectured on the subject of the Iraq War to eager students at Tavrida National University in Simferopol at the invitation of Prof. Dr. Tatiana Senyushkina, a specialist in ethnic-based conflict, who also served as the co-director of the conference in Yalta. The Ukrainian students overwhelmingly rejected the U.S.'s invasion of Iraq, but they were nevertheless willing to listen to me, an American graduate student explaining to them why Americans supported the war in the Middle East, which I did not. Despite my joy of visiting these many places, my time in the Crimea disclosed one very important reality about this area of the world: the Crimea was still contested, and one could feel it in the air.

At the time of my first visits to Ukraine, I did not know the Russian or Ukrainian language, but my translators, always named Darya (Dasha) for some reason, were quick to tell me when they were speaking either. It was news to me that the Crimea was claimed by both Ukraine and Russia, and that the population, which I perceived as being fairly homogenous, was actually divided among ethnic lines, and therefore disagreed as to whom the Crimea truly belonged. Was the Crimea rightfully Ukrainian, or should it be "returned" to Russia, as it was a possession of the former Russian Empire?[2] Should it remain with Ukraine, as it had been since 1954, when the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet transferred it to the administration of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic? And what to do with Tartar population, who resided in the Crimea even prior to the Russians and Ukrainians, and who had only recently returned to the Crimea after Stalin deported them en masse during the Great Patriotic War (WWII)? Is the peninsula truly theirs, as it was before Czarina Catherine the Great incorporated it into the Russian Empire in 1783? These topics came up repeatedly over the years that I visited Ukraine and sparked numerous debates. However, that all came to an end when Vladimir Putin's "little green men" seized the peninsula in February of 2014 in response to the Euromaidan protests in Kyiv.[3] These protests resulted in Ukraine's pro-Russian fourth President, Viktor Yanukovych, abdicating his presidency and fleeing to Russia. He had previously skuttled the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement, after being pressured by Moscow. Against the wishes of the majority of the Ukrainian people, Yanukovych chose Putin's authoritarian Russia over the EU, and hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, from the far-left to the far-right, took their protests to the streets of Kyiv. In the bitter cold of winter, the protests were violently suppressed by the *Berkut* (riot police) before Yanukovych gathered as much money as he could and fled to his safe haven in Moscow. Just a month after Putin's military seizure, the Crimea held a referendum, "voted" for independence, and was subsequently incorporated into the Russian Federation.[4] While the majority Russian-speaking population in the Crimea celebrated the "reunification" with the "motherland," the ethnic Ukrainians and Tartars lamented the return to life under the rule of Moscow.[5] In response to the "illegal annexation" of the Crimea, as it was described by most world leaders, the Obama administration signed Executive Orders 13660, 13661, and 13662, which effectively prohibited U.S. citizens from visiting the now "occupied" territory. My time in the Crimea had come to an end. I could no longer return, as it would be a defacto recognition that a part of Ukraine had "legitimately" become Russia.

Political-Ideological Metanoia

My experiences in Ukraine led me to study more closely not only the Russian language, but also the prevailing political philosophy of Vladimir Putin and the thinkers his regime draws from. Having studied the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory, I was well versed in Marxism, and had a good understanding of Soviet history, but post-Soviet political philosophy was still relatively obscure for me. It was clear that Russia had not become the liberal-democracy that many in the West had hoped it would become. Although Putin's Moscow and St. Petersburg seemed to have all the consumer trappings of London, Paris, Berlin, and Rome, Russia's politics took a decidedly anti-liberal-democratic stance soon after Putin ascended to power after Boris Yeltsin's resignation in 1999. This transfer of power came at an auspicious time: violent crime was rampant in Russian cities; capitalists had all but stolen the wealth of the nation by buying up pennies-on-the-dollar what was earlier nationalized Soviet industry and natural resources; Chechens rebels were still fighting for independence from Russia, often through terrorist attacks, and millions of Russians were looking back to the Soviet Union with nostalgia, wondering if the experiment in liberal democracy was worth the incessant misery. If democratic post-Soviet Russia was to succeed, it needed strong leadership; leadership that would end the social, political, and economic chaos indicative of the 1990s, and restore the Russian people's faith in their country. The man to do that, so thought the then Russian President Boris Yeltsin, was Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin.

Putin came into power as a Westward looking behind-the-scenes bureaucrat, who was "open to the possibility of Russia joining NATO and the European Union" (Figes, 2022: 283-286). Although a former KGB officer and the chief of the FSB (Federal Security Service), he was not a hardline communist wanting to return Russia to the glorious past of the Soviet Union. He famously said in 2000, "anyone who doesn't miss the Soviet Union has no heart. And anyone who wants it back has no brain" (Eltchaninoff, 2018: 22). Rather, Putin looked to rebuild Russia to the standards of the West without being wholly absorbed into the West. He remained cautiously suspicious of his Western counterparts, especially the expansion of NATO into former Warsaw Pact states. At this time in the early 2000s, it would not be accurate to call Putin a "democrat" or a "liberal," but he was willing to work with democrats and liberals for the betterment of post-Soviet Russia (Eltchaninoff, 2018: 1-27). However, something drastic happened to Putin in the mid-2000s that led him to abandon any pretense of being a Western-style democratic "reformist." He increasingly appeared to embrace a worldview that was expansionist, imperial,

hyper-conservative, and aggressive towards the West. This about-face was best exemplified in Putin's 2007 "Munich Speech," wherein he laid out his grievances with NATO, arguing that its expansion eastward was "a serious provocation" (Figes, 2022: 285). Likewise, the U.S.'s disregard for international law, especially in relation to its military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, represented a unilateralism that Russia was not prepared to accept, as Putin himself was threatened by the thought of being overthrown. In ideological language that mirrors the "unipolarity/multipolarity" concepts championed by Alexander Dugin, Putin told the assembled dignitaries in Munich,

> *I consider that the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today's world. And this is not only because if there was individual leadership in today's – and precisely in today's – world, then the military, political and economic resources would not suffice. What is even more important is that the model itself is flawed because at its basis there is and can be no moral foundations for modern civilization. Along with this, what is happening in today's world – and we just started to discuss this – is a tentative to introduce precisely this concept into international affairs, the concept of a unipolar world (Putin, 2007).*

Echoing Putin's Munich speech, for some critics of the West, such as the John Mearsheimer of the "Neo-Realist School" ala Henry Kissinger, and the famous linguist/social-political critic Noam Chomsky, the answer for Putin's change is squarely in NATO's expansion into the former Soviet Republics in Eastern Europe, which deprived Russia of the geographical "buffer zone" between it and the West/NATO. Ever since the 2007 Munich Speech, Putin has repeatedly claimed that the Soviet Union was given assurances by Western leaders that NATO would expand "not one inch" eastward. There is evidence to suggest that this promise was *informally* made by numerous sources, including the German Secretary General of NATO Manfred Wörner, the Chancellor of Germany Helmut Kohl, American Secretary of State James Baker, U.S. President George H. W. Bush, U.K. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the subsequent U.K. Prime Minister John Major, and British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, among others (National Security Archive, 2017). These assurances were supposedly made during negotiations with the Soviet Union regarding German reunification in 1989/1990. However, no such promise or agreement was ever *officially* made. There is no existing treaty between any NATO member state with the Soviet Union or the Russian Federation that forecloses on Eastern European countries willfully joining the military alliance, and NATO has

always maintained that sovereign states, including Warsaw Pact states, have the inherent right as sovereign nations to join whatever military alliance they so choose, as enshrined in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act (Spohr, 2022). The denial of this right to states within what Russia calls its "spheres of influence" would give Putin veto power over the defense policies of former "satellite states," thus weakening their ability to defend themselves against territorial-expansionist Russia. By expanding NATO eastward, the West denied Russia the "buffer zone" between it and Europe that it coveted even before Stalin. For NATO, expansion eastward was the natural outcomes of an increasingly integrated Europe, which included Russia, if only an aspiration. To Putin, it looked like the formation of a new anti-Russian bloc, one that justified his withdrawal and ultimate disregard from international norms and laws, which he believed represented merely the interests of the West. Additionally, when Putin witnessed NATO's military intervention in Yugoslavia, Russia's fraternal Slavic state, on behalf of the Kosovars in 1999, he saw what he believed to be the danger of the unipolar world; the West, especially the United States, had no countervailing force to hold it in check, and that was an inherent threat to Russia, which was merely a shadow of the superpower it once was within the Soviet Union. This perception only increased after September 11th, 2001, when the U.S. and NATO member states unilaterally went to war in Afghanistan and Iraq. Unilateralism appeared as the prerogative of Western nations; all other nations had to simply comply and remain silent. For Putin, the actions of the West proved that "might makes right," and in response he was determined to make Russia mighty again, so that it too could determine the fate of the world.

According to the historian Orlando Figes, this perceived "betrayal" by the West served as "the basis on which Putin built his anti-Western ideology" (Figes, 2022: 283-286). This anti-Western ideology took on a concrete ideological form – a form of Russian Civilizational-Nationalism. Only a drastic shift in political ideology – from being "open to the possibility of Russia joining NATO and the European Union," to seeing the West as "evil" and "satanic" – can account for his abrupt metanoia (Figes, 2022: 283-286). I argue that the political ideology he adopted is in fact Neo-Eurasianism, a form of palingenetic ultra-conservative authoritarian nationalism, i.e., fascism, which is now responsible for Putin's disastrous war of aggression in Ukraine.

Neo-Eurasianism

Putin's Neo-Eurasianism is the resultant political philosophy of many different veins of influence. In its essence, it is a form of fascism that has been modified for the Russian context. This sense of "nationalism" is less about the ethnic nation (*Volksgemeinschaft*), as it was for previous forms of palingenetic ultra-nationalism, such as Hitler's Third Reich (Griffin, 1993: 26-55). In Neo-Eurasianism, it is not the Russian genome that animates the "Russia Idea," but rather a resurrected notion of the Russian Empire, the immense "civilization-state" that passed from the Tsars to the Soviet Union, but was reduced significantly with the collapse of the USSR (Tsygankov, 2010: 663-686).[6] Neo-Eurasianism seeks a "rebirth" (palingenesis) of the Russian/Soviet Empire, not through the reemergence of communist ideology, but rather through a political ideology that retrieves cultural material from before the Soviet Union, from the time of the Tsars, while also incorporating certain elements of Stalinism and fascism that would strengthen and advance Neo-Tsarism in the 21st century. As such, the territorial borders of the Soviet Union, for Neo-Eurasianists, must be restored, especially in the majority territories of the three "fraternal" peoples: The Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. Without such an expansive empire, Russia remains merely a regional power, not the superpower it was when it was at the center of the Soviet Union, which controlled nearly a quarter of the world's landmass, 1/6th of the world population, and could project its power and influence well beyond its borders. Putin understands that if Russia is to truly be a countervailing force against the global hegemony of American/European neoliberalism, the "unipolar world," he must reintegrate those "lost" parts of the former Russian Empire; they cannot be integrated into an antagonistic West, but must remain under the control of Moscow. Thus, war with Ukraine was inevitable, especially since it has been on a Westward trajectory since the early 2000s.

According to Putin's essay, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians," which was released by the Kremlin in the summer of 2021, prior to the invasion of 24 February 2022, he argues that Ukrainians and Belarusians are essentially Russian, they are in essence "one people," the "Russian World" (*Russkii mir*/Русский мир), and therefore their territory is an integral part of Russia (Putin, 2021). It was only with the fall of the Soviet Union that they were artificially carved off from the "motherland" (*Rodina*/Родина) and crafted into independent countries (Putin, 2021).[7] The breakup of the Soviet Union, which had preserved the territorial integrity of the Tsarist/Orthodox Russian Empire, is what Putin famously called the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe" of the 20th century (Figes, 2022: 286).[8] By

claiming that Ukraine had always been an integral part of Russia, with Kyiv at the center of primordial Russia – the Kievan Russ – Putin's essay denied that the Ukrainian people were ever an separate people deserving of an independent state. Rather, Ukraine is the result of Western *divide et impera* (divide and conquer), which removed Russia as a world-historical force, leaving the U.S. as the sole superpower in the world. Reuniting that which was artificially separated is therefore both a historical and a geopolitical necessity for Putin and Russia. Although it is based on a fabricated historical account of Russo-Ukrainian history, this essay foreshadowed and justified Putin's forthcoming imperial invasion of Ukraine, as it laid the ideological foundation for the forced reintegration of the wayward son of the Russian World (Edward, 2022).[9]

The subtext of Putin's essay is clear: he understands that without a restored Russian Empire – spiritual in its essence – wherein all the fraternal Russo-Slavs are united within one civilization-state, the so-called "Russian World" remains divided against itself, and therefore unable to defend itself adequately against Western encroachment, encroachment that comes from numerous directions: NATO's expansion, Western meddling in Russian internal affairs, and/or the penetration of postmodern Western cultural norms. In such an internally divided condition, Russia can only be a regional power at best. It is true that Russia can hold the world hostage with its nuclear weapons (which it often does), but it cannot be treated as a major force in a future "multipolar" world until the entire Rodina is once again united under Moscow. Without Ukraine, the Russian economy is too small (roughly the size of California); the Russian military is too weak, and the Russian/Slavic people are too divided for Moscow to be the center of a world-historical empire.

The most prominent voice of Neo-Eurasianism today is the Moscow-based political philosopher and former Moscow State University sociology professor, Alexander Dugin. Dugin has been called "Putin's brain," "Putin's Rasputin," "Putin's special representative," "Putin's favorite fascist philosopher," as well as the "St. Cyril and Methodius of fascism." The degree to which Alexander Dugin has influence on the Kremlin is hotly debated, with many Western scholars seeing him as being highly influential on Putin and many Russian scholars seeing him as a peripheral figure, only mildly influential on the Kremlin (if at all). The latter often argue that Dugin has no official position in the Russian government, and therefore has no direct access to Putin. Without which, he lacks the ability to mold Putin's political philosophy and worldview in any meaningful way. While I think that some in the mainstream media overestimate the influence Dugin has on Putin's personal political philosophy – clearly he is not the *only* political thinker to shape Putin's far-

right worldview – it certainly is the case that Dugin's "Fourth Political Theory," his geopolitical theories (unipolarity/multipolarity, etc.), as well as his numerous Heideggerian ontological theories about Russian "Being," i.e., Russian identity being wholly rooted in the Dasein determined by Orthodoxy, absolutism, and ethnos, have had some degree of influence on the overall philosophy of the current Kremlin (Dugin, 2012; Dugin 2014).[10] While this influence may not be direct – Dugin does not have weekly meetings with Putin to discuss Russian philosophy and religion and its importance to current Russian politics and identity – his influence seems to stem more from his *metapolitics*, i.e., the saturation of the public political discourse with a given ideology to such a degree that the substance of the ideology becomes *the* dominant framework through which politics, both foreign and domestic, is carried out. In other words, I argue that Dugin and the form of aggressive, militarist, and apocalyptic Neo-Eurasianism that he champions in his books, public lectures, TV appearances, etc., does not require a direct conversation with Putin and his underlings in the Kremlin; such Neo-Eurasianist categories, concepts, values, and ideals have already thoroughly saturated the Kremlin's political worldview, and as such determines Putin's foreign and domestic policies. Additionally, Dugin traffics in many of the same 19th century Slavophile and Pan-Slavic thinkers that Putin draws from, in addition to others like Ivan Ilyin, Russia's most famous fascist philosopher (Snyder, 2018). In this way, Dugin's interpretations of such thinkers, and the religio-philosophical synthesis he makes of their work, provides a comprehensive Russian worldview that is easily assessable and deployable to Putin. Therefore, what makes Dugin so dangerous, is that he has articulated and propagated the latest version of the "Russian Idea" (Русская идея), one that is rooted in earlier forms of fascism but camouflaged enough as not to make such a nefarious genealogy easily detected by Russians themselves.

Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism has created a *Weltanschauung* and a *Leitkultur*, which integrates questions of "authentic" Russian identity, the need for an authoritarian state, the necessity of Orthodoxy, and the necessity of surface-level tolerance for other traditional religions within the civilization-state, as well as the need for territorial expansion into the former Tsarist and Soviet lands. Neo-Eurasianism has produced a powerful means of interpreting Russian history, a way of thinking about Russia's primordial identity and destiny, and an orientation through which the Russian state relates to the West – in a binary of identity/anti-identity. In other words, Neo-Eurasianism is a comprehensive worldview and political ideology that incorporates all the major questions, concerns, and aspirations that are at the core of today's modern Russia, especially in regards to identity and politics. It is this

unseen and gradual saturation of the body-politic by Neo-Eurasianism that has given Dugin the kind of notoriety that he now has, both outside of Russia and within the Kremlin. However, the same unseen and gradual nature of Eurasianist metapolitics is also what makes it possible to legitimately deny the influence of Dugin's work on the Kremlin. That is the particular efficacy of metapolitics: it is pernicious influence that is not *explicitly seen* but if successful, is *expansive* and *clearly identifiable*. In other words, one can point to Putin's deployment of Neo-Eurasianist concepts and arguments without pointing to when and from whom exactly he received them. Additionally, Dugin is useful for Putin: his Neo-Eurasianist ideology gives academic and intellectual credence to Putin's imperial politics; it legitimates his aggressive and brutal wars in Chechnya, Georgia, and Ukraine; alongside the Russian Orthodox establishment, it sanctifies Putin's authoritarian rule as being an authentically – and therefore necessary – way of governing the Russian people: it is the will of God for Russia to be at the forefront of history and Putin is merely the instrument of God's will. Dugin's Neo-Eurasianist critique of the "degenerate" and "Satanic" West taps into the still-lingering Soviet-born suspicion of the West, offering the Russian masses an image of the "enemy" against which they can direct their socio-political and economic ire. This one-dimensional image of the West is reinforced every night on Russian state TV, i.e., Russia 1, Russia 24, Russia Today (RT), as well as on Tsargrad TV.[11] In other words, Dugin's ideology is extremely useful for Putin's consolidation of power, as it binds the masses to their leader.

Although Putin's 2005-2007 political metanoia appeared abrupt to the West, the influence of Neo-Eurasianism, along with the many veins of influence that fed into the Neo-Eurasianist worldview, took hold of him gradually, but assuredly. It is now to the point that through the study of Neo-Eurasianism (broadly, not just Dugin), one can almost always predict what Putin and his regime will do, as many of us did on the eve of Russia's 2022 *totalen krieg* (total war) on its "fraternal" state of Ukraine.

Veins of Influence on Neo-Eurasianism

My reading of Alexander Dugin's works began when I was researching the Alt-Right in the United States during the Presidency of the Rightwing-populist, Donald Trump. As I studied the work of the most prominent members of the Alt-Right, including Richard Spencer, Michael O'Meara, Greg Johnson, as well as members of the *Nouvelle Droite* (New Right) in France, such as Guillaume Faye, and Alain de

Benoist, who influenced the Alt-Right, I repeatedly came across a name I had heard back when I was still visiting Ukraine: Alexander Dugin. It became clear that members of Western Far-Right groups, including avowed fascists, were looking to Putin's Russia as an exemplar of a modern state that had shaken off dysgenic cultural liberalism and pluralistic democracy and was returning to its native culture, traditions, and authoritarian rule. They admired Putin's embrace of Orthodoxy, even if they were not Christian believers; they admired his aggressive anti-LGBTQ+ politics and policies, which they both believed were the results of the secular degenerate West; they admired his advocacy of traditional "family values," even if Putin didn't practice them himself; they admired his seemingly unrepentant manliness (what's called "toxic masculinity" in the West), against which they scorned Western feminism, political correctness, and the trend in the West toward gynocracy, etc. The destruction of Russian democracy and cultural modernization was a sign of Putin's strength, for the Alt-Right. The authoritarian personalities of the West admired his "strong man" politics; they liked the fact that he put people in their places; they admired that he was not bound by international law, that he could impose his demands on his neighboring states, such as Georgia, Belarus, and Ukraine, as well as his own people. For the Western Alt-Right, Putin's Russia was everything they wanted the West to be: a palingenetic nation rooted in tradition, patriarchy, authoritarianism, and overwhelmingly White (so they thought). Within this context, Alexander Dugin appeared to the Alt-Right as the theorist behind Russia's resurrection and its retrotopian return to the past as its present and future. As his books are routinely published by Arktos Media, the largest and most influential far-right publishing house, led by the New Right Swede Daniel Friberg, Dugin's books were devoured by the literate, i.e., "intellectual" side of the Far-Right.[12] In those books, they learned Neo-Eurasian ideology's positions regarding politics, geopolitics, sociology, psychology, history, and philosophy. They found a bearded mystical-political and ontological guru who could help them understand how their own societies, the postmodern Western societies, were the cause of the world's decay, the maintainers of the cancerous neoliberal world order, the sole beneficiaries of the "unipolar" world, and the reason why Russia has yet to fulfill its divine destiny as the Katechonic force behind the historical process.

To understand the power behind the Neo-Eurasianist ideology, one must look behind the latest iteration as it relates to world's condition in the 2020s. In other words, one must pull back the curtain, interrogate its sources, and come to understand that Eurasianism (евразийство) has grown out of fertile soil, much of which is *not* native to Russia. Rather, the nourishment that sustains modern Neo-

Eurasianism comes from a variety of sources, including Nazi Germany, Italian Fascism, French esoteric Traditionalism, and the post-1968 French *Nouvelle Droit*. It is by interrogating these sources that we can begin to see how the demise of the Soviet Union gave way to bad liberalism that degenerated into a Russian form of palingenetic ultra-nationalism, i.e., what I call Russo-fascism (sometimes called "Ruscism" and/or "Rushism," i.e., "Russian Fascism").

Dugin constructs his Neo-Eurasianist thought from four main sources, which I have broken into their geographical locations: Russia, Germany, France, and Italy. While there are others, most of the material that Dugin draws from to construct his political ideology, as well as his ethnosociology, can be located in individual thinkers and movements from these four areas of the world.[13]

Russian Eurasianism: The First and Second Generation

Neo-Eurasianism is predicated on the idea that Russia is not an extension or an integral part of Europe or Western Civilization. Rather, it is a civilization unto itself. It is not Europe; it is not Asia: it is "Eurasia." This idea was championed by Tsarist philosopher, historian, Slavophile, and Pan-Slavist, Nikolai Iakovlevich Danilevsky (1822-1885), whose book, *Russia and Europe: The Slavic World's Political and Cultural Relations with the Germanic-Roman West* (1869), posited the idea that Russian cultural, religious, political, and sociopolitical particularity could not be reconciled with other civilizations, nor could it replace its authentic self by importing ideas, values, and cultural norms from the West, which erroneously believed its civilization to be "universal" (Danilevskii, 2013).[14] For Danilevsky, all attempts to import foreign ways-of-being-in-the-world into Russia were ultimately doomed to fail, as they do not belong to the Russian soul, but are mere temporary ornamentations on the surface of Russia life. Europe does not understand Russia, and Russia should not measure its civilization against Europe, for Europe is not the civilizational standard-bearer, despite its claims to "universality." Doing so, as it was done under the Tsar Peter the Great and Tsarina Catherine the Great, for example, only undermined Russia, making it weak from within itself, as it privileges Westernality over Russianness.

While Russia was at the center of the Soviet Union, it was captive to the Marxist belief in the universal good of working-class revolution and working-class rule. However, after the Soviet Union collapsed, and the rediscovery and return to traditional Russian culture began to take shape, the ideas of Danilevsky's book, which had been unavailable for nearly a hundred years in Russia, were once again

being discovered, especially by conservative and retrotopian intellectuals like Alexander Dugin. Dugin saw in Danilevsky's work the primordial justification for Russia's distancing from the modern West. Whether it was Peter the Great and his attempt to Westernize Russia, or Putin's early attempts to emulate certain Western political norms, if Russia was to escape an imprisonment in inauthentic norms, it had to resist being integrated into the West as a "European" nation (Clover, 2016: 239). It had to insist on its unique particularity, including its traditional religion and culture (Orthodoxy), politics (monarchical authoritarianism and plebiscitary authoritarianism), as well as its fated role in world history: the Katechon, i.e., biblical "restrainer" of the anti-Christ and the anti-Christ's civilization, i.e., the post-modern secular West (Byrd, 2022: 1-22).

Similar to Danielevsky, Konstantin Nikolayevich Leontiev, an imperial monarchist and Tsarist monk, argued in his book, *The East, Russia, and Slavdom* (1885-1886) that Russia had to strengthen its ties to the still-pre-modern East, in order to escape the cultural, social, and political catastrophe that had taken over the "enlightened" liberal West, with its egalitarianism, materialism, and anti-Monarchianism. Both echoing Fyodor Dostoyevsky's disregard for Western decadence and materialism, as well as his belief in Russia's spiritual superiority, Danilevsky's and Leontiev's work laid the foundation for the first systematic form of Eurasianism, which would be further developed by the writings of numerous Russian émigrés: Prince Nikolai Trubetzkoy, Petr Savitsky, Petr Suvchinsky, George Florovsky, and others.[15] Responding to the early Soviet Union of the 1920s and 1930s, some of the more fanciful Eurasianists saw the USSR as a means by which a non-European Orthodox Christian state could eventually proceed from the atheistic Marxist state, which was, like the Eurasianists themselves, against so-called "Western decadence" and its belief in its own universality. However, the conservative traditionalists within the Eurasianism movement saw this hope as merely a pipedream. The Soviet Union, especially under Stalin, was wholly captive to a form of Western materialist ideology, Marxism, which was predicated on egalitarianism, and as such could not be reconciled with Orthodox Christianity, traditional Russian culture, and the social hierarchy that underpins monarchy. Ironically, these Eurasianists, purged by Stalin, settled predominantly in Europe whilst devising their anti-European arguments. Being in Europe during that tumultuous time, many of them witnessed the rise of fascism, another form of reactionary modernism, in both Italy and Germany. Despite the internal differences within the movement, the main voices of Eurasianism continued to argue for a Russian civilization that was distinct from Europe; one that had its own destiny, its

own historical mission, and one that had to resist all attempts to absorb the Rodina into Western modernity.

The second generation of Eurasianism that influenced Alexander Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism is best exemplified by the work of Lev Nikolayevich Gumilyov (Gumilev) (1912-1992), who resurrected the theories of the first generation of Eurasianists and made them intellectually fashionable – and functionalizable – within post-Stalin Soviet Union (Dugin, 2018: 83-89). The son of the famous Stalinist era poets, Nikolay Gumilyov and Anna Akhmatova, whose poetry was censored in the Soviet Union, Lev went on to be a famous historian, ethnologist, anthropologist, and the progenitor of novel theories concerning ethnogenesis and the ethnos-based theories of historical development (Figes, 2014; Bassin, 2016). His theory of "passionarity" (passionarnost/пассионарность) – a difficult to translate Russianized Latin term – attempts to explain the rise and fall of ethnic groups and subsequently the rise and fall of the civilizations that ethnicities create. Similar to Oswald Spengler's cyclical notion of history, Gumilyov believed his theory of history had universal applicability; all societies and civilizations were subject to the same rise and decline of passionarity. According to Gumilyov, passionarnost is a cosmic energy (energetics/energetika) that causes individuals to engage in activities that form ethnicities (Bassin, 2016: 43-59; Eltchaninoff, 2018: 109-111). Such socially transformative energies cause groups to expand and create even greater groups. These ever-expanding ethnic group pass through predictable stages: birth, development of complexities, peak development, socio-cultural lethargy, convolution and collapse. Drawing upon earlier Eurasianists, Gumilyov believed that the Russian ethnic group was a "super-ethnos," not bound by a single Euro-based ethnicity, but rather a group of intertwined ethnicities that together constitute the Russian civilization. On the other hand, he believed that Europe was in a deep state of civilizational inertia. Like the primary thesis in Oswald Spengler's book, *Decline of the West*, Gumilyov thought European civilization was passing through the stage of decline, but despite its decay, remained influential on other societies (Spengler, 2021). Because this declining civilization was in close proximity to the Russian civilization, which was still in a state of development and expansion, the influence of Europe had to be minimized, lest the decay infect the Russian ethnosphere while it was still in the process of formation.

According to Charles Clover, the author of *Black Wind, White Snow: The Rise of Russia's New Nationalism,* Putin made use of Gumilyov's term "passionarnost" at the annual address to the federal assembly in St. George's hall inside the Kremlin

(Clover, 2016: 1-2). Speaking in terms of civilizational growth and decay, Putin proclaimed,

> *Who will take the lead and who will remain on the periphery and inevitably lose their independence will depend not only on the economic potential, but primarily on the will of each nation, on its inner energy which Lev Gumilev termed passionarnost: the ability to move forward and to embrace change (Clover, 2016: 1-2).*

For Putin, Gumilyov's passionarnost was not just about the ability to embrace the inevitable change that occurs in all history, but rather the ability through the strength of "the will" to endure individual and/or collective "suffering" (Latin: "Passio") for the benefit of one's civilization, which is inevitably born from such change. This ability to endure suffering while authoring history, according to Gumilyov's theory of passionarnost, is the "defining trait of great nations" (Clover, 2016: 2). As such, civilizations that best develop instrumental rationality, who are the most technologically advanced, wealthy, and/or rational, are not necessarily those that will rise to the top of nations (Clover, 2016: 3). They may temporarily make history, but they will only appear in the footnotes in the chapters of great civilizations. Rather, it is those with the greatest ability to suffer for the rise and advancement of their civilization that ultimately build the empires that define human history. Consequently, Putin, Dugin, and the *Siloviki* (men of force) tend to believe that the West lacks such passionarnost, that their affluent societies have made them weak, comfortable, and unable to endure hardships and deprivations, whereas life in Russia is difficult, hardships and deprivations are normative, thus making them bearers of an extreme form of passionarnost. Due to this diagnosis, which I think is simplistic at best, Putin and his cohort believe that the West doesn't have the spiritual capacity to endure a long war in Ukraine, even if they have the military means to do so.

German Influence: Karl Marx, Carl Schmitt & Martin Heidegger

Dugin's version of Neo-Eurasianism is partially indebted to some of the most consequential German thinkers of 19th and 20th centuries. For example, Dugin's critique of capitalist modernity, like the Nazis before him, is complex. On the one hand, he bemoans the undermining of traditional culture that capitalism inevitably brings. Like Karl Marx before him, Dugin realizes that wherever capitalism goes, it weakens and ultimately disfigures the foundations of traditional societies. The ultimate outcome of global capitalism, it is assumed, is the homogenization of the

human species, in this case on the basis of Western and/or American cultural norms. As such, capitalism within Russia is an agent of cultural imperialism, divorcing Russias, especially the young, from their native culture, traditions, and belief systems. Capitalism creates *homo consumens* out of what would otherwise be Orthodox believers; it creates internationalists out of what would otherwise be Russian nationalists; it creates post-modern individuals out of what would otherwise be traditional collectives. The inherent exploitative nature of capitalism is not what is primarily objected to in Dugin's thought, as it was with Marx. Rather, Duginist anti-capitalism objects to the fact that capitalism severs the ethno-mystical and civilizational connection between the Russian people (народ – "narod") and the "motherland" (родина – "Rodina"), similar to Marxist forms of communism (Figes, 2014: 158, 177, 187-189).[16] On the other hand, Dugin understands the necessity of capitalist industry, especially within the "defense" sector, as without such industry Russia cannot expand into the former Soviet Republics to reconstitute the Russian Empire, nor would it be able to compete against the war machine in the capitalist West. Thus, like the Third Reich, he sees the state's role as being the overlord of capitalist industrialism; if it is to exist within Russia, it must ultimately serve the purposes of the state; it must be guided by the "Russia Idea."

The influence of Carl Schmitt on Alexander Dugin is vast, just as Schmitt's work has been influential on post-Soviet Russian conservativism, as well as Putin and his authoritarian form of governance.[17] The clearest example of Dugin's appropriation of Schmitt's thought can be seen in his use of Schmitt's concept of the "Katechon." According to St. Paul, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 2:6-7, the return of Christ remained distant because an ambiguous force, referred to by St. Paul merely as the "Katechon" (the "Restrainer"), holds back the apocalyptic chaos of the Antichrist (Son of Perdition).[18] Catholic biblical scholars have argued that St. Paul's Katechon should be read as the Roman Empire or specific Roman Emperors, whereas the Orthodox Church has maintained that the great restrainer has been various monarchs and Orthodox Emperors. Schmitt took advantage of the ambiguity of the term Katechon to argue that every age has Katechonic forces working against the forces of chaos, that these forces are both personal and institutional, and that the Katechonic force ought to be identified within each age that it appears (Byrd, 2022: 7-12; Schmitt, 1991; Schmitt 2006). In Schmitt's determinate negation (*Aufhaben*) of St. Paul's concept, the Katechon reflected the conservative forces of the dialectal zeitgeist of any given age, and therefore within modernity the Katechon was not necessarily a religious figure or religious institution. It could be any conservative power that stood against

civilization degeneracy. As such, Schmitt believed that the Third Reich was the Katechonic force struggling to push back the political, economic, and cultural chaos and destructiveness unleashed by atheistic Bolshevism, with its destructive isonomia.

The concept of the Katechon was especially attractive to Dugin, considering that he believed that Russia was the conservative bulwark against expansionist neoliberalism, which came in the form of free market capitalist, democratic, and post-modernist chaos. Dugin's concept of the Katechon mirrored Schmitt, but where Schmitt saw the Third Reich as the "restrainer" of the Antichrist and therefore the Apocalypse, Dugin saw Russia – the "Third Rome" – as being the penultimate restrainer of the eschatological destructiveness of the Antichrist civilization: The West. As such, Putin's Russian Federation is fulfilling its messianic role by opposing the unipolar world order led by the United States and its allies in Europe. For Dugin, all that stands in the way of the triumph of the Antichrist is conservative/traditional Russia, and if Russia is to remain the great restrainer, if it is to remain the sole force that holds off the Antichrist, it must increase its strength; it must regain its empire. Only as a wholly integrated civilizational state can it continue to fulfil its messianic role for the world (Byrd, 2022: 12-17). Additionally, the defeat of Russia at the hands of the Antichrist would result in the reign of Satan. At that point, for Dugin, nuclear weapons would be the only remaining option, for it would be better that the world does not exist than to exist as the realm of Satan (Rooney, 2020).

Dugin skillfully marries the concept of the Katechon with another of Schmitt's political theological concepts, i.e., the concept of the "sovereign," which was first devised in his book, *Dictatorship* and further elaborated on in his seminal work, *Political Theology* (Schmitt, 2005; Schmitt, 2014). In order for Putin to effectively lead the Russian Katechonic state, he must have the powers to determine what Schmitt referred to as the "state of exception" (*Ausnahmezustand*), i.e., the ability to step outside of the law, both domestic and international, and act in a seemingly lawless way to maintain global order, which can only be brought about through the creation of a multipolar world. Therefore, for Putin to fulfill the Katechonic role Russia currently plays, he must act as a sovereign dictator. In other words, in order to rescue humanity from the triumph of the Antichrist, he must disregard international rules and norms, including the prohibition against invading and annexing of territory by force, as such laws would hinder his Katechonic responsibilities, which is above and beyond positive law. Putin would have to act unilaterally, even if it risks international isolation and backlash from the great

powers within the unipolar neoliberal world, i.e., the U.S. and Europe. Gumilyev's Passionarnost, here understood as the ability to suffer the consequences of what must be done to rescue human civilization from the Antichrist, allows Putin and his palingenetic Russia to sustain the burdens and sufferings caused by the fulfilment of their Katechonic mission. If the war in Ukraine costs tens of thousands of Russian lives, it is a burden that must be endured; it is the cross of the Katechon.

Dugin's Katechon rhetoric sets up a beneficial binary weltanschauung within Russia. If one accepts that Putin's desire to reconstitute the borders of the former Russian Empire is a necessary step in the fulfillment of a divinely appointed mission, it gives Putin the authority of God. *Deus Vult* (God wills it). While that perceived divine authority means very little in the post-secular post-modern West, to many religious Russians, being on the side of God translates into absolute loyalty and support of Russia's aggressive neo-imperialism and the regime that leads it. What other choice does the religious Russian have but to support God's plan? All else would be aid to the Antichrist.

Reenforcing Dugin's theological Manicheanism are the Greek concepts of thalassocracy and tellurocracy. First introduced into ancient political literature by Herodotus (484-425 BCE), thalassocracy denotes empires that are primarily sea-based (maritime), rarely controlling the interior of land masses but dominating the coastal regions, while Tellurocracy empires dominate land masses and generally have little influence over the seaways around them. In his book, *Land and Sea*, Carl Schmitt posits the Anglo-American world, especially the U.S. and the British Empire, to be modern forms of a thalassocracy, like ancient Carthage, Phoenicia, and the Maritime Republics of Venice and Genoa (Schmitt, 2015). This modern sea-based power has been dubbed "Atlanticism." The maritime thalassocracies are known for their cultural eclecticism, nomadism, decentralized power structures, and their ability to control and/or influence lands large distances away from their traditional ethnosphere. Schmitt's Third Reich, ever expanding into its newly acquired *Lebensraum* (living space), was thought to be a modern tellurocracy, land-based powers, like the Roman Republic and ancient Persia. Tellurocracies are defined by their conservativism, their sedentarism, cultural-religious and ideological ties to the land, despotic centralized power, and ability to broadcast and enforce their power throughout the territories they control. Dugin appropriated these binary imperial concepts and imported them to the post-Soviet *Russkii Mir* (Russia world), wherein Russia, as a civilization-state, served as the most poignant example of a modern tellurocracy. This simplistic worldview, which was already questionable in the 20th century, led Dugin to overestimate the military capacity of Russian's

ground forces in its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Modern 21st century military forces, especially that of the United States and many of its NATO allies, simply do not fit into this antiquated concept, as they are both dominant on land and sea, and Russia has proven by their disastrous performance in Ukraine to be neither dominant on land or at sea.[19] Nevertheless, as a concept, the notion of tellurocracy legitimates Russia's claim to be a powerful "civilization-state," and therefore its rightful domination over large swaths of Asia. Additionally, Russia projecting its shadow upon the West, especially the U.S. and U.K., as aggressive thalassocracies surrounding the innocent "heartland" of Russia, which sits at the center of what Dugin calls the "World Island," legitimates Russia's claims to interfere within countries on their periphery, i.e., the "Rimland" (Dugin, 2015a).[20] For Schmitt, "world history is a history of the battle of sea powers against land powers and of land powers against sea powers" (Schmitt, 2015: 11). This historical determinism is as authoritative as Marx's notion that "all of history is the history of class struggle." It is assumed to be a dialectic inherent within the historical process that empires cannot escape, and therefore war is inevitable as long as there are maritime and land empires whose sphere of influence/interest clash. That this dialectic has been broken by modern militaries, especially in the West, is not considered by Dugin, who remains trapped within his own Schmidtian ideology.

While many intellectuals and philosophers have had a sizeable influence on Dugin, none is more prominent than the fascist philosopher, Martin Heidegger. In the 1930s, Heidegger wanted to serve as Hitler's court philosopher, translating the crude nationalist ideology of the Third Reich into a philosophically respectable system of ontological thought (Sherratt, 2014). Disillusioned with the lack of influence he had on the party, Heidegger resigned himself to being a university professor playing a small role in the intellectual life of Hitler's fascist Reich. However, in Russia, Heidegger would find an apt pupil in Alexander Dugin, who translated Heidegger's political-ontology corpus into the intellectual milieu of post-Soviet conservatism, as it attempted to return to its authentic self after its hiatus as a secular communist empire. The authenticity that Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism was looking for, a theoretical foundation which he found in Heidegger's ontology, would define itself against the pernicious nihilism of liberalism and "calculative thought," which was equally hated by Heidegger as it is by Dugin today (Dugin, 2012: 28-29).

In his seminal book, *The Fourth Political Theory*, Dugin identifies Heidegger's work as being the core of his own palingenetic ideology, stating that,

> *At the heart of the Fourth Political Theory, as its magnetic centre, lies the trajectory of the approaching Ereignis (the 'Event'), which will embody the triumphant return of Being, at the exact moment when mankind forgets about it, once and for all, to the point that the last traces of it disappear (Dugin, 2012: 29).*[21]

Dugin latches onto the opaque Heideggerian concept of *Ereignis*, or "event," or "coming into view," or what Parivis Emad and Kenneth Maly translate as "enowning" (Heidegger, 2000). For Dugin, Ereignis denotes the "event" wherein those who have found themselves lost within the nihilism of post-modernity, have become indistinguishable from "The They" (*Das Man*), and have succumbed to the mode of existence framed by the spell of "technical development" (*Ge-stell*), suddenly "return to Being," as if the darkness of ontological bleakness is finally broken through by a palingenetic light, guiding one's (or a civilization's) way out of a totally dysgenic world (Dugin, 2012: 29). Dugin's appropriates and redeploys Heidegger's concept of Ereignis within the Russian context, arguing that the dominant mode of world existence, as defined by Western post-modernity and its apotheosis of instrumental rationality, cannot engulf modern Russia, which has historically resisted abandoning its own peculiar "Russian truth," "messianic idea," and "own version of the 'end of history'" for Westernality for centuries (Dugin, 2012: 30). Dugin believes that the greatest of Russian minds foresaw and witnessed the decline of the West as it rushed away from its authentic (*Eigentlich*) sources of ontic Being (both ontological and theological) and into the meaninglessness of postmodern nihilism dominated by techné. As the West comes to understand its spiritual and ontological bankruptcy, it will not attempt to turn the dialectic of history around and de-negate that which has already been negated (what I call "peripeteic dialectics"), but rather will double down and attempt to find even greater answers to the problem of Being via even-more complex technological advancements. The West's inability to engage in metanoia, according to Dugin, only makes "mankind's night blacker and blacker," for it is this postmodern West that is globally hegemonic, thus subjecting the world to its internal civilizational illnesses (Dugin, 2012: 30).[22] "Russia," Dugin states, "needs to follow a different path, its own" (Dugin, 2012: 30). No amount of reform of the current unipolar world can save it or the *Russkii Mir*. Russia must depart wholly from Western postmodernity and create its own archeo-future.[23] It, along with other dissenters from the Western hegemony, must create the intellectual, spiritual, and ontological space for a multipolar world, wherein people are no longer subject to the corrosive effects of the so-called "universal civilization," i.e., the West. Thus, Dugin's Fourth

Political Theory, rooted in a politicization of Heidegger's ontological thought, is an attempt to bring about the "Russian Ereignis," the world-historical and transformative event that emancipates Russia and others from the "brave new world of globalization, postmodernity, and post-liberalism," thus opening up the horizon for Russia's being-historical (*Seynsgeschichtliche*) (Dugin, 2012: 30-31).[24]

French Influence: René Guénon and the Nouvelle Droit

Dugin's fascination with France has little to do with its revolutionary republican tradition, its long history of Enlightenment thought, and its postmodern libertine culture and way-of-being, encapsulated in Dugin's French nemesis, Bernard Henri-Lévy, the French-Jewish liberal voice of the *Nouveaux Philosophes* (New Philosophers) movement.[25] Rather, Dugin's interest is in the work of those French intellectuals who rebel against such a French modernity, those who reject the laïcité of the French Republic, and those who think the 1968 generation ushered in the catastrophe of multiculturalism, which has ruined traditional French identity. Chief among these French thinkers that Dugin admires are the traditionalist René Guénon (1886-1951) and the *Nouvelle Droit* (New Right) philosopher, Alain de Benoist (1943-), both of which had delivered important conceptual material to Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism, which he has adapted to the Russian context.

In René Guénon, Dugin found two important veins of conceptual thought: (1) Guénon's critique of Western modernity, especially as it is articulated in his books, *East and West*, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, and *The Reign of Quality and the Signs of the Times*, and (2) Guénon's religious traditionalism, which can be found throughout his corpus of work (Guénon, 2001a; Guénon, 2001b). Guénon was a modern man who instinctively belonged to a prior and much more religious age. He is known for his ecumenicism between the world religions, especially within their esoteric, occultic, symbolic, and mystical traditions. The key to his "Traditionalism" is its *perennial* nature. Like all perennialists, Guénon believed that all major world religions, especially those with ancient origins, were all legitimate and genuine manifestations of one "primordial" religious tradition. The commonality of this religious metaphysics allows for religious communities to make peace with each other, as they recognize the same primordial truths in other religious traditions that they find in their own despite their obvious differences. Such primordial truths are articulated differently due to time, space, culture, etc. Thus, religious pluralism is merely an accident of history. In reality, all religions express the same truth. Due to the long history of religious exclusivist claims, religious diversity historically

devolved into inter-religious and confessional violence. From the perspective of the Traditionalist, religions' exclusivist claims are a mistaken reading of the primordial truths expressed within each of the various traditions. To read the religious claims properly is to recognize the legitimate expression of such singular truth claims within the context of another religion. What exclusivity that should be maintained is the exclusivity of religious geography; religions that are traditionally bound to a certain ethnosphere, geography, culture, etc., ought to remain the dominant tradition within that culture. In this sense, the "melting pot" of religions in the *Willensgemeinschaften* states (democratic willed-states) is the wrong form of diversity. Diversity, for the Traditionalists, is primarily between civilizations; it is not cosmopolitanism that one finds within the diverse cities within civilizations. Therefore, while the Traditionalist Dugin would accept Islam as being a part of the Russkii Mir, especially important to its "borderlands," he would not accept the abandonment of Russian Orthodoxy for Islam in any large degree by ethnic Russians, nor the intermingling of the two. That would be an abandonment of their authentic identity. However, within the Russian civilization-state, Islam finds a protected place, as millions of Russian citizens are devout Muslims. Against the Russian nationalists who see these Muslims as being inherently alien to the Russian ethnos, Dugin accepts them as being inherently belonging to the Russian civilization, thus rejecting the inherent racism of the vulgar Russian nationalists. Traditionalism, as Dugin perceives it in a political way, is a religious means to inclusively integrate the cultural diversity that exists in the world's largest country. By accepting the legitimacy of non-Orthodox Christian religions, Traditionalism binds the non-Orthodox citizens of Russia to the Russian ethnosphere, the opposite of the Russian ethno-nationalists do. For Dugin, religious exclusivity, on the basis of religious identity, would weaken the eastern parts of Russia from the Orthodox West. Thus, Guénon's Traditionalism provides Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism a ready-at-hand adhesive through which to bind the civilization-state as a singular political entity.

In his more sociological work, such as his book *The Crisis of the Modern World*, Guénon critiques the Western world for what he sees as its deviant path away from religious and spiritual traditions. In the name of "modernity" and "progress," it has regressed into a nihilistic civilization of individualism, materialism, and social chaos. For Guénon, modernity equals "contempt for tradition," the germ of which began with the rise of autonomous reason in ancient Greece, for it was the Greeks who developed a "profane philosophy" via rational thought that consequently found

its apex in the modern West, as it undermined the legitimacy of religions and religious truths (Guénon, 2001a: 10, 12-13). He writes,

> *The tendencies that found expression among the Greeks had to be pushed to the extreme, the undue importance given to rational thought had to grow even greater, before men could arrive at 'rationalism,' a specifically modern attitude that consists in not merely ignoring, but expressly denying, everything of a supra-rational order (Guénon, 2001a: 13).*

For Guénon, the dysgenic nature of the West crystalized in the "Greco-Latin civilization," against which Christianity intervened, producing the Medieval world: a world saturated with religion (Guénon, 2001a: 14-15). However, as Christianity waned within the modern West, it began to resemble once again the ancient world with its desacralized form of rationality. In this sense, the Renaissance, or the "rebirth" of the Greco-Latin civilization, was the beginning of the end of the spiritual and religious traditionalism in the West, and the birth of its modern condition, which Guénon describes in the following:

> *Henceforth there was only "profane" philosophy and "profane" science, in other words, the negation of true intellectuality, the limitation of knowledge to its lowest order, namely, the empirical and analytical study of facts divorced from principles, a dispersion in an indefinite multitude of insignificant details, and the accumulation of unfounded and mutually destructive hypotheses and of fragmentary views leading to nothing other than those practical applications that constitute the sole real superiority of modern civilization – a scarcely enviable superiority, moreover, which, by stifling every other preoccupation, has given the present civilization the purely material character that makes of it a veritable monstrosity (Guénon, 2001a: 16).*

Guénon saw the West's rejection of religion and all things spiritual as a sign that the world had entered into the Kali Yuga, the "Dark Ages," as defined by Hinduism. This fourth stage within a cyclical conception of world history is marked by its wonton violence, anomie, sin, and debauchery, against which only a return to "tradition" can prevail. Following the logic of Guénon, Dugin recognizes the spiritual and religious catastrophe awaiting Russia if it were to follow the West's *sonderweg* (deviant path), its form of materialistic and nihilistic modernity – its Kali Yuga. Just as Western modernity has wiped clean all traditional forms of

identity within the European ethnosphere, so too would Russia lose its traditional identity, i.e., that which maintains its position as a "God-bearing" people. Russia nearly lost that identity and its connection with the Divine due to the anti-religionism of the Soviet Union, wherein the "Russianness" of the Russian people – born out of its thousand-year history – was nearly annihilated on the basis of a Western materialist ideology: secular communism. If the *Russkii Mir* is to remain wholly determined by authentic Russianness, it must not only embrace traditional Russian religiosity and religious institutions, but must nurture and foster it via the Russian state and Orthodox Church working in tandem. Weakening the connection between the Russian ethnos and its most important source of its uniqueness – the Russian Orthodox Church – only serves the nihilist and aggressive West.

The second of the most important French intellectuals for Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism is the French *Nouvelle Droit* philosopher, Alain de Benoist. The Nouvelle Droit was a mid-20th century philosophical movement in France attempting to distinguish themselves from the "Old Right," which was still "tinged by association" with the fascism of Vichy France and German National Socialism (Clover, 2016: 176; Johnson, 2013). Although the Nouvelle Droit disassociated itself from earlier forms of fascism, it in essence created a new articulation of fascism, an alternative form of fascism, one that was much more philosophically sophisticated and less vulgar in its ideology. For example, the Nouvelle Droit did not call for the mass extermination of national minorities, neither did it cultivate a leader cult. However, it does reject many aspects of European modernity, the most poignant being multiculturalism, liberal democracy, and capitalism. It is in favor of archeo-futurism as devised by Guillaume Faye, wherein pre-modern pan-European culture norms are preserved amidst technological modernization. Having met and worked with Dugin in the 1990s, de Benoist readily admits that he introduced Dugin to the works of Carl Schmitt, which had a lasting effect of Dugin's geopolitical theories (de Benoist, 2013). De Benoist and Carl Schmitt were especially important in helping Dugin formulate his 1997 book, *Foundations of Geopolitics*, which became an important text within the Russian military establishment (Clover, 2016: 178), as it set forth a strategy to reestablish Russia as the dominant force on the Eurasian continent at the expense of Europe.

Beyond geopolitics, the most important concept to migrate from the Nouvelle Droit to Dugin was the notion of "ethnopluralism," the idea that all peoples have the fundamental "right to differ" in their culture. Alain de Benoist and the Nouvelle Droit argue that modern multiculturalism, i.e., the affirmation of diverse cultures within one society, does fundamental harm to the culture that hosts such a plurality

of peoples. When the native culture is no longer privileged within the lands that it developed, it becomes one of a mere polyphony of cultures, thus destroying the very identity of the people who gave birth to that nation/country. For the Nouvelle Droit, multiculturalism is ethnocide: the suicide of the native culture. Thus, mass immigration, which they argue is more appropriate for natural *Willensgemeinschaften* states (willed-states) like the U.S. and Canada, as opposed to *Volksgemeinschaften* states (ethnostates) like the European states, is the means in which European identity is ended. Americanization of Europe is the end of Europe, for Europe is not only its geography, but also the native ethnoi and cultures that proceed form the land and thus bear ancestral ties to the land. From the perspective of Alexander Dugin, ethnopluralism also pertains to Russia, who has the fundamental right to be something other than European. It has the right to insist upon its own culture identity, its own traditions, and its own "Russian truth." To be integrated into Europe is to be subject to the same process of Americanization, i.e., the hybridization of cultures and peoples – leading to cultural homogenization on the basis of postmodernist cultural norms, i.e., LGBTQ+ rights, transhumanism, consumerism, atheism, and nihilism. Ethnopluralism, therefore, is an attempt to recognize the variety of human cultures, appreciate their distinctiveness, but demand that they stay segregated, as not to collapse human diversity into genetic and cultural homogeneity. For numerous countries, ethnopluralism is expressed through exclusivist forms of nationalism, whereas in the Russian context, it takes on an inclusivist Eurasianist form, wherein the inherent diversity *within* the borders of the civilization-state is embraced, thus preserving the citizenry's "right to differ" (Robinson, 2019: 193). Ethnopluralism, therefore, is an ideology that legitimates and concretizes the separation of cultures within the Russkii Mir, all in the spirit of "plurality." Thus, it is a form of inclusive segregation.

An important strategy that Dugin learned from his involvement with Alain de Benoist was the importance of "metapolitics." Originally a Marxist concept, as devised by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, metapolitics is the systematic attempt to influence society outside of the realm of the state, through the saturation of civil society and civil institutions with political ideology, so that the society as a whole begins to think within the contours of the political ideology without realizing it has been mentally captured by such a political ideology. Thus, the goal of metapolitics is to create a hegemony of ideas, so that by the time the politics of the nation catches up to the metapolitical saturation, the nation as a whole is intellectually prepared for the state to embrace that which the people have already come to believe. Metapolitics, not politics – since Dugin lacks a state position – is

what has made him influential in the Kremlin and specifically upon Putin. While Dugin certainly is not the only ideological influence impinging upon Putin's worldview, so effective has been Dugin's metapolitics that I suspect most other influences are received by Putin through the lenses of Dugin's iteration of Neo-Eurasianism. Such extra-Dugin influences merely augment and strengthen Dugin's positions.

Julius Evola

The main Italian influence upon Dugin's worldview is the work of the Dada painter, poet, translator, occultist, esotericist, and "superfascista," (super fascist) Julius Evola (1898-1974).[26] Evola is known for saturating Guénon's already conservative Traditionalism with radical far-right political thought. In doing so, he delivered a religious and spiritual dimension, as well as theocratic legitimation, to the radical Right in Italy, during and even after WWII. Both deeply racist and anti-Semitic, his positions emphasized the historical necessity and naturality of aristocracy, of which he saw himself as being of the *kṣatriya* caste (warrior caste) of the traditional Hindu caste system (Evola, 1995: x). To his horror, modernity, especially in its liberal and Marxist forms, emphasized the principle of equality (both political and ontological) for all peoples. Evola saw this as an attack on both nature and history, both of which demonstrate not only the naturalness of human aristocracy but also its absolute necessity. Evola's book, *Revolt Against the Modern World*, a logic extension of Guénon's *The Crisis of the Modern World,* ruthlessly critiques the notion of historical "progress" as one would find the work of the German Idealist G.W.F. Hegel or the Historical Materialist Karl Marx. Like Guénon, Evola ascribed to the idea that time is cyclical, not linear, and the modern age (*Kali Yuga*) is an age of plebian degeneracy, especially as it is a product of the West and its own *Sonderweg* (deviant path) away from traditional and religious worldviews (Evola, 1995: 177-183). Evola fervently supported Italy's turn to Fascism as well as Germany's adoption of National Socialism as a means of taking back the Western ethnosphere from the dysgenic forces of liberal and Marxist conceptions of "progress." Both Fascism and Nazism were seen as ways to eliminate the flattening of society, via secularization, democratization, scientization, etc., by modern liberals and Marxists. Jews were especially targeted by Evola, as he believed that they were responsible for the West's self-contempt and its subsequent war on its own traditions, hierarchy, and spiritual values. For Evola, when Fascism and Nazism ultimately triumphed over Jewish modernity, Westerners could finally reconnect with their suppressed

religious and transcendent nature (Staudenmeir, 2022: 72-94), thus regaining their authentic traditions.

Dugin was deeply affected by Evola's more militaristic form of Traditionalism. He was impressed by Evola's warrior rhetoric and his advocation for a violent political response to the dysgenic sources of modernity. While other traditionalists, like Mircea Eliade, Carl G. Jung, and Frithjof Schuon, advocated a quieter, more pacifist retreat into traditionalism, Evola foresaw an inevitable violent clash between the dynamic and hierarchical forces of Traditionalism and plebian-democratic forces of secular Modernity, especially in his book *Metaphysics of War* (Evola, 2011). This was a war for the future of the world; a war in which humanity would either return to its spiritual core, or would continue on into nihilism, atheism, and materialism. Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism was deeply enriched by Evola's fascistic worldview, as he saw the struggle between Russia and its authentic religious lifeworld as being in direct conflict with the ever-expanding West and its postmodernist theomachian lifeworld. Echos of Evola's militarism can be found throughout Dugin's work, but most poignantly in his glorification and sanctification of Russia's "holy war" against "little Russia," i.e., Ukraine, as can be seen in Dugin's 2015 geopolitical book, *Ukraine, My War* (Украина, моя война) (Dugin, 2015b).

Conclusion: The War in Ukraine and the Future of Russia

On August 20, 2022, the daughter of Alexander Dugin, Darya Alexandrovna Dugina, was killed when the SUV she was driving exploded. It was an assassination attempt on her father, the most prominent political ideologist for Putin's regime. Darya just happened to be driving her father's vehicle, although she herself was an emerging propagandist for Putin's war on Ukraine. In response, Putin, in his highly anticipated speech, delivered on September 30th, 2022, on the occasion of the official "annexation" of Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, as well as the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions to the Russian Federation, stated that, "for them [the West], a direct threat is our thought and philosophy, and therefore they encroach on our philosophers" (Dugin, 2022; Putin, 2022).[27] In many ways, Putin is right. The Neo-Eurasianist political philosophy has become a threat to the world, but not just the West. Within Russia itself, according to Marlène Laruelle, Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism has a "quasi-monopoly… over a certain part of the current Russian ideological spectrum" (Laruelle, 2012: 107). It has supplied Russia, a regional power, with the feeling of being a world-historical force, which, unlike the

Soviet Union, it is far from such a state of being. Neo-Eurasianism has given a nuclear power a feeling of invincibility, which it is not; a sense that it's on a mission from God, a messianic role to rescue the world from the oncoming apocalypse, which is mere wishful ideology. Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism has given Putin's regime a license to kill, rape, and destroy Ukraine and Ukrainians, while engaging in nuclear blackmail of the rest of the world. Never before, not even under the Soviet Union, has Russia been such a threat to world stability and world peace. Unlike Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, both of which had their murderous ideologues, today's Russian form of fascism comes equipped with nuclear weapons, and a necrophilic political-eschatology – bolstered by the Russian Orthodox Church – to justify using such capabilities. That, in and of itself, makes Dugin the most dangerous philosopher alive. And that is why he was targeted in August of 2022.

The future of Russia is in flux. Its disastrous war in Ukraine could inevitably lead to the downfall of Putin's regime, and major political transformation in Russia could ensue. However, the outcome of that transformation is uncertain. It could take the form of a doubling down on its current imperialist ideology, with an even more aggressive President at the helm. Or it could return Russia to democracy. It's very possible that the so-called "civilization-state" degenerates into a balkanized conglomeration of states independent of Moscow. The future path of Russia is not clear. However, what is clear at this point is the following: the 2022 attack on Ukraine by the Neo-Eurasianist regime in Moscow is also an attack on the global neoliberal hegemony. Yet, this is not an attack from the Left, as many "regressive Leftists" in the West often think. This attack is not attempting to determinately negate liberalism and bring about a more justice- and peace-filled socialist society. Rather, it is an attack from the Far-Right, i.e., an authentic and organic form of Russian fascism.[28] Despite what Putin says, Neo-Eurasianism is not a "de-colonizing" movement. Nor does it oppose imperialism. It is an imperial and colonizing project. Rhetorically, it does appropriate anti-imperial and de-colonizing verbiage, as it directs its "leftist-sounding" critique against neoliberal hegemony, the common foe of both the Left and the Right. For over a decade, Russia has attempted to foster a Red/Brown coalition, i.e., an alliance of communists and fascists that would aid Russia when it finds itself in hostile waters. Today, even as Russia engages in wholesale slaughter of innocents in Ukraine, many on the anti-fascist Left continue to fall for Putin's anti-colonial rhetoric. However, in reality, Russia today is itself a Right-wing aspirational Empire: a civilization-state attempting to colonize a territory it formerly controlled, both during the Russian Empire and during the Soviet Union, which now struggles to maintain its freedom

from that imperial control. The "multipolarity" that Dugin and Putin frequently speak of does not make the world safer, more prosperous, or freer for smaller countries; it does not free them from domination of more powerful states. Rather, the attack on the liberal "unipolar" world makes the world safer for a plurality of oppressive Empires, which inherently devour smaller nations on their borders, especially those nations around the "tellurocracy" Empire of Russia, as we've seen in Chechnya, Georgia, and now Ukraine. There is no doubt that the "rules based" neoliberal world order, enforced by the power of American military might after it was established post-World War II, has resulted in political-economic winners and losers. It has not been fair, nor just, to many countries and to many peoples. The political sins of the West, especially during colonization and the Cold War, are vast and gruesome, most poignantly in Latin America, Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The legitimate animosity that colonialism, the Cold War, and the current neoliberal situation has created has been exploited by neoliberalism's latest adversary, aggressive Neo-Eurasianist fascism, which seeks to undue the post-WWII consensus for a more chaotic and fragmented world, all in the name of preserving "global diversity" against the homogenizing tendencies of capitalist globalism, post-modernity, and American militarism.

In the absence of a substantive Leftist challenge to the neoliberalism hegemony, many Leftist intellectuals and activists have been seduced by Putin's Neo-Eurasianism's critique of the West. Yet, Putin's Russia plays the "altruism" card skillfully, just as the Soviet Union did when it supported Third World liberation movements for its own geopolitical benefit. Putin's aggressive stance against the West, in this case via the West's so-called "proxy," Ukraine, is claimed to be in service to the "liberation" of humankind, especially the losers within the current world order. In reality, such aggression is in service to the aspirational Russian Empire, a colonial empire, which seeks to take the place of the U.S. as the global hegemon, not end the world of global hegemons. Putin would like to shape the world in Russia's image just as globalization has shaped the world in the image of the West. However, the West is predominately democratic, reformable, and dynamic. Putin's vision for Russia is authoritarian, counter-reformatory, and static – bent on throwing the dialectic of history in reverse, thus ushering in a "New Middle Ages," as was envisioned by Nikolas Berdyaev (Berdyaev, 2009: 67-120).

Unlike the European Jews during the Shoah, who were exterminated because of their differences from the Aryans, Ukrainians today are being exterminated by Russians because they are too similar to Russians, yet remain distinct enough to warrant an identity separated from the Russians. That similarity, yet non-

identicality, is exaggerated by both sides, but only one side has resigned itself to annihilate the difference. Dugin understands this, and thus he and others provide Putin with a ready-at-hand political, religious, and theological ideology that justifies the elimination of the non-identicality of Ukrainians. Ukrainians, from the perspective of Neo-Eurasianism, will either come to recognize themselves as being inherently Russian, belonging to the *Russkii Mir*, or they will no longer exist as a fraternal people within the greater eastern Slavosphere. They will either bend their knee to the new-Tsar, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, as is required in Russia, or their "artificial" state will cease to exist as a state independent of the aspirational Russian Empire. Being that Ukrainians have no desire to live under the thumb of Moscow, they will continue to resist being reincorporated into the Russosphere; Ukrainians will continue to insist on their distinct culture, traditions, and language; Ukrainians will continue to remind Russia that they are Europeans, not Eurasians; Ukrainians will continue to bind themselves to the liberal Western democracies against the illiberal Russian Empire; Ukrainians will continue to "decommunize" as Russia continues to functionalize its communist past in the service of its fascist present; Ukraine will continue to fight, for if it ceases to fight, it will no longer exist as Ukraine.

Note

1. A version of this essay first appeared in Jeremiah Morelock and Felipe Narita Narita's 2022 book, The Return of History: *The Russo-Ukrainian War and the Global Spectacle*, published by Edições/Barao in Brazil. My chapter appeared under the title, "The Geist of Russia's War on Ukraine: Neo-Eurasianism." The version here reflects significant changes to the essay due to the ongoing developments in the Russo-Ukrainian war and my interpretation of that war.
2. The Crimea was captured from the Muslim Tartar Khanate in 1783 by the Catherine the Great, Czarina of an southward expanding Empire of Russia.
3. In Ukraine, the 2014 protest movement against Yanukovych is called the "Revolution of Dignity."

4. No Western country recognized the "referendum" as being legitimate, as elections under military occupation are always suspect, as they do not fulfil the requirements set by international law for legitimate votes for independence. Only nineteen countries have in some way, and to different degrees, recognized the Crimea as being a part of Russia. The vast majority of the international community continues to recognize it as part of Ukraine. Additionally, most Tartars and a large number of ethnic Ukrainians boycotted the referendum as not to lend it legitimacy through their willing participation.
5. This was especially true for the Tartars, who had suffered greatly ever since Catherine the Great conquered the Crimea and begin the "Russification" of the Black Sea. Additionally, under Stalin, the Tartars were forcibly deported to Central Asia, for many of them sided with the Third Reich during Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union. The Tartars were not committed Nazis, but rather saw the German invasion as an opportunity to be liberated from Stalin's dictatorial regime and possibly regain their independence. It was only after the fall of the Soviet Union that they were allowed to return to their ancestral homeland in Ukrainian Crimea.
6. The notion of the "Russian Idea" has a long history, going back to the 16th century claim that Orthodox Russia was in fact the "Third Rome," existing triumphantly after fall of Rome and Constantinople, thus having the same sacredness to Christendom as the two holy cities before it. Such a bold ideology was to guide the Russian people as they developed their distinctive civilization. Thus, even today, the "Russian Idea" is a construct of constitutional norms, values, and principles that express the historical particularity of Russia and it special world-historical purpose.
7. Ibid. President Zelensky of Ukraine likened Putin's essay on the so-called "brotherhood" of Russians and Ukrainians as one akin to Cain and Abel. See "Зеленский прокомментировал статью Путина" (Zelensky comments on Putin's article). Ukrayinska Pravda. February 12, 2022. https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2021/07/13/7300371/
8. Many commentators have misunderstood Putin's oft-repeated phrase about the collapse of the Soviet Union being the "great geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century." They have taken it to mean he longs for the return of the Soviet Union and its ideology. This is false; he has made it known throughout his tenure that he has no longing for a return to communism. Rather, the collapse of the Soviet Union into nation-states left millions of Russians living outside of the borders of Russia. Whereas they and their ancestors lived within the Russia Empire, whether it was Tsarist or Soviet, they now lived in countries that were independent of Russia. In other words, millions of Russians lived in exile from their motherland.
9. The Ukrainians have a long history distinguishable from the Russians, albeit intertwined with their fraternal neighbors to the east. For an

exhaustive study of such a history, see Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*. New York: Basic Books, 2021.

10. Those who deny Dugin's influence on the Kremlin have been vigorously challenged by an essay in Meduza, the exiled Russian publication that tracks the politics of Putin's Russia. According to Andrey Pertzev, Dugin's influence on the Kremlin became especially acute after an assassination attempt on Dugin himself left his daughter, Dariya, dead. At the time of the assassination attempt, it was clear that the Russian "special military operation" was already a disaster for Putin, and thus he needed an ideological cover that was beyond his capacity to dream up. See Andrey Pertzev, "Hawkish times need hawkish people: How the death of Daria Dugina helped her father, Alexander Dugin, rise from ultraconservative fringe philosopher to key Kremlin idealogue." November 3, 2022. https://meduza.io/en/feature/2022/11/03/hawkish-times-need-hawkish-people
11. Tsargrad TV is owned by the media oligarch, Konstantin Malofeev, who named his TV station after the traditional Slavic name for the "Second Rome," i.e., Constantinople. In 2015, the year that the channel was started, Alexander Dugin was named its chief editor. Interestingly, the channel was started with the help of the former American FOX News producer, John "Jack" Hanick, who was later charged by the Southern District of New York with violating the U.S. sanction on Konstantin Malofeev for helping him establish Tsargrad TV. He was also charged for making false statements to the FBI in an attempt to conceal his activities in Russia. Unlike its more secular counterparts, Tsargrad TV is expressly religious, often blending its advocacy of Russian Orthodoxy with its support for Vladmir Putin, creating an image of Putin as a divinely appointed ruler over Russia with a messianic mission for the world.
12. Some major booksellers, such as Amazon.com, following sanctions imposed on Dugin in 2015 by Obama's Executive Order 13660, no longer carry Dugin's books. However, they do sell books that are about Dugin, both critical and sycophantic.
13. One should be mindful that doing philosophical genealogy is a difficult task, as it is often imprecise. What follows is an examination of some of the major influences on Dugin's thought; it should not be understood as being exhaustive. Dugin is a cafeteria intellectual, drawing from a myriad of sources to construct what amounts to as a political-theological-philosophy, one that is closer to a complete worldview than an academic "school of thought."
14. This "false universality" of the West is a constant theme in Dugin's rhetoric, even claiming that "human rights" are not universal, but rather a category imposed upon the rest of the world through Western political hegemony.

15. For a good introduction to the some of the main Eurasianist ideologues, see Jafe Arnold and John Stachelski (eds.), *Foundations of Eurasianism,* Vol. 1. Prav Publishing, 2020.
16. I make the distinction here between "Marxist forms of communism" and other forms of modern communism, such as Stalinism, for Stalin "nationalized" Bolshevism by Russifying it via Russia culture material, albeit with the exception of the Orthodox church.
17. For a comprehensive study of Schmitt's influence on Putin's Kremlin, see David G. Lewis, *Russia's New Authoritarianism: Putin and the Politics of Order*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021.
18. St. Paul refers to the "restrainer" as both an inanimate thing (τὸ κατέχον – "that which withholds"), and as a person (ὁ κατέχων – "the one who withholds").
19. At the time of this writing (November 2022), the war in Ukraine is only in its nineth month, and Russia has already lost nearly 100,000 soldiers on the battlefield. It has lost two of their more important naval vessels in their Black Sea fleet, the Moskva and the Admiral Makarov. It has lost the Kharkiv Oblast as well as most of western part of the Kherson Oblast that it had captured early in the war. Additionally, it failed to capture Kyiv in the initial assault and has now mobilized 300,000 conscripts that were quickly deployed to Ukraine with very little or no training, which has proven to be combat ineffective. At this point, the only effective measure Russia is doing is its constant attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, which, if history proves consistent, will not demoralize Ukrainians, but will elevate their will to fight against the aggressor.
20. Another Nazi theorist that influenced Dugin's geopolitics is Karl Haushofer, who's geopolitical thought laid the foundation for much of the Third Reich's expansionist policies. Dugin borrows heavily from Haushofer, but much of it is filtered through Schmitt's appropriation of Haushofer's thought. See Holger H. Herwig, *The Demon of Geopolitics: How Karl Haushofer "Educated" Hitler and Hess.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.
21. Michael Millerman was right to critique the scholar of Eurasianism, Marlene Laruelle, when she dismissed Heidegger's influence in Dugin's thought, writing that Heidegger was not "congenial" for Dugin. This was a colossal mistake on her part. See Michael Millerman, Beginning with Heidegger: Strauss, Rorty, Derrida, *Dugin and the Philosophical Constitution of the Political (*London: Arktos Media Ltd., 2020), 167.
22. Dugin does not believe in any theory of history that assumes progress is inevitable. Those who would say that history is unidirectional, and as such both orthogenetic and monotonic, such as Hegel argued, are rejected. Rather, Dugin believes that history is "reversible," and therefore that which has been negated in the past can be de-negated and brought back into existence as a historical framing. This is especially important for

Dugin's palingenetic ideology, wherein he reaches back behind the Soviet Union for cultural, spiritual, and political materials through which he can create a worldview and Russian Idea that guides the Russian Federation today. See *Dugin, The Fourth Political Theory*, 67-70. For a discussion of Peripeteic Dialectics, see Dustin J. Byrd, "Palingenetic Ultra-Nationalist Christianity: History, Identity, and the Falsity of Peripeteic Dialectics." *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 42, no. 4 (2021): 39-64.

23. Archeo-futurism comes from the Nouvelle Droite (New Right) thinker, Guillaume Faye. It is a combination of a nation's archaic values, cultures, traditions, etc., and modern technology. This reactionary-modernism is a common trait among all modern far-wing movements that do not want to abandon modern technology while they "return" to pre-modern cultural norms and worldviews. See Guillaume Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of the Post-Catastrophic Age*, trans. Sergio Knipe. London: Arktos Media Ltd., 2010.
24. There are many other 20th century German conservative thinkers in Dugin's intellectual baggage, including Ernst Jünger (1895-1998), Ernst Niekisch (1889-1967), and Arthur Moeller van den Bruck (187601925), just to name a few.
25. Alexander Dugin has a special disdain for Bernard Henri-Lévy. He debated him in the 2019 Nexus Institute symposium in Amsterdam. While many on the Right applauded Dugin's critique of the West, it was Henri-Lévy's defense of the Western world that carried the day.
26. While on trial in 1951, Evola denied he was merely a fascist. Rather, but he described himself as a "superfascista," a term meant to distance himself, and therefore culpability, for the crimes of Fascism and National Socialism, while at the same time forwarding the position that Mussolini and Hitler's regimes were not fascist enough.
27. In his essay on Putin's speech, Dugin argues that Putin has proclaimed a new "Russian Idea," one that is wholly in line with Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism.
28. I do not use the phrase "fascism" lightly. Neither do I use it as a pejorative insult. Rather, my use of the term stems from an analysis of Putin's regime and political ideology in comparison to fascism's "ideal type" as developed by the Oxford scholar, Roger Griffin, in his book, The Nature of Fascism. London: Routledge, 1991. A systematic analysis of Neo-Eurasianism's core tenets and practices demonstrates clearly that it warrants the moniker, Russo-fascism, Rashim (рашизм), or Ruscim (русизм), i.e., Russian fascism (русский фашизм).

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Islamic Perspective, Vol. 28, 39-50
The Institute for Critical Social Theory, 2022

Revisiting the Origin and Development of Sociology in Iran

Based on the Concept of "Sociological Imagination"

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Abstract

This article studies the origins, emergence and development of sociology in Iran as a discipline based on sociological imagination in the historical context of Iran— not just as an academic discipline. Many of those who have spoken about the emergence and development of sociology in Iran, referred to the establishment of this discipline in university and the commencement of teaching sociology as a course; and they have asserted that the origin of sociology in Iran as an Academic discipline can be traced back to teaching Ilm al-ijtima (social science) at the Teacher Training Institute and the Faculty of Literature of the University of Tehran. The present study, however, attempts to employ a different perspective by going beyond the institutional approach in examining the beginning of sociology in Iran. It analyzes the origin and development of sociology in Iran from another angle based on the concept of sociological imagination.

Keywords: Sociology, Iran, Sociological Imagination, Modernity, Discipline

Introduction

This paper studies the origins, emergence and development of sociology in Iran as a discipline based on sociological imagination in the historical context of Iran— not just as an academic discipline. Many of those who have spoken about the emergence and development of sociology in Iran including Ehsan Naraghi, (1379); Ali Akbar Mehdi and Abdolali Lahsaeizadeh, (1992) referred to the establishment of this discipline in university and the commencement of teaching sociology as a course; and they have asserted that the origin of sociology in Iran as an Academic discipline can be traced back to teaching *Ilm al-ijtima* (social science) at the Teacher Training Institute and the Faculty of Literature of the University of Tehran by Will Hass and other professors such as Assadollah Bijan and Yahya Mahdavi (1962) and Gholam Hossein Sedighi (1938) and Ehsan Naraghi (2000) and Zanjanizadeh (2013). In fact, two narratives exist regarding the commencement of teachingsociology in Iran: one considers the beginning of teaching social sciences in 1908 at the school of political sciences established by Hassan Pirnia (Mushir al-Dawla), and the other maintains teaching the course of "*Ilm al-ijtima*" at the Teaching Training Institute in 1919 and at the University of Tehran in 1934 as the starting point for sociology education in Iran. These narratives are based on the institutional establishment of the field of social sciences or sociology in Iran. This type of narrative of the history of a discipline usually has a progenitor who founded the discipline and is considered the father of that science. This model of the history of a science or an academic discipline is based on the narrative of the institutional history referring to the establishment of a science as a discipline in a university. Most historiographies of sociology in Iran are also based on this institutional perspective. The present study, however, attempts to employ a different perspective and go beyond the institutional approach in examining the beginning of sociology in Iran. It analyzes the origin and development of sociology in Iran from another angle based on the concept of *sociological imagination*, i.e., how notions on the "social" appeared in the minds of Iranians since the dawn of modernity.

Ilm al-ijtima: Rereading the Concept

To begin with, let us examine the concept of '*Ilm al-ijtima'* as the first terminology for sociology in Iran and distinguish it from ancient social thought. Yahya Mahdavi, one of the founders of social sciences in Iran, has written a book entitled "*Sociology or Ilm al-ijtima*" in 1943 which is considered one of the first few books on social sciences in Iran. This title was chosen to convey his take on sociology as a modern

science. The term '*ilm*' in here is different from the knowledge that was introduced in the field of societal and was used by ancient thinkers and scholars in writings and manuscripts in the pre-modern era; sciences such as *Ilm al-Quran*, *Ilm al-Hadith*, and *Ilm al-Rijal* (knowledge of Men) cannot be defined in the modern science sense. One can probably argue that there was *Fiqh al-Ijtima* (social jurisprudence) and *Falsafah al-Ijtima* (social philosophy) in pre-modern Iran. I would like to note that these sciences are not synonymous with modern social sciences but they are rather a different kind of conceptualization of social knowledge in those days. Later, when Mahdavi uses the term '*Ilm al-Ijtima*,' he juxtaposes it as a science next to the concept of 'society' which refers to modern science. Failing to take this distinction into consideration has led to many misinterpretations and misunderstandings today.

The term 'Islamic Social Sciences' emanates from these misinterpretations. Social science or sociology, indeed, cannot be 'Islamized;' what should be considered instead is *Fiqh al-Ijtima* which looks at the society from the perspective of jurisprudence and Islam, and reproduces the concepts, approaches and paradigms of social affairs fit for Islamic society through a jurisprudential approach. This is the paradigm of *Fiqh al-Ijtima* and should not be confused with *Ilm al-Ijtima*. These two concepts are even different from *Falsafah al-Ijtima* which has an elaborate history in the Muslim world and Iran. Farabi and Khajeh Nizam al-Mulk al-Tusi, for instance, wrote on *Falsafah al-Ijtima* in their works but their proposed social principles cannot be defined and explained under the definition of sociology in the modern scientific sense as the science of society. These scholars constructed, explained and interpreted social concepts in the context of ancient sciences. However, a theoretical framework, a paradigm, or a sociological theory in the modern social sciences or sociology is conceived through its scientific meaning under the new sciences the meta-theoretical of which are fundamentally different from *Fiqh al-Ijtima*, *Falsafah al-Ijtima*, *Irfan al-Ijtima* (social mysticism), and *Hikmah al-Ijtima* (social wisdom).

The history of social sciences, particularly the science of sociology in Europe and the United States, has been redefined according to theconcept of sociology introduced by Auguste Comte. This redefinition recognizes Auguste Comte's concept of sociology as the starting point of the history of this science. However, some scholars believe that sociology was formed when Durkheim, Weber, and Pareto established the discipline of sociology at the university level and distinguished it from other sciences such as philosophy and psychology; and they formulated human issues –not individually and mentally – based on the society and

the complexities of the 'social matter.' They succeeded in designing, describing and interpreting the social matter, and presented it in the form of the science of knowing the society. Pitrim Sorokin critiqued this belief and argues that this view overlooks the history of sociology (Kafkazli, 2003). He traces the history of sociology between the history of ancient Iran, Rome, Greece, Vedanta in India, and the pharaohs of Egypt and the history of Islam and the Islamicate societies. This suggests that he developed a global view of the history of sociology and considered the formation of sociology in a profound and extensive way. Concurrent with Sorokin's historical approach to sociology, a group of scholars also think of Montesquieu and consider his theories as sociological theories. This group argues that Montesquieu formulated his sociological theories more than a century prior to Auguste Comte; hence, they associate him with the beginning of sociological foundations.

Non-institutional Reading of the Emergence of Sociology in Iran

Employing a non-institutional perspective is the proper way to go beyond the stereotypes of the commencement of sociology in Iran. Anchored within such discourse, it can be contended that sociology, like many other sciences, was initially a set of ideas that produced a new perspective. To understand these ideas and then their genealogy, it is not adequate to study the issue only from the institutional perspective of the emergence of this science. Let me provide you an example that illustrates this point. In Dar ul-Funun, the idea was developed that when a concept called technology enter the Iranian world or any other non-western society, according to the rules of the related context, it would engender consequences and ramifications, and affect other social, economic and cultural areas as well. What I would like to note is that the technology or techniques that were proposed in the institution of Dar ul-Funun were not the same technique or industries that Mir Damad (Mir Mohammad Baqer Esterabadi: 1561-1632) had in mind in the Safavid period. Although these two concepts share a common terminology, it is the inner context of the concept that changes substantially; and this change in the inner context leadsto consequences in the Iranian world. The journey of Iranians to Europe and India and other parts of the world in the eighteenth century and their familiarity with concepts such as parliament, democracy, freedom and independence is one such example. In their travelogues, they spoke of these concepts borrowed from Europe and introduced them into the Persian language and literature. These are a few examples of a set of ideas that the history of which should be examined from their inception. It does not do justice to examine the

history of sociology from the time it was introduced in Iran as an academic concept. Rather, one should trace the context of its formation to extract the social issues. Sociology should not be reduced to a mere method, theory and an academic discipline. It was established as an academic discipline at the university level with a particular framework. What we should bear in mind is that the sociological ideas and explanations of social issues appeared at least one hundred years before the establishment of the university in Iran. Those who regard 1934 as the time when sociology appeared in Iran overlook a considerable period of time since the starting point of sociological ideas in Iran. To further explain this approach, I would employ C. Wright Mills' concept of 'sociological imagination.' Of important ideas in sociology, for instance, one can speak of the ideas of justice, freedom, autonomy, the role of institutions, and power. These ideas have appeared in social science textbooks since the 1960s but they can also be traced in some older sources. For example, the heart of Mostashar al-Dowleh's book "*Yek Kalameh*" (*One Word*) lies in the idea that civil society will not appear if the concept of power is not restrained. This work addresses a social issue and introduces a sociological idea. Therefore, it falls into the category of social science resources or sociological foundations. This is indicative of the fact that one can trace the origin and the process of sociological foundations in Iran through older resources. It is wrong to think that sociology appeared in Iran with the establishment of the University of Tehran and with the start of teaching sociology as an academic discipline in Iran.

Sociology: The Science of Conceptualizing "Society" or "Nation-state"?

Emmanuel Wallerstein (2001) believes that the central signifier in both social sciences in the general sense and sociology in the specific sense is society; and with little attention and analysis, it can be argued that society is a general concept. However, the question that arises is when sociologists speak of society in the 19th and 20th centuries; do they look at society as a general concept? Or do they think of history and a concept that has a profound relation with a defined historical context? Wallerstein argues that sociologists and social theorists insist that they think of and theorize about human society in the general sense but their behind-the-scene assumptions do not cover the whole of human society, rather they speak of a form of human society that emerged in the nation-state system and the institution of the new state. Giddens, for example, contends that he examines, analyzes, and explains the different issues of human society in the general sense but he only deals with one

formulation of the historical formulations of human society which has emerged in the current nation-state system.

One of the concepts which is the basis of sociological imagination is the concept of 'new'. Iranians have been familiar with this concept and experienced it objectively since the middle of Fath Ali Shah Qajar era, and through the consequent Abbas Mirza's reformations in the army, bureaucracy, economy, factory, academy and publishing industry; hence, the creation of the new army, new bureaucracy, new factories, and new schools. This concept had not been the focus of much attention prior to this, but its context—the new nation-state system—was gradually taking shape. In the past, Iran was an Empire and then the reign of kings who were initially Khan or the Chief of a dynasty or a tribe and would only declare kingdom upon seizing power by defeating the heads of other tribes and dynasties. It was in the middle of Fath Ali Shah's reign that Iranians—after encountering the Europeans who already had the nation-state system in their society for a period of at least 150 years—gradually became familiar with the basics of civil society and made an effort to follow suit and establish it in the country. Sociology in Europe and its concepts were formed based on this nation-state system. To conduct the genealogy of the emergence of sociological ideas in Iran; it is good to refer to the early 20th century (coinciding with the middle of the reign of Fath Ali Shah). Later in the Pahlavi period, thinkers like Taghi Arani, Bozorg Alavi or Seyyed Jafar Pishhavari had sociological ideas with leftist tendencies. These individuals did not necessarily have an academic degree in sociology in the institutional sense and its academic discipline, but they did present a set of sociological ideas. Similarly, the nineteenth-century of Iran witnessed left and liberal parties such as Equality and Justice proposing ideas about society that existed 80 years prior to the institutional and academic establishment of sociology. They have acted like a bud in the sociological context of Iranian society; these are sociological themes with a sociological imagination approach not seen in the historiography and genealogy of the social sciences. Accordingly, it is now the time to transmute the basics of sociological historiography in Iran through the sociological imagination approaches for the emergence of a new perspective in this field. The present paper attempts to analyze the contexts of this development through the sociological imagination approach. To conduct the genealogy of sociological imagination in Iran, it is erroneous to simply employ an institutional view and introduce the great patrons and progenitors of this science as we miss a significant part of the history of the development of sociology in Iran. This begs the question 'What good does it have to employ the sociological imagination approach in looking at Iranian sociology?' To begin with, this can

rediscover thinkers and bring back ideasabsentin books related to sociology in Iran. This absence originates from placing them outside the realm of sociological foundations. For sociological historiography, the sociological approach of sociology must be employed; this suggests that we should figure out the roots of this sociological imagination.

The second point to bear in mind is what encouraged Yahya Mahdavi to teach sociology? What comes to mind immediately upon hearing the question is that Iranian students traveled to Europe to pursue their studies and upon returning, they decided to establish this field in Iran. As a matter of fact, Mahdavi and the audience of this field came up with a language through which concepts were formed. If the basics of sociology were shared with audiences who had no understanding of the concept, needless to say no mutual understanding would be developed. Undoubtedly, the formation of this mutual understanding was based on the emergence of cultural and civilizational contexts that had somehow created a world in their mind and languages on a subconscious level. The institutional founders of Iranian sociology such as Yahya Mahdavi and Gholam Hossein Sedighi established this social knowledge based on the nation-state context, the foundations of which were formed a hundred years earlier during the reigns of Ghaem Magham Farahani, Amir Kabir, and the modernity of Nasser al-Din Shah in Iran. In other words, when modernity and the concept of society emerged in Iran, the science of sociology found its significance to be established, taught and institutionalized.

To illustrate this point, let me provide you with an example. When Nasser al-Din Shah brought a camera from Europe to Iran, he did not import only a new technical tool; rather, according to the rule of related context, he brought a kind of paradigm shift in Iranian society. That era had a philosophical principle that nature is not transferrable; when Aqa Reza Akasbashi takes a picture of Mulla Hadi Sabzevari— one of the greatest Sadraian philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries— and shows it to him, he is amazed and wonders how this happened (Fatemeh Qaziha, 2001). Another prominent example lies in Nasser al-Din Shah's well-familiarity with the French language and his decree in teaching this European language to his children. In the 18th and 19th centuries, French was not only one of the main languages in European courts and other important countries but also the language of modernity, intellectualism and the ideals of the Enlightenment. If a person in Europe and America intends to write the history of sociology, he cannot succeed without referring to the ideals of Enlightenment. I am not raising the question here that whether Nasser al-Din Shah or the Nasserite court

understood the age of the Enlightenment or ever questioned the Enlightenment or not. It is no secret that the Qajar period had not witnessed even a single philosopher or a hakim who put forward a proposal to question the Enlightenment. When the familiarity with the language of Enlightenment arises in the center of power in Iran— in the court— it produces social consequences and ramifications which have not been taken into consideration in relation to the sociological imagination in historiographies. However, this paradigm shift in the Nasserite period is one of the turning points in the history of sociology in Iran which has been marginalized in historiography to this day. This paradigm shift should have been accentuated and considered as the main text.

Underground Associations and Sociological Ideas

Another historical field in Iran that neither has been the focus of much exploration in relation to sociology and nor has been viewed favorably is the underground and Freemasonry associations and their consequences in Iranian society. None of the available narratives of the time shows a serious analysis of the effects of the thoughts and ideas of this association on Iranian society, Iranian identity and even the Constitutional Revolution, and later on the discipline of sociology in Iran. A part of the ideas of this association can be traced back to the underground operations and activities which have been widely discussed and analyzed in all the narratives. What has not been seriously discussed is that part of the ideas that influenced the *Munavar al-fekr* (i.e., scholars and thinkers who were influenced by the Enlightenment) of the time and the center of power, both political and religious power (court and Shiite clergy). What influences these ideas had on the society, the minds, and language of Iranians at the turning point of Iranian history, and its relation to the emergence of social affairs in Iran have not been discussed in historiographies. The functionality of these associations, however, has leaned towards one of the most important sociological questions which is the emergence of social affairs in the context of the nation-state, modernity and the ideals of the Enlightenment.

Religious Social Movements and Sociological Ideas in the 19th Century

The emergence of the Babi Movement in the history of Iran is another under-discussed point owing to the sensitivity of the Shiite community. The absence of

attention to this issue arises from the wrong assumption that the Babi Movement and the Baha'i sect are one and the same. The Babi Movement was a social movement but due to the then social structure of Iran, every movement that emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries had a religious flavor. This movement created a challenge in the Iranian society by questioning the decadence that had affected the masses as well. The literature of this movement, undoubtedly, was apocalyptic literature but it shook the pillars of Iranian society and had impacted the thoughts of the society. This movement, as a social movement, engaged the minds and language of Iranian thinkers. But because of a posteriori belief that the emergence of the Babi must necessarily be historically formulated under the Baha'i faith, thinkers remained silent about it. Tahereh Qurrat al-ʿAyn, as a character brought the issue of gender and women to the fore of Iranian society before which such category did not exist in the Iranian society. The emergence of this gender-oriented issue in the center of Iranian society and attention to such issue as one of the indicators of social issues, and the birth and emergence of sociological imagination deserve a recovery. Paying attention to these points is important in writing the history of sociology in Iran. One could argue that *broken* parts of histories of the Iranian sociology are recoverable here and there.

Iranian Journalism and Sociological Concepts in Iran of the 19th Century

Another issue that should be seriously considered in sociological historiography in Iran is journalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Esmaeil Jasim, 2013). What are the places of journalists like Mohammad Taghi Bahar, Mirza Jahangir Khan Shirazi, Farrukhi Sistani, Abolghasem Lahouti, Mirza Ghasem Khan Tabrizi, and Ali Akbar Dehkhoda in the sociology of Iran? They had no sociology degree but their proposed ideas and those of other journalists during the Qajar period can be explored and analyzed as a decisive form of 'social school.' Those ideals, elements and components are the foundation of sociological imagination and prepare the society for the next hundred years so much so that Gholam Hossein Sedighi and Yahya Mahdavi would establish the field of sociology in Iran. The preparation of society was significant for the emergence of a sociological institution as it had a dramatic impact on the mentality of the first group of sociology students, and prepared them to understand social and sociological issues.One can detect these ideas even in the poetry of poets such as Ali Akbar Saber, Nasim Shomal and Mirzadeh Eshghi or Iraj Mirza, different from Saadi and Ferdowsi and Hafez; these

ideas can also be located in the religious and philosophical works of Allameh Naini whose ideas are distinct from Mullah Hadi Sabzevari. What can be elicited from such works of journalists, poets, philosophers, writers and thinkers of the Qajar period is a social issue that has emerged in the context of modernity and was formed in the Iranian society. Therefore, this is also another point that deserves serious reflection and consideration in writing the history of sociology in Iran.

Paying close attention to the emergence of understanding the social issue amongst the thinkers of the Qajar period is of foremost importance for detecting and re-reading sources of sociological imagination in Iran. This attention will give birth to a transmutation in our understanding of sociology and move Iranian sociologist out of stagnancy. Setting the sociological imagination in motion will facilitate the transmission of this imagination to the next generation, broaden the sociologist's perspective and improve sociological education in Iran. If this occurs, the discussion of the indigenization of sociology in Iran will also be formulated according to the establishment of relativity between history and transformations of the Iranian mind. The indigenization of social sciences should be formulated based on the ecology and history of this country in relation to the historical-social changes in Iran. Taking this into account, the context of nation-state formation in Iran, and its traits and components should be re-read and analyzed. If we consider the arrival of sociology in Iran and its institutional establishment at the university in 1934 as the starting point of the history of sociology in Iran, we will ignore all those eruptions of thoughts and ideas formed in the volcano of the Iranian minds and languages, and its molten materials which had paved the way for paying attention to social issues.

Rereading the History of Sociology in Iran based on the Concept of "Sociological Imagination"

If we employ the concept of "sociological imagination" as a research framework on the history of sociology in Iran, then the geometry of our research context will change. Put simply, we can theoretically formulate the issue of sociology in Iran based on the concept of ‘imagination,’ instead of having an institutional approach to the emergence of sociology. The available studies in this field have so far developed a mechanical look at the emergence of sociology and social sciences in Iran.The mechanical point of view is what historians of sociology have erroneously assumed that sociology is a ‘commodity’ discipline which has been imported by the professors in the field and ‘assembled’ in Iran. As a matter of fact, to understand the

transfer and acquisition of knowledge, we need to first comprehend the relation between society and ideas; this comprehension will not occur without paying attention to the imagination. In other words, taking notice of the social issue in the minds and languages of thinkers, poets, and writers a century prior to the establishment of the sociological institution is of great importance for the consistency of the sociological imagination. C. Wright Mills (1959) corroborates this sentiment and argues that a sociologist is not one who has only a university degree in this field, but a sociologist is one who has developed a sociological understanding. Employing the sociological imagination approach in writing the history of sociology in Iran will make it possible to discover the history of the emergence of early sociological ideas and will broaden social understanding. This way, the concept of sociology will be no longer merely an imported issue; rather, it can be seen and understood in the definition of Iranian society to create and design new paradigms from the heart of social affairs in Iranian society. For drawing sociological paradigms in a society, a sociologist must be residing in that society. One of the reasons that Iranian sociology has suffered from a conceptual impasse and is devoid of the power to recreate sociological imagination has been the confinement of sociology in institutional frameworks. Modern rationality can be extracted in accordance with historical contexts in the field of social affairs. I would like to note that sociological imagination has no meaning without modern rationality. If we look at the history of Iranian sociology with a sociological imagination approach, this science will no longer be an academic discipline imported from the West, but will be part of the "becoming of Iranian society."

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Islamic Perspective, Vol. 28, 51-71
The Institute for Critical Social Theory, 2022

Ali Shariati: Liberation Theology, Social Justice, & Humanism

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Abstract

The erudite scholar Ali Shariati (1933-1977) is one of the greatest minds of the twentieth century. Thus, it is challenging to contribute something worthy to honor his academic legacy and heritage. His pioneering contributions span a wide spectrum of disciplines, not only in the humanities and social sciences, but also in pedagogy and education. This short chapter endeavors to shed light on a specific angle of his reading of 'critical social theory', viewed from the prism of his socio-political and cultural theory, as evidenced in his outlook towards liberation theology, social justice, and humanism. While Shariati had actual correspondences with Fanon, the comparisons with Foucault, Fromm, Gramsci, Durkheim, and Weber are warranted by the heuristic tradition.

Keywords: Liberation theology, Social justice, Humanism, Modernity, Postcolonial theory, De-colonial theory, Alternative social theory, Islamic thought, Spirited religion, Spirited resistance.

Spirited religion & spirited resistance

Almost one year after the death of Ali Shariati, in 1978, in the heyday of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the late renowned French philosopher and social activist Michel Foucault (1926 -1984) covered this salient historical event by reporting to the *Corriere della sera*. In his attempt to depict a realistic picture of the situation, Foucault interpreted ritual as a construction of the sacred. He saw in the Islamic Revolution a 'spirited resistance'; a sort of a spiritual-esoteric dimension embedded in the heart of the political realm, wherein this spiritualism takes precedence over politics and ferments in new policies that serve the populace. Foucault was rather harsh in his reading of revolutionary ethos, when he prematurely made the analogy between Sunnism and tyranny, on the one hand, and democracy and Shi'ism, on the other. Foucault though that there are 'moral and spiritual' safety valves or effective limitations that safeguard against the autocracy of the Revolution, which is led by the Shi'ite *ulama* (clergy), to turn into militancy and dictatorship. As a harbinger of change, the 'moral fiber' of the Revolution, culminated in Foucault's new and innovative reading of 'political spiritualism'. As such, political spiritualism is grounded upon the premise that the esoteric dimension of the Revolution would eventually outweigh its exoteric aspect, since the 'spiritual commemorational dimension' and 'political opposition' are fused together. Based on the masses' unwavering stance of resistance and opposition to illegitimate power and tyranny, Foucault considered Shi'ism to be primarily an ideological tool and strong social bond used by the Revolutionaries against the ruling or power elite, who claim fake civic conformity and false authority. Foucault discovered in Shi'ism a unique and original political stance because it is based on the desire of the self to be completely different from the current status quo ante (Stauth 1991). Foucault's moral discourse gives way to humanistic ambitions, since these ambitions are not only material, economic, or even nationalistic, but are also rooted in a long-standing metaphysical-esoteric dimension. This might explain why across history, political Shi'ism transformed itself into a mobilization force to reckon with, based upon Durkheim's notions of social and organic solidarity. Durkheim did not define 'society' per se, as he believed that it is a product of social construction; as such, a metaphorical construct that could neither be confined nor defined. (Durkheim 1965: pp. 60ff). The spiritual ethos of the Islamic Revolution that Foucault discovered might have waned in the early stages of state-building of the Islamic Republic, especially during the Iraq-Iran war (1980-88). Nevertheless, the fulcrum of the Revolution remains it esoteric dimension, or what Foucault called its 'political spiritualism'; its 'spirited resistance.'

A few months before he passed away, Foucault said,

> *There has been political innovation, political creation and political experimentation outside of the great political parties, and outside of the normal ordinary program. This innovation included changes in the way people gather, organize, socialize, and interact. 'It's a fact that people's everyday lives have changed from the early 1960s to now; and certainly, within my own life, and surely, that is not due to political parties, but is the result of many [social] movements' (Shepard 2011: p. 15).*

Salient among those social movements is the 1979 Islamic Revolution – a foundational revolution aimed at heralding new ideas and nurturing various strands of critical thinking – with its 'political spiritualism' and 'spirited resistance.' This 'spirited resistance,' which Shariati dubbed and reconstructed as 'Red Shi'ism,' constitute the fulcrum of this chapter. Red Shi'ism is aimed at the salvation of the masses, while 'Black Shi'ism', an authoritarian form of religion associated with the *mullah*s (clerical establishment) of the regime, feared that Shariati's works and ideas would be employed against them. Shariati used the model of spirited resistance, Red Shi'ism, or revolutionary religion as a means to developing a new line of thought; a social theory. Spirited resistance and revolutionary religion are tied to liberation theology by the pedagogy of the oppressed, the downtrodden, and the disenfranchised. Thus, Shariati's objective was to affect a shift from authoritarian (Black Shi'ism) to humanistic, revolutionary religion (Red Shi'ism).

Revolution and liberation

Ali Shariati situates Islam within the framework of revolution and liberation. The principle aim in Shariati's reading of Islam is the transformation of religion into a revolutionary ideology ('revolutionary Islam' or 'spirited religion') and its utilization within a revolutionary framework. Shariati views Islam as a 'liberation theology': a liberationist way of life; a modus vivendi, where its aim is to affect change and allow the realization of dignity, agency, and personal development on the micro level, on the individual per se; as well as, on the macro level, on the society as a whole, by guiding it to growth and perfection (Shariati 2017).

As to the theoretical foundations of Islam, Shariati observed that there exists an embedded (contradictory) dichotomy within the notion of 'religion' itself. He argued that there are two religious categories: 'revolutionary religion' and 'apologetic religion.' Shariati identifies 'revolutionary religion' with the notion of

public good, which is associated with unitary religion (*tawhid*); and 'apologetic religion', an authoritarian form of religion that is linked to polytheism (*shirk*). Moreover, Shariati argued that 'revolutionary religion' nurtures the believers with a 'critical outlook and vision' towards all that surrounds them, both in material and moral realms or milieus. Subsequently, this impetus provides the followers of 'revolutionary religion' with a sense of moral responsibility – a sort of élan vital – towards the status quo; and makes them think about affecting change in the stagnant society they live in (Shariati 2017: p. 40). Invoking of 'what remains of God on earth,' Shariati draws analogies from the 'revolutionary' stances of initial leaders and prophets of unitary (*tawhid*) religions, and their struggle 'against all forms of vices and corruption in the land' in order to rectify the path (pave the way) and guide humanity to salvation. Shariati asserted that the central characteristic of revolutionary religion – the public good religion – is to avoid legitimizing and justifying the status quo along religious lines. Revolutionary religion does not believe in being subordinate to the status quo or taking a stance of carelessness and negligence towards all that surrounds it, especially oppression and injustice (Shariati 2017: p. 40).

Shariati contrasts this 'revolutionary religion' with 'apologetic religion,' an authoritarian form of religion that aims to justify the status quo by making supernatural beliefs part and parcel of the mainstream religious doctrine. Also, 'apologetic religion' endeavors to distort doctrinal religious beliefs in order to coax and convince people that their current situation is the most ideal. Thus, 'apologetic religion' deceives people to accept it because it is depicted as a manifestation of God's will, i.e., it is predetermined; it is the destiny that God has accorded them (lit. 'written for them') (Shariati 2017: p. 42). It is possible to identify Shariati's reading of Islam, and more specifically Red Shi'ism, with his category of 'revolutionary religion,' where he initially argued that, "Islam is a religion which made its appearance in the history of mankind with the cry of "No!" from Mohammad (PBUH), the heir of Abraham, the manifestation of the religion of the Unity of God and the oneness of mankind; a "No" which begins with the cry of "Unity", a cry which Islam reiterated when confronted with aristocracy and compromise". (Red Shiism: p. 1). In short, Shariati analyzed the nature, meaning, and function of self-sacrifice in early Islamic history by discussing and stressing its physiological, psychological, and sociological dimensions.

Maintaining the idea that 'Red Shi'ism' is in congruity with the revolutionary ideals and tenets of Islam, Shariati argued that Red Shi'ism "appear[ed] as the spearhead of rebellion and the struggle of the downtrodden and oppressed masses,

especially the rural people. It flourished wonderfully, in multiple facets, and in different directions, moderate or extreme, in the form of various movements of the masses against the powers of the day" (Red Shiism: p. 5). Later on, this scenario materialized in the Islamic Revolution, whereby the masses, or the grassroots, transformed their 'spirited religion' into a 'spirited resistance' – along the lines of *Karbala'* – which was capable of confronting the power (ruling) elite, and eventually toppling the regime.

In short, Shariati's identification of Islam, in general, and Red Shi'ism, in particular, with the category of 'revolutionary religion' occurs on the ground of his reading of Islam as a progressive, yet practical religion that distances itself from all forms of polytheism (*shirk*). From the stance of the esoteric dimension of 'political spiritualism', or 'spirited religion,' in each historical epoch, Islam rebelled against various forms of tyranny and oppression; whereby the physical upheaval resulted in nurturing a sense of critical evaluation of the prevalent status quo and the societal stagnations the Muslims found themselves living in (Shariati 2017).

Shariati's and Fanon's exchanges: precursors to postcolonial and de-colonial theory

What are the denotative and connotative meanings of postcolonialism and decolonialism? "[P]ostcolonialism emphasizes an interdisciplinary perspective that encompasses economic, political, social and cultural aspects of decolonization and its aftermath. It highlights the importance of race, gender, and ethnicity in understanding anticolonial struggles" (Viotti and Kauppi 2020: p.115). Also, "Postcolonialism would include literature on dependency and the capitalist world system" (Viotti and Kauppi, 2020, p. 408). Accordingly, the decolonial framework has its point of departure in the colonization of the "Americas"; whereby a small European minority colonized and exploited a vast majority of peoples and lands and shifted the balance of power in their favor for centuries to come (Quijano 2007: p.168). This "de-colonial shift, in other words, is a project of de-linking while post-colonial criticism and theory is a project of scholarly transformation within the academy" (Mignolo 2007: p.452).

Bearing the aforementioned in mind, it is worth noting that the 'captive mindset' concept is linked to the vast array of literature dealing with colonialism. It is dominant in Fanon's notion of the colonial inferiority complex (Fanon 2008: p. 9). According to him, this inferiority complex is the result of two things: economic

domination and loss of culture. As such, the above is a reflection to the colonizers' perceived superiority; it is "the correlative to the European's feeling of superiority" (Fanon 2008: p. 69).

Well, how do both Shariati and Fanon situate themselves within this dynamic debate or dyad? To further contextualize, Shariati's understanding of Islam as a 'revolutionary religion' within the time-frame of the Twentieth Century, corresponds to Fanon's reading of colonization. This interpretation tends to give weight to Shariati's reading of Islam as a religion whose specific revolutionary characteristics are molded in accordance to the contextual and particular contradictions in the historical epoch. Fanon responds to prior correspondences with Shariati, by writing that:

> *I could insist more than you, on your proposition that in the Third World […] Islam possesses – more than all of the other social forces and ideological alternatives – the anticolonial capacity and anti-western characteristic […] I wish that Iranian and Muslim intellectuals can utilize the immense authentic social and cultural resources hidden deep within the societies and religious consciousness of Muslims, with the aim of emancipation and for the foundation of a better humanity and another civilization (Lettre à Ali Shariati).*

In this sense, it is necessary to highlight the significance of the aforementioned correspondence, which reflects Fanon's argument in his seminal books entitled, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008). Fanon theorized the psychological and physical incapacitating effects of colonialism. He argued for the necessity of radical anti-colonial popular movements to liberate themselves from Western materialist colonialism and its repressive apparatuses; and to free themselves from Western 'universalizing' narratives and accounts of what is and ought to constitute 'humanity.' Fanon framed this project of liberation within the larger project of theorizing new notions of 'humanity' and 'normality,' which would include the marginalized and downtrodden colonized masses. Concerning, decolonization and the creation of 'new man,' Fanon writes,

> *It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity.*

> *Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men (Fanon 1961: p. 36).*

In the aforementioned correspondence with Shariati, Fanon states that Islam possesses the 'anticolonial capacity' and the subjective potential for emancipation and for the foundation of another humanity and another civilization. As such, the Fanonian anti-colonial line of argument comports with Shariati's observations that within the context of the colonized Third World, Islam possesses the revolutionary kernel for social change and emancipation (for instance, via social justice and liberation theology). After observing that such a revolutionary potential exists, Shariati's theoretical project of setting Islam within a revolutionary framework, and his concept of 'revolutionary religion,' come as a continuation to the previous reading of the condition of Muslim societies, with the aim of actualizing such potential (*Lettre à Ali Shariati*).

In short, throughout the Fanon-Shariati dialogue, it is possible to stipulate the following three notions: (1) in the spatio-temporal reality of the Twentieth Century, Islam was in opposition to specific socio-economic forces resulting from colonial and Western aspirations; (2) Islam possessed the capacity for emancipation; (3) and, subsequently, Islam led to the creation of new lines of definition for society. These three characterizations comport with the understanding of social justice and liberation theology as a 'revolutionary religion' or 'spirited religion,' which is the viable alternative to deeply ingrained societal oppression. Thus, the pedagogy of the oppressed is the common denominator between revolutionary religion ('spirited religion' or 'red Shi'ism') and liberation theology. Islam is not only a revolutionary religion, but it is also social practice: a practical, progressive, and educational religion, viz. the religious duty to education. Thus, the Muslim intellectual has a societal duty, or a 'call,' to affect change by countering the intransigence of the ruling elite (Shariati 2005: pp. 145-146).

The above dialogue – with its resultant mainstream lines of thought – resonates Shariati's thinking, when he argued that in creating 'Muslim Protestantism', Muslim intellectuals are mandated with the following colossal tasks: (1) As the cultural engineer of the society,[1] the intellectual is tasked with the mission of unearthing the valuable cultural treasures and inculcating these in the masses in order to produce movement and energy; thus replacing the decadence and stagnation that has gotten hold of (imprisoned) our communities. (2) By using art, education, literature and scientific knowledge as cultural tools to deplete and override cultural, social and political cleavages that rupture Muslim societies, the

Muslim intellectual would be faithful to the mission of conscience raising along the Prophetic tradition, which ultimately removed people from darkness to light and made them bury their idols and the shackles of the past[2]. (3) Bridge the gap between erudite scholars (the learned eggheads) and the illiterate masses in order to inculcate cooperation, understanding, and community service. (4) Disengage negative religious sanctions that are tyrannizing the masses and falsely brainwashing them to negative conformity, instead of being an active mobilization force. (5) Reign in reactionary forces – both political and religious – in order to rid them of debaucheries and to inculcate the right social, human, historical and cultural identity via a renaissance and religious reform, i.e., the return of religion to become again the religion of life, movement, power and social justice (Shariati 2005: pp. 145-146).

This seems reminiscent of "Foucault's call for intellectuals to value the ways nonlinear social knowledge and practice contributes to social innovation and change. For many, ludic activism functions as a lived theory and practice. In this sense, Foucault noted, 'theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply to practice: it is practice'" (Shepard 2011: p. 15). This also reminds us of Hegel who argued that though and action are almost one: "What is rational is real; And what is real is rational" (Hegel 2001: p. 18).

Although there were no actual correspondences between Erich Fromm and Ali Shariati, their conceptualization of religion is comparable from a critical social theory perspective. Shariati's conceptual distinction between Black Shi'ism and Red Shi'ism would, to some extent, correspond to Fromm's distinction between authoritarian and humanistic religion. Like Shariati's Black Shi'ism, Fromm's authoritarian religion compromises the agency and identity of the individual. Also, like Shariati's Red Shi'ism, Fromm's humanistic religion takes individual identity and agency to center stage by stressing the right and duty of individuals to achieve their objectives of self-realization. In other words, Fromm's humanistic religion stresses personal development. Consequently, Fromm links thought and action to natural or humanistic religion. Although Fromm blatantly labels himself as an atheist, nevertheless, he portrays an 'open' definition of humanistic religion: He writes, "I understand by [humanistic] religion any system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion" (Fromm 1950: p. 21), which could also refer to secular interpretations or orientations of religion. Nonetheless, Fromm calls for self-realization, or self-actualization, along Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Accordingly, in humanistic religion, the individual "has to outgrow the group in order to find himself, he has to

put aside infantile notions about God [authoritarian religion] if he is to find complete liberty and independence for self-realization. Thus, he will become (to quote the title of an earlier book of Erich Fromm) 'man for Himself'. This is not a religious ideal ... it is not even a humanistic ideal" (Sheedy 1952: p. 144). In short, individuals must divest themselves from authoritarian religion in order to live and practice their humanistic religion, viz. realize and actualize their personal development by boosting their dormant skills, qualities, and self-awareness; thus, realizing their human capital to the full.

In turn, Antonio Gramsci favored 'subaltern voices'[3] or 'the voice of people who have no voice', i.e., the marginalized, oppressed and downtrodden. This is reminiscent of Franz Fanon's argument above (Fanon 1961 and 2008), and, by extension, Shariati who stressed that 'spirited religion' accorded dignity and a new identity to the downtrodden and oppressed. Gramsci also thought along the same lines, but employed a different framing. It was under Gramsci's influence "that movement scholars started asking why people did or did not get involved in efforts aimed at social change" (Shepard 2011: p. 17) by changing hegemonic though, in line with Gramsci's vision and mission. In his renowned *Prison Notes*, Gramsci argued that what is social is political, and what is political is social, and that economy is the fulcrum that balances the social and political (Chandhoke 1995: p. 24). It is worth noting that Mussolini placed Gramsci in prison so that he could not think because he was an enemy of, and, a threat to Mussolini's closed society.[4] Gramsci characterized Mussolini's attitude as hegemonic; hegemony being "the ideological ascendancy of one or more groups or classes over others in civil society" (Bellamy 1994: p. 33). Gramsci added that via culture and ideology, the state exercises its hegemonic control over civil society, thus silencing intellectuals and public opinion.

Contrary to Mussolini's closed society, Gramsci favored an open civil society where intellectuals play a leading role is disseminating social justice and inculcating conscience raising among the masses and grassroots, along Shariati's five points discussed above. Nevertheless, as a thorough-going Marxist, Gramsci questioned the role of religion in public life and civil society, stripping Shariati's 'spirited resistance' from its religious elements. Gramsci seems to concur with structuralism, which argues that the state's activities are determined by the structures of society, rather than by power elites (Bellamy 1994: pp. 22-37). This argument ties in with Alexander Wendt who argued that social structures are made up of collective meanings, shared knowledge, and material resources and practices. He added that social identities are "identities that political [and social] actors generate through

interaction with other actors" (Wendt 1994: p. 285); and this is the leading role incumbent upon intellectuals to play in civil society.

Alternative social theory & Islamic Thought

Max Weber pointed out to the tribal leader's principal role in Muslim-majority societies. What Weber

> *explored was mainly the socioeconomic origins of Islam, its traditional patriarchal authority or patrimonial domination, and the nature of the relationship between Islamic beliefs and the emergence and persistence of capitalist institutions. With respect to the origins and rise of Islam, Weber overemphasizes the role of the powerful warrior groups in Arab society, who, we are told, managed to accommodate the new message to their group and class interests (Barakat 1993: p. 121).*

Weber differentiated among "rational-legal authority" and "traditional" and "charismatic". Max Weber made the distinction among three ideal types of authority: (1) charismatic; (2) traditional; (3) rational-legal authority or bureaucratic leadership. He employed the term rational-legal authority to denote power legitimatized by law. For example, in the early Islamic polity, the charismatic authority might correspond to the judge or the *Khadi* justice. The judge makes his decisions without any recourse to a jury, as he considers himself conversant with the Shari'ah. As such, his decisions and rulings are absolute and irrevocable, in the sense that he views them as true, right, and binding. The traditional authority could be illustrated by the mufti. The legal-bureaucratic authority corresponds to the reforms aimed at bureaucratizing and systematizing the function of the judge. However, this attempt led to inconsistency because the entire legal system was codified in the nineteenth century with the advent of the nation-state, where the charismatic authority of the judge and the traditional authority of the mufti were reduced (i.e., rationalized and routinized) to state-bureaucratic functions; thus altered from the sacred (charismatic) to the profane (bureaucratization). Weber argued that the codification of Islamic Law is rationalization; and law rationalization means that the law is predictable. Thus, the judge lost his charisma and supernatural sanction to become a mundane state-employed person concerned with bureaucratic routine; a civil servant executing justice as a procedural matter (rationalization and routinization). Nevertheless, social transactions (*mu'amalat*) remained in the domain of profane and mechanistic solidarity, as Durkheim might

have argued (Shepard 2011: pp. 17-20). Employing the Weberian routinization of charisma, Shariati's project did not aim at preserving the status quo; rather, its objective was to change the rampant stagnation by stressing the spirit of independent-critical reason and the notion of intellectual, philosophical independence.

Shariati employs the Weberian distinction between functional rationality and value rationality. Functional rationality (*Verantwortungsethik*) implies acting as efficiently and effectively as possible in attaining a goal or end i.e., thinking, acting, and calculating leading to a systematic way of thinking based on means and ends. This was the case of the old paradigm charismatic (judge) and traditional (mufti) authority. This changed to value rationality (*Gesinnungsethik*), viz. rationality oriented towards a value, i.e., legitimizing function of 'tradition'; or, more precisely, national reform giving life to the correct Islamic Shari'ah or Islamic law, which corresponds to the bureaucratic authority of the judge and mufti in the new paradigm (Burke 2007: pp. 62-65).

Nevertheless, the Weberian notion of work as a hard-drug (workaholic) for people to forget their religion (praxis) applies to the muftis, rather than the judges who practiced Veblen's 'conspicuous consumption' (Veblen 1994), which is not at all consistent with Weber's 'Protestant Ethic.' Thus, the 'elective affinity' or the positive correlation between the two Weberian variables, namely, the Protestant ethic, on the one hand, and the spirit of capitalism, on the other, seems to tangentially fit the muftis and the founders of the modern Arab states.

According to Shariati, contrary to Protestantism – which was forced to make from the peace-loving, tranquil Jesus a 'revolutionary' Christian preaching 'liberation theology' concepts such as social justice, equality and equity – 'Muslim Protestantism', due to its long-standing and accumulated enlightened tradition of embedding such concepts, was able to evolve as a revolutionary social movement spearheaded by Muslim intellectuals who are endowed with this very mentality. The mentality of a promulgated-standing tradition of a revolutionary enlightened-movement of a global dimension, which is based upon 'genuine humanistic struggle and sacrifice', crowned by martyrdom that breeds the responsibility of defending human freedom and autonomy. Shariati stresses that this is exactly the role and duty of the Muslim intellectual, who in incumbent with reviving the community's 'value rationality', which would inevitably lead to founding a 'Muslim Protestantism' as its ultimate goal (Shariati 2005: p. 145).

Shariati links this mainstream line of thought to Shi‘ism as a ‘spirited resistance.’ Revolutionary Shi‘ism is the school of thought that preached social and political protest, which is based on the genuine values of equality and guidance as well as a history of continuous struggle and martyrdom. This empowering, revolutionary ethos incites the masses to repress the traditional Muslim understanding of religion as an apathetic, pacifying doctrine, and to replace it with the élan vital of resilient humanistic mobilization that leads to an indomitable enlightened community grounded in the conscious belief of exercising the ‘liberation theology’ of ‘Muslim Protestantism’ (Shariati 2005: p. 147).

Liberation theology

In highlighting the importance of liberation theology, Shariati stresses the primacy of religious knowledge (*al-ihata bi al-‘ilm*) over martyrdom and sacrifice. He analyses Prophet Muhammad’s hadith: “The ink of a religious scholar (*alim*) is holier than the blood of a martyr, i.e., a fighter who fell in battle { **حبر العالم أقدس من دم مداد الشهيد**}” (Shariati 2006: p. 27). Shariati explains the denotative meaning and connotations of the *hadith* by reference to the authoritative sixth Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq, who, dwelling on the Prophetic Tradition, argued along the following lines. Shariati summarizes the argument in a nutshell form. He writes, that if on the Day of Judgment God summoned all people and used the balancing act of weighing the blood of a martyr, on the one hand, with the ink of an *‘alim*, on the other, then the latter would outweigh the former by a great stretch. The justification for this line of thought and reasoning is that the ink of an *‘alim* crystalized as a result of an accumulated tradition and a meticulously-continuous process of dissemination of the religious doctrine over the years, with the sole intention of benefiting the community of believers at large and serving the public good (*maslaha*). The *‘ulama*’s presence is effervescent and continuous processes even after their death as their writings remain in circulation guiding the believers and saving them from abominations. However, the martyrs’ work is temporal and for a specific purpose, such as annihilating oppressor and tyrant infidel groups who will dwell in hell-fire. Thus, the end goal of the two is different: the martyrs’ mission does not grant believers salvation; nevertheless, the *‘ulama*’s ink does in the long path aimed at establishing justice and equity (57: 25) in the here and now (Shariati 2006: pp. 27-29; 97): “We sent a foretime our messengers with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice …” (Yusuf Ali 2006: p. 297).

In a nutshell, Ali Shariati argued that the oppressed is a Qur'anic concept that came to prominence with the advent of 'red Shi'ism' as a revolutionary religion; as a spirited religion. Shariati's ideas found strong following in Lebanon. On March 17, 1974, and in an endeavor to alleviate the suffering of deprived masses irrespective of their religio-ethnic or sectarian belonging, the Iranian-born Imam Musa al-Sadr (1928-) and the late Grégoire Haddad (1924-2015), a Greek-Catholic archbishop, formed the "Movement of the Deprived" (*Harakat al-Mahrumin*) as a broad-based grassroots' movement amalgamating 'downtrodden' people from all walks of life and denominations. Inspired by Shariati's red Shi'ism as a spirited resistance, Haddad – also known as the 'Red Bishop of Beirut' – embarked on a path of 'liberation theology,' both as a modus operandi and a modus vivendi or a way of life. It is worth noting that in 1973, Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Peruvian Catholic priest, minted the concept of 'liberation theology,' which he construed as a Biblically-inspired doctrine that urges the Church to mobilize it resources in order to unshackle world poverty, oppression, injustice, and inequality, by providing equitable socio-economic justice (Alagha 2013: p. 194).

Shariati employed a humanistic approach by emphasizing the all-encompassing nature of the Qur'anic concept of oppression, which neither discriminates among race, religion, class, and gender, on the one hand, nor dwells upon cultural, economic, social, or political cleavages, on the other. Merging liberation theology and Marxism as a revolutionary ethos, Shariati legitimized the distinction between oppressors and oppressed on the basis of the Qur'an (34: 31-33) offering an Islamic theory of oppression (Shariati 2005: pp. 142-144).

> *(34:31) Those who had been despised [oppressed] will say to the arrogant [oppressors] ones: "Had it not been for you, we should certainly have been believers!"*
>
> *(34:32) The arrogant ones will say to those who had been despised: "Was it we who kept you back from Guidance after it reached you? Nay, rather, it was ye who transgressed.*
>
> *(34:33) Those who had been despised will say to the arrogant ones: "Nay! it was a plot (of yours) by day and by night: Behold! Ye (constantly) ordered us to be ungrateful to Allah and to attribute*

> *equals to Him!" They will declare (their) repentance when they see the Penalty: We shall put yokes on the necks of the Unbelievers: It would only be a requital for their (ill) Deeds. (Yusuf Ali 2006: p. 297).*

Shariati interpreted many Qur'anic verses as referring to liberation theology concepts; among these are the following: (2:220); (7:56); (7: 7:85); (7:170); (8:26); (11:88); (11:117); (26:152); (28:5-6); (38:28); (42:39). Shariati argued that the Qur'an distinguishes between two types of the oppressed (4:97-99): (1) the 'negligent,' who practice apologetic religion and refuse to migrate; and (2) the 'steadfast,' who engage in revolutionary religion or spirited religion, which sanctions struggle (jihad) and sacrifice. This spirited religion later on became the élan vital, the driving force, or the kindling fire of the Islamic Revolution in Iranian (Shariati 2006: pp. 20-27; 2005: pp. 142-144). This 'soft power' succeeded in changing the grassroots' destiny – the weak and oppressed in the earth – and granted them salvation, as Yusuf Ali explains: "Allah's gracious Mercy will recognise and forgive our weakness if it is real weakness, and not merely an excuse" (Yusuf Ali 2006: p. 60).

> *(4:97) "When angels take the souls of those who die in sin against their souls, they say: "In what (plight) Were ye?" They reply: "Weak and oppressed Were we in the earth." They say: "Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to move yourselves away (From evil)?" Such men will find their abode in Hell, -What an evil refuge! - "*

Yusuf Ali explains that Islam

> *requires a constant, unceasing struggle [jihad] against evil. For such struggle it may be necessary to forsake home and unite and organise and join our brethren in assaulting and overthrowing the fortress of evil. For the Muslim's duty is not only to enjoin good but to prohibit evil. To make our assault we must be prepared to put ourselves in a position from which such assault would be possible, and Allah's earth is spacious enough for the purpose. "Position" includes not only local position, but moral and material position. For example, we must shun evil company where we cannot put it down, but organize a position from which we can put it down (Yusuf Ali 2006: p. 60).*

> *(4:98) Except those who are (really) weak and oppressed - men, women, and children - who have no means in their power, nor (a guide-post) to their way.*

> *(4:99) For these, there is hope that Allah will forgive: For Allah doth blot out (sins) and forgive again and again (Yusuf Ali 2006: p. 60).*

It is most likely that Shariati adopted the Iranian framework of identity, namely pan-Islamism and revolutionary anti-Imperialism and extended it at large to the Muslim Umma. In conformity with Iran's third component of its identity, namely, anti-imperialism…

This translated itself in practical political-ideological terms as a confrontation with both the East and the West, while upholding Islam as the fulcrum (24:35):

> *"... Lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive, neither of the east nor of the West, whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it: Light upon Light! ..." (Yusuf Ali 2006: p. 237).*

Yusuf Ali explains the significance of the above-quoted verse as such:

> *This mystic Olive is not localised. It is neither of the East nor the West. It is universal, for such is Allah's Light. As applied to the olive, there is also a more literal meaning, which can be allegorised in a different way. An olive tree with an eastern aspect gets only the rays of the morning sun; one with a western aspect, only the rays of the western sun. In the northern hemisphere the south aspect will give the sun's rays a great part of the day, while a north aspect will shut them out altogether, and vice versa in the southern hemisphere. But a tree in the open plain or on a hill will get perpetual sunshine by day: it will be more mature, and the fruit and oil will be of superior quality. So, Allah's light is not localised or immature: it is perfect and universal (Yusuf Ali 2006: p. 238).*

Influenced by Ali Sharita's thought, Imam Khomeini's ideology of – 'no East, no West; rather, only Islam' – resulted in a substantial following to Iranian foreign policy objectives[5] vis-à-vis both the East and West. Thus, Khomeini's reference to (24:35) on East and West gets another dimension – since its original use, as a mystical interpretation, is different from the East and West of the Cold War era (1945-1990). Based on the Qur'anic concepts of oppressors (*mustakbirin*) and

oppressed or downtrodden (*mustad'afin*) (34: 31-33) as such, Khomeini laid down a new theory in International Affairs by dividing world politics into a Manichean dualism of darkness (oppressors) and light (oppressed).

Social justice and humanism

In his book *Religion against Religion*, the chapter entitled, "Yes, this is how it was my brother," Shariati visits the Pyramids, and he is amazed by their elegance and grandeur. They span far and wide, and they are a testimony to the capabilities of humanity in erecting monumental edifices. However, he eventually notices what seems like debris a couple of hundred meters away; a mere pile of rocks that is barely noticeable. He asks the guide about the debris, but, in the beginning, the guide was reluctant to give an answer. When pressed by Shariati, eventually the guide concedes and explains that these are the mass graves of the slaves who built the pyramids. Immediately, Shariati is appalled and becomes repulsed by the very sight of the pyramids. Then, he goes on and conducts a hypothetical-speculative conversation with the slaves. Although Shariati and the slaves originate from different places and epochs, he considers them as his brothers in humanity (Shariati 2007: p. 95).

This calls for an explanation. Imam Ali classified people into two kinds: "either a coreligionist, or a brother in humanity" (personal recollection). In the same breath, Shariati's discourse conveyed and stressed tolerance and acceptance of the other. Like Imam Ali, Shariati emphasized that his primary concern is with the human being, per se, and humanity, at large: "People are of two types: either a brother in religion or a peer in morality; either a brother in Islam or an equal in humanity" (personal recollection). Shariati extends this mandate to argue that people are brothers in humanity and that an 'equitable world' or common grounds should guide relationships between Muslims according the social values of mutual tolerance, acceptance of the other, inclusiveness, autonomy, respect, brotherhood, solidarity (*takaful*) mutual coexistence, cooperation, and dialogue; and most importantly, brotherhood (Shariati 2017). As Imam 'Ali said: "All people are the family of God, and the most cherished by God is the one who is good to them" (personal recollection). Thus, Shariati preached dialogue and understanding of the other according to what is stipulated in the following Qur'anic verses:

> *(3:64): Say: O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah. that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah. If then they turn back, say ye: Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will) (Yusuf Ali 2006: p. 41).*
>
> *(16:125): Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance (Yusuf Ali 2006: p. 180).*

As such, Shariati believed in 'global citizenship' based on equal human, civil, economic, social, cultural, and political rights. Shariati upheld the Prophetic Tradition: "There is no difference between a Muslim and a non-Muslim except on the grounds of piety … all believers are brothers" (personal recollection).

Returning to the pyramids and applying this logic to the slaves, the social bond that exists between Shariati and the slaves is the state of wretchedness; by being the 'wretched of the earth,' the oppressed, and belonging to the zone of non-being – i.e., lacking humanity – to use Fanon's terminology. For Fanon, and for the slaves that Shariati is in conversation with, humanity is something that is not given to those who are oppressed. Humanity belongs only to those that are white and belong to the global north, viz. the colonizers, the oppressors. The slaves that Shariati is in conversation with lack humanity, by the very fact that they are not even given the slightest sense of attention, although they built the pyramids everyone is marveling about. They belong to the 'zone of non-being' through their dismissal and their marginalization, while the pyramids, marvels that they are responsible for, are not considered part of their suffering and eventual death. Although the Egyptian slaves had different socio-historical background than the 'wretched of the earth,' the oppressed that Fanon would later talk about (Fanon 1961) – for example, the lack of 'racialization' of Egyptian slaves, and the different functions they served – they could still serve as a metaphor for later developments that follow the same logic (Shariati 2007: p. 96).

Modernity is one example and development that Shariati later mentions. He later expands upon these particular pyramids, and uses the same underlying logic to criticize modernity in its entirety. In this sense, Shariati considers modernity to have a 'darker side,' as Mignolo later articulated, that underside being colonialism,

oppression, exploitation, and dehumanization. Shariati becomes repulsed by modernity in its entirety; as modernity in itself ignores slavery and the exploitation that brought it to life. Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution could not have become what they are today were in not for the exploitation of the Americas and the enslavement of Africans (Mignolo 2007). Yet, today one talks about 'progress' and 'modernity' without any regard to slavery or colonialism that constituted modernity. In this sense, 'modernity' functions like the pyramids: the oppressed people that brought it into being have become buried under some rubble and ignored and marginalized throughout history. This is 'the darker side of Western Modernity' that Mignolo talks about; the darker side being colonialism, without which modernity, as such, could not have come into life. Pursuing this further, from the stance of a heuristic comparison, one could say that for Shariati the 'darker side of Egyptian pyramids' are the slaves who built them, as they are constitutive of each other. Even though Shariati was a teacher of humanities and proponent of social justice and liberation theology, he affirms that those slaves have taught him what humanism really means and have shown him the true meaning of modernity (Shariati 2007: p. 96).

In this sense, Shariati was engaged in the same Fanonian project that sought to redefine humanity, by taking into account the status of the 'wretched of the earth', the oppressed, who, supposedly, lacked humanity. Simultaneously, Shariati was criticizing modernity that silenced its colonial underside (darker side) and neglected slavery and exploitation, which were constitutive to the modern project of civilizing the world.

Conclusion

By way of apologetic discourse, I would like to stress that, in writing this chapter, I heavily relied on Arabic translations, which might be suspect in many ways; in the sense that the vast majority of them might lack the academic rigour. Nevertheless, I did my utmost best to frame them in an academic manner, while employing critical thinking and heuristic comparisons. Thus, I take full responsibility for any weaknesses, inconsistencies, and incoherencies that might have arisen from following this methodology. I hasten to add, that our challenge as scholars, as social scientists, is to engage in a close reading of Shariati's works in order to pick out and weed; to identify the possibilities of developing the structures and architectonics of a social theory. Via construction, reconstruction, and deconstruction, I endeavored to find a viable way to metamorphose Shafiite's thought into social theory by

stressing his social relevance to timely current debates on social justice, liberation theology, and humanism.

Note

1. This seems reminiscent of Karl Popper's (1902-1994) social engineering (Popper 2013).
2. Cf. Francis Bacon's (1561-1626) four idols: Idols of the Tribe, Idols of the Cave, Idols of the Marketplace, and Idols of the Theater (Bacon 2019). For a quick glance, see also: https://matei.org/ithink/2009/09/28/francis-bacons-four-idols-summary/.
3. Due to censorship, Gramsci replaced 'proletariat' with 'subaltern' and was able to smuggle his Prison Notes out of prison, and thus outsmarted the censorship that was imposed on him. Later on, Gramsci's Prison Notes became a foundational document; an edifice in the social sciences and critical social theory.
4. See chapter six entitled, "The Closed Society and Its Enemies", in: (Morgan 2018: pp. 169-206.)
5. Persian nationalism, Pan-Islamism, and revolutionary anti-imperialism are the functions of political Islam in foreign policy, and they are part and parcel of Iran's identity (Maloney 2002: pp. 88-116).

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Islamic Perspective, Vol. 28, 73-94
The Institute for Critical Social Theory, 2022

The Whole Earth is a Mosque

An Introduction to a Theosophical Conception of Cosmopolitanism

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Abstract

In this article, which is the first one in a series of texts, I introduce the reader to some theosophical ideas which will be (I hope) the building blocks of a treatise on Cosmopolitanism. By using some Sufi authors in this treatise, such as Farid ud-Din ʻAttar (1145-1221), Shihab ud-Din Suhrawardi (1154-1191), ʻAli ibn Talib (600-661), Ibn ʻArabi (1165-1240), and others, or ideas such as al-Insan ul-Kamil (The Perfect Human Being), Wahdat al-Wujud (Unity of Existence), or the Ishraqi philosophy (Ishraqiyyun / Illuminationism), I want to explore how they can help us to overcome some of the political problems that plague the world and the times in which we live: borders, territorial nationalism, forced migration, identity politics, and the nation-state. The concept of "cosmopolitanism" used here is in its original meaning, "citizen of the world", and by "political theosophy" I mean something which is more than (political) theology and more than (political) philosophy, something which is a form of wisdom, a knowledge of the Divine mysteries as the original meaning of this word implied, and as understood by different Sufi masters, before it became emptied of meaning by modern pseudo-spiritual movements.

Key Words: Political Philosophy, Political Theology, Political Theosophy, Sufism, Farid ud-Din ʻAttar, Mantiq-ut-Tair.

Introduction

"The earth has been made for me (and for my followers) a place for praying..."

Bukhari, vol. 1, book 7, number 331

In 1930, while addressing the All-India Muslim League, Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) explained that Islam was animated by an ethical ideal that saw man not as a creature rooted in earth, defined by this or that portion of land, but as a spiritual being understood in terms of social mechanism, and having rights and duties as a living factor in that mechanism (Iqbal, 1930).

In the centre of Iqbal's vision on Islam was the concept of Tawhid (Oneness), applied not only to God's own nature but also in Its relationship with the world. Because God is an only creator, sustainer and judge of the Universe, God's will or law also governs all aspects of Its creation and should be realised in all areas of life. This belief was the base for Iqbal's vision of the community as a religiopolitical state and for the supremacy of Islamic law in Muslim society. Basing himself on the prophetic tradition which says that the "whole of the earth is a mosque", and in the role of Muhammad as a leader of the state in Medina, Iqbal concluded that "all which is secular is for that reason sacred in the roots of its existence", without separation of the spiritual and the temporal.

About four months before his death, Iqbal published a "new year" message on the 1st of January in 1938 and offered his own conception of what can be called Cosmopolitanism. Commenting on the condition of the modern age, he wrote that the pride of modern age was justified considering the immense progress in knowledge and matchless scientific developments. Yet, he added that, the world was experiencing a "tyranny of imperialism" under the masks of democracy, socialism, nationalism, communism, and fascism, which Iqbal described as "the darkest period of human history" where "the spirit of freedom" and "the dignity of man" were being trampled. Looking at the year that had passed by, Iqbal saw nothing but misery all around the world, such as Abyssinia or Palestine, Spain or China.[1] In solving the problems of the world, Iqbal thought that a huge responsibility fell to the world leaders. Judging from the Great War and other conflicts taking place all around the world, Iqbal concluded that national unity that was based on blood, race, country, ethnicity, or language was not durable. Contrary to this, he argued that "only one unity is dependable, and that unity is the brotherhood of man, which is above race, nationality, colour or language."

Accordingly, he believed that this "so called democracy", and "this accursed nationalism" along with "this degraded imperialism" should be shattered, and distinctions of race and colour should be wiped out completely and mankind should demonstrate "by their actions that they believe that the whole world is the family of God." Only then, Iqbal believed, would they "be able to lead a happy and contended life and the beautiful ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity will […] materialise" (Iqbal, 2009: 298-300).

The following years would prove that Iqbal was right, and after a brief euphoric moment in 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the world pursued its trajectory of divisions and exclusion of different kinds. By Cosmopolitanism I mean the original sense of the word "cosmopolitan", which derives from the Greek word *kosmopolitēs* ("citizen of the world"), which has been used to describe a wide variety of important views in moral and socio-political philosophy.

A Theosophical Conception of Cosmopolitanism

All cosmopolitan views assert the idea that all human beings, regardless of their political affiliation, are (or can and should be) citizens in a single community. Different versions of cosmopolitanism envision this community in different ways, some focusing on political institutions, others on moral norms or relationships, and still others focusing on shared markets or forms of cultural expression. In most versions of cosmopolitanism, the universal community of world citizens functions as a positive ideal to be cultivated, but a few versions exist in which it serves primarily as a ground for denying the existence of special obligations to local forms of political organizations. Versions of cosmopolitanism also vary depending on the notion of citizenship they employ, including whether they use the notion of "world citizenship" literally or metaphorically. The philosophical interest in cosmopolitanism lies in its challenge to commonly recognized attachments to fellow-citizens, the local state, parochially shared cultures, and the like.

There is a wide variety of views that can be called cosmopolitan. Every cosmopolitan argues for some community among all human beings, regardless of social and political affiliation. For some, what should be shared is simply moral community, which means only that living a good human life requires serving the universal community by helping human beings as such, perhaps by promoting the realization of justice and the guarantee of human rights. Others conceptualize the universal community in terms of political institutions to be shared by all, in terms of cultural expressions that can be shared or appreciated by all, or in terms of

economic markets that should be open to all. The most common cosmopolitanism – moral cosmopolitanism – does not always call itself such. But just as ancient cosmopolitanism was fundamentally a "moral" commitment to helping human beings as such, much contemporary moral philosophy insists on the duty to aid foreigners who are starving or otherwise suffering, or at least on the duty to respect and promote basic human rights and justice.[2]

By using some Sufi authors in this treatise, such as Farid ud-Din 'Attar (1145-1221), Shihab ud-Din Suhrawardi (1154-1191), 'Ali ibn Talib (600-661), Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240), and others, or ideas such as al-Insan ul-Kamil (The Perfect Human Being), Wahdat al-Wujud (Unity of Existence), or the Ishraqi philosophy (Ishraqiyyun / Illuminationism), I want to explore how they can help us to overcome some of the political problems that plague the world and the times in which we live: borders, territorial nationalism, forced migration, identity politics, and the nation-state. The concept of "cosmopolitanism" used here is in its original meaning, "citizen of the world", and by "political theosophy" I mean something which is more than (political) theology and more than (political) philosophy, something which is a form of wisdom, a knowledge of the Divine mysteries as the original meaning of this word implied, and as understood by different Sufi masters, before it became emptied of meaning by modern pseudo-spiritual movements (Nasr, 1997: 150, footnote 12).

Political philosophy (or theory) is the study of topics such as politics, liberty, justice, property, rights, law, and the enforcement of a legal code by authority: what they are, why (or even if) they are needed, what, if anything, makes a government legitimate, what rights and freedoms it should protect and why, what form it should take and why, what the law is, and what duties citizens owe to a legitimate government, if any, and when it may be legitimately overthrown, if ever. In a vernacular sense, the term "political philosophy" often refers to a general view, or specific ethic, political belief, or attitude, about politics that does not necessarily belong to the technical discipline of philosophy. In short, political philosophy is the activity, as with all philosophy, whereby the conceptual apparatus behind such concepts as aforementioned are analysed, in their history, intent, evolution and the like.[3]

Political theory (of which political philosophy is sometimes considered as a sub-branch and other times as an alternative designation) is the study, on the one hand of the concepts, values, and arguments used in political science and, on the other, of the substantive issues involved in the exercise and distribution of political power. It

has two principal concerns, which are the clarification of values to demonstrate logically the purpose of political activity, and thereby the way in which society "ought" to proceed (for example, in allocating resources), and the rigorous derivation and testing of theories drawn from empirical research. Political theorists address such issues as the nature of the state, the relations between religion and politics, individual rights, democracy, and law and freedom, and there has been a revival since the 1970s, associated with works on rights and with such themes as feminism, civil disobedience, the welfare state, animal rights, climate change, new forms of technology, social media, market economy, post-colonialism, immigration, tolerance, multiculturalism, minority rights, and green issues.

Being an interdisciplinary endeavour, whose centre of gravity lies at the humanities end of the discipline of political science, its traditions, approaches, and styles vary, but the field is united by a commitment to theorize, critique, and diagnose the norms, practices, and organization of political action in the past and present, in one's own place and elsewhere. It studies the concepts, values, and arguments used in political science and the substantive issues involved in the exercise and distribution of political power. Political theory shares a concern with the demands of justice and how to fulfil them, the presuppositions and promise of democracy, understood as a collective self-rule, the divide between secular and religious ways of life, the nature and identity of public goods, among many other topics.

Political theorists take their cue from events around them, turning their attention to the challenges presented by ecological crisis; emergency or security politics; the impact of new technologies on the ways privacy, justice, or the category of the human are thought about; the impact of new migrations on ideas of race, tolerance, and multiculturalism; the implications of growing global inequalities on the way liberty, equality, democracy, sovereignty, or hegemony are theorized. They also share a commitment to the humanistic study of politics, being located at one remove from the quantitative vs. qualitative debate, positioning itself somewhere between the distanced universals of normative philosophy and the empirical world of politics. They engage with empirical work in politics, economics, sociology, and law to inform their reflections, and there have been plenty of productive associations between those who call themselves political scientists and those who call themselves political theorists.

Political theology is a sub-field of political theory, being at the intersection of both political philosophy and theology that investigates the ways in which theological concepts or ways of thinking underlie political, social, economic, and cultural

discourses. Though the relationship between Christianity and politics has been debated since the time of Jesus, political theology as an academic discipline arose in the latter part of the 20th century, partially as a response to the work of both Carl Schmitt (1888-1985) and the Frankfurt School. Apart from Schmitt, much of political theology's roots can be traced to discussions of the relationship of ethics and religion. The influence of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) is also evident throughout much of political theology including the theology developed by the Catholic theologian Johann Baptist Metz (1928-2019), who explored the concept of *political theology* throughout his work and arguing for the concept of a "suffering God" who shared the pain of his creation. This led Metz to develop a theology that is tied to Marxism, and to level a fierce critique of what he calls bourgeois Christianity and believes that the Christian Gospel has become less credible because it has become entangled with bourgeois religion. His work *Faith in History and Society* develops apologetics, or fundamental theology, from this perspective (Metz, 1980). Two of the other major figures in the early development of political theology were Jürgen Moltmann and Dorothee Solle (1929-2003). Like in Metz's work, the concept of a suffering God is key to Moltmann's theological programme, and his political theology was strongly influenced by the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch (1885-1977), and both Moltmann and Solle were influenced heavily by liberation theology, as was Metz. Another early influence was the Frankfurt School of critical theory, especially Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), and the Frankfurt School's broader critique of modernity.[4]

Traditionally, among the leading theorists have been always those considered as belonging to the Western canon, such as Plato (c. 428-374 BC), Aristotle (384-322 BC), Saint Augustine (354-430), Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Karl Marx (1818-1883). However, indifference to non-Western political thought and theory reflects a parochialism by contemporary Western political theory. Nevertheless, there has been increased recognition of the need to engage with other political traditions during the past decade or so, with the discipline of cross-cultural or comparative political theory beginning to establish itself in Anglo-American academia.

Just as the "Western" political tradition is complex and composed of plural, occasionally inconsistent strands, so the others, be they Islamic, Hindu, African, or Chinese, are rich, wide, varied, and many aspects of it have enriched, or have the potential to enrich, contemporary debates in political theory. For example, the

thoughts of ancient Legalist thinkers such as Han Fei Zi (280-233 BC), anticipated Machiavellian *realpolitik* and the "originality" of Machiavelli might not be so apparent seen in this comparative light. In India, Chanakya (370 or 350-283 BC), a political thinker in Takshashila and author of *Arthashastra*, a treatise on political thought, economics, and social order, and where he discusses monetary and fiscal policies, welfare, international relations, and war strategies in detail, among other topics, foreshadowed both the Legalists and Machiavelli, defending the imposition of discipline. Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), a Muslim philosopher, considered that the government existed to prevent injustice, and, before John Rawls, the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) wrote about social justice.[5] Daoist antipathy to authoritarian controls can be compared to anarchist proposals for social order without coercion. The Buddhist practices designed to dissolve the self can provide inspiration for Western liberals concerned with the question of how to motivate impartial justice; and the Buddhist ideal of compassion for all forms of life or the Bantu concept of *Ubuntu* (human-ness and/or kindness) can bring insights to the moral and political theories of animal rights advocates or of human rights advocates, respectively, not to mention the African proverb "it takes a village to raise a child" when dealing with children.

When talking about "Religion", things get more complicated. *Religion* derives from Latin *religionem*, nom. *religio*, "respect for what is sacred, reverence for the gods", "obligation, the bond between man and the gods", the ultimate origins of which are obscure. One possibility is an interpretation traced to Cicero (106-43 BC), connecting *lego* "read", *i.e.*, *re* (again) + *lego* in the sense of "choose", "go over again" or "consider carefully". Modern scholars, such as the Canadian Thomas William Harpur (1929-2017) and the North-American mythologist Joseph John Campbell (1904-1987), favour the derivation from *ligare* "bind, connect", probably from a prefixed *re-ligare*, *i.e.*, *re* (again) + *ligare* or "to reconnect", which was made prominent by St. Augustine, following the interpretation of Lactantius (240-320), an early Christian author. The medieval usage alternates with *order* in designating bonded communities like those of monastic orders. According to the German philologist and Orientalist Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900), the root of the word "religion", the Latin *religio*, was originally used to mean only "reverence for God or the gods, careful pondering of divine things, piety", which Cicero further derived to mean "diligence". Max Müller characterized many other cultures around the world, including Egypt, Iran/Persia, and India, as having a similar power structure at this point in history. What is called ancient religion today, would have only called by them "law".[6]

Many languages have words that can be translated as "religion", but they may use them in a very different way, and some have no word for religion at all. For example, the Sanskrit word *dharma*, sometimes translated as "religion", also means law. Throughout classical South Asia, the study of law consisted of concepts such as penance through piety and ceremonial as well as practical traditions. Medieval Japan at first had a similar union between "imperial law" and universal or "Buddha law", but these later became independent sources of power. There is no precise equivalent of "religion" in Hebrew, and Judaism does not distinguish clearly between religious, national, racial, or ethnic identities. One of its central concepts is *halakha*, sometimes translated as "law", which guides religious practice and belief and many aspects of daily life. The use of other terms, such as obedience to God, *din*, or Islam, is likewise grounded on particular histories and vocabularies.

There are numerous definitions of religion and only a few are stated here. The typical dictionary definition of religion refers to a "belief in, or the worship of, a god or gods" or the "service and worship of God or the supernatural". However, writers and scholars have expanded upon the "belief in god" definitions as insufficient to capture the diversity of religious thought and experience. The English anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) defined religion as "the belief in spiritual beings", arguing, back in 1871, with his two-volume *Primitive Culture* (London: John Murray), that narrowing the definition to mean the belief in a supreme deity or judgment after death or idolatry and so on, would exclude many peoples from the category of religious, and thus had the fault of identifying religion rather with particular developments than with the deeper motive which underlie them. He also argued that the belief in spiritual beings existed in all known societies.

The North-American anthropologist Clifford James Geertz (1926–2006) defined religion as a system of symbols which acted to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seemed uniquely realistic. He also remarked that there was very little idea of how, in empirical terms, a particular miracle was accomplished. We did just know that it was done, annually, weekly, daily, for some people almost hourly, with an enormous ethnographic literature to demonstrate it (Geertz, 1973).

The Belgian Roman Catholic theologian Antoine Vergote (1921-2013) also emphasised the "cultural reality" of religion, which he defined as "the entirety of

the linguistic expressions, emotions and actions, and signs that refer to a supernatural being or supernatural beings", taking the term "supernatural" simply to mean whatever transcends the powers of nature or human agency (Vergote, 1996). Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), in his book *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* [*The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*], published in 1912, defined religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things", by which he meant things that were set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which united into one single moral community called a Church, and all those who adhered to them. Sacred things were not, however, limited to gods or spirits. On the contrary, a sacred thing could be "a rock, a tree, a spring, a pebble, a piece of wood, a house, in a word, anything can be sacred". Religious beliefs, myths, dogmas, and legends were the representations that expressed the nature of those sacred things, and the virtues and powers which were attributed to them.

The North-American philosopher and psychologist William James (1842-1910) defined religion, in his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience: a Study in Human Nature*, published in 1902, as "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine", by which he meant "any object that is god*like*, whether it be a concrete deity or not" to which the individual feels impelled to respond with solemnity and gravity.

Echoes of James's and Durkheim's definitions are to be found in the writings of, for example, the North-American philosopher Frederick Ferré (1933-2013) who defined religion as "one's way of valuing most comprehensively and intensively". Similarly, for the German-American Christian existentialist philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965), faith was the state of being ultimately concerned, which was itself religion, being this the substance, the ground, and the depth of man's spiritual life. The German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) in the late 18th century had defined religion as *das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl* [a feeling of absolute dependence], and his contemporary Hegel disagreed thoroughly, defining religion as "the Divine Spirit becoming conscious of Himself through the finite spirit".

The world's principal religions and spiritual traditions may be classified into a small number of major groups, although this is by no means a uniform practice. This theory began in the 18th century with the goal of recognizing the relative levels of civility in societies. The school of religious history called the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* was a 19th-century German school of thought which

was the first to systematically study religion as a socio-cultural phenomenon, depicting religion as evolving with human culture, from primitive polytheism to ethical monotheism. The *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* appeared at a time when scholarly study of the Bible and church history was flourishing in Germany and elsewhere, and the study of religion was important because it had often shaped civilizations' law and moral codes, social structure, art, and music. The 19th century saw a dramatic increase in knowledge about other cultures and religions, and the establishment of economic and social histories of progress. The "history of religions" school sought to account for this religious diversity by connecting it with the social and economic situation of a particular group. Various theories were proposed regarding the origin of religion, supplanting the earlier claims of Christianity of Ur-religion. Early theorists Burnett Tylor and the English philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) proposed the concept of animism, *i.e.*, that non-human entities possess a spiritual essence, while the British archaeologist John Lubbock (1834-1913) used the term fetishism, *i.e.*, that an object possesses supernatural powers. Meanwhile, the German religious scholar Max Müller theorized that religion had begun in hedonism, *i.e.*, the school of thought that argues that pleasure is the only intrinsic good. The German scholar and folklorist Wilhelm Mannhardt (1831-1880) suggested that religion began in "naturalism", by which he meant mythological explanation of natural events. All these theories have since been widely criticized and there is no broad consensus regarding the origin of religion.

Typically, religions were divided into stages of progression from simple to complex societies, especially from polytheistic to monotheistic and from extempore to organised. Nowadays the claim that religion evolved from polytheism to monotheism has been discredited, and religions can be classified as circumcising and non-circumcising, proselytizing (attempting to convert people of other religion) and non-proselytizing, with many religions sharing common beliefs. In world cultures, there have traditionally been many different groupings of religious belief. In Indian culture, different religious philosophies were traditionally respected as academic differences in pursuit of the same truth. In Islam, the Qur'an mentions three different categories: Muslims, the People of the Book (a term used to designate non-Muslim adherents to faiths which have a revealed scripture), and idol worshipers. Initially, Christians had a simple dichotomy of world beliefs: Christian civility versus foreign heresy or barbarity. In the 18th century, "heresy" was clarified to mean Judaism and Islam, which, along with paganism, created a fourfold classification which spawned such works as *Nazarenus, or Jewish, Gentile,*

and Mahometan Christianity by the Irish philosopher John Toland (1670-1722), which represented the three Abrahamic religions as different "nations" or sects within *religion* itself, the "true monotheism". For Daniel Defoe (1660-1731), religion was properly the "Worship given to God, but 'tis also applied to the Worship of Idols and false Deities".

At the turn of the 19th century, the language dramatically changed: instead of "religion" being synonymous with spirituality, authors began using the plural, "religions", to refer to both Christianity and other forms of worship. Therefore, the North-American Christian author Hannah Adams (1755-1831) had the name of her earlier encyclopaedia changed from *An Alphabetical Compendium of the Various Sects*, first published in 1784, to *A Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations*. In 1838, the four-way division of Christianity, Judaism, Mahommedanism (archaic and Western terminology for Islam) and Paganism was multiplied considerably by the *Analytical and Comparative View of All Religions Now Extant among Mankind*, a work by the English Josiah Conder (1789-1855), which still adhered to the four-way classification, but in his eye for detail he put together much historical work to create something resembling our modern Western image, including Druze, Yezidis, Mandeans, and Elamites under a list of possibly monotheistic groups, and under the final category, of "polytheism and pantheism", he listed Zoroastrianism, "Vedas, Puranas, Tantras, Reformed sects" of India as well as "Brahminical idolatry", Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Lamaism, "religion of China and Japan", and "illiterate superstitions".

The modern meaning of the phrase "world religion", putting non-Christians at the same level as Christians, began with the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago. The Parliament spurred the creation of a dozen privately funded lectures with the intent of informing people of the diversity of religious experience: these lectures funded researchers such as William James, the Japanese Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki (1870-1966), and the British Alan Wilson Watts (1915-1973), who greatly influenced the public conception of world religions. In the latter half of the 20th century, the category of "world religion" fell into serious question, especially for drawing parallels between vastly different cultures, and thereby creating an arbitrary separation between the religious and the secular. Some history professors have now taken note of these complications and advise against teaching "world religions" in schools, while others, such as the historians Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012) and Terence Osborn Ranger (1929-2015), saw the shaping of religions in the context of the nation-state as the "invention of traditions" (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983).

As can be seen, "Religion" is a concept which has been used to denote: (1) the class of all religions; (2) the common essence or pattern of all supposedly genuine religious phenomena; (3) the transcendent or "this-worldly" ideal of which any actual religion is an imperfect manifestation; and (4) human religiousness as a form of life which may or may not be expressed in systems of belief and practice. These usages suffer from a tendency to be evaluative, presuppose a commitment of some sort, or are so general as to provide little specific guidance. What is clear is that no single definition will suffice to encompass the varied sets of traditions, practices, and ideas which constitute different religions. Some religions involve the belief in and worship of a god or gods, but this is not true of all. Judaism, Christianism, and Islam are theistic religions, while Buddhism does not require a belief in gods, and where it does occur, the gods are not considered important. There are theories of religion which construe it as wholly a human phenomenon, without any supernatural or transcendent origin and point of reference, while others argue that some such reference is the essence of the matter. Several other viewpoints exist, and there are often boundary disputes regarding the application of the concept. For example, debate continues as to whether Confucianism is properly to be considered a religion, and some writers argue that some ideologies are in important respects like a religion.

Religion is an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems, and world views that relate humanity to an order of existence. Many religions have narratives, symbols, and sacred histories that are intended to explain the meaning of life and/or to explain the origin of life or the Universe. From their beliefs about the cosmos and human nature, people derive morality, ethics, religious laws, or a preferred lifestyle, and many may have organized behaviours, clergy, a definition of what constitutes adherence or membership, holy places, and scriptures. The practice of a religion may also include rituals, sermons, commemoration or veneration of a deity, gods or goddesses, sacrifices, festivals, feasts, trance, initiations, funerary services, matrimonial services, meditation, prayer, music, art, dance, public service, or other aspects of human culture.

All the world's religions in their origins and histories were comprehensive ways of living. Although the relationship of religion to politics varies, religion is a path or a way of life with a strong emphasis on community as well as personal life. The modern notion of religion has its origins in the post-Enlightenment West, and its restricted definition has become accepted as the norm or meaning of religion by many believers and unbelievers alike in the West. Bereft of a sense of history, few realize that the term "religion" as known and understood today is a modern and

Western interpretation of it. The West then set about naming other religious systems or *isms*. Christianity and Judaism were joined by the newly named Hinduism, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism. Thus, the nature and function of other religious traditions were categorized, studied, and judged in terms of modern Western, post-Enlightenment secular criteria, with its "separation of church and state", a Western notion which is also recent. For example, Hinduism is a synecdoche describing the similar philosophies of Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and related groups practised or founded in the Indian subcontinent. Concepts which most of them share include karma, caste, reincarnation, mantras, yantras, and darśana. Hinduism is not a monolithic religion but a religious category containing dozens of separate philosophies amalgamated as Sanatana Dharma, which is the name with whom Hinduism has been known throughout history by its followers.

The development of religion has taken different forms in different cultures. While some religions place an emphasis on belief, others emphasise practice. Some religions focus on the subjective experience of the religious individual, while others consider the activities of the religious community to be most important. Some religions claim to be universal, believing their laws and cosmology to be binding for everyone, while others are intended to be practised only by a closely defined or localized group. In many places religion has been associated with public institutions such as education, hospitals, the family, government, and political hierarchies. One modern academic theory of religion, social constructionism, says that religion is a modern concept that suggests all spiritual practice and worship follows a model like the Abrahamic religions as an orientation system that helps to interpret reality and define human beings. Among the main proponents of this theory of religion are the French historian and anthropologist Daniel Dubuisson, the North-American anthropologist Timothy Fitzgerald, the anthropologist Talal Asad, and the North-American Jason Ananda Josephson.

The social constructionists argue that religion is a modern concept that developed from Christianity and was then applied inappropriately to non-Western cultures. Dubuisson (2007) says that the idea of religion has changed a lot over time and that one cannot fully understand its development by relying on consistent use of the term, which tends to minimize or cancel out the role of history. What the West and the history of religions in its wake have objectified under the name "religion", according to him, is something which could be appropriate only to itself and its own history, and he notes that St. Augustine's definition of *religio* differed from the way we used the modern word "religion". Dubuisson prefers the term "cosmographic formation" to religion, and he says that, with the emergence of religion as a

category separate from culture and society, there arose religious studies. The initial purpose of religious studies was to demonstrate the superiority of the "living" or "universal" European world view to the "dead" or "ethnic" religions scattered throughout the rest of the world, expanding the teleological project of the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and the Dutch theologian Cornelis Petrus Tiele (1830-1902) to a worldwide ideal religiousness. Due to shifting theological currents, this was eventually supplanted by a liberal-ecumenical interest in searching for Western-style universal truths in every cultural tradition.

According to Fitzgerald (2000), religion is not a universal feature of all cultures, but rather a particular idea that first developed in Europe under the influence of Christianity. Fitzgerald argues that from about the 4th century CE Western Europe and the rest of the world diverged. As Christianity became commonplace, the charismatic authority identified by St. Augustine, a quality we might today call "religiousness", exerted a commanding influence at the local level. As the Church lost its dominance during the Protestant Reformation and Christianity became closely tied to political structures, religion was recast as the basis of national sovereignty, and religious identity gradually became a less universal sense of spirituality and more divisive, locally defined, and tied to nationality. It was at this point that "religion" was dissociated with universal beliefs and moved closer to dogma in both meaning and practice. However, there was not yet the idea of dogma as a personal choice, only of established churches. With the Enlightenment religion lost its attachment to nationality, says Fitzgerald, but rather than becoming a universal social attitude, it now became a personal feeling or emotion.

Asad (1993) argues that before the word "religion" came into common usage, Christianity was a *disciplina*, a "rule" just like that of the Roman Empire, an idea that can be found in the writings of St. Augustine. Christianity was then a power structure opposing and superseding human institutions, a literal Kingdom of Heaven. It was the discipline taught by one's family, school, church, and city authorities, rather than something calling one to self-discipline through symbols. These ideas were developed by S. N. Balagangadhara who says that in the "Age of Enlightenment" the idea of Christianity as the purest expression of spirituality was supplanted by the concept of "religion" as a worldwide practice, which caused such ideas as religious freedom, a re-examination of classical philosophy as an alternative to Christian thought, and more radically Deism among intellectuals such as Voltaire (1694-1778). Much like Christianity, the idea of "religious freedom" was exported around the world as a civilizing technique, even to regions such as

India that had never treated spirituality as a matter of political identity (Balagangadhara, 2012).

In *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, Jason Ananda Josephson (2012) has argued that while the concept of "religion" was Christian in its early formulation, non-Europeans (such as the Japanese) did not just acquiesce and passively accept the term's meaning. Instead, they worked to interpret "religion" (and its boundaries) strategically to meet their own agendas and staged these new meanings for a global audience. In nineteenth-century Japan, Buddhism was radically transformed from a pre-modern philosophy of natural law into a "religion", as Japanese leaders worked to address domestic and international political concerns. In summary, Josephson argues that the European encounter with other cultures has led to a partial de-Christianization of the category religion, and hence "religion" has come to refer to a confused collection of traditions with no possible coherent definition.

For the British historian Nicholas de Lange, the comparative study of religions is an academic discipline which has been developed within Christian theology faculties, and it tends to force widely differing phenomena into a kind of straitjacket cut to a Christian pattern. The problem is not only that other "religions" may have little or nothing to say about questions which are of burning importance for Christianity, but that they may not even see themselves as religions in precisely the same way in which Christianity sees itself as a religion. George Arthur Lindbeck (1923-2018), a North-American Lutheran and post-liberal theologian, but not a social constructionist, argues that religion does not refer to belief in "God" or a transcendent Absolute, but rather to a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought, similar to an idiom that makes possible the description of realities, the formulation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings, and sentiments.

In the Islamic tradition of discourse, the realms of ethics and spirituality are intimately connected. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Sufi tradition, which is being increasingly and most aptly referred to as the *ihsani* tradition - understanding the word *ihsan* (excellence, virtue, goodness) in the sense imparted to it by the Prophet in a tradition of central importance as regards the three fundamental aspects of the Islamic way. It is known as "the *hadith* of Gabriel", for the questioner of the Prophet in this exchange, unbeknown to the Companions who were present, was the angel Gabriel, in human guise: "O Muhammad, tell me about submission (*al-islam*)", the stranger asked. The Prophet replied, "*Al-islam* is to testify that there is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God, to

perform the prayers, to pay the poor-due (*al-zakat*), to fast in Ramaḍan, and to make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to do so." The narration continues: "He [Gabriel] said, 'You have spoken truly', and we [the Companions] were amazed at his asking him and saying that he had spoken truly. He said, 'Then tell me about faith (*al-iman*).' He [the Prophet] said, 'It is to believe in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in divine destiny, both the good and the evil thereof.' He said, 'You have spoken truly.' He said, 'Then tell me about virtue (*al-ihsan*).' He said, 'It is to worship God as though you see Him, and if you see Him not, yet truly He sees you.'" The word *ihsan* can also be literally translated as "doing what is beautiful", the root of the word being related primarily to beauty, *husn*; virtue and vice are often referred to in Islamic ethical discourse as *husn* and *qubh*, literally beauty and ugliness. Ultimately, it is the vision of the divine beauty that inspires virtue, which is beauty of soul. It is thus not surprising to find that, generally speaking, while the specialists in the domain of outward action according to Islam have been the jurists, the *fuqahaʾ*, and the specialists in the domain of formal belief have been the theologians, it fell to the mystics to be the custodians of the domain of spiritual virtue, of "making beautiful". Indeed, it is no coincidence that many artists in the Islamic world - calligraphers, painters, poets, musicians, etc. - have been practising Sufis. From the Prophet's definition of *ihsan* as "worshipping God as if one could see Him", one clearly sees the crucial relationship between worship and virtue, spirituality and ethics, between devotion to the Creator and goodness to creatures; understanding this relationship takes us to the very heart of the spiritual tradition in Islam (Shah-Kazemi, 2006: 78-79).

In his *Mantiq al-Tayr* (also known as *Maqamat-e toyur*),[7] Farid ud-Din 'Attar tells the tale of the mystical journey of the birds through seven valleys in search of their mythical king, Simurgh, a cosmic bird of ancient Iranian lore, who turns out to be their real Self. The theme of the journey of the birds had been used long before 'Attar as a symbol for the soul's attempt to approach God in philosophical (Ibn Sina) and Sufi (al-Ghazali) literature; however, 'Attar's adaptation is by far the most poetic and mystical.[8]

It describes a quest by a group of birds to find Simurgh, their King, under the leadership of a hoopoe bird (also known as a green peafowl or lapwing). The Simurgh is an Iranian mythopoetic bird that has existed in Persian literature since the time of Zoroaster. He is a representative of the Divine, both within and beyond the created order, and of death and rebirth, and is often identified with the phoenix (Baxter-Tabriztchi, 2003: 440-41). He is, of course, God, and the search for the Simurgh is the search for the Divine.

In the poem, the birds of the world gather to decide who is to be their sovereign, as they have none. The hoopoe, the wisest of them all, suggests that they should find the legendary Simurgh. The hoopoe leads the birds, each of whom represents a human fault which prevents humankind from attaining enlightenment. The hoopoe tells the birds that they must cross seven valleys to reach the abode of Simurgh. The valleys are:

1 - Valley of the Quest, where the Wayfarer begins by casting aside all dogma, belief, and unbelief;

2 - Valley of Love, where reason is abandoned for the sake of love;

3 - Valley of Knowledge, where worldly knowledge becomes utterly useless;

4 - Valley of Detachment, where all desires and attachments to the world are given up - here, what is assumed to be "reality" vanishes;

5 - Valley of Unity, where the Wayfarer realizes that everything is connected and that the Beloved is beyond everything, including harmony, multiplicity, and eternity;

6 - Valley of Wonderment, where, entranced by the beauty of the Beloved, the Wayfarer becomes perplexed and, steeped in awe, finds that he or she has never known or understood anything; and, finally,

7 - Valley of Poverty and Annihilation, where the self disappears into the universe and the Wayfarer becomes timeless, existing in both the past and the future.

ʿAttar consummates the epic with an affirmation of his cherished belief that man will find the sought supreme being, within himself, and he expresses his meaning through an ingenious pun: the thirty birds (si morḡ) find to their amazement that the Simorḡ is none other than their own selves. ʿAttar's birds are not an anonymous flock, but often come onto the scene as individuals concerned with problems of the venture. Their leader, the hoopoe, (mentioned in Qur'an 27:20 as Solomon's messenger) is the moving spirit of the whole enterprise. There were thirty birds and in Persian "Simurgh" means exactly that, thirty birds. The truth is that "Simurgh was them, and they were Simurgh" (Wolpe, 2017: 331). God is the only true reality; everything else reflects God. The birds do not become God - they are formed by God from the beginning.

Conclusion

Farid ud-Din ‘Attar depicts a captivating story of birds in this epic poem, which starts with the conference of the all-world birds to find the king. The wisest bird, the hoopoe, proposes that they should discover the legendary bird Simurgh. The group of birds starts the journey to cross seven valleys of quest, love, understanding, detachment, unity, astonishment, and finally deprivation and death, one after to find Simurgh. Each bird is a moral symbol of human behaviour and has an associated literacy purpose. The guiding bird is the hoopoe, while the nightingale symbolizes the lover. The parrot is searching for the origin of eternity, and the “fallen soul” who is in alliance with Satan is symbolized by peacock. On the way to find the Simurgh, birds drop out of the journey one by one, claiming that they are not able to bear the journey or that the differences between them are too great to overcome. However, the hoopoe convinces them to continue the journey, advising them to focus on the integrity and ignore the conflicts between them. In the end, only thirty birds stay in the group as they reach Qaf, the dwelling place of Simurgh. It is worth mentioning again that Simurgh [Si (thirty) + murgh (bird)] means “thirty birds” in Persian, referring to the number of birds that endured the journey. At the end, they all discover a water lake in which they see their own image and not the mythical Simurgh - what they were looking for exists within their collective self and in the totality of all things (Saebipour, Zare, Ghaemi, and Joghataie, 2018).[9]

In their journey, there are no *borders*, each bird is a *being* having *freedom*, and together they form a *community* pursuing a common goal, which is to know their Sovereign. All they discover is a water lake in which they see their own image and not the mythical Simurgh: what they were looking for exists within their collective self and in the totality of all things. And “to see things as they really are” is the definition of Justice, which will be the subject of my next article. By using the ideas and thoughts of Shihab ud-Din Suhrawardi (1154-1191) and ‘Ali ibn Talib (600-661), I will explore how, in these times of Darkness that we live in, the light can only come from Justice.

Note

1. References to the second Italo-Ethiopian war, which started after Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, the Zionist encroachment in Palestine, the Civil War in Spain, which had started in 1936, and the second Sino-Japanese war, which started after Japan's invasion of China in 1937.
2. I will not dwell on the different conceptions of Cosmopolitanism and the debates surrounding it, debates which can be sterile and barren. For those different conceptions, I recommend Baker and Bartelson (eds.), 2009, especially Kimberly Hutchings, "Dream or nightmare? Thinking the future of world politics", on pp. 15-35; Hooft and Vandekerckhove (eds.), 2010; Kleingeld and Brown, 2019, and the bibliography there indicated. For examples from the past in Muslim contexts, see MacLean and Ahmed (eds.), 2012.
3. For a general introduction to some of the subjects dealt by political philosophy (or theory), see Dryzek, Honig and Phillips (eds.), 2008; Gaus and Kukathas (eds.), 2004; or Skinner, 2002.
4. For further details, see Byrd, 2020a and 2020b. For an introduction to political theology, see Cavanaugh and Scott (eds.), 2004 and 2018.
5. For more on Sayyid Qutb, see Soffar, 2021.
6. For further details, see Beckford and Demerath (eds.), 2008**;** Davie, 2013; Hinnells, 2005; Juergensmeyer and Roof (eds.), 2012; Masuzawa, 2005; Strenski, 2006.
7. There have been several translations into European languages with different titles (*The Conference of the Birds*, *The Language of the Birds*, *The Parliament of the Birds*, *The Logic of the Birds*, *Bird Parliament*, …) and that is why I rather use here the original title in Persian.
8. For further details on Farid ud-Din 'Attar and his work, see Landolt, "Farid al-Din 'Attar" at https://www.iis.ac.uk/farid-al-din-attar; Nott, 1984; Avery, 1998; Lewisohn and Shackle (eds.), 2006; Reinert, "'Attar, Farid-al-Din" in *Encyclopedia Iranica* III/1, 20-25; Ritter, 2003; Jahangiri and Karimnia, 2017; Baxter-Tabriztchi, 2003; Darbandi and Davis (trans.), 1984/2011; Fitzgerald, 1889; Keshavarz, 2006; Este'lami, 2006; Shackle, 2006; Tavakoli, 2014; Wolpe, 2017; *The Conference of the Birds*, 2012; *The Conference of the Birds*, 2013.
9. For a detailed analysis, see Basu, 1966.

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Islamic Perspective, Vol. 28, 95-118
The Institute for Critical Social Theory, 2022

Theorising miscarriages of justice

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Abstract

This article is premised on the straightforward notion that innocent victims of miscarriages of justice who are unable to overturn their wrongful convictions undermines the legitimacy of the criminal justice system, signalling an urgent need for transformation in the interests of justice. It acknowledges the contribution made by the existing discourses on miscarriages of justice, but argues for a distinction between such descriptive forms of information based on analyses of individual cases of successful appeal against criminal conviction and social theoretical analyses that can explain the power relations that characterise and underpin the structures and workings of the criminal justice system. In so doing, it provides a Foucauldian account and critique of current theoretical orthodoxies in understanding miscarriages of justice from Durkheimian and Marxist perspectives. This highlights the apparent ideological stance of the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC), the body set up to assist alleged victims of miscarriages of justice to overturn their convictions, as well as certain miscarriage of justice practitioners and intellectuals themselves, who might be characterised as quasi-Durkheimian for their defence of the existing arrangements, which can and do fail innocent victims. The overall aim is to contribute to the project of *theorising miscarriages of justice* to provide a better understanding of the rationale and workings of the existing mechanisms for overturning alleged wrongful

convictions at the post-appeal stage in the hope that they might be more effectively challenged.

Keywords: Miscarriages of justice; Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC); Emile Durkheim; Karl Marx; Michel Foucault.

Introduction

An extensive literature exists on the causes of miscarriages of justice and wrongful convictions[1] in England and Wales (see Brandon and Davies, 1973; Walker and Starmer, 1986; Walker, 2001; JUSTICE, 1989: Naughton, 2007). In this research, miscarriages of justice have been conceptualised as routine, even mundane, features of the criminal justice system if all successful appeals against criminal conviction are taken into account, affecting many thousands of primary victims and many more thousands of secondary victims per annum (Naughton, 2003a). Wrongful convictions, particularly when caused intentionally, have also been depicted as state crimes (Naughton, 2014; Stratton, 2015). They have been shown to cause extensive and profound forms of social (Naughton, 2003a; 2007; Burnett, 2016; Burnett, et al, 2017), psychological (Taylor and Wood, 1999; Grounds, 2004; 2005; Jamieson and Grounds, 2005; Grounds and Jamieson, 2003) and financial harms (Naughton, 2003b; Tan,) to victims that they and their families (Jenkins, 2013) may never recover from. And, the existing arrangements for overturning alleged miscarriages of justice in the Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) (CACD) (Nobles and Schiff, 2000: Chapter 3; Pattenden, 2009; Naughton, 2013: Chapter 6; Roberts, 2017) and/or under the auspices of the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) (see Nobles and Schiff, 2002, 2005; Naughton, 2009a; Naughton, 2012; Naughton and Tan, 2013; Hoyle and Sato, 2019) have been roundly criticised for rejecting applicants who may be innocent victims of miscarriage of justice, thus exacerbating the harms that they suffer.

Looked at in this context, it seems unsurprising that the public revelation of miscarriages of justice signals bad news for government, generally, and the agencies that make up the criminal justice system, specifically. This is confirmed in the existing research on public attitudes to wrongful convictions, whether in the United Sates (Huff et al, 1996; Zalman et al, 2012; Green and Clarke, 2020) or in Canada (Bell and Chow, 2007, Ricciardelli et al, 2009), which shows, clearly, that they diminish public trust and confidence in the operations of the criminal justice system.

This chimes well with the experience in England and Wales where public awareness of certain miscarriage of justice cases which have succeeded in attaining a high-profile status within society have induced widespread crises of confidence in the workings of the criminal justice system and led to the introduction of some of the most significant reforms aimed at preventing miscarriages of justice or ensuring that they can be overturned when they occur (see Naughton, 2001; 2007: xvi-xvii). This includes the introduction of the Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) (CACD) in response to the case of Adolf Beck (see Coates, 2001); the abolition of capital punishment (Block and Hostettler, 1997) in response to the case of Timothy Evans (Kennedy, 1961); the formalisation of guidelines on how the police should deal with suspects and the introduction of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) (Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, 1981) in response to the *Confait Affair* (Price and Caplan, 1976; Price, 1985); and, the creation of the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) (Elks, 2008) to assist victims of miscarriages of justice unable to overturn their convictions within the normal appeals system in response to the cases of the Guildford Four (Conlon, 1990), the Birmingham Six (Hill and Hunt, 1995), and a string of other cases of alleged miscarriages of justice at the time where Irish people had been wrongly convicted for alleged terrorist offences (Woffinden, 1987).

To be sure, wrongful convictions can be conceived to undermine a key and core requirement of the various agencies that make up the criminal justice system, i.e., to promote trust and confidence in the criminal justice system and the rule of law (see, for instance, Jackson et al, 2012).

Against this background, this article is premised on the straightforward notion that innocent victims miscarriages of justice who are unable to overturn their wrongful convictions undermines the legitimacy of the criminal justice system, signalling an urgent need for transformation in the interests of justice. It acknowledges the contribution made by the existing discourses on miscarriages of justice, but argues for a distinction between such descriptive forms of information based on analyses of individual cases of successful appeal against criminal conviction and social theoretical analyses that can explain the power relations that characterise and underpin the structure and workings of the criminal justice system. Whilst the existing discourse on wrongful convictions has had, undoubted, political value in fostering the necessary forms of counter discourse that have forced governmental intervention and the introduction of the aforementioned reforms, it has tended to be shaped not by social scientists but, rather, by journalists, practitioners, academics or victims themselves from a critical legal perspective.

This prompted Richard Leo (2005) to characterise wrongful conviction scholarship in the United States as 'impoverished', theoretically, conceptually, methodologically and empirically, which is generally true, also, of the terrain in England and Wales (Naughton, 2014), and to call for social scientists to conduct research to better social scientific understandings of the phenomenon.

To be sure, there is a dearth of social scientific theorisations that seek to explain the apparent reluctance by criminal justice system power to embrace the reality of miscarriages of justice and/or the limitations of the present arrangements for overturning them when they occur, which can leave innocent victims languishing in prison unable to overturn their wrongful convictions. Crucially, the existing discourse with its focus on individual cases is not able to explain why despite the reforms cited above that there remain no guarantees under the existing arrangements that innocent victims will ever overturn their wrongful convictions.

To this end, the remainder of this article seeks to contribute to the project of *theorising miscarriages of justice* in three parts, utilising the social theories of Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Michel Foucault, respectively. These theorists have been chosen due their 'classical' status in the discipline, as well as their enduring relevance for contemporary criminological analyses and debates that build on their social thought. In so doing, it provides a Foucauldian account and critique of current orthodoxies in understanding miscarriages of justice from a Durkheimian or Marxist perspective. This highlights the apparent ideological stance of the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC), the body set up to assist alleged victims of miscarriages of justice to overturn their convictions, as well as certain miscarriage of justice practitioners and intellectuals themselves, who might be characterised as quasi-Durkheimian for their defence of the existing arrangements, which can and does fail innocent victims.

The overall aim is to provide a better understanding of the rationale and workings of the existing mechanisms for overturning alleged miscarriages of justice at the post-appeal stage in the hope that they might be more effectively challenged. Indeed, in a human system where miscarriages of justice have been conceived as 'inevitable' (Greer, 1994: 68), it is vital that the last resort for victims to overturn them, the CCRC, is fit for purpose (Lavelle, 2012).

Durkheim

The existing general criminal justice system approach to alleged miscarriages of justice can be conceptualised as quasi-Durkheimian in character. This is revealed in

an understanding of his perspective on crime and punishment and his stance on their functional utility for society.

More specifically, for Durkheim, criminal law reflects a moral consensus that represents the interests of society at large and is fundamental to maintaining social order and enhancing social solidarity. Fundamentally, Durkheim saw crime in terms of disapproval, a form of behaviour strongly opposed, and, 'universally' offensive to the 'conscience collective' (cited Chambliss and Mankoff, 1976: 4). Moreover, for Durkheim, crime is not regarded as pathological, but 'normal', and, indeed, 'necessary', performing a vital function: 'it strengthens social solidarity through the reaffirmation of moral commitment among the conforming population who witness the suffering and expiation of the offender (Durkheim cited Reiner, 1984: 180).

From this perspective, it can be conceived that it is vital that convictions are obtained and offenders punished when criminal offences are committed, especially in response to high profile serious offences such as the terrorist bombings and murders at the heart of the notorious wrongful conviction cases, to show that the criminal justice system is working as it is thought it should be by the moral consensus: convicting the guilty and acquitting the innocent in criminal trials. This lay perspective on the workings of the criminal justice system was summed up by the then Home Secretary, Charles Clarke (cited in Travis, 2006) in the following terms:

> *'What individuals [the general public] want to see is a legal system which correctly finds guilty those who are guilty and acquits those who are innocent, with respect to what they did or didn't do.'*

In this vision, however, miscarriages of justice are not welcome and attempts to unearth them must be thwarted as they can cause a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system by the conscience collective and undermine its legitimacy. It is in this sense that attempts to defend against critiques of the limits of the existing criminal justice system in dealing with claims of innocence by alleged victims of miscarriages of justice by criminal appeal lawyers or miscarriage of justice intellectuals can be conceived as falling under Emile Durkheim's theoretical umbrella.

A prime example is Lord Denning's refusal to permit the Birmingham Six to prosecute West Midlands Serious Crime Squad for the beatings that they had suffered before five of them 'confessed', which can be conceived to epitomise a Durkheimian approach to miscarriages of justice. Denning was known as the 'people's judge' and widely seen as having a 'tremendous feel for ordinary people'

as he was claimed to be 'prepared to use the law for its true purpose in the interests of fairness and justice' (Tony Blair cited Dyer, 1999). His judgement on the application of the Birmingham Six, however, was not in line with lay discourses on how the criminal justice system should function – convict those who committed the alleged criminal offence and acquit those who did not (Naughton, 2013: 16-20). On the contrary, it was more concerned with the potential harmful consequences for the criminal justice system and, specifically, the police, in terms of lack of public trust and faith were their allegations true (which they later turned out to be!), than with the due process of law and the possible wrongful conviction of the innocent. In a now infamous judgment within the miscarriages of justice World, Denning upheld an appeal by West Midlands Police against a civil action by the Birmingham Six for the following reasons, which can be conceptualised as epitomising a Durkheimian perspective:

> *'Just consider the course of events if this action is allowed to proceed to trial…If the six men win, it will mean that the police were guilty of perjury, that they were guilty of violence and threats, that the confessions were involuntary and were improperly admitted in evidence and that the convictions were erroneous. That would mean that the Home Secretary would either have to recommend they be pardoned or he would have to remit the case to the Court of Appeal. This is such an appalling vista that every sensible person in the land would say: It cannot be right that these actions should go any further' (Denning cited Mullin, 1986: 216).*

Another remark by Denning about the Birmingham Six is equally indicative of a quasi-Durkheimian desire to protect the criminal justice system at all and any cost from the damage to the conscience collective that wrongful convictions might cause:

> *'We shouldn't have all these campaigns to get the Birmingham Six released if they'd been hanged. They'd have been forgotten and the whole community would have been satisfied' (Denning cited Dyer, 1999).*

In May 1991, the Birmingham Six finally overturned their convictions on their third appeal in the CACD. Denning's worst fears were confirmed by the revelations of the causes of their miscarriages of justice, police torture, fabricated statements and allegedly corrupt forensic science evidence (see, Mullin, 1986; Callaghan and Mulready, 1993); Hill and Hunt, 1995). Combined with the cases of the Guildford

Four (Conlon, 1990) and other successful appeals and suspected cases of wrongful convictions in which Irish people had been convicted for Irish Republican Army (IRA) bombing campaigns (see, Woffinden, 1987; Maguire with Gallagher, 1994; Ward, 1993), it induced a widespread public crisis of confidence in the entire workings of the criminal justice system. It prompted the setting up of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice (RCCJ)[2] to undertake the most extensive review of the criminal justice system ever undertaken in England and Wales (see, Royal Commission on Criminal Justice, 1993: 1).

The most significant reform from the RCCJ was the removal of the power to refer alleged miscarriages of justice back to the CACD by the Home Secretary and the establishment of the CCRC as it became apparent that successive Home Secretaries were covering up the corruption and malpractice by agents of the criminal justice system by failing to refer potential miscarriages of justice back to the CACD for political, as opposed to legal, reasons (see, Naughton, 2009b: 1).

However, the CCRC is not the panacea for miscarriages of justice that was hoped for as it is structured in a way that means it can (see Innocence Network UK, 2011), and does,[3] fail victims of miscarriages of justice in ways which were not intended or envisaged by the RCCJ when it was established. The nub of the problem is that the CCRC must abide by s.13 of the 1995 Criminal Appeal Act 1995 (Criminal Appeal Act, 1995) and s.23 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 (Criminal Appeal Act, 1968).

Firstly, s.13 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1995 dictates that the CCRC can only refer cases to the CACD[4] where it feels there is a 'real possibility' that the conviction will be overturned. Then, in deciding whether the 'real possibility' test has been met, the CCRC must also consider s.23 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968, which requires that evidence admissible in the Court of Appeal must be 'fresh', understood generally as evidence or argument that was not or could not have been available at the time of the original trial.

In consequence, CCRC reviews are for the most part mere desktop considerations of whether such 'fresh' evidence may now exist that was not or could not be available at the time of the original trial or previous failed appeal that has a good chance of overturning the conviction (Newby, 2009). Such an approach sees the CCRC reject alleged victims of miscarriages of justice if it is not felt that they have or could have 'fresh' evidence that will fulfil the 'real possibility' test. This means that CCRC reviews are not aimed at finding the truth of claims of innocence by alleged victims of miscarriages of justice which can, and do, overlook

and positively exclude, lines of inquiry that may prove an applicant's claim of innocence if it is not felt that such investigations would discover material that would meet the 'fresh' evidence and/or 'real possibility' criteria.

The restrictive approach to applications is reflected in the CCRC referral statistics. Between 1999 when the CCRC was set up and the end of 2015-16, the overall proportion of cases referred to the appeal courts was 3.43%. Recent annual referral rates have, however, been much lower. In the three years to 2018-19 they stood at 0.77%, 1.24% and 0.9% respectively. In 2019-20 this rose to 1.95% (APPG Miscarriages of Justice, 2021: 12-13).

Such statistics are a stark insight into how the CCRC can fail innocent applicants. This is given further support in a dossier of cases that was created by Innocence Network UK (INUK) (Innocence Network UK, 2012). It detailed 44 cases that comprised mainly of prisoners serving life or long-term sentences for serious offences, ranging from gangland murders and armed robbery to rape and other sexual offences. All of them maintained that they were not involved in the offences despite having failed in their appeal and having been refused a referral by the CCRC on at least one occasion because they are not felt to satisfy the requirements for 'fresh' evidence and the 'real possibility' test. They asserted that they were wrongly convicted for reasons including fabricated confessions, eyewitness misidentification, police misconduct, flawed expert evidence, false allegations and false witness testimonies, perennial and well-established causes of the wrongful conviction of the innocent as evidenced by successful appeal cases.

The way that the 'real possibility test' works to subordinate the CCRC to the CACD and how innocent victims of miscarriages of justice can, therefore, fall through the gaps of CCRC reviews has been openly conceded in public meetings by CCRC staff speaking in a personal capacity.[5] The CCRC website also states, clearly, that it can only refer cases if there is fresh evidence and how this impacts on its ability to refer cases, which is a further acknowledgement that innocent applicants may not have their cases referred:

> *'To launch a fresh appeal, we need something important like strong new evidence or an argument that makes the case look different now. Since this can be very hard to find many cases cannot be referred for appeal' (Criminal Cases Review Commission, 2021).*

And, former CCRC Commissioners once they have left the CCRC have been scathing of the impact of the 'real possibility test' on how the CCRC decides which

applications to review, how it reviews them, and how this can result in the applications of genuine victims of miscarriages of justice being rejected.[6]

Despite this, however, much effort has been exerted by CCRC defenders who betray a quasi-Durkheimian approach in their attempts repel critiques of the limitations and/or outright failings of the CCRC in assisting potentially innocent victims of miscarriages of justice to have their cases referred who may be languishing in prison. This includes academic voices (for instance, Quirk, 2007; McCartney et al, 2008; Roberts, 2018: 266-267), successive CCRC Chairs such as Richard Foster (see Justice Committee, 2014; McGuiness, 2016: 3) and Helen Pitcher (see Robins, 2021) and other State agents such as the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, Edward Argar MP, who responded to critiques of the CCRC's real possibility test in a parliamentary debate in July 2019 in the following unequivocal terms:

> *'I very much support the work of the CCRC…. We [The Government] do not feel that it would be appropriate to alter the [real possibility] test simply to demonstrate the independence of the CCRC…. the organisation is well placed to deliver its important work investigating where people are wrongly convicted or where convictions are unsafe' (Argar cited House of Commons, 2019).*

Marx

In direct opposition to the Durkheimian perspective, Karl Marx's social theory urged analyses that seek to puncture the ideological 'false consciousness' that pervades modern Western capitalist societies, and which underpins the belief that societal institutions, such as the criminal justice system, operate in the interests of the general public. From a Marxist perspective, crime is not normal but, rather, acts which are criminalised by the powerful in society to protect their own interests (Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973). Marxist analyses, therefore, endeavour to highlight the economic power relations at play in the processes of the criminal justice system that target the working class and leave the crimes of the economically powerful relatively unchallenged or certainly downplayed (Bongor, 1916; Pearce, 1976; Slapper and Tombs, 1999). The criminal justice system is further implicated as functioning against the interests of the working class in Marx's thesis on surplus value, which holds that if remunerative occupations are useful, acts socially constructed as crime is also useful as it gives rise to the police, the court and even the professor who teaches criminal law and future criminal lawyers. All of whom,

therefore, have a profound stake in maintaining the existing arrangements and power relations (see, Bottomore, 1991: 117).

Indeed, from a Marxist perspective, crime control is a lucrative 'industry' that solves two major problems that confront modern capitalist societies: unequal access to paid work and the uneven distribution of wealth. It provides profit and work while producing social control of those who would otherwise cause trouble (Christie, 1993: 11**).** As crime is so often considered in isolation from other social harms, such as wrongful convictions, it also gives legitimacy to the further expansion of the crime control industry. As Hillyard and Tombs (2004: 29) noted:

> *'In the UK, the amount committed to law and order has increased faster than any other area of public expenditure and, as a result, more and more peoples' livelihoods are dependent on crime and its control.*'

The Marxist perspective thus argues that 'modern social orders are being increasingly characterised by an unacknowledged but open war between young males, mainly from poor and deprived backgrounds, and an army of professionals in the crime control industry' (Hillyard and Tombs, 2004: 29; see, also, Box, 1983**,** Christie, 1993, Reiman and Leighton, 2020).

The routine nature of miscarriages of justice from a Marxist perspective, then, can be broadly conceived as revealing how far the criminal justice system deviates from genuine (lay) public interests when the police and prosecution are shown to have wrongly convicted the 'usual suspects', predominantly young working class males who are disproportionately from ethnic minority backgrounds (see Box, 1983: 2; also, Walmsley et al, 1992; Pantazis, 1998**)** and when the system for correcting miscarriages of justice is shown to be failing to overturn the convictions of such victims who may be innocent (Naughton, 2013; 162-186). They are seen as signalling State abuses of power and, indeed, call into question the continued legitimacy of the existing criminal justice system (Naughton, 2014; also, Stratton, 2015).

More specifically, from a Marxist perspective extra-judicial initiative such as the RCCJ that recommended the establishment of the CCRC are generally seen as representative of 'damage limitation exercises' that enable to State to continue to retain power and its 'control' of the criminal justice system (see, for instance, McConville and Bridges, 1994: 22-23; also, Hillyard, 1994: 74). Celia Wells (1994: 53-54) expressed this perspective of the RCCJ as follows:

> *'It is unarguable that the criminal justice system is a taken for granted part of the apparatus of the state, however defined… [it is] subject to government manipulation in support of its claim to authority.'*

In this context, the establishment of the CCRC from a Marxist perspective is viewed as a cosmetic reform that fails to get to the heart of the need for fundamental changes to the underlying structures and the operations of the criminal justice process. For instance, McConville and Bridges (1994) edited a book on the failures of the RCCJ from a broadly Marxist perspective in which the 28 contributors were said to share a view that it was a 'betrayal' in terms of the part that it failed to play in achieving meaningful reforms (see, McConville and Bridges, 1994: xv).

More recently, Robert Schehr (2005: 1296) applied a Marxist perspective derived from the work of Bob Jessop (1990) to argue that the CCRC is a 'state strategic selection mechanism', serving as a meliorating institution that appeared during a time of a legitimacy crisis in the criminal justice system to fend off instability. For Schehr (2005: 1297-1298), the social control function of state strategic selection mechanisms is manifest in contemporary society as 'adaptive responses' to apparent crises.

From this perspective, the CCRC is a product of the public crisis of confidence in the criminal justice system that was exposed in successful appeals such as those of the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six (and other cases) that represents but another structural device available to meta-organisations responsible for the administration of crime and punishment.

Moreover, from this perspective, it is little wonder that the CCRC has failed as the final solution to the continuing problems faced by victims of miscarriages of justice who are unable to provide the so called 'fresh' evidence to the CCRC that is required for it to be able to refer convictions back to the CACD. A Marxist view would not see this an accidental, nor unintentional. Just as the collective response by the authors of *Criminal Justice in Crisis* both feared and predicted, the Marxist perspective would argue that the CCRC was never meant to fix the problem of miscarriages of justice in a system governed by capitalist power relations where they are the inevitable consequence of crime control and, thus, mere collateral damage.

Foucault

The Durkheimian and Marxist versions of miscarriages of justice appear to operate as polar opposites, yet despite their surface differences both approaches are equally open to critique in terms of their respective conceptualisations of criminal justice system power relations from a perspective derived from the social thought of Michel Foucault. From a Foucauldian perspective, Durkheim fails to acknowledge that criminal law does not always represent shared morals and norms and he does not explain how crimes are created or how the moral consensus in the conscience collective is achieved and/or sustained, although it is acknowledged that this critique is also one that is made from a Marxist perspective, notably Gramsci's thesis on hegemony. Likewise, Marxist analyses present a rather nihilistic conspiratorial account of State domination over the population, which fails to see any tangible value in engaging with the processes of law reform at all, as all reforms are viewed negatively and as simply serving as further additions to State power. Moreover, in terms of initiatives such as the RCCJ and the setting up of the CCRC, a Foucauldian perspective would see Durkheimian and Marxist accounts as also corresponding in seeing them as a pointless waste of time, albeit for quite different reasons: the Durkheimian view is that they cause unnecessary trouble for a benign State that must be trusted as it has the best interests of the (conscience) collective at heart; alternatively, the Marxist perspective sees them as mere sops that allow the State to retain its social control via the criminal justice system.

Contrary to the kinds of analysis that can be conceived from a general reading of Durkheimian or Marxist theory, Foucault provided a critical perspective that can be dovetailed with the Marxist perspective to further juxtapose the Durkheimian perspective, although it requires rethinking the structures of power and the ways that it is exercised. Indeed, whilst Marxist analyses focus on ‘why’ questions of power relations in capitalist societies to highlight that economic thinking underpins exercises of power, Foucault’s questions revolved around ‘how’ such exercises of power are accepted as legitimate by the population at large and what can be done to resist apparent abuses of State power.

Crucially, for Foucault (1991), the State is important in modern Western capitalist societies, but only insofar as it is an effect of government or what he termed governmentality. Governmentality for Foucault is a practical pursuit that problematises the population, seeking to know the needs and aspirations of the population so that it may be governed or managed in an appropriate, and pastoral, way. The overall aim of government/governmentality in Foucault’s analysis is not

unquestioning trust and obedience to the State (Durkheim) versus State domination (Marx) but, rather, the enhancement of the general welfare of the population/the governed in terms of heath and wealth, with the strength of the modern State compared with other States being reflected in the prosperity and overall wellbeing of the nation. This challenges models of power which posit a State 'sovereign' with absolute power over 'subjects', either benevolently (Durkheimian) or in terms of a will to domination (Marxist).

Moreover, for Foucault (1979) a defining feature of exercises of power in modern Western societies is the centrality of discourses, bodies of knowledge, and their counter-discursive opposition, which inform governing agencies on the appropriate way of dealing with the population. It is discourses that shape and direct governmental interventions or exercises of power. This is not to say that the economy is not important or even the most important consideration in exercises of governmental power in a capitalist society. Rather, it is to present power as an interrelationship between the 'holders' of power and the population, government and the governed, with the latter providing the public mandate required for governmental exercises of power to be accepted as legitimate (Foucault, 1991: 100).

Indeed, contrary to Marxist analyses, Foucault's thesis on resistance to power sees it as not simply a reaction to a form of the pre-existing power embodied by the Sovereign. Rather, it is an intrinsic part of his definition of power. That is to say, for Foucault, power and resistance imply one another and co-exist in struggles between power and resistance. Moreover, resistance, for Foucault, is never external to power. Forms of power are continually engendered or incited by virtue of the potential counter-powers or states of resistance, which co-exist with them. As he said: 'where there is power there is resistance' (Foucault, 1979: 95).

Vital to Foucault's conception of resistance is the concept of 'force' or 'power relations. In the context of the present discussion, 'power' within the sphere of the criminal justice system can be conceived as the assortment of force relations existing within the socio-legal body. Power's conditions of possibility actually consist of this shifting substrate of force relations: the struggles, confrontations, contradictions, inequalities, transformations and integrations of these force relations. This sees individuals as 'positioned' within any struggle only as a consequence of the existence of a struggle for power. Consequently, both existing forms of power and resistance to them involve the creation of 'tactics' and the co-ordination of these various tactics into coherent strategies by government and the governed. The political value of Foucault's thesis on power is that a strategic action

must be countered by an opposing action; a set of 'tactics' must be consciously 'invented' in opposition to the setting in place of another; a different procedural 'art' of criminal justice system, for example, is what will oppose the existing one: 'One is always "inside" power, there is no "escaping" it' (Foucault, 1979: 95).

Moreover, from a Foucauldian perspective, resistance is more effective when it is directed at a technique or specific exercises of power rather than at 'power' in general. It is techniques of power which allow for exercises of power and the production of forms of knowledge. Resistance consists of not accepting these techniques. Perhaps most significantly, a Foucauldian perspective would argue that oppressive forces of domination do not hold the monopoly in the capacity to invent and deploy tactics. If resistance is to be effective, it requires the acknowledgement that tactics are being employed in a struggle, and the active interrogation of those tactics. For Foucault, it is in the scrutiny of tactics of power that power is rendered intelligible, which allow for the analysis of power down to its most minute details. Such analyses of power can reveal the historical strategies and sets of 'tactics' designed to mobilise these techniques to political advantage (Foucault, 1979: 95-96).

Perhaps most crucially, a Foucauldian perspective to power and resistance offers hope to those seeking to challenge existing forms of power to effect transformative reforms. Indeed, contrary to sovereign exercises of power, as epitomised in pre-modern Feudal societies, for Foucauldian governmental exercises of power to be legitimate, government cannot simply impose changes to social systems in society or exercise power over citizens arbitrarily. Rather, for exercises of governmental power to be legitimate they must follow a certain process, in which it is crucial that the population/governed participate in the process by informing government of aspects of social life that impact detrimentally upon public wellbeing. It is through such engagement that government knows, that is obtains the forms of discourse and counter discourse about societal problems in need of governmental intervention.

If we apply these kinds of ideas to the establishment of the RCCJ, a Foucauldian approach would likely view it as a governmental technique into an apparently problematic aspect of the criminal justice system that was highlighted by the apparent miscarriages of justice of the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, and so on. It would be seen as representing a governmental tactic within which the power struggle between dominant forms of criminal justice system discourse and its counter-discursive resistance could take place. That is to say, the RCCJ provided an arena for the engagement between forms of discourse and counter discourse on the

apparent problem with the criminal appeals system that were impeding highly visible miscarriages of justice from being rectified.

As this relates to the setting up of the CCRC, a Foucauldian perspective would conceive it as a governmental strategy of power that 'successfully' resolved of the public crisis of confidence that was caused by the miscarriages of justice cases of the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, and so on. It would be seen as an example of the ongoing governmentality of the criminal justice system. The processes of governmentality are described as 'on-going' as there is a continual and always unfinished contest between dominant discourses and counter discourses in struggles for power and resistance to power. Finally, from a Foucauldian perspective, it is fundamental in the processes of governmentality that are being discussed here that that miscarriage of justice activists subject the criminal justice system to continual critical scrutiny. They must, firstly, unearth cases of miscarriages of justice and, then, bring them to public attention as a precursor to further governmental engagements and contestations between existing forms of dominant discourse and their counter discursive opposition calling for transformations of the criminal justice system (c.f. Foucault, 1980; for an extensive discussion of this application of Foucault's thoughts to miscarriages of justice see, Naughton, 2007: 26-35).

Conclusion

This article has sought to show how key sociological and criminological theories can be used as analytical tools to help to situate and provide insights and understanding of the social and legal realities of the criminal justice system that relate to miscarriages of justice. I think that it is fair to say that the application of a Durkheimian, Marxist or Foucauldian theoretical analysis in isolation would not allow for the depth or richness of analysis that can be gained in a critical interrogation that utilises a wider range of available, even conflicting, social theories. For instance, although the theoretical orientation in the foregoing analysis stands intellectually against the Durkheimian perspective, Durkheimian social theory is, nonetheless, useful in this critical analysis as a foil that provides theoretical insights and understanding into the apparent resistance to forms of counter discourse on miscarriages of justice and attempts to overturn them by criminal justice system power.

Likewise, although Marxist analyses can be critiqued from a Foucauldian perspective in terms of the concept of power relations in contemporary Western societies, they aptly illuminate the influence and detrimental impacts of the existing

criminal justice system in which, as Reiman and Leighton (2020) so succinctly put it, 'the rich get richer and the poor get prison'. Marxist analyses also further explain the general reluctance of lawyers, criminal justice system agencies and even academics to embrace critiques of the criminal justice system from an economic perspective. Put simply, they can be conceived as economic beneficiaries of the existing arrangements, so it is unsurprising that they would want to resist or undermine attempts to reveal flaws with the existing criminal justice system and/or calls for change.

As such, taken together, the Marxist and Foucauldian perspectives can work together to provide a more holistic critical analysis than an analysis of either perspective in isolation could provide: whilst the Marxist perspective highlights the lived material realities of the criminal justice system that favour the economically better-offs and which can leave the economically powerless vulnerable to wrongful convictions, the Foucauldian perspective on power and resistance can be conceived as providing something of a blueprint for a progressive engagement with the flaws of the criminal justice system that seeks to unearth miscarriages of justice to present as counter discursive evidence of how the criminal justice system is targeted at the powerless, whether measured in economic or discursive terms, to bring about reforms aimed at their prevention.

From this standpoint, a synthesis of a Marxist-Foucauldian inspired social theory can provide illuminating insights into the behaviours of individual agents or entire agencies of the criminal justice system. Knowledge *is* power, and the thinking here is that the better the critical knowledge or counter discourse that is produced on what is wrong with the system in terms of miscarriages of justice that can be attained, the better informed will be the analysis and, hence, any strategies of resistance on how those problems might be responded to and ultimately fixed.

More specifically, the central focus of this article has been on the limits of the CCRC in being able to guarantee that innocent victims of miscarriages of justice can and will overturn their wrongful convictions. That is to say, how the CCRC is unable to fulfil the task that the RCCJ recommended and which CCRC representatives and its defenders continue to say that it does fulfil.

There is an age-old adage that says: 'If the facts don't fit the theory, change the theory.' The problem with the existing dominant discourses on the CCRC from the perspective of this adage is that they work along quasi-Durkheimian lines. They accept without question that the CCRC was, indeed, established to assist innocent

victims of miscarriages of justice to overturn their convictions when the evidence (facts) show that it wasn't.

On the contrary, the facts support the alternative theory that the CCRC is an integral part of the criminal justice system, rather than independent from it. Further, that the CCRC functions not to assist innocent victims to overturn their wrongful convictions but, rather, that it acts as a gatekeeper of the criminal appeals system, serving to hide and bury all manner of egregious wrongs, injustices and harms that are caused to innocent victims of wrongful convictions and their loved ones by the criminal justice system. This finding alone demonstrates the value of theoretical analyses that seek to explain why organisations like the CCRC operate in the way that they do.

Moreover, looking at the evidence/facts of the context within which the RCCJ was established and within which it recommended the setting up of the CCRC, the inability of the Court of Appeal to overturn miscarriages of justice given to innocent victims that was identified at the time is a problem that is merely mirrored by the CCRC in its 'real possibility' test. As such, the inability of the criminal justice system to guarantee that innocent victims of miscarriages of justice can and will be able to overturn their convictions is a problem that has not be resolved by the CCRC and one which still exists.

Another value of the foregoing theoretical analysis is that helps to explain why meaningful reforms to ensure that innocent victims can overturn their miscarriages of justice have not been forthcoming, i.e. because the criminal justice system and the CCRC operate along quasi-Durkheimian lines to prevent public knowledge of miscarriages of justice for fear that they diminish trust and confidence in the criminal justice system and detract from the social solidarity that is obtained by the conviction of alleged criminal offenders. This highlights how victims of miscarriages of justice can be treated as mere collateral damage in a criminal justice system that seeks Durkheimian forms of social solidarity from criminal convictions and fails to provide the mechanisms necessary to overturn wrongful convictions when they occur.

But this article also provides hope to fuel continued efforts to transform the existing post-appeal arrangements under the CCRC in the shape of Foucauldian inspired theoretical insights into the workings of the power relations that govern the interplay and exchanges between the dominant discourses that centre on miscarriages of justice and their counter discursive opposition.

To be sure, and as was discussed above, in a Foucauldian sense the CCRC is better seen as a tactic or technique of criminal justice system power that was created, not as the final solution to the wrongful conviction of innocent victims, but, rather, to silence the public crisis of confidence that was caused by the widespread public awareness of cases of the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, and so on. Also, from the perspective of a Foucauldian reading of power and resistance and the ongoing fight for justice for innocent victims of miscarriages of justice, the governmental tactic that is the CCRC is now seen plainly for what it is; an attempt to prevent miscarriages from coming to public attention that might cause harm to the need for public trust and confidence in the criminal justice system.

In response, anti-miscarriage of justice activists should take heart that all is not lost with the setting up of the CCRC as the fight is ongoing. As such, forms of counter discursive resistance like the analyses presented in this article can act to encourage and inspire the refusal to accept the failings of the CCRC in dealing with applicants who claim to be innocence. It is unjust and a clear and apparent abuse of criminal justice system power to reject applications from alleged innocent victims of miscarriages of justice on the basis of legal technicalities and the need for so called 'fresh' evidence that was not available at the time of the original trial. It is well documented in successful appeal cases and in the existing research that lawyers can and do fail their clients, that juries can make mistakes and that innocent victims can be wrongly convicted (see Brandon and Davies, 1973; Walker and Starmer, 1986; Walker, 2001; JUSTICE, 1989: Naughton, 2007; 2013). Forms of counter discourse need to be invented that can highlight these continuing realities of the existing criminal justice system and how the real possibility test of the CCRC needs to be urgently repealed in the interests of justice. This would uncouple the CCRC from the Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) so that it is free to conduct truly independent and impartial investigations into claims of innocence by alleged victims of miscarriages of justice in the interests of truth and justice. In these investigations, any evidence not presented to the jury at trial should be argued to be considered as fresh or new, as it should be as it has not been heard by a jury that made a decision based on incomplete evidence, and if it undermines the reliability of the evidence that led to the conviction or validates a claim of innocence then the conviction must be quashed by the CCRC. This, also, requires the CCRC to also have its own authority to overturn wrongful convictions and not have to send cases that it finds are wrongful convictions backwards to a court of appeal which previously refused to overturn the alleged wrongful conviction.

Moreover, if it is not possible to reform the CCRC in these ways, those against the existing arrangements of the CCRC could create counter discourses that call for the replacement of the CCRC with a new body with these functions that is fit for the purpose of assisting the innocent to overturn their convictions. It is simply unjust to have a criminal justice system in which innocent victims can be, and are, wrongly convicted and imprisoned and do nothing to rectify the failures of the CCRC in dealing with applicants claiming factual innocence. It is not acceptable for the CCRC and its defenders to argue that the CCRC is merely working within its governing statutes and there is nothing that can be done about it.

Finally, when thinking about alleged miscarriages of justice, it must always be remembered that when innocent victims are wrongly convicted that the guilty perpetrators of those crimes remain at 'wrongful liberty' with the potential and reality (see Baumgartner et al, 2018) to commit further crimes. This adds an important public protection and moral dimension to the work of forms of anti-miscarriage of justice counter discourse that defenders of the existing post-appeal system of the CCRC also fail to acknowledge.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to thank Will Atkinson for his positive and supportive comments om an earlier draft.

Note

1. Miscarriages of justice and wrongful convictions are used as synonymous and interchangeably in this article to indicate the wrongful conviction and/or imprisonment of an innocent victim, but for an analysis of the definitional complexity see Naughton, 2013: 15-31.
2. Announced on the day that the convictions of the Birmingham Six were overturned in the CACD.
3. For example, the case of Dwaine George, refused by the CCRC but, subsequently, referred to, and overturned by, the CACD following work by Cardiff Innocence Project and Innocence Network UK (INUK) (see BBC News, 2014).
4. This analysis is concerned only with CCRC referrals to the CACD following conviction in the Crown Court, but the CCRC also deals with alleged miscarriages of justice in magistrates' courts (see Kerrigan, 2009).
5. As long ago as at the Inaugural Innocence Projects Colloquium, University of Bristol, 3 September 2004, which was attended by the Principal Legal Advisor,

the Public Relations Officer and four Case Review Managers (CRMs) from the CCRC.

6. As acknowledged by former CCRC Commissioners Laurie Elks and David Jessel (see Naughton and Tan, 2013; also Jessel cited House of Commons, 2014: paragraph 12).

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Islamic Perspective, Vol. 28, 119-134
The Institute for Critical Social Theory, 2022

Ali Shariati and Postcolonial Contributions

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Abstract

As one of the most celebrated thinkers in contemporary Iran, Ali Shariati's thoughts and works on Islam and his impact as the key driving force behind the 1979 Islamic Revolution have been discussed and analyzed widely in several languages including Persian, Arabic, Urdu, English, Turkish, and Malay amongst other languages. His impact as the key driving force behind the 1979 Revolution can still create a heated debate in Iran. With many skeptics of his work, Shariati became a target for a heap of absurdities and defamatory remarks in the country. I am concerned that in the midst of all these skepticisms, Shariati's positions and ideas were not safeguarded and understood as well as they should have been. Most importantly, it concerns me that scholars are caught in a vicious circle of mapping the contours of their arguments over Shariati's thoughts on the issues of Islam, Shi'ism, and tradition that they completely miss the tremendous power of his significant anti-colonial and anti-imperial thoughts and theories. This paper seeks to respond to the question 'Why should we consider him a postcolonial thinker?' and brings to the fore his contributions to postcolonial criticism while being aware of the limitations plaguing his work.

Key Words: Modernity; anti-colonial thoughts; return to self; tradition; third way

Introduction

Ali Shariati is one of the most celebrated thinkers in contemporary Iran. His thoughts and works on Islam, and, most importantly, his impact as the key driving force behind the 1979 Islamic Revolution have been discussed and analyzed widely in Persian, Arabic, Urdu, English, Turkish, and Malay amongst other languages. His impact as the key moving force behind the 1979 Revolution can still create a heated debate in Iran. With many skeptics of his work, Shariati became a target for a heap of absurdities and defamatory remarks in the country. Unwarranted allegations such as 'Shariati's use of religion to incite people against the Shah question his sincerity and belief in religion,' 'his ideas spread Sunnism,' 'he was overwhelmed by the ideals of the past,' 'he reduced religion to ideology,' 'he left no room for reformation when there were forces that sought to reform instead of changing the regime,' and that 'he was the first proponents of *Velayet-e Faqih* for his emphasis on ideology meant that the society needs an ideologue' have long been circulating widely without much demur. I have no intention to respond to these allegations as it is beyond the scope of this paper but rather, I am concerned that in the midst of all these skepticisms, Shariati's positions and ideas were not safeguarded and understood as well as they should have been. Most importantly, it concerns me that scholars are caught in a vicious circle of mapping the contours of their arguments over Shariati's thoughts on the issues of Islam, Shi'ism, and tradition that they completely miss the tremendous power of his significant anti-colonial and anti-imperial thoughts and theories. Shariati is a leading anti-colonial and anti-imperial thinker, and deals with resistance and struggles ranging from the Algerian War and the partition of India to the occupation of Palestine, and the toppling of the US-backed monarchy in Iran. He addresses Eurocentric modernity, the imperial hegemony, the erasure of non-western tradition, the reconstruction of non-western tradition, cultural alienation, and the exclusionary structures of the modern world system from the 1950s through the 1970s.

It is, however, unfortunate that Shariati's anti-imperial and anti-colonial stand is less-known and studied, and has rarely been discussed both in Iran and across the world. In many parts of the Muslim and non-Muslim world, Shariati is only considered a controversial and nonconformist Islamic Thinker (*Moufakkir Islami*). He is known for his scholarship on Islamic and Shai mainstream thought; particularly for his scholarship as a critique of multiple narratives in Islam and Shiism. Dividing his own writings into three broad categories of Societal (*ijtima'iyyat*), Islamic (*Islamiyyat*), and Deserta (*Kaviriyyat*), he admitted that "what

only the people like are the Societal; what both I and the people like are the Islamic, and that which makes me happy…[are] the Deserta."[1] It is important to note that these three categories of his writings are largely fluid and inextricably intertwined. It is obvious that Shariati likes the *Kaviriyyat* more than the other two categories; and his *ijtima'iyyat* appeals to the overwhelming majority of both Muslims and non-Muslims. Yet, it is mostly his writings in *Islamiyyat*— on Islam and Shiism— that have been translated, published and discussed widely. Although it is hard to dissociate his *Islamiyyat* from his anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist resistance, much of his scholarship regarding empire, Eurocentrism, modernity, and resistance seems to be absent and unheard of. While scholars of Postcolonial Studies repeatedly cite other leading anti-colonial thinkers and frequent their works, none of them has ever mentioned Shariati and his significant contributions to postcolonial criticism. While we have been advised not to label him as 'the outstanding intellectual of the Contemporary Iran' or 'the Fanon of the Islamic Revolution,' or any other laudatory epithets, I labeled him as a 'Spokesman of Intellectual Decolonization' and 'one of the earlier postcolonial thinkers' who have been concerned with investigating the various trajectories of modernity. This paper seeks to respond to the question 'Why should we consider him a postcolonial thinker?' and brings to light his contributions to postcolonial criticism while being aware of the limitations plaguing his work. Before responding to this question, let us pause here a bit and find out 'what are the features of postcolonial thinking?'

Postcolonial Thinking

There are three pivotal occasions in the development of postcolonial thought the first of which is anti-colonial struggles. Postcolonialism, indeed, began with the colonial resistance to western rule and cultural domination during the course of the anti-colonial struggles of the 19th and 20th centuries. It has been generated from the political perspectives and experiences that were developed during the course of colonial resistance. [2] Concomitant with these anti-colonial struggles was the intellectuals' reflection upon their dual status as 'natives' and 'imperial subjects,' and this led to the discourse of autonomy.[3] Whereas Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi, and Frantz Fanon are the common points of reference to investigate the early anti-colonial theories, Ali Shariati remains largely unknown. Like Memmi, Césaire and Fanon, Shariati laid out the charges against the colonial system during a time when the system was falling apart. What I should like to note is that the years in which Memmi, Césaire and Fanon were writing were the same years that Shariati

commenced activities, lecturing and writing against the domination of the West in Iran. A prominent example of such early anti-colonial activity can be traced back to August 1953 when Shariati and his father Mohammad Taghi played a key role in founding the Mashhad branch of the clandestine pro-Mosaddegh organization, the National Resistance Movement (*nehzat-e moghavemat-e melli*) with the abrupt end of the democratically-elected Mosaddegh's premiership through the British and American-backed coup. One of his first works addressing the domination of the West is the 1954 translation of a long anti-colonial letter by Allamah Muhammad Husayn Kashif al-Ghita addressed to the then Vice-president of the American Friends of the Middle East, Gerals Ivans Hokins wherein he had voiced the grievances of the Muslim world against the West.[4] Shariati writes, in the introduction to the translation, that "Kashif al-Ghita was well aware of the French crimes in Algeria and Morocco, and the British aggression against the Muslims countries of Iran, Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, and the American atrocities in Palestine, Pakistan, Turkey and Jordan."[5] The introduction to the translation is one of Shariati's first writings at revealing the intentions of western colonial powers for the Iranian audience.

In 1955, he translated the Egyptian author Abdul Hamid Jawdat AL-Sahhar's biography of *Abuzar Ghafari*, the story of Prophet Muhammad's companion who protested against the early caliphs and was a model combatant for justice. Shariati subtitled his translation as *Khoda Parast-e Sosialist* (*The God-worshipping Socialist*) which was a direct reference to an underground organization named *Khoda Parastan-e Sosialist* (The God-worshipping Socialists) founded to eradicate oppression, poverty, colonization and exploitation, and political and economic dependence.[6] Shariati introduced Abuzar as a paragon of God-worshipping Socialist to the Iranian society. The translation witnessed popularity and several reprints. The same year he produces his *Maktab-e Vaseteh* (1955) (the Median School of Thought) and argues that "between Materialism and Idealism, Islam has a method particular to itself which can be called 'realism'…it is a mid-point between the corrupt regime of Capitalism and that of Communism." [7] He further argues that the political orientation of Islam between "the two blocs of the East (led by the Soviet Union) and the West (led by the United States) is, indeed, a mid-bloc unrelated to either side. It is a pure tree which is neither Eastern nor Western."[8] The manuscripts he chose to translate and the creative religious writing of *Maktab-e Vasteh*— although not directly dealing with colonialism and imperialism— have conspicuous anti-colonial concerns and sentiments. Once in France, his anti-colonial concerns were developed and he started collaborating with the Algerian National Liberation

Front (FLN) in 1959. He helped to organize demonstrations in support of Third World Liberation, and took part in a demonstration in honor of Patrice Lumumba in 1961 for which he was briefly imprisoned. Shariati joined the Iranian Students' Confederation in Paris and had a pivotal role in publishing *Nameh-e Parsi* (the theoretical journal of the anti-Shah students in exile) and *Iran-e Azad*, the National Front Publication abroad. This succinct background testifies that Ali Shariati is also one of the pioneer authors dealing with colonial and imperial issues. Anti-colonial movements are distinct and contextually confined. It is their heterogeneous principles that form a postcolonial theory. That said, postcolonial theory is, indeed, a product of what the West saw as anti-slavery activists and anti-colonialists.[9]

The next occasion which is oftentimes called 'the moment of high theory' reaches its highest point with Edward Said's 1978 publication of *Orientalism.*[10] This set the stages for what was to become 'postcolonial theory;' Said's important contribution lies in revealing the fact that the colonial project was not only a military-economic system but also a discursive infrastructure of culture and knowledge which makes the colonial project epistemic too. It is not a vulgarization of history to remark that a number of thinkers had already disclosed the epistemic colonialism way before Edward Said's contribution. Ali Shariati is one such thinker who contributes to the shared anti-colonial discourse of the 'return to self'—to one's authentic culture, history, and language—at a time when the vocabulary of the imperial culture was plentiful with terms and concepts such as 'inferior,' 'subordinated people,' 'subject race,' 'dependency,' and 'authority.' His theory of 'self-return' in the 1960s was developed in response to the vulnerability of the East to alienation and assimilation. He speaks of reclaiming a 'self' that had been deprived of its identity in the process of cultural colonization. He writes: "Self-return means regaining one's human personality, historical authenticity and cultural heritage, and in one word, self-consciousness, and ultimately it means recovery from the illness of cultural alienation and intellectual colonization."[11] While admitting that Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Al-e Ahmad were amongst the pioneers of this discourse, he argues that it was Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Iqbal who pioneered the movement that not only liberated Muslims from the European colonialism but also questioned the colonial modernity that rejected and erased all the other cultures and civilizations. Afghani's call for turning away from the West and Iqbal's 'return to the self,' Shariati contends, appeared approximately a century before the provincialization of Europe by well-known anti-colonial thinkers such as Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Jomo Kenyatta, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah, Ahmed Sékou Touré, Julius Nyerere, Aimé Césaire,

Frantz Fanon, Kateb Yacine, and Albert Memmi.[12] Shariati's 'return to self' was further explored by other thinkers through concepts of 'Eurocentrism,' 'cultural colonization,' and 'cultural alienation' that became a buzzword in works such as Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Although his 'return to the self' discourse is a response to the certain colonial and postcolonial conditions of western hegemony and cultural alienation, his project altogether, like Fanon's, emphasizes the condition of human emancipation and the challenges of a common humanity.[13] Shariati was, indeed, amongst the first anti-colonial intellectuals who questioned the Eurocentric dynamics of knowledge production and advocated that liberation from the western hegemony and imperial domination required 'the rediscovery of local identity or selfhood.'[14]

The third occasion is related to globalization which is understood as part of the continuing history of imperialism, indeed, of capitalist development and expansion.[15] It is one of the most conspicuous consequences of modernity and has in its turn reformed the project of modernity. A hallmark of modernity is the expansion of Europe and the founding of Euro/American cultural hegemony across the world. That is the reason why the discourse of modernity has turned into the primary focus of attention by scholars throughout the world. Since the 19th century encounter with European colonialism, the question of modernity has been the most significant issue both at the theoretical and practical levels in many Middle Eastern and Islamicate societies. All through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and even today, the tension between modernity and Islamic tradition has been one of the key features of the primary social, political, philosophical, and cultural debates. The Western scholarship on Muslim politics and social life was broadly formed by two various articulations of this view: Orientalists such as Gustave E. von Gruenabaum argued that Islam and Muslim societies were essentially unable of reforming and adopting the accomplishments of the modern world. And the other view represented by modernization theorists such as Daniel Lerner who contended that Islam and Muslim societies can still be modern by adhering to the western path of modernization although Islam lacked the resources for beginning modernity.[16] The perceived irreconcilability of Islam and modernity instigated many Muslim intellectuals to call for the modernization of their country through the westernization and top-down secularization. A counterargument to this view was held by another group of Muslim intellectuals who held that the servility of Muslim societies to western colonialism and imperialism is a repercussion of neglecting the Islamic heritage and traditional culture, and called for circumventing modernity and embracing Islam's cultural and religious traditions. Aiming for an alternative to

both extremes of modernity and traditionalism, elsewhere I have argued, Shariati came up with a new perspective of transformation for Muslim nations through an amalgamation of local religious/cultural traditions and western norms and institutions that renders obsolete the binarism of Islam and modernity.[17] While criticizing the hegemonic modernism and essentialist culturalism, Shariati develops a third way between the total acceptance and the total rejection of modernity. As opposed to the dichotomous forces of modernity and Islam, Shariati develops strategies for successfully being-in-the-(modern)-world and keeping the tradition/religion in full swing as well. His notion of 'third way' will be discussed at some length in the following section.

Third Way: A Postcolonial Contribution

Ali Shariati's notion of 'third way' has been his most important postcolonial contribution. However, it has been mostly unheard of in the context of postcolonial studies as not much ink has been spilled on the notion. At a time when the non-western intellectuals were caught between tradition and modernity and were thinking in terms of either/or, Ali Shariati developed a concurrent critique of modernity and tradition. The two predominant groups of intellectuals either embraced modernity and argued that their society would not survive if they did not adopt modernity, or would encourage returning to tradition to discard the West in its entirety. Shariati understood that the dichotomy between 'tradition' and 'modernity' was overstated as old and new, and knew that 'tradition' and 'modernity' were not always antithetical. Shariati was of the idea that both the culture of tradition and modernity had caused social decay and spiritual poverty. While criticizing "the infatuated modernists and the retarded traditionalists" he labels the two groups as passive imitators, and instead he chooses a 'third way' through the notions of 'returning to one's root' and 'homeless intellectual' and his 'civilizational discourse.' Concerned with the critique of both tradition and modernity, and as opposed to the dichotomous forces of modernism and traditionalism, Shariati introduces the notion of 'third way' at a time when the Iranian society was witnessing the rise of Marxism, capitalism, and colonialism. This third way is an alternative foundation to that of Enlightenment modernity for negotiating and developing a discourse of agency and human emancipation in the Iranian society.

Presenting his civilizational discourse as an alternative to the prevailing discourse of modernity in a lecture entitled "Civilization and Modernization" (*Tamadon va Tajadod*), Shariati contends that the prerequisite to a genuine

development is not the top-down imposition of western modernity, but instead a radical bottom-up change in accordance with a sustained critical engagement with the cultural/civilizational resources of each society.[18] For Shariati, the tragedy of modernity begins when the intelligentsia accepts the colonialist ideas wholeheartedly. That the wholesale adoption of the western civilization was the only road to progress, in Shariati's view, is only the Trojan Horse of western imperialism. He criticizes reform-minded intellectuals such as Mirza Malkum Khan, the founder of the modern Iranian 'enlightenment,' who proposed the idea of 'western civilization without the Iranian identity;' and figures such as Seyyed Hassan Taqizadeh, the first Iranian to suggest that 'we must become westernized body and soul.'[19] Shariati takes umbrage at the fact that the intellectuals of the time could not recognize the difference and even contradiction between modernity and civilization. What was imported into the country was not civilization but modernity as to Shariati civilization refers to a capacity for intellectual and material production and "a high level in society's cultural and spiritual growth and an elevated state of human spirit and outlook."[20] Taken this definition into consideration, civilization suggests alert actions of self-generation, volition and an innovative adoption which could neither be imitated nor imposed. Shariati rightly contends that civilization has two different meanings. Civilization in a particular sense, he argues, is "the combination of the experiences and achievements of a particular people or society."[21] These experiences and accomplishments mostly indicate differences in historical and geographical terms, and supply the residents of each society with a sense of belonging and the condition of self-consciousness.[22] Civilization in a universal sense, Shariati argues, is "the combination of all of the spiritual and material experiences and achievements of our common humanity."[23] Shariati makes it clear that civilizations with their own particular set of traits, norms and values which have always been present throughout history represent collective human accomplishments and mark the legacies of preceding civilizations.[24] His civilization discourse teaches us that if we comprehend civilization as the "accumulated material and spiritual experiences of a collective humanity," then it is wrong to speak of "Islamic," "Christian," "Indian," "Chinese," "Eastern," or "Western" civilization in the strict sense of the term.[25] Teachings like this brought forth the recognition that although cultural productions of a specific geographical area may witness periods of development and decline, the continuing operation of human civilization works at multiple sites and across cultural and geographical borders.[26]

Shariati's civilizational discourse is amongst the first few critiques of Eurocentric metanarratives and draws attention to the multiple and diverse

epistemic sites. Way before postcolonial scholars such as Walter Mignolo draws our attention to the feasibility of epistemic shift that brings to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding and, consequently, other economy, other politics, and other ethics,[27] Shariati critiqued the coloniality of knowledge and provided a vision towards the co-existence of many worlds. Long before Mignolo's delinking that builds a politics of knowledge termed as a "pluri-versal world as a uni-versal project" where a "new inter-epistemic communication" occurs,[28] Shariati referred to this diversity and interdependence and cited the Islamic, Indian, Chinese and other civilizations' material and cultural contributions to the formation of modern western civilization. This is his 'third way' which repudiates neither tradition nor modernity while critiquing blind adherence to either of them. The East/West binary and the dichotomy of tradition/modernity have no place in his 'third way.' His 'third way' stands between an uncritical embrace of the East in the name of religious and cultural tradition, and a blind adherence to the West in the name of progress, modernity and civilization. While questioning traditionalism, he acknowledges that tradition produces a culture conducive to progress. He has nothing but disdain for those who condemn the West without knowing it and its sciences. To Shariati, the only legitimate condemnation of westernization occurs when one has comprehensive knowledge of western culture and civilization along with a deep understanding of their own society, history, culture and religion.[29] His critique of traditionalism applies mutatis mutandis to western modernity as well. He contends that western modernity should not be discarded in its entirety as he believes that one could learn a great deal from the West especially if they understand the foundation of progress in the history of the West. As a homeless intellectual, the third way for him is to take what is most useful, significant and relevant from both the West and the tradition. Shariati understands the specificities of the historical formation of East and West but he opposes the essentialist conceptions of the two categories. He does not consider East and West as polar opposites, and instead seeks to provide a dialogical space between the two.[30] By refusing the binary category of East and West, Shariati is against embracing one and rejecting the other.[31]

Shariati's stand against rejecting western modernity in its entirety is not tantamount to ignoring western imperialism through modernity. Modernity, Shariati argues, is not a pseudomorphosis of western civilization in the East but rather it is a produce of western imperialism consciously devised to stymie the progress of culture and civilization in the East.[32] Shariati perceives the danger of losing faith in one's own ability to produce the cultural and material values if non-western nations

turn into mere consumers of the West which is how the myth of perfect western culture and civilization makes sense. He contends that the West became interested in the history, culture and religion of the East only to reshape, reconstruct and represent them as a lesser entity.[33] While Shariati defines civilization as a combination of experiences and achievements of common humanity, he questions the West for producing a globalized civilization that seeks to exclude all the other cultural traditions and civilizational legacies. He states that the past diverse cultures and civilizations of nations, races, and people "are now being destroyed with the assault of industrial European modernity which is rapidly becoming a globalized entity."[34] On the decline of diverse human cultures and civilizations with the rise of European modernity, Shariati writes:

> *Today, we see on our planet another grave crime, and that is the death of diverse human cultures and civilizations which historically existed and each had different sensitivities, colors, smells, preferences, and directions. In the Past, Romans, Iranians, Arabs, Chinese, Africans and others each had their particular cultures and civilizations. But today, Europe, with its violent robotic civilization is slaughtering all other cultures and replacing them with its own civilization. So now everyone talks the same way, and about the same thing. Cities, buildings, attire, relation between men and women and everything else everywhere in the world has been homogenized and a singular global cultural and civilizational model has been imposed. We no longer have inwardly Eastern culture and outwardly Western culture. Chinese ingenuity is today expressed in European forms and the result cannot be anything other than what has been thought of and imagined once before. This is a major obstacle to the realization of human ingenuity and it is the death of difference and of cultural, spiritual, artistic, intellectual, civilizational, and human evolution.*[35]

This is the cultural colonialism that aimed to generate a decultured individual without roots in their society and hollow out all historical and cultural contents longing to be replaced with meaning and substance by the West. This modernity was neither authentically western nor Iranian; it would not recreate and reconstruct the traditional values and would not reproduce the western values as well. Therefore, it lacked certain creativity and depersonalized an individual from history, culture and religion.[36] This is where Shariati's notion of 'Return to self' intervenes, a return to one's authentic social culture, history and language and a return towards reinstituting the belief in self and reclaiming a 'self' which had been deprived of its

identity facing the western modernity. This 'return' is not a return to a glamorized vision of an ethnic, racial or pre-Islamic past as he states:

> *When we say 'return to one's roots,' we are really saying return to one's cultural roots… Some of you may conclude that we Iranians must return to our racial roots [Aryan] roots. I categorically reject this conclusion. I oppose racism, fascism, and reactionary returns… [our people] do not find their roots in [pre-Islamic] civilizations… for us to return to our roots means not a rediscovery of pre-Islamic Iran but a return to our Islamic roots.*[37]

Returning to racial roots is an ill-advised and backward return that regenerates another hegemony and degrades all other cultures and civilizations. The idea of returning to roots is not to perpetrate and perpetuate the same colonial myth of a superior civilization but rather it is to demonstrate that Iranians have also possessed a civilization and they too have contributed a great deal to the emergence and development of a collective human culture and civilization.[38] While 'self-returns' or 'returning to roots' usually produces verities of religious and nationalist fundamentalism in the Third World,[39] Shariati's notion of 'return' is a re-negotiation of modernity on the basis of "a worldview that corresponds to local, social and cultural realities."[40] As he is against the dichotomous constructs of Islam and modernity and East and West, his 'return to one's roots' should not be taken as a religious repudiation of modernity, but instead it is a post-colonial regaining of modernity.[41] Furthermore, Shariati regards the 'return to the self' as a cultural and civilizational diversity and difference that colonialism sought to eliminate. Therefore, it is safe to argue that the return to the self is not a rejection of the other but rather the recognition of both the self and the other.

Conclusion

Shariati contributes significantly to the decades-long effort in the postcolonial context to negotiate a third way between hegemonic universalism and essentialist particularism, and between Eurocentrism and traditionalism. In negotiating and advocating a third way, Shariati acts as an amphibian postcolonial intellectual[42] who goes beyond the predominant East-West civilizational binary by drawing attention to the concurrent symbiosis and combination of diverse and different civilizations and cultures that make our common humanity. Negotiating an alternative to colonial modernity and indigenous traditionalism, for Shariati, comprises of an effort to emancipate the people of his society from both the cultural, political, and economic

manifestations of western colonialism, and the essentialism of tradition. His response to the colonial and postcolonial condition of western hegemony and cultural alienation comes through revisiting and restructuring cultural identity in Muslim societies. Although Shariati's primary frame of reference is Iran, he develops ideas within the tradition of Islamic thought and the Third World context that makes his thoughts and works relevant beyond the Iranian society. His lectures and writings accentuate the condition of human emancipation and the challenges of common humanity. Such lectures and writings echo the similar concerns of a range of leading postcolonial thinkers who questioned western domination and Eurocentric modes of knowledge production. Shariati contributes to the deconstruction of the false binaries of Islam/modernity, Islam/West, and East/West. His thoughts and works on the sociopolitical and cultural colonialism and imperialism, indigenous modernity and civilizational diversity, and returning to one's roots find common ground with the discourses of many other postcolonial thinkers of the twentieth century.

Note

1. Ali Shariati, Kavir (Deserta). (Tehran: N.P. 1349/1970), ix.
2. Robert J. C. Young, Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
3. Achille Mbembe, "What is postcolonial thinking?" Esprit 12 (2006): 117-133.
4. See Ali Shariati's Collected Works, XXXI, pp. 463-522. The letter is in response to Hopkin's invitation to attend an anti-communist seminar. Allamah Muhammad Husayn Kashif al-Ghita sent a letter and argued that Communism is a lesser evil than American imperialism and Britain's colonialism.
5. Ibid.
6. Founded in 1943, Nahzat Khoda Parastan-e Sosialist (Movement of God-worshipping Socialists) was a political party led by Mohammad Nakhshab to seek social equality and justice combining religious sentiments, nationalism and social thoughts.
7. Ali Shariati, Collected Works, XXXI, p. 7.
8. Ibid.

9. Robert J. C. Young, Postcolonialism: An historical introduction. London: Blackwell, 2000.
10. Edward Said, Orientalism. London: Routledge, 1978.
11. Ali Shariati,"Bazgasht beh Khish" ("Return to the Self"), C.W. 4. The Complete Collection of Works. Tehran: Shariati Cultural Foundation, 1350/1971
12. Ali Shariati, Ma va Iqbal: majmooeh asar 5 (Iqbal and Us: Collected Works), Aachen, Germany: Hosseinieh Ershad,1978): 79– 85.
13. Sara Shariati has also echoed this in an interview by Siavash Saffari, November 29, 2012. See Siavash Saffari, Beyond Shariati: Modernity, Cosmopolitanism, and Islam in Iranian Political Thought. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
14. Raewyn Connell, Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 134.
15. Achille Mbembe also suggests that these are the three key moments in the development of postcolonial thinking.
16. Saffari, Beyond Shariati, 1.
17. Esmaeil Zeiny, "Spokesmen of Intellectual Decolonization: Shariati in Dialogue with Alatas," in Ali Shariati and the Future of Social Theory: Religion, Revolution and the Role of the Intellectual, eds. Dustin J. Byrd and Seyed Javad Miri. (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 64-84.
18. Ali Shariati, "Tamadon va Tajadod" (Civilization and Modernization), 1969, C.A.31, Ali Shariati: The Complete Collection of Works, Tehran: Shariati Cultural Foundation, 2010.
19. Ali Shariati, "The Pyramid in Cultural Sociology," in Man and Islam, trans. Fatollah Marjani. North Haledon, New Jersey: Islamic Publications International, 1981.
20. Shariati, "Bazgasht beh Khish.
21. Ali Shariati, "Farhang va Ideology" (Culture and Ideology) 1350/1971, C.W. 23, Ali Shariati: The Completed Collection of Works, Tehran: Shariati Cultural Foundation, 2010.
22. Ali Shariati, "Bahs-e Kolli Raje beh Tamdaon va Farhang" (General Discussion about Civilization and Culture), 1348/1969, C.W.11, Ali Shariati: The Completed Collection of Works, Tehran: Shariati Cultural Foundation, 2010.
23. Shariati, "Farhang va Ideology"
24. Ibid.
25. Ali Shariati, "Tamadon Chist?" (What is Civilization?) 1349/1970, C.W. 11, Ali Shariati: The Completed Collection of Works, Tehran: Shariati Cultural Foundation, 2010.
26. Ibid.; for a detailed analysis of Shariati's civilizational discourse, see Saffari, Beyond Shariati.
27. Walter Mignolo, "Introduction: Coloniality of Power and De-Colonial Thinking," Cultural Studies, 21 (2-3) (2007): 155-167.

28. Ibid.
29. Ali Shariati, 1350/1971a. “Cheh Bayad Kard?" ("What is to be Done?"), C.W. 20. The Complete Collection of Works [CD ROM]. Tehran: Shariati Cultural Foundation.
30. Bijan Abdolkarimi corroborates this sentiment and argues that by rejecting an uncritical embrace of modernity and a blinding embracing of tradition, Shariati proposes a dialectical approach for understanding both categories. He argues that what makes Shariati stands out amongst his contemporaries is his ability in creating this dialogical space between modern rationality and historical tradition. See Bijan Abdolkarimi, “Davat-e Bozorg-e Shariati, Tajdid-e Ahd ba Sonat-e Tarikhi-e Mast” (Shariati’s Major Invitation is to Renew Our Historical Traditions), January 17, 2012, Academy of Iranian Studies in London, http://iranianstudies.org/fa/ (Accessed May 14, 2022).
31. Mohammad Amin Ghaneirad also considers Shariati’s ‘third way’ as his lasting legacy. See Mohammad Amin Ghaneirad, “A Critical Review of the Iranian Attempts at the Development of Alternative Sociologies,” International Journal of Social Sciences, 1 (2), pp.125-144.
32. Ali Shariati, 1982. CW, Vol. 25: Man without Self. The Complete Collection of Works [CD ROM]. Tehran: Shariati Cultural Foundation.
33. Ibid.
34. Ali Shariati, “Khosoosiat-e Ghoroon-e Moaser” (The Traits of the Modern Centuries) 1347/1968, C.W. 12, Ali Shariati: The Completed Collection of Works, Tehran: Shariati Cultural Foundation, 2010.
35. Ibid.
36. Shariati, Man without Self.
37. Shariati, Bazgasht beh Khsih.
38. Ibid.
39. Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xiii.
40. Shariati, “Vijegihay-e Tamadon-e Emrooz.”
41. Saffari also points out that Shariati’s self-return’ is not the rejection of modernity but it is rather the reclaiming of postcolonial modernity. See Saffari, Beyond Shariati.
42. I have borrowed the term ‘amphibian intellectual’ from Edward Said’s discussion of intellectuals in exile. An amphibian intellectual is someone who fluently traverses two or more interlacing environments, and embraces both ‘home’ and ‘exile.’

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