Chapter 4

The Discursive Modernity and the Necessities of a Secular Framework of Social Formation

The pathological study of modernity, despite its fundamental critique of the process of rationalization and secularization, is contrary to the critique of counter modernism. The critique of counter modernism advocates an alternative to modernity, either as a return to tradition and the pre-modern social formation or as a creation of a new social order. On the other hand, the pathological study of modernity still believes in the power of reason to deal with the historical problems, particularly in its sociopolitical aspect. By reconsidering the role of human reasoning as the core of the new age, in the life of human beings, it tries to redefine modernity. Modernity has predominantly been defined as the apogee of Western rationality, which has historically been realized on the one hand through the rationalization of social life, and on the other hand by disenchanting the world from the magic and the irrationalities of myth and religion. By rejecting the pre-givenness of the sociopolitical order, modernity presented itself as the concrete combination of human mind and actions in history. The amount of control and the degree of manipulation that could be inserted into the activity became the yardstick by which the rationality of any action or group of actions could be measured. As a result, rationalization has been considered as the characteristic of modernity, not in a way that was claimed by the Enlightenment as a normative concept which implies the expansion of truth and liberty, but merely as a capacity to create control, order and progress. We find this definition undesirable. This is not only because it reduces modernity to a mere process of rationalization which produces
control and suppression in social life, but also because of the inherent idea in the approach that considers modernity as a rootless and newly made rational entity, which suggests a disconnection from the past and the context in which it is going to be cultivated. According to this narration, modernism creates an imagination which believes that "modern society moves towards a state of traditionlessness in which interest pursued with the aid of reason is the predominant ground of action and tradition only a survival unfitting to the style of such a modern society" (Shils, 1983, p. 9). The corollary of the above view of modernity in a non-Western country like Iran in which, through the ideology of modernism, modernity has been projected, is the reduction of modernity to scientific knowledge and the skills which could utilize the knowledge. Therefore modernization has become merely a careful imitation of the Western skills in order to utilize those skills and knowledge in the social construction, which is projected on the ruins of outmoded tradition. By making tradition a useless entity that continues to live in the present time, non-Western modernism cut the ground from beneath its feet.

The study believes that Habermas' notion of modernity, which conceives of it as the offshoot of de-centered human intersubjectivism, saddled on a particular context, is valuable. On the one hand, it provides us a value-based view of modernity and therefore rejects all inhumanities which may be committed in the name of modernity in society. On the other hand does not necessitate the equalization of modernization with Westernization. This study believes that Habermas' explanation of modernity as an "unfinished project", opens new opportunities to our particular situation. The situation in which our societies are swinging between tradition and modernity, while neither can be considered traditional nor modern.

In the following chapter, first we will prescribe Habermas' view of
modernity, then we will talk about modern political values inherent in a modern socio-political order, and in the last part we will take into account the necessity of a contextual notion of secularism for a modern democratic order, which will primarily be based on Bhargava’s views of this issue.
A. A Discursive Notion Of Modernity

Contrary to the notion of modernity which was presented by the modernists in Iran, the dialogical notion of modernity rather than considering any particular situation or any entity as a rational one, relates rationality to a process in which the participants, through communicative actions, argue with valid knowledge with one another, in order to reach an agreement. The main reason that makes us interested in Habermas' notion of modernity is, firstly, related to his normative view of modernity, and, secondly, is connected to his utilization of Husserl's concept of 'life-world' "as the horizon within which communicative actions are 'always already' moving" (Habermas (b), 1987, p. 120). Hence, if we consider modernization as a process in which society, structurally, is transforming into a more rational situation, it must be understood as a value-based reproduction of the lifeworld that "consists essentially in a continuation and renewal of tradition, which moves between the extremes of mere reduplication of and a break with tradition" (Ibid., p. 139).

According to Habermas any philosophical study of modernity has to go back to Hegel for whom modernity became a problem: "Hegel located the core of modernity in the principle of 'subjectivity', a principle which carried for him mainly the connotations of individualism, critical rational competence and autonomy of action." (Dallmayr, 1996, p. 61). The problem which Hegel attributes to modernity is related to the principle of subjectivity which from one side justifies the superiority of the modern era when compared to previous ages, and from the other side accommodates man's alienation in his self-made world. To overcome the problem, Hegel speculatively depicts the framework of an ethical life in which
unification is divided into different moments of membership, and the political sphere of the state is separated from the sphere of family and civil society. The main critique of Habermas about Hegel is related to this notion of universality: on the one hand Hegel's notion of subjectivity that accordingly the idea beyond of the reality results from the movement of 'a priori fashion of reason' in history, a self-enclosed subjectivity. "a notion of reason starting from the philosophy of reflection, that is, from the relation of the subject to itself" (Habermas, 1987, p. 32); On the other hand, Habermas' critique is linked to the separation of Hegel's philosophy from the process of thought-shaping in the actual world. "The tendency of objective and absolute spirit to become the objects of passive contemplation removed from participation in the actual world process...[r]estricted to its own concerns, Hegelian philosophy... 'ultimately robbed present actuality of its salience" (Dallmayr, 1996, p. 65). For Habermas, this philosophical flaw must be related to Hegel's endeavor to construct an ethical totality which was designed according to an idealized model of a bygone past. He failed to understand that a mere modern understanding of reality prevents such an idealized reconstruction of the past in the present.

Keeping pace with the sociological traditions of thought which studied modernity as a transition from a community-based order of traditional life into an organized and secularized order of modern time, Max Weber locates rationality as the core of this epochal transition. Rationalization is the term by which Weber studies and describes the process of the above-mentioned transition in Western society. Although Habermas appreciates and recognizes the importance of Weber's study, particularly its notion of societal rationalization, he is not satisfied with Weber's diagnosis of modern life, specifically when it parallels process of rationalization with domination while is presented as an unavoidable characteristic of the modern life order. According to Habermas, the deformation that Weber ascribes to modern life - the
loss of meaning and freedom as a necessary outcome of the secularization of culture and worldviews, and the social rationalization of organizations - "ought not be attributed either to the rationalization of the lifeworld as such or to increasing system complexity as such. Neither the secularization of worldviews nor the structural differentiation of society has unavoidable pathological side effects per se" (Habermas, 1987, p. 330). The one-sidedness of rationalization as the characteristic of modern life, according to Habermas, should be attributed to a particular type of social formation that imposes the rationality of economic and administrative activities on the entire context of human life. Although Weber accepted the existence of different types of rationality, he described modernization as a process of the domination of the social aspects of human life by purposive rationality that has been uprooted from its substantial values. "Weber concentrated almost exclusively on the Reformation and some of the sectarian movements emanating from it; he neglected the bourgeois revolution and the mass movements of the nineteenth century" (Ibid., p. 316). He separated modernity from the battlefields on which it had been fought for. Weber's theory of purposive rationality suffers from the narrowness of approach, which reduces social rationalization of modern times to the historical development of capitalism. "To focus narrowly on the agent's subjective understanding of his or her action... gives the impression that cultural rationalization itself is responsible for social pathology and altogether neglects those unintended (and un-interpretable) consequences of action resulting from the irrational functioning of economy and state." (Ingram, 1987, p. xvi).

Horkheimer and Adorno, by abandoning the Marxist critique of ideology and leaning entirely on Weber, reach the same dead end that Weber had also reached. They saw the modern world as the mere production of formal rationality which indicates "the determinations that make possible the 'calculability of actions'" (Habermas, 1984, p.
345). Under the process of secularization the subject or doer has already been deprived of any substantive value appraisal that could determine his preferences. According to Habermas, Horkheimer and Adorno failed to recognize and do justice to the rational content of cultural modernity. By cultural modernity, Habermas refers to “the specific theoretical dynamic that continually pushes the sciences, and even the self-reflection of the sciences, beyond merely engendering technically useful knowledge,...[and] to the universalistic foundations of law and morality,...[in] the forms of democratic will formation, and individualist patterns of identity formation.” (Habermas (b), 1987, p. 113).

By changing the direction of the critique from a total critique of bourgeois ideals and culture, to a confined critique of its irrationalities and its dominating functions, Habermas, theoretically, projects the revitalization of a cultural modernity and its deliverance from the system by which it has been instrumentally utilized. The main flaw that Habermas attributes to the philosophy of consciousness - starting from Descartes’ “cogito, ergo sum”, and continuing in Kant, Hegel, and the critics of ideology is related to the principle of subjectivity, in which a self-conscious subject relates itself to whatever non-self, as an object, either for presenting and knowing or for acting upon. In this framework, the objectification of the world by the self-maintaining attitudes of subjects, becomes irresistible, and when this quality of the subject is expanded to the higher order of social formation, it will be manifested as a total subordination of social life to the dictates of purposive rationality, inherent within the system. The corollary of this perspective is equating modern life with an 'iron cage' created by autonomous subjects. Thus, subjectivity, though a good ground for scientific development, fails to establish a stable social formation out of a particular historical formation. For Habermas this failure must mainly be related to its one-sidedness. Therefore the philosophy of consciousness suffers from defectiveness in its
conceptual framework in which reason is considered the mere property of an autonomous subject. To overcome the deficiency, Habermas introduces his notion of communicative rationality, which, by replacing the 'cognitive-instrumental rationality' of the philosophy of consciousness with a notion of reason which emerges from intersubjectivity of the social community, not only reconstructs the modern de-centered concept of rationality but also provides us a paradigm shift in the understanding of modernity. According to Habermas it "recalls older ideas of logos, in as much as it brings along with it the connotations of non coercively unifying, consensus-building force of a discourse in which the participants overcome their at first subjectively biased views in favor of rationally motivated agreement" (Habermas, 1987, p. 315). The inter-subjectivity of communicative reason de-centers the understanding of the world and therefore avoids the deficiencies of the merely self-related and subject-centered reason of the philosophy of consciousness. Habermas believes that the road to a theory of communicative action was open in the philosophical discourse of modernity, but it could not be taken due to subject-centered attitudes inherent in modern philosophy. It was particularly open for the young Hegel, however, he opted for a path that "presupposes an ethical totality which is not germane to modern conditions but rather is borrowed from the idealized past of early Christian communities and the Greek polis" (Dallmayr, 1996, p. 62). Being in favor of the monarchical state, Hegel dismisses the democratic self-organization of society. Habermas' theory of communicative action tries to reconstruct the ethical unity that Hegel strove for, but in a way that would suit modern participatory democratic conditions.

To demonstrate a more comprehensive and inclusive notion of rationality, Habermas disconnects the close relation that has predominantly been established between rationality and knowledge, because "rationality has less to do with the possession of knowledge
than with how speaking and acting subjects acquire and use knowledge." (Habermas, 1984, p. 8). By giving a phenomenological twist to the understanding of the term 'rational', that means giving importance to the environment and conditions from which it could emerge, Habermas relates 'rationality' to reasonableness as a linguistically justifiable entity, confined within human experience and communication, and therefore devoid of any kind of transcendental teleology. As a result, "the rational behind an action is essentially related to the kinds of reasons and arguments that the agent could marshal to justify it as the most appropriate thing to do under given circumstances" (Ingram, 1987, p. 33). Habermas is a radical believer in the superiority of modern rationality over the previous ways of understanding the world - religious or mythopoetic. This superiority of the modern rationality is mainly related to its capacity for progressive learning and its ability to accept criticism. In other words, modern rationality is open to an objective and fair assessment and therefore is able to universalize itself. Accordingly, scientific reason and purposive rationality, which have predominantly been propagated as the characteristics of modern rationality, cannot fully realize the hoped superiority, mainly because of their narrowness of approach and method within the process of the theorization of objective reality. Habermas believes that the discursive notion of rationality which explains the world through inter-subjectivism of the community is able to redeem the above-mentioned deficiency. Hence, "[r]ationality is understood to be a disposition of speaking and acting subjects that is expressed in modes of behavior for which there are good reasons or grounds. This is true of all symbolic expressions that are, at least implicitly, connected with validity claims" (Habermas, 1984, p. 22). By placing this argumentative and dialogical notion of rationality at the core of modern social behavior, Habermas constructs a theory of action in which two or more persons voluntarily seek to reach an
refers to the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations (whether by verbal or by extra verbal means). The actors seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to co-ordinate their actions by way of agreement" (Ibid., p. 86). In contrast to the purposive model of rational action which is based on the intentions of the actor and his conscious choice of means and ends directed toward the consequences of action, communicative action, from its beginning, is oriented toward the settling of disagreements by providing reasons for the validity claims which participants stand for. Hence, action is not directed toward a realization of the demands of any side, but directed toward understanding in order to achieve a consensus regarding a common problematic, communicative action presents itself as a co-operative process of interpretation in which "access to the object domain of social action, through the understanding of meaning of itself, makes the rationality problematic unavoidable. Communicative actions always require an interpretation that is rational in approach" (Ibid., p. 106). The rationality of approach is not only related to its reasonableness and its openness toward different views and different interpretations, but is also attached to the fact that participants have access to pre-theoretical knowledge of the situation and the problematic issue, which is hermeneutically sealed to a non-participant observer who does not belong to the context. In other words, since the participants in communicative action belong to a common universe, i.e. a common context of life, there is a common pre-theoretical knowledge regarding the matters of the context; this not only presents the unity of the members of the community in communication but also provides them a common horizon of thinking regarding the issue. The participants are able to enjoy a solid and common basis for the understanding of the meaning of certain actions and institutions. Those who are not a member of that particular universe have no access to this context and its inherent body of knowledge. Habermas has called this context in which the process of
understanding through participation takes place, the 'lifeworld' or the background knowledge of any type of understanding: “the abstract concept of the world is a necessary condition if communicatively acting subjects are to reach understanding among themselves about what takes place in the world or is to be effected in it. Through this communicative practice they assure themselves at the same time of their common life-relations, of an inter-subjectively shared lifeworld” (Ibid., p. 12). Quite like the categories of thinking in Kant, the lifeworld has an a priori and transcendental character which frames an inter-subjectively shared horizon. This in turn determines the subject's thoughts and actions, and channels the process of social integration and socialization of the members of community. “Communicative actors are always moving within the horizon of their lifeworld, they cannot step outside of it.” (Habermas, 1987, p. 126)

They cannot refer to the lifeworld as they do to facts and different experiences. The lifeworld as a whole remains transcendental and inaccessible to subjective scrutiny, and only elements of it can be thematized which are apart from the totality of the lifeworld. As a consequence, the process of rationalization of society must be regarded as the expansion of the horizon provided by a particular lifeworld. Since the lifeworld itself is a product of the fusion of the present horizon of community with the horizon of the past which has been embraced by previous generations, rationalization could be considered as a process of settlement of disagreement and unproblematication of thematized issues, which are problematicized by the emergence of new issues in the historical movement of a community. Therefore, historical change should not be seen as a deconstructive movement that creates a complete break and disconnection with the past, but rather as a result of the rationalization of the lifeworld and its unintentional effects in reality. This means a simultaneous break and continuity with the past and tradition in order to establish a rational conduct of life. Functionally speaking, by placing communicative action within the lifeworld,
Habermas is able to explain the different aspects of mutual understanding and co-ordination of actions, which are aimed at providing social integration and solidarity among members of a society. As a result of this process - the continual formation and reformation of personal and collective identities through reproduction of valid knowledge, shared values and culture - the lifeworld stabilizes the context where socialization takes place. From the perspective of Habermas’ discursive notion of modernity, modern society should be presented as “a network of communicatively mediated co-operation”, resulting from a continuous development in the rationality of the lifeworld.

For Habermas, the European rationalization of the modern world was from its outset an ambiguous movement with binary attitudes. Therefore, in his description of modern rationality, “rationalization involves both a real increment in rationality and a distortion of reason. The real increment in rationality can only be comprehended from the perspective of ‘communicative’ rationality; while the distortions of rationality are best comprehended as illegitimate extensions of subject-centered reason into an inter-subjectively constituted lifeworld.” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 245). Although the systemization and regularization of economic activities and the bureaucratization of the legal system were necessary steps for the transformation of European societies from feudal-based communities to class-based societies, the predominance of capitalism in the European process of modernization led to the deformation and disconnection of the lifeworld from the system or political, administrative and economical institutions of society. As a result the “organizations not only disconnect themselves from cultural commitments and from attitude orientations specific to given personalities, they also make themselves independent from lifeworld contexts by neutralizing the normative background of informal, customary, morally regulated contexts of action” (Habermas, 1987, p. 309). Contrary to other critics of modernity who assume that
the entire society and social activity have been absorbed within the above context of action organization, Habermas, by differentiating between lifeworld and system, believes that the unbalanced expansion of the system splits up society into different spheres of actions. These are determined on the one hand by linguistically mediated imperatives of the lifeworld and on the other hand by the purposive rationality of subject-centered interests against the lifeworld. Accordingly, the growing independence of the system and its elements from the lifeworld and the uncoupling of the former from the latter has two consequences. On the one hand, this leads to an increasing atomization of systemically integrated institutions, and on the other hand to an occupation of the area of actions of the lifeworld, mediated through communications, by the compulsions of the system. In this framework, the Weberian view of modernization - which considers the split as the process of a separation of purposive rationality from its constitutive substantial values and reasons - is a reductionist approach which, by implying the rationalization per se as the root cause of modern malformations, unwillingly favors the anti-rationalism of pre-modern times. This idea problematizes the entire project of modernity. For Habermas the maliciousness of modernity should be connected to the fact "that a progressively rationalized lifeworld is both uncoupled from and made dependent upon increasingly complex, formally organized domains of action, like the economy and the state administration. This dependency, resulting from the mediatization of the lifeworld by system imperatives, assumes the socio-pathological form of an internal colonization." (Ibid., p. 305). As a result, the system and the lifeworld, which must be demarcated in social life - at least in a speculative level - for the sake of expansion of the system, are mixed. Therefore, the realms of the lifeworld, like family or cultural networks of public opinion formation are functionally directed to the goals that the system has propagated. Not only is the system no longer generated from and anchored in the lifeworld, but the lifeworld has also been reduced to a sub-system of
the system. Hence, for Habermas the completion of the project of
modernity does not mean a complete rationalization of society, in
order to control each happening and any decision-making, as it was
for Weber, but rather to accomplish means to re-anchor the system in
the lifeworld. Thus, by requiring for an end to the colonization of the
latter by the former, Habermas demands a situation in which the
inter-subjectivity of communication and the possibility of voluntary
decision-making could be restored.

In modern times the lifeworld cannot any longer be "replenished
unconsciously or pre-reflectively; rather, [its] reproduction relies
essentially on cognitive critique, ethical universalism and 'extremely
individualized' forms of socialization" (Dallmayr, 1996, p. 88). In line
with this development, the system, as a functional network which
connects and regulates the relation of different practical interests in
society, should be adjusted to the imperatives of an inter-subjectively
shared lifeworld. In this ideal situation the lifeworld and system are
not in opposition to one another, as it is in the present world
situation, but their relation is balanced according to the conditions of
a communicatively shared world. The ideal speech situations are when
the communication of the participants in interaction is delivered from
non-linguistically mediated imperatives of money, power and
administration.

From the point of view of this study, which aims at understanding
modernity and the actual process of modernization within a non-
Western context, Habermas' notion of modernity has many advantages
if compared to the other understandings as discussed here. First of
all, his approach does not suffer from Euro-centrism, because in his
definition of reason and rationalism, contrary to Hegel and Weber's,
modern rationality is not considered as a characteristic of only the
Western civilization. Non-Western civilizations are not compelled to
identify modernization with the repetition of Western history in their
context. Habermas' critique of the philosophy of consciousness,
particularly regarding the egocentrism of its notion of rationality, does not lead to a hopeless confrontation with the entire modern tradition of rationalism, which could lead to a meta-historical or non-historical notion of reason, as it is in the mythical world or in a theocratic sociopolitical order of society. Instead, Habermas finds the remedy for modern deficiencies in modern discourse within its own resources.

According to Cohen and Arato (1992), Habermas' discourse of modernity not only gives him a position in philosophical ethics, but also "can be usefully upheld as an account of the moral constraints on political action in the state and civil society" (Harrington, 2001, p. 145). Similarly, McCarthy (1993) concludes that "Habermas' concept of communicative rationality should essentially be viewed in terms of the moral regulation of political life and the scope of democracy in public affairs." (Ibid., p 145). Despite all advantages that his notion of modernity provides, we should remember that Habermas' context of thought is Europe, and that the issues which are problematized by him emerged from the particular lifeworld to which Habermas belongs. Therefore we should be cautious if we want to utilize his views in our non-western context. The deformation of the lifeworld which Habermas attributes to the West is mainly related to the domination of the political and cultural institutions of society by the non-linguistically mediated imperatives which are emanated from the institutions which have control over economic, political power and administrative expertise. But in society there are still the realms in which the institutions of the lifeworld can resist control. There is a public sphere in which the public opinion can be reviewed or be critically shaped. In contrast, in a society like Iran, almost the entire society, including the economic and administrative institutions, are controlled and dominated by state imperatives under a theocratic rule. Either there is no public sphere or it is too small and therefore there is little chance for the rationalization of the lifeworld and the formation of an ideal situation of speech. Despite above mentioned differences
between the nature of problems in Iran and Europe, we believe that Habermas' notion of modernity has many advantages for the purpose of our study. Iranian society is suffering from a different type of deformation. As a result of an unreflected modernization, society became the battlefield of the forces of traditionalism against modernists of different types. The prolonged conflict between these groups, transformed modernism and traditionalism into group identity which their supporters are violently challenging each other's existence in Iran. Considering modernity as a discursive ground on which, through a reason based process of communication, the different groups are able to reach an agreement, provides Iranians an opportunity to settle their disagreement without being involved in the physical elimination of each other. Iranians' encounter with modernity was not primarily a matter of choice, it was a result of hegemonic expansion of the Western history into the stagnated history of Iran. The consequence of this development not only transformed the Western institutions and sciences into Iran, but also along with them brought the Western lifeworld and their horizon of thinking. The result was the fusion of the Western lifeworld with the Iranian lifeworld that was suffering from its sluggishness and undynamism and its survival was merely related to its unreflected pregivenness. The fusion could end to regeneration of Iranian tradition. But since Iranians failed to utilize the Western thoughts and knowledge to question the basis of their tradition, it eventually ended to a deformed reality, which neither is traditional nor modern, neither the Western nor the eastern. The deformation of reality removed religion from its traditional position in society, but it did not take it to a situation which religion could be placed within a modern condition. By giving an ideological direction to its presence in society, it made all other public and social institutions as the sub-division of religion in society. In other words it anchored the entire society in itself, as system anchored the institutions of the lifeworld in Europe in itself. The main reason for the development of this particular arrangement and the deformation of the
reality of Iranians' sociopolitical life, might be attributed to a wrong presentation of modernity within its Western paradigm and further misunderstanding of the relation of modernity and tradition by Iranians, which took the society into a wrong projected process of modernization. In this deformed reality, religion functions as system functions in Hubermas explanation of the deformation of life in Europe. To consider modernity as a process in which people are able to remove the falsehoods of their way of life, Iranians are able to enter in a process of decolonization of society from religion, but not in order to eliminate religion, but to place it in a position which has the potential to deliver Iran from above mentioned deformity. Entering into such a situation needs a particular ethics that traditionally was not present in Iranian society. A kind of morality which is based on equal rights of every member of the society. In following part, the study is directed to explain this morality as the basis of human interaction in a modern society.
B. Modern Morality and the Demand of Inclusion

Modern morality should be understood as a rupture from the dominant morality of the Middle Ages in Europe where the Church as the only authoritative force of morality, was the exclusive arbitrator of all kinds of actions including social ones. In other words, good and evil were decided in advance and the only thing that was left to man was to follow the church-made pattern of social norms. The individualism that Protestantism upheld transformed the kingdom of God from the Church or the entire body of community into every single human being. This transformation is the breaking point in the moral history of the Western Christianity, although its notion of individualism is closer to mysticism and its long history in human life than to rational individualism or subject-centered action that arose from the Enlightenment. In the social realm of human behavior “the reformation, in dividing Europe by religion, asked for a toleration which hardly anyone at first thought right” (Chadwick, 1995, p. 23). The state of war that was the result of a common intolerance regarding differences ended into a situation in which a society, if it wanted to survive, had to tolerate differences in matters of religion as well as the morality. Individual conscience, basically ignored by the church, became the core of moral behavior. “Luther and Calvin asserted that we are all severally (rather than jointly) equal in the eyes of God...Equality in the eyes of God laid the foundations for equality in the eyes of others and before the law. Equal obligations eventually became equal rights” (Bruce, 2001, p. 235).

The development of toleration in Europe, and giving equal rights to every member of society including to the minorities, linked the concept of morality to the concept of freedom. Man could be persuaded and convinced - but not compelled - to act according to the dominant concept of good that was propagated by the church. His moral personality became a part of his self-realization. As a result of this change, for the sake of harmony, in the name of
tolerance, the Enlightenment man was determined to establish a morality independent of religion. The problem was "to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before" (Rousseau, 2001, p. 184). For this fundamental problem the Enlightenment man, as before Hobbes had done, strove to construct a theory of social formation based on a social contract. In this way, eventually, man's moral liberty became subject to a will, which simultaneously represented him and the society that he was a member of. Rousseau called it the 'general will', the formative will beyond the political body, "it is called by its members state when passive, sovereign when active, and power when compared with others like itself. Those who are associated in it take collectively the name of people, and severally are called citizens, as sharing in the sovereign power, and subjects as being under the laws of the state" (Ibid., P. 185). For Rousseau, only in a republic could the general will be fully realized. In such a state the law is tantamount to the will of the people who themselves are subject to the law but in such a way that their will precedes the law.

Immanuel Kant has probably the greatest influence on the evolution of a political doctrine in which the principles of right have supremacy over the concept of good. For Kant, a political action could be considered proper behavior only when it is morally justified, which means to act merely out of duty. In contrast to the medieval concept of duty in which man had to act in order to fulfill some pre-given good, according to Kant, since man should be his own lawgiver and act according to his own will, "to act for the sake of duty is thus to act in order to conform to some self-imposed law." (Reiss, 1999, P. 19). Giving such a definition to the concept of duty, Kant brings the legal arrangements of society into the realm of morality. Accordingly, the philosophical inquiry into politics must be directed toward moral
discussions that attempts to clarify which political conduct is just and which is unjust. In other words, it must answer the question that how a man in a particular situation should act in accordance to the demands of a just society. Since Kant considers morality as a set of binding laws that govern human actions, "there can be no conflicts between politics, as an applied branch of right, and morality" (Kant, 1991, P. 116). In other words, a just society is a sociopolitical formation in which there is no contradiction between politics and morality. Political decisions are not merely made out of expediency of interest or dependent on a particular situation, but also coupled with morality in order to harmonize political action with a universal principle of right. "Right is therefore the sum total of those conditions within which the will of one person can be reconciled with the will of another in accordance with a universal law of freedom" (Ibid., P. 133).

By establishing a correlation between the performance of duty and freedom, Kant attributes morality to a kind of action or decision which is made by a free will, which is released from the external constraints on his action or decision. Since society is an aggregate of human beings, each with a different will, the rationality of man compels him to establish a state in which out of various wills and contradictory desires, a unifying will can be formed. For Kant only a constitution, made out of the will of every citizen, can acquire the character of a unifying will. Kant Considers freedom as the first principle of right on which a state should be established, he makes the free will of every citizen as the basic component of the constitution. Contrary to Hobbes' notion of state, he not only preserves man's freedom but also subordinates the sovereign to the law or the unified will of individuals. Equality is the second principle on which a state should be founded: "Kant attacks the entire heritage of feudal privilege...He also rules out in principle slavery or any inferior political status for a citizen" (Reiss, 1991, p.26). The equality that Kant pursued, is a mere political equality, and there is no consideration for economic equality or the positive realization of human freedom. Kant's concept of equality, at
most, advocates a kind of state, in which every citizen enjoys a horizontal relation with other members of society in his legal status. Combining the first principle with the second one, Kant forms the third principle of right, according to which each citizen must have the right to participate in the matters of state and the politics of society. However, he disqualifies women from this fundamental right and does not care about those who have no ability to enjoy these universal rights. By detaching the principles of right from human experience, Kant assumes them *a priori*, emerging from pure reason or a reason which is delivered from historical limits and the expediencies of life of particular groups of people. He urges man: “Act in such a way that you can wish your maxim to become a universal law (irrespective what the end in view may be)” (Kant, 1991, p. 122). Kant calls theses universalized maxims the ‘categorical imperatives’ of human action. In other words, the categories are the general laws that men are obligated to choose if they want to act in accordance with morality.

Kant rejects any notion of political utilitarianism which in the formative process of legal rules, in the name of the interest of the majority of people or the realization of maximum happiness for the maximum number of people, discriminates or excludes some section of society, even a very small one, from the benefit of the law. To avoid utilitarianism in moral actions including political ones, Kant formulates his famous categorical imperative by which he insists that man “must in all his actions... be regarded at the same time as an end. From this postulate follows the second formulation of a categorical imperative which says: *Act always so that you treat humanity whether in your person or in that of another always as an end, but never as a means only* ” (Reiss, 1991, p. 18). According to Kant’s notion of moral conduct, to act morally in the realm of politics, firstly, man has to will an action which speculatively could be universalized, and, secondly, he should find out whether others also have a will to make the universalable will into a law enjoined with the coercive power of
implementation over society.

The political system which Kant advocate is a legal order in which the various wills of various individuals, according to the principles of right somehow are formulated in the form of a constitution. The order of society is not pre-given as some religious establishments claim. It is a mere product of practical human reason, in order to establish the conditions of the self-determination of individuals. Within this sociopolitical formation, "external freedom is freedom from any constraint except coercion by law, a freedom which allows each individual to pursue his own ends, whatever they may be, provided that this pursuit leaves the same kind of freedom to all others" (Ibid., p. 22). Openness to public reason and freedom of critique is the main safeguard, which, according to Kant, can protect the rights of people vis-à-vis the sovereign authority. The main critique of Kant is directed toward his notion of individualism. His non-historical notion of universalism compels him to overlook the importance of context in which man's moral behavior takes place. Kant's moral individual is stripped of his identity and therefore is detached from any tradition. "He tacitly assumes that in making moral judgements each individual can project himself sufficiently into the situation of everyone else through his own imagination" (Habermas, 1999, p. 33). By making man's cultural identity irrelevant to his moral and political behavior, Kant, like Rousseau, provides us no safeguard against a forced inclusion and a compulsory cultural assimilation of different communities in a unified nation.

For MacIntyre the above mentioned fact presents the crisis of morality in the modern times. It is a failure of the Enlightenment to project man as "the individual moral agent, freed from hierarchy and teleology, conceives of himself and is conceived of by moral philosophers as sovereign in his moral authority." (MacIntyre, 1985, P. 62). In a secular world where religion is not able to provide a foundation for moral conduct, philosophy is employed to discover the
moral rules of human relations. According to MacIntyre's critique of modern moral philosophy, such a failure must be related to how philosophy regarded man: modern man is a mere natural phenomenon, devoid of any particular telos and essence, and a dehistoricized man, disconnected from his cultural background. By making the human divergence irrelevant in the formation of his moral behavior, man opted to become the subject of the universal moral rules and categories. All men, independent of the contexts and conditions in which they lived, could obey the rules of the rational morality. Accordingly, the implementation of the above mentioned notion of morality on human life leaves us only two alternative modes of social living. As a result, "the politics of modern societies oscillate between a freedom which is nothing but a lack of regulation of individual behavior and a form of collectivist control designed only to limit the anarchy of self-interest" (Ibid., p. 35).

For MacIntyre the root-cause of the modern political crisis should be traced back to the Enlightenment's view of practical reason which embodied the idea that through a neutral application of rationality and human reason, it was possible to form a neutral notion of justice independent of all traditions. Contrary to the Reformation which strove to remedy the inadequacies of Christianity with the help of the resources which Christianity itself provided, the Enlightenment tried to overcome the inadequacies by establishing a universal ethic independent of any specific historical tradition.

By considering Aristotelianism as the most powerful pre-modern mode of moral and political thought - the Enlightenment carelessly avoided to utilize its resources - MacIntyre urges us to return to Aristotle's ethics, or something similar to it: "one cannot learn to pursue one's own overall good except in the context of the household and the polis, for 'someone presumably does not have a good of his own without participation in the management of a household and without a polity" [MacIntyre, 1988, p. 126]. The concept of practical rationality is
integrated with the concept of justice, because while the latter provides citizens the proper concept of goods, the former allows them to justify the right principles of conduct. Therefore the virtue of a citizen compels him to both that means be just and practically rational. Society is conceived of as an aggregation of different activities, "within which goods are unambiguously ordered and within which individuals occupy and move between well-defined roles that the standards of rational action directed toward the good and the best can be embodied. To be a rational individual is to participate in such form of social life and to conform, so far as is possible to those standards." (Ibid., p. 141).

There are two fundamental problems regarding MacIntyre's approach toward morality which make it undesirable to our purpose of study. He does not provide us any clue to find out how one can avoid the violence and injustice which could emerge when a dominant majority imposes its idea of good as the telos of the community on every group and individual of society, as it has been the case in the medieval times. The universality that the Enlightenment projected on its notions of rationality and ethics was mainly related to its imitation of the Aristotleian approach toward tradition, which Enlightenment aimed at its replacement. Now MacIntyre requires us to repeat that tradition but in a different way. The second problem is related to his limited notion of modernity. Modernity cannot, at least any longer, be considered as a traditionless mode of life which has emerged from the Enlightenment's notion of man and the universe, and developed into a form of society in which man in the realm of politics and social relations acts as he acts in the market. Modernity established itself as a tradition and the continuation of a particular way of life which itself includes many kinds of sub-traditions. As has been mentioned by Shils regarding Western civilization in modern times, "[t]he tradition of emancipation from tradition is also among the precious achievements of our civilization. It has made citizens out of slaves and serfs... The
Enlightenment...centuries in Europe and America was one of the noblest epochs in the history of the human race. Its instrument was reason and its end was emancipation” (Shils, 1983, p. 324). Whatever might be the inadequacies of the modern way of life, the solution cannot be a return to a pre-modern social formation and its particular framework of thought, from which the present time is totally disconnected, although some of its elements continue to be effective in the present order of social relations and social morality. MacIntyre sees the problem of modern morality in its individualism and a virtue-less code of social behavior in which isolated citizens follow a self-fixed concept of good rather than a good that has emerged from the particularities of the political community in which the individuals are rooted. As a result of this approach, he urges us to separate our concept of morality from the Kantian notion of autonomy and self-determination, and, by making a U-turn back to pre-modern times, reconstruct the Aristotleian morality.

By reconstructing the Kantian principles of morality, Rawls, unlike MacIntyre, is offering a justification for a kind of modern society, in which every member, as free and equal citizen, has a fair - if not necessarily equal - share of the goods in society. Rawls by accepting the Kantian moral axiom, which implies in a political society each person should be treated in a equal way, he tries to re-establish the moral foundation of a modern social formation in a way that is politically just and fair to every member. Accordingly, since justice is the first virtue of all social arrangements, “laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust” (Rawls, 1972, p. 3). Hence, the basic structure of society - including every social institution that has a role in the distribution of fundamental rights or duties including all kinds of social values - becomes the subject of Rawls’ conception of justice. Justice, rather than being a mere moral concept, emerged from a particular notion of good, as is demonstrated by religion or in moral
philosophy; it is a political concept founded on moral sensitivities, which, by giving equal rights to every citizen to choose his conception of good, presents a fair social and political arrangement of society. Following the tradition of social contract theories, starting from Hobbes, Rawls, in order to formulate the principles of justice, demands that citizens or their representatives enter into a disinterested hypothetical position - he calls it 'original position' - which is an equal position for all parties that are involved. This basic equality can be achieved with the help of the so-called veil of ignorance i.e. in order to make parties disinterested toward the interests of each other, they should deny some of their interests, like the interest in wealth, prestige, and domination. The persons in the initial situation who are enjoying equal rights in the procedures, would choose two principles of justice which accordingly the equalities or inequalities of the real life, can be fairly framed. Rawls categorizes the two principles of justice as follow: “First each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others. Second: social and economic inequality are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all.” (Ibid., p. 60). Therefore, according to Rawls definition of justice as fairness, laws and regulations which clarify rights and duties, must be assigned according to the two aforementioned principles, which are publicly accepted. Public acceptance means that everybody knows that everybody else has accepted the same principles of justice as the basis of social structure, while public reasoning gives priority to right. “[T]he priority of right means that the principles of political justice impose limits on permissible ways of life; and hence the claims citizens make to pursue ends that transgress those limits have no weight” (Rawls, 1993, p. 174).

By presenting justice as a political concept and recognizing the existence of a pluralism of comprehensive doctrines in society, Rawls
uses the concept of justice as fairness to prescribe the foundation of a liberal democracy in which different comprehensive doctrines from their own point of view are able to endorse the constitution of a sociopolitical formation. The political conception which emerges from this procedure is not formed out of any particular comprehensive doctrine, including liberalism and its respected values like individualism and self-autonomy. The sociopolitical unity is based on a political conception which itself resulted from a consensus among the reasonable doctrines, including religious ones, which each one from its own point of view supported the common agreement. This 'common agreement', resulted from different reasons and reasoning, has been called by Rawls, as 'an overlapping consensus' of reasonable comprehensive doctrines. The concept of 'overlapping consensus' along with the political conception of justice, forms Rawls' notion of 'political liberalism'. Political liberalism is a freestanding political ground on which the different interests of different groups with different belief systems are harmonized by providing a fair share of space to each of them. "[P]olitical liberalism says: our exercise of political power is fully proper only when it is exercised in accordance with a constitution the essentials of which all citizens as free and equal may reasonably be expected to endorse in the light of principles and ideals acceptable to their common human reason" (Ibid., p. 137). For Rawls only a political conception of justice detached from any comprehensive doctrine, religious or non-religious, can serve as the basis of such a public reasoning which is able to justify and endorse a political structure. Therefore, values which political liberalism stands for are merely political values "among them the values of equal political and civil liberty, fair equality of opportunity; the values of economic reciprocity, the social bases of mutual respect between citizens...[and]] the values of public reasons" (Ibid., p. 139). It was left to individuals to relate and to settle these political values with other values inherent in their comprehensive doctrines. Therefore political liberalism must be considered as a procedural covenant of a
constitutional regime which is neutral toward the aim or the final good that a citizen may choose. But procedurally political liberalism is not neutral and is determined to protect the aforementioned political values which were always honored by liberalism but were never fully realized.

Rawls distinguishes the idea of overlapping consensus from a *modus vivendi* or a mere political agreement out of historical compulsion. He confirms that the former could be the result of a historical development of the latter, first into a constitutional regime and then into a reason-based overlapping consensus. "consensus goes down to the fundamental ideas within which justice as fairness is worked out. It supposes agreement deep enough to reach such ideas as those of society as a fair system of cooperation and of citizens as reasonable and rational, and free and equal...it covers the principle and values of political conception...and it applies to the basic structure as a whole" (Ibid., p. 149). Accordingly, the overlapping consensus can only be realized in a society where people are characterized by a democratic political tradition that honors the existence of a reasonable pluralism - not mere pluralism - and citizens see themselves as members of a political cooperation. In the name of justice they abandoned the idea of the nation as a political community in which their coexistence has been predefined by a comprehensive political doctrine.

We understand Rawl's concept of justice as an ethical principle of sociopolitical foundation aims at giving a fair share of benefits to conflicting interests in order to make society able to achieve a state of equilibrium in which value pluralism of society could be protected and preserved. Tourain believes that if we consider justice in its legal term as a constant struggle against established inequalities, it implies the term "recourse", and therefore reference to a conflict. Thus, justice is not based on consensus, but on a compromise that is constantly being challenged by social or political actors who modify the law" (Touraine, 1997, p. 34). The history of the modern concept of justice,
like the history of democracy, is a history of mobilizations, reforms and reconstruction among different interest groups; this is the reason, as mentioned by Touraine, why it is impossible to start from Rawls' 'original position'. To abstract individuals from their socio-historical context in order to withdraw their interest from their values and objectives, not only means to ask individuals to stop being social actors but it also deprives justice from its historical dimension. In other words, "to treat people fairly we must regard them concretely, with as much knowledge as we can obtain about who they are and what they care about" (Carens, 1999, p. 47). A political concept of justice which for its moral justification, proclaims that it has no need of religious or other comprehensive doctrines, has to stand in a historical context where concrete conflicting social actors from a common moral point of view are struggling to realize the justice. It seems that Rawls' notion of political liberalism is bypassing both these factors.

Like Rawls, Habermas believes that the sociopolitical behavior of human beings and their exercise of power must be regulated according to a constitution that essentially could be accepted by every free and equal citizen. Despite their agreement on the political project, they disagree on some crucial points. It seems that for the sake of pluralism, Rawls forsakes any kind of value evaluation and justification of normative values which give way to the formation of a universal value or normative principle, which can be upheld by all parties in a modern society. In contrast, for Habermas reaching such a normative principle, acceptable to every member of a plural society, is not only possible but also necessary.

Habermas shares with Rawls the starting assumption that in modern, pluralistic societies, social norms can derive their validity only from the reason and will of those whose decision and interactions are supposed to be bound by them, but they go their separate ways when Habermas asserts that the will can become the basis of a just plural
society only when from a common moral point of view it is developed into the legal norm. In an age when the sacred authority is not any longer able to use religious sanction over value-based validity claims of individuals, Habermas, in the footsteps of Mead, who gives a central role to language in the process of socialization, transforms the binding force of the sacred authority into those validity claims that can acquire their validity only in discourse. As a result, "the validity of any norm means in the end only that it could be accepted with good reasons by everyone involved...The universality of a moral norm can be a criterion of its validity only if by this is meant that universal norms express in a reasonable way the common will of all involved" (Habermas, 1987, p.94). The universality of "Ought" or a social norm is not coming from a moral-based rational activity of an abstracted and disinterested individual, but produced from the inter-subjectivity of an ethic in which individuals communicatively are involved in discourse. The binding force of moral argument lies in its rational character, that means a reasonable consensus among individuals who want to understand each other. "Discourse ethics defends a morality of equal respect and solidaristic responsibility for everybody. But it does this in the first instance through a rational reconstruction of the contents of a moral tradition whose religious foundations have been undermined." (Habermas, 1999, p. 39). The ethic provides a binding answer to the problematic of each member and every moral community who wish to live in a modern pluralistic society. It does not solve the problem through violence or any type of imposition of will of one group on other groups, not even through a compromise which is made according to the expediencies of the community; this is done merely through the reason-based communication of the participants who collectively aim at reaching a consensus on the issue, a total 'uncoerced' agreement. Therefore the obligatory conditions of a just discourse compels the members to define the political formation, not only in a way that includes every member and provides an equal opportunity of contribution to each of the participants but also defines
the public sphere in such a way that free communication delivered from any kind of coercion can be guaranteed.

A just discourse cannot happen if it is not willed by the people, it cannot be imposed and it cannot come from outside. People should reach a level of cultural development that makes it possible for them to wish the concept of good in such way that is founded on their communicatively produced consensus. Within this framework of thought, the morality of a community is dependent on the resources that are provided to it by its lifeworld. As a result, a discursive ethics cannot be propagated in a belief-based integrated society, but only in a society where democratic values have already been institutionalized and "moral obligations recommend themselves by their internal relation to the gentle, persuasive force of reasons" (Ibid., p. 4)

By providing a neutral ground to morality in his discursive ethics, Habermas achieves two things: on the one hand, he releases morality from religious-metaphysical worldviews whose concept of justice is interwoven with a particular concept of the good life i.e. related either to the revealed words of God or to an appeal to integrate human life according to the rational order of a destined cosmos. On the other hand, by giving priority to the right over the good, he presumes a kind of democratic sociopolitical formation in which not only individual rights are preserved but also the predominant opposition between community and society, could be resolved in liberal democracies. Since the modern notion of justice requires equal treatment, "the equal treatment of different individuals and groups, each of which has its own individual or collective identity, could only be assured by standards that are part of a shared conception of the good equally recognized by all of them" (Ibid., p. 28). Hence, justice impels an openness on society which allows individuals or groups to be separated if they want while the political solidarity and a just framework of living is still preserved. According to this model, democracy becomes tantamount to self-organization of society, in
which civil society not only keeps its distance from the state, but also resists any other forces including economic ones, which strive to distort the reasonable communication by depriving society of an un-coerced public opinion formation. Therefore, the deprivation of anybody or any group, for any reason, from delivering the view or to rob him/them from an audible voice in the public sphere, is synonymous with the erosion of morality and a crisis of solidarity and integration. In such a democratic society where the sociopolitical system is the result of a rational extension and elaboration of rights, citizenship becomes “the core of what holds people together, and what makes them at the same time dependent on, and responsible for, each other. They [the citizens] perceive that private and public autonomy each presupposes the other in maintaining and improving necessary conditions for preferred ways of life” (Habermas, 1996, p. 291) From these points we can conclude that for Habermas justice implies a constant struggle to establish 'an ideal speech situation' which provides the conditions of an undistorted communication, but since such pure and un-coerced communication, never can be fully realized, the task of justice compels citizens to continuously review their social norms and reconstruct their social institutions in order to make them closer to the upheld concept of justice.

From all that we discussed up to here we can assume that modern morality is basically a right-based principle of action which is connected to the idea of liberty and human rights. The respect for the autonomy and the self-legislation of individuals is its characteristic. A modern moral man is a free man who is willing to be persuaded of the rightness or wrongness of his attitudes and actions. Society has an obligation to make it possible for him to exercise his freedom without invading the freedom of others, and to provide him an opportunity to express himself if he wishes so. Modern moral man is a subject, not merely as a capability of knowing and being able to utilize everything according to his interests, as a Weberian may assume,
but, as has been stated by Touraine, it is at once reason, liberty, and memory. Modern moral man is considered as a subject in the sense that he and all other members of society are creators of their individual and collective lives, while everybody is aware and committed to equal rights of everybody else. Democracy is the precondition for men to be able collectively to create and recreate their common world and the concept of the good according to which their world could be formed. The "subject entails both personal liberty and membership in a society or culture, both project and memory, disengagement and commitment...freedom and tradition, and democracy is the political precondition for its existence" (Touraine, 1997, pp. 18-19). It seems that this notion of subjectivity is not in contradiction with Habermas' notion of inter-subjectivity which the moral concepts emerge from "the recognition of the subjective freedom of individuals. On the one hand, they are founded upon the right of individuals to perceive what they are supposed to do as valid; and on the other hand, they are founded on the demand that each person may pursue the ends of his particular welfare only in harmony with the welfare of everyone else" (Habermas, 1987, p. 18).

In a theocratic system like that of present Iran, the clergy see itself as the sole moral authority of the society. By emphasizing the pre-givenness of the concept of good, the clerics assumes that the individuals' entrance into political realm is a matter of duty. Therefore the clergy deny people's right to get involved in the arrangement of their society. In this situation, the condition of Iran is similar to the Middle Ages of Europe in which the official religious authority was the only source which could define the underlying principles of action for the people. In a modern democracy the underlying principles of human action in the sociopolitical arena cannot develop out of the pre-givenness of the social norms by the sacred authority. It has to come out of free wills of people who are integrated within a national framework of co-existence. In this situation the Iranian modernists
are not dissimilar with the men of the Enlightenment who strove to establish the principles of social actions independent of the will of the established religion. In a modern democracy the unifying will of the nation cannot be imposed on people who are carriers and holders of different wills and beliefs. It has to be shaped through a democratic process of will formation in which - through a discursive interaction of different groups and individuals - people are able to form their unifying will as the constitution of their co-existence. The religious institutions can also be involve in this process, but only when they are ready to enter into the public arena with reasonable claims and arguments without demanding or maintaining any particular privilege.
C. Modern Democracy and the Demand of a Contextual Secularism

Modern western democracy, to some extent, owes its existence to its pluralistic character that conveys the presence of a social consensus over mutual tolerance. It has been projected on society through a gradual process of secularization, which means the official exclusion of religion from, if not every, but some important, public aspects of social living. “Pre-modern religion was necessarily political and public, in the sense that it sought a natural existence in the sphere of public institutions which organized human existence. [...] also... tended towards exclusivism assuming the possibility of only one true religion.” (Marquand/Nettler, 2000, p. 3). The Church was in charge of a universal project of emancipation and redemption. Its mission was to take people of all societies and cultures to the kingdom of God for their final inclusion in Heaven. Individuals were simply born in this universal institution of salvation, and for them there was no choice but an unquestioned conformity to the requirements of the Church. By transforming the kingdom of God from the Church as the entire body of community into individuals, the Reformation de-universalized Christianity. It polarized society into contesting communities, each with its own notion of salvation. The apogee of this situation was the religious wars. To end the state of war, Europe had no way but to enter into a state of pluralism and the formation of the secular state in which the legitimacy of sociopolitical groupings was not dependent on the universal appeal of a Church. Social formation could not be considered anymore as a God-given and pre-planned way of interaction within the kingdom of God, but was subjected to man's will and desires for the creation of a man-made social order. The European process of secularization did not stop with a mere separation of Church and state and a peaceful coexistence of diverse communities. It aimed at a structural transformation of society in which sociopolitical institutions could be considered as the actual
incarnation of the collected wills of individuals. The gradual process of secularization was directed toward the self-determination of man in a way that the social order could be the result of human creativity. Subjecting social order to human creativity does not banish religion from society but compels it to function differently. Therefore, if we consider secularization as a process of emancipation of man from religious bondage, the deliverance must be related to dehumanizing aspects of religious authorities, but not of religion as such. As a result, the anti-religiosity of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries might be attributed to an emancipatory mode of sociopolitical critique which sees religious authorities and faith as the legitimizers of and contributors to the production and continuity of the dominant inhuman conditions.

Thinkers like Feuerbach held that "religious faith encourages dogmatism, intolerance, arrogance and illiberality, and thereby legitimizes the persecution of unbelievers and heretics" (Aldridge, p. 61). Atheism presented itself as a mode of thought which believed that, by merely replacing religious faith, a humane life condition could be realized for all. Marxism shares the same view on the religion, but sees it more as an effect rather than a cause. In order to legitimize its continuity, the beneficiaries of the inhuman conditions create religious faith as a false-consciousness of the situation. In his critique of Hegel's philosophy of right (1844), Marx states, "man is the world of man, the state, society. This state, this society, produce religion, a reversed world-consciousness, because they are a reversed world. Religion is the general theory of that world." He continues that "religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people" (Marx, 1985, pp.11,12). Once the world has changed, the untruth attributed to it will also disappear and there will no longer be a need for such a
supernatural illusion.

Contrary to the above-mentioned trends of thought, secularism does not consider religion as an untruth or as a mere bondage of human liberation. It recognizes the danger and harm that can be ushered into society by religious faith. To assert the harmful potential of religion does not mean denying the positive aspects of the presence of faith in society. Rather than striving for the elimination of religion, secularism is searching for a proper system of mooring and control. In its explanation of religion and religion's social function, the supporters of secularism, rather than attaching themselves to the atheist traditions of thought, connect themselves to those thinkers who from a human rights point of view try to accommodate religion a proper place within a man-made social order. This does not mean that secularism projects a society that is totally de-linked from its older traditions. In contrast, man with whom secularism is concerned, is a historical being in a particular context which, through rights-based conventions, strives to preserve liberty and equality in the social order. Therefore, if in legal terms secularism is standing to enforce law independent of religious morality, in matters of salvation and choice in faith, it resists any compulsion from any authority. It is true that secularism does not care about the essence of religion, it rather attempts to provide a condition in which everybody is forced to tolerate everybody else's religious practices. In this way secularism is not aimed at marginalizing or destroying religiosity. For the sake of democracy and the preservation of pluralism, by putting religion in a different social position - a less-favored stratum - compared to its position in a traditional society, secularism compels religious institutions to function differently. In a secular order, religion, by giving up its political aspirations, has to establish its kingdom in the hearts of individuals who are still in need of religion, either as the moral basis of their behavior or as a provider of meaning to their life. Above all, religion continues to be a main source of identity and group culture.
Pluralism, which secularism stands for, does not convey the self-efficiency of reason in every aspect of human life, although, in protecting religious liberties, it leans on human reasoning.

Essentially, modern pluralism has emerged from a discourse which recognizes the finitude of human reason. Pluralism in modern democracy is "the response of finite intelligence to a reality so rich that it constantly escapes existing categories and calls for the convergence and complementarily of various cultures and modes of experience. Pluralism is the counterpart of finitude" (Davis, Pp. 29). Davis continues to say that when pluralism is denied, which means that man forgets his finiteness and absolutizes his particular narration, he corrupts faith and acts in such a way that it presumes the act of God on earth, and therefore he forgets his human character and his limitedness.

The transition of society to a secular state of pluralism presupposes that no moral rule can universally be imposed on society for the mere reason that it originated from an absolute creator or any other similar reason. Accordingly, the force of moral rules in a secular state can only be considered binding if they represent all interests, a moral agreement upheld by every party. "It is characteristic of the development of modern states that they change over from the sacred foundation of legitimation to foundation on a common will, communicatively shaped and discursively clarified in the political public sphere" (Habermas, 1987, p. 81). Along with Durkheim, Habermas attributes the superiority of democracy to the kind of arrangements in which individuals co-operatively and discursively shape the principles through which social integration could be achieved. In a pluralistic society there is a fair space for each moral community and member who has accepted the universalism of the democratic principle of equal right while respecting the differences and allowing to be the preservation. It "leaves to citizens themselves to settle the question of religion, philosophy, and morals in accordance
with views they freely affirm" (Rawls, 1993, p. 154). In a democratic plural society it is nonsense to use the sanctions of state power in favor of any particular religion or worldview.

In this way, in our aspiration for a plural secular democracy we are following in the footsteps of the Enlightenment thinkers, particularly of the advocates of the social contract, who subjected state sovereignty to a general will that represents the interests and the will of each member. By rejecting the church monopoly on political power and any type of theocratic state, Rousseau says, "there can be no longer an exclusive national religion, tolerance should be given to all religions that tolerate others, so long as their dogmas contain nothing contrary to the duties of citizenship" (Rousseau, 2001, p. 201). From its early days the modern idea of democracy is interwoven with the idea of pluralism, an idea that separates state from religion in a way that neither the state is able to judge or interfere in moral and religious beliefs of individuals, nor is religion able, in the name of an ultimate good, to impose its morality and dogmas on society. Because of its respect for liberties and preservation of diversities, secularism universalizes the idea of participation.

Bhargava, by emphasizing the link between democracy and secularism and moving away from the view which identifies democracy with majority rule, asserts that "the heart of the democratic idea is the belief that every person within the community is equally entitled to a life of dignity and self-respect...Democracy neither means the rule of the majority nor of a minority but the acceptance of a common framework that prevents the concentration of power in either" (Bhargava, 1998, pp. 111-112). As a consequence, secularism in a democratic society implies a particular organization of society which, by separating state from religion, provides a political context in which communities or individuals, who differ from each other in their ultimate beliefs and values, are able to co-exist peacefully while feeling part and parcel of the same context. As mentioned earlier, a secular
society is not secular because it upholds anti-religiosity, but because it preserves democratic pluralism. "The crucial sociological and social-psychological characteristic of the pluralistic situation is that religion can no longer be imposed but must be marketed" (Berger, 1969, p. 144). A secular democratic order provides a viable framework for a sociopolitical life which is hospitable to the participation of a variety of communities and individuals, almost irrespective of their belief systems. In such a society religion can be an important source of moral insight but not a teleological source of life-order that forcefully imposes the commands of God. It is not the religious rationale which provides the basis of sociopolitical conduct, but secular reasons, articulated in a democratic public arena which sets the boundaries for the social behavior of each member. Giving reason a public character means that reason is publicly accepted, in a democratic society which is then able to realize the secularist idea of equal treatment and liberty of every member, not only among different religious groups but also among citizens including atheists and non-believers. As a result, although secularism does not bar religious institutions from publicly taking up moral positions, it resists and prevents the kind of reasons that impose the moral will of one particular group or groups on others. In other words, democratic secularism provides a framework in which particular interests and liberties can patch up with public reason in order to preserve social integration, without sacrificing either. In this way, secularism is a part of discourse of rights which taking place among the people who "have neither given up the hope of living together nor yet arrived at agreement over crucial substantive issues that could bind them into a reasonable and vibrant unified existence" (Bhargava, 1998, p. 542)

Being committed to the equal right of every member - whether as a group or as an individual - democratic secularism resists any attempt, either religious or non-religious, to grant a privileged position to itself. As has been mentioned before, it does not necessarily make religious
identity irrelevant to political context, as shown by the French or Turkish version of state sponsored secularism. In India or Iran where religious values are present in every aspect of social life, the realization of such notion of secularism, is an impossible task and is from the outset a political failure. The overwhelming presence of religious identities of such countries compels secularism to vindicate the idea of separation differently, if it wants to realize its democratic values. If we consider secularization as a gradual historical process in which citizens are able to do without religion, a political project that - as mentioned by Bhargava - wants the complete secularization of society is neither possible nor desirable. Accordingly, secularism must essentially be regarded as a part of man's political prudence in his encounters with political turmoil and carnage which emerge from the entry of religious identity into the political realm. However, the idea of separation of state and religion is much more than mere political vigilance.

By objecting to the identification of secularism with the mere separation of state and religion, Bhargava contends that "secularism is constitutively tied to some substantive values. Without these values, we may have a state but not a secular state." (Bhargava, 2000, P. 102). In order to accommodate secularism into the deeply diversified context of India, he puts more emphasis on "the religious-strife model" vis-a-vis "the church-state" model of separation. In both of them, religious toleration is the starting point of secularism. Ideally, - that means the notion which originally has been presented in Europe - secularism strives to fulfill itself through providing full liberty to every member. By considering religious identities irrelevant to one's right to some sort of political participation, secularism grants each member of society an equal right to citizenship. As has been mentioned by Bhargava, secularism from its very beginning was committed to some substantive values, the most important of which are the preservation of peace, liberty of conviction, and access to equal
citizenship rights. The separation of religion and politics is then directed toward the realization of these particular values. The corollary of this approach rules out some customary conceptions of secularism which it has been "understood in purely instrumentalist terms...[or] a non-instrumental view that overburdens secularism... for this view, separation is required in order to bring about a fundamental transformation in the entire social order so that a comprehensive worldview is embodied therein" (Ibid., p. 107). Having some ideals for better living conditions does not make secularism an overloaded ideology for the structural transformation of society through the process of modernization. Even if one wants to consider secularism as a political strategy, one has to consider it as a value-based strategy, although Bhargava himself prefers to see it as a deeply valued ideal which has its own intrinsic values.

The value-based-ness of secularism allows Bhargava to see secularism as a contextual phenomenon, i.e. while recognizing the possibility of the realization of secular values in any society, there is also the awareness of the fact that no ideal form of separation can be applied to a giving situation unless it has been required by the particular conditions of that context. Hence, if in Europe a particular form of separation of church and state brought about substantive values of secularism, it cannot lead to the same result if the separation is applied in the same way to other societies with different conditions. As a result, for Bhargava, secularism rather than propagating a particular notion of separation, thanks to its theoretical flexibility, embraces various types of separation which lie between total exclusion and complete fusion of religion and politics. He calls it 'contextual secularism', in the sense that secularism not only acquires different shapes in different societies. Thus secularism in England is different from that in France, but also more importantly, secularism's realization is dependent on the reasons and compulsions of a particular context which justifies the implementation of a
institutional separation of religion and politics.

Bhargava has distinguished two kinds of separation: "The first identifies separation with exclusion. For the second, to separate is to mark distance or boundaries" (Bhargava, 1998, p. 493). The first kind requires a total mutual exclusion between religion and politics in the public arena, either as hostile or as two independent institutions; the second kind of separation permits some contacts while imposing some distance i.e. neither a complete fusion nor a total disconnection. Bhargava has termed it a 'principled distance' which has enough room for religious liberty while promoting equal citizenship – it does not imply an equal treatment of citizens by the state. He then further divides secularism as principled distance in two forms: according to the first one, the state, by upholding the principles of political neutrality, keeps distance from religions in order to treat every member of society, including believers and non-believers, in an equal manner. In the second version religion and politics are distanced in order to be independent from each other. Each of them occupies its due space and has a commitment to respect the boundaries of the other. By separating himself from the absolutist version of secularism, which, in order to make secularism universally applicable to society, unconditionally attempts to establish a total separation between religion and politics, Bhargava is able to construct a sound conception of secularism which is not only committed to participatory democracy and its values, but is also acceptable by believers and non-believers. He classifies secularism into four different categories: "(a) Ethical secularism that excludes all religions from the affairs of the state (b) Ethical secularism that requires that the state maintain a principled distance from all religions (c) Political secularism that excludes all ultimate ideals including religions from the affairs of the state, and finally (d) Political secularism that demands that the state be principally distanced from all religions and non-religious ultimate ideas" (Ibid., p. 492). The first category is totally hostile toward
religion, particularly when, through state intervention, it tries to eliminate religion from the public arena. Although Ethical secularism applies this separation in order to establish its own non-religious ultimate ideals, Bhargava attributes this problem to the view which identifies secularism with the first category and unfairly claim that it is impossible to form a secular sociopolitical order in which believers and non-believers can co-exist peacefully. For his own context of thought, India, Bhargava finds versions b and d applicable. Although he is in favor of a contextual notion of ethical secularism as a promising ideal which can bind communities to each other, as it seems to be the case of India, at least for the time being, he recommends the principled distance version of political secularism which is "somewhat less attractive but well within our reach. Both insist upon the separation of religion and politics without undermining either... But in the short run and in some contexts, political secularism may not only be a good fallback strategy but the only available way to prevent a community from falling apart" (Ibid., p. 511). More important than all potential arguments in support of the separation of religion and politics, is a commitment to ordinary life and a decent way of life of people that convinces Bhargava, at least in some contexts, to remove all ultimate ideals, including religious ones, from the political affairs of the state. To clarify his view, Bhargava puts forward a distinction between what is worthy and valuable as an ultimate ideal and what is required to preserve the conditions of a decent life. These conditions provide man not only the basic worldly goods like health care, education and liberty, but also allow him, without being forced to strive for the realization of some ultimate ideals, to produce and reproduce his natural life. To secure an ordinary life means to expel rival ultimate ideals from the public arena, when their followers, in fighting deprive people from the minimum conditions of a decent existence. Bhargava recommends a version of political secularism in order "to avert unbearable suffering and degradation of life. In particular, loss of life and liberty is evil and
must not be taken away from anyone no matter to which religious community he belongs” (Ibid., p. 491).

The separation of religion from politics is not related to religion’s demerit in modern times, but on the one hand to the coercive character of the state, and on the other hand to religion’s potential for being misused by political and economic interests. Such a separation is required to restrain the potential ushering of violence into society, and is not aimed at belittling religion. Political secularism is not incompatible with religious ideals; it just leads them to their proper place. It does not tolerate any kind of brutality and savagery that in the name of some ideals, religious or non-religious, may take place in society. To preserve the small ideals of normal living conditions which are equally fair to every member of society - regardless of the ultimate ideals that they may pursue - political secularism separates ultimate ideals from the state. A contextual notion of political secularism does not exclude religion from politics indiscriminately, it excludes by distinguishing between coercive and non-coercive ideals; and only those ideals which aim at entering the public arena coercively - either with the help of the state apparatus, or by the mobilization of the followers - are barred from entry into the public arena. The neutrality of the state in political secularism is a context-sensitive neutrality, when procedurally state policies are unbiased and non-partisan. To Bhargava “a state is politically neutral, if in a context of deeply conflicting high ideals, and for the sake of a decent life to all individuals and groups its politics intend to help or hinder to an equal degree all those sensitive to this context and committed to these goods.” (Ibid., p. 505). The criteria, which political secularism use as a yardstick to distinguish between different ultimate ideals, might not been highly valued but some small value-based measures that fore example, prohibits the use of force in the matter of belief, or secures a fair living conditions for every member. By these measures it takes away the big evils which make the co-existence of followers of different
high ideals in a society impossible. It is wrong if we consider political secularism as a mere framework of co-existence, which for the sake of peace, by applying the principle of neutrality impoverishes social life by depriving it from its ultimate ideals. For political secularism, very close to Rawls’ theory of ‘overlapping consensus’ where co-existence results from procedurally fair public policies toward every member, society is not unified by a universal conception of collectivity which justifies the co-existence. The co-existence is regarded as the mere peaceful togetherness of different communities. This is probably the main reason for Bhargava to think that a society based on the principles of political secularism cannot, in the long run, be a workable social order. It seems that, although under conditions in which barbarism and inhumanity are going to take over society, political secularism is highly recommended, in a normal situation the Ethical version of a contextual secularism, which implements separation according to some secular ideals, like autonomy, is more applicable. But with the caveat that the contextuallity of an ethical version of secularism requires the realization of autonomy or of any other value in society be confined to the limitations of every distinctive member. In this way Bhargava presents his version of secularism as a multi-value ideal. It is aimed at constructing a structure in which conflicting values can co-exist, not by the forceful dissolution of one into the other, but by people’s ability to differentiate the worth and essence of encountering values. Therefore “secularism can be upheld only if there is proper exercise of judgment and imagination...It gives us a perspective from which to articulate the way we value things.” (Bhargava, 2000, P. 108). The multi-value character of secularism does not allow it to change the world according to a particular concept of good, it does it through public reasoning, interpretation, and contextual judgments which are aimed at reconciliation and co-existing. It provides society an arena in which different groups, whether religious or non-religious, including traditionalists and modernists, enter into a constructive process of dialogue, deliberation
and negotiation in order to find a common concept of good on which their social and political life can be based. People “can however hardly being to do so unless they discover a minimally overlapping good within the framework of participatory democracy” (Bhargava, 1998, p. 537). They must have reached a level of cultural and political maturity that makes it possible for them not only to be flexible towards the necessary modification of upheld values, but also to be ready, if necessary, for the transformation of their group identities as the formative basis of social integration. In such a public arena where ultimate values - religious or non-religious - challenge each other, a secular state committed to a principled notion of secularism intervenes or avoids interference according to its constituent values.

The only problem we may have with Bhargava’s notion of secularism, is related to the disconnection of the concept of secularism from the process of secularization and the battlefields which it has gone through during its developmental process. The values which democratic secularism upholds, have been historically realized by the restless struggles of people who had faith in the possibility of a better life. In Islamic countries these values such as individual autonomy and individual rights, have either never been present in pre-modern times, or had a total different connotation, for instance, toleration, which in traditional life meant the official permission for a passive membership of minorities in a social order that they had no share in its formation. For people who are used to seeing religion as the arbiter in sociopolitical matters, it is not easy to construct a political domain which is primarily aimed at depriving religion of its historical privileges. This cannot be done unless people can be convinced, at least in some way that for public manners they can do or decide without religion. This realization is dependent on the change of people’s framework of thought. If we consider political secularization as the process by which politics can be delivered from religious domination and religious reason, a contextual notion of secularism
has to outline the process of secularization in a given context. Only through a proper process of secularization can secular values become a part of people's attitudes in their social behavior. Otherwise, in a secular state, the secular values will be merely present in laws and institutions, and when the state machinery is not able to protect them, the secular system breaks down, as periodically happens in India. It seems that for Bhargava there is either no differentiation between secularism and secularization, or they are two independent concepts.

For a society like Iran where for every public activity - particularly the holding of public office - a religious qualification is required, there is a fundamental need for a theory of secularism to transform the situation into a just and democratic society. The opponents of secularism, by reducing it either to an anti-religious ideology which aims at excluding Islamic values from the public domain, or to a part of the Christian history and the result of the internal rationalization in Christianity, state that its implementation in Islamic countries means the dominance of Christian values over Islamic societies, hence, present secularism as an impossible option. If one views toleration as the core of modern democracy, in order to move toward a democratic situation, he is obliged to opt for some version of secularism. Contrary to the developed countries of the West which are suffering from the over expansion of the formal rationality dominant in the administration and bureaucratic systems into the cultural or language mediated area of society, Iran is suffering from a deformed reality in which the worldviews including the religious ones, present themselves as the political identities. Since 1979, by presenting religion as a political identity, the clerics have become able to penetrate in every corner of society. By taking over of the state in Iran, the official religion became able, in the favor of its particular concept of good, to dismiss all other concepts of good from the public arena. We do not believe that in order to remove the deformation, Iranians must, in
favor of some modern worldview, dismiss religion from the public life. To establish herself as a modern democracy, Iran has to enter in a political situation in which each worldview and political identity is compelled to tolerate other worldviews and political identities. The study believes that the Bhargava's notion of secularism provides us such a political framework in which the different worldviews can live peacefully in Iran. To realize such a democratic framework of coexistence the clergy has to give up its aspiration for the political power. To use the sanctions of state power to realize religious rules is against the basic tenets of modern democracy. In next chapter, by describing the historical development of political leadership in Shi'ism, and examining the views of three contemporary Iranian modernists, the study hopes to show that Iran historically and culturally is apt for the institutional separation of religion and state. We believe through this separation it is possible to shift religion from its present situation and place it into a situation that does not contradict the formation of a modern democracy.