Chapter 5

Shiism and Reflection on the Past and Future

The present study does not consider modernism as a view, which necessarily impose a choice between tradition and modernity. The thought of authenticity\textsuperscript{1} sees modernity as a contextual phenomenon, which, by inserting reason into man’s life, improves his living conditions. By entering into a modern condition a particular people are able to open their mind to the surrounding world and to remove the falsehoods from its tradition of life. In a country like Iran, where the country has already gone through a wrong process of modernization, and in the age when most western social institutions are universalized, there is little space for an authentic notion of modernization. In the following chapter first by discussing the relationship of religion and politics, on the one hand we discuss the nature of aforementioned relation in Shiia history and we see how the processes of reinvention of political leadership have taken place in Shiism; on the other hand, by reflecting on the concept of secularism and Western experience of secularization, the thesis attempts to find out whether secularism is relevant to shiism or not. In the next part of the chapter, we will see how Iranians thinkers have reflected on the fusion of politics and religion in their society, and how the new experience compel them to redefine the relation of tradition and modernity.

\textsuperscript{1} By Authentic thinking, the study refers to a tradition of thought that defines and projects modernity within the sources of a particular self with a clarified identity. The followers of authentic thought present modernization as a kind of self-realization of particular peoples whose cultural peculiarity differentiates them from other nations. In Iran Islamic modernists are predominantly presented as the proponents of authentic thought.
A. The Political Leadership in Twelver Shiism\(^1\) and the Relevance of Secularism

Shi\(\text{a}\) Islam might be considered as a religion of tradition and preservation similar to Judaism and the Sunni Islam, while, like Catholicism, it could also be recognized as a religion of memories, promise and hope. Along with the other Muslims, the Shi\(\text{a}\) uphold the three basic tenets of Islam: 1. \textit{Tawhid} (the affirmation of the unity of God) 2. \textit{Nabuwwa} (belief in Prophecy and Mohammed as the last Prophet) 3. \textit{Ma'ad} (belief in Resurrection and the Day of Judgment); but they also added two of their own principles, 1. \textit{Imama} (belief in the \textit{Imamate} and leadership of the descendants of Mohammed) 2. \textit{Adl} (belief in the justice of God). Principally it is the doctrine of \textit{Imama} that radically separates Shi\(\text{a}\) Muslims from the majority Sunni Islamic community. According to the Sunni belief, after Mohammed the leadership of society had been categorized in a religious and a political one. The caliph or ruler, who was selected or elected by the community, was a successor to Mohammed as political and military leader without having his religious authority. By contrast, for the Shi\(\text{a}\), "leadership of community is vested in the \textit{Imam} (leader), who, though not a prophet, is the divinely inspired, sinless, infallible, religio-political leader of the community." (Esposito, 1998, p.43). In Sunni Islam the community of believers, as a whole, has access to the truth, therefore the religious authority of Mohammed was bestowed upon the community rather than upon any particular figure.

The early division of Muslims on the basis of the leadership of society, not only led to political factions and civil wars, but also to different ways of understanding the concept of salvation in Islamic society. Basically, the concept of salvation for all Muslims was interwoven with

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\(^1\) The Shi\(\text{a}\) are divided into several denominations. The number of imams that they consider as infallible leaders differentiates them from each other. Since Iranian Shiites believe in twelve imams as the right leaders and successors to Mohammed, they are named as Twelvers.

\(^2\) The Shi\(\text{a}\) view on justice is similar to the Mutazeli view on the Justice of God.
the belief in the sole mediatorship of Mohammed in the delivery of the
divine message to human beings. Following the death of the Prophet
and the end of the period of the “Rightly Guided” caliphs in A.D. 680¹,
the Sunnites “looked upon salvation as possible only through the
allegiance and loyalty of all believers in the community. As long as the
community continued to be fully committed to the promulgation and
observance of the law (Sharia), its salvation was guaranteed”
(Sachedina, 1980, p.5). Contrary to the time of Mohammed salvation
had no necessary relation with the qualities of the leader. By contrast,
the Shiites do not believe that community allegiance and the
realization of Sharia in society is enough for the salvation of the
believers. Accordingly, “Islam, in order to continue its function of
directing the faithful toward salvation, was in need of a leader who
could perform the Prophet’s dual role authoritatively.” (Ibid., p.5). As a
result the Shiites believe that, as in the case of prophethood, the Imam
could only be appointed by God in a set time. In order to provide
guidance to Muslims he, like the Prophet, needs to be immune to sin
and mistake, and in absence of the prophet, he is the final interpreter
of God’s will. “God does not guide solely through authoritative text,
but through specially equipped humans, the imams of the
community” (Brown, 1996, P.60). According to the Shiia doctrine of
the imamate, the Imam must be a direct descendant of Mohammed
and his son in law, Ali, who himself was the first Imam. “Salvation was
impossible if a person failed to acknowledge the true Imam of his time,
to whom devotion and obedience was incumbent since he alone could
bring a true Islamic rule of justice and equity in the world”
(Sachedina, 1980, p.7).

Since Ali and his descendants had been deprived from political power,
particularly during the rule of the Umayyads (A.D. 661-750), the

¹ The Sunnites consider the first four caliphs - Abu-Bakr, Omar, Osman and Ali - as
the “Rightly Guided” leaders of the community.
Shiites were united to oppose the political establishment of the time. As a result, from its inception, Shiism became an opposition party that was fighting for a true Islamic notion of justice and sociopolitical order. The Messianism of the Shiia belief might be attributed to their radical demand of a perfect and just Islamic society, which has been promised but was never realized. The Shiia only survived all the persecutions in the hope that one day, under the leadership of the true Imam, the promised society would be realized. The apogee of the image of Shiism as a radical opposition group is the event of Karbala and the revolt of Husayn, the younger son of Ali, in AD 680, which led to the massacre of his followers and himself by the Umayyad troops. In Shiism this event generated the idea of martyrdom as a rational choice that in any situation could be upheld by true believers. The constant failure of the Shiites' uprisings against the political establishment - particularly the revolt of Zayd, the grandson of Husayn in AD 740 - persuaded the Shiia to formulate a more moderate notion of Imamat which could not only make the everyday life of the believers easier, or at least free from persecution, but also bring them closer to the main body of the Islamic community. Under the leadership of the great Shiia Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (d. AD 765), a descendant of Ali through his son Husayn, the Shiia reformulated the doctrine of the Imamat in such a way that, till the promised revolt of the last Imam, there was no necessary relation between the religious authority and the political one. In other words, there was no need for Shiia to act like a continuous revolutionary movement. It became a religion of patience and survival, while keeping hope for the rise of the last Imam that would bring justice and establish the kingdom of God on earth.

Although Shiia believers cannot find a path to salvation without a designated Imam, "there are times when the world can be without a manifest Imam; this is so when God is enraged at the people, who are
unable to see the Imam in occultation\textsuperscript{1}, although he sees them” (Ibid., p.23). As stated by the primary texts of Shi\textit{ia} belief, the twelfth Imam, Mohammed ibn al-Hassan al-Askari, went into occultation in AD 873-74. He will continue to remain in that state as long as God reckons it necessary. He will be commanded to come out when the situation in the world is suitable for his uprising to reestablish justice and equity.

According to the mystical interpretation of Shi\textit{ism} by Leili Echgh\i, the main thing which distinguishes the disappearance of the twelfth Imam from other messianic disappearances is related to the nature of the occultation. “The twelfth Imam has not left the world, he is absent while he still is within the world...he refused to go to heaven and he has hidden himself in a well in order to make a hole and a deficiency in the world. It is not important that he will return to fill the world with justice, but that he separated from the world while he is still in it” (Echghi, 2000, pp. 81-82, Own translation). Through his occultation, he makes it possible for the believer to handle and manage his worldly affairs by himself, while he is still aware of the fact that the world is not a perfect one. Through his promised reappearance, the Imam will establish another world devoid of deficiencies. “He would return as a messianic figure, the Mahdi\textsuperscript{2}, at the end of the world to vindicate his loyal followers, restore the community to its rightful place, and usher in a perfect Islamic society in which truth and justice will prevail” (Esposito, 1998, p.45). Much like the Hegelian Historical Movement, it seems that the Shi\textit{ia} also demonstrate a deterministic view of history in which the last Imam is a missioner to take the world into a state of non-contradiction or a state of moral unification. To the extent that the reappearance of al-Mahdi at the end of the times would make the world enter into a state

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Occultation (\textit{Ghayba}) is a state chosen by God for the Imam who is in danger of being killed by enemies.
\item Without giving any particular name to the occulted Imam, Shiites have given him many titles, which not only explain his qualities but also his Mission: al-Mahdi (The Guide), Sahib al-amr (the Master of command), Sahib al-Zaman (the Master of time), Akhar al-Zaman (Who comes in the end of the time).
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of justice and complete truthfulness, history ends its movement.

The prolonged state of occultation and the believers' demand for guidance in matters of everyday life - particularly related to their duties in matters of religious law - led the Shia to establish the institution of deputyship (Wikala). This institution played the most crucial role in the formation of the priesthood and its further development in the Shia Islam. Basically, from its early days, Shiism has been considered by the political establishment as an outlawed sectarian cult within the community. Its survival was dependent on its leadership and its followers' support, militarily as well as financially. This is the reason why "the early agents [The direct appointed deputies of the Imam] were both treasurers of the Imam, collecting khums1 due by the followers of his Imam, and his bab (gate), through whom one could communicate with the Imam" (Sachedina, 1980, p.93). The Shia divide the period of the occultation of the Imam into two distinctive periods: the short occultation and the complete one. The short period embraces the years from AD 874 to 941; due to threats to his safety the Imam had hidden himself and he directly appointed his deputies, which included three traders and one religious scholar. By AD 941 the Imam entered the complete occultation and stopped to appoint any deputy. Since that time, according to Shia belief, the appointment of the agents has been rendered to God. It is from the second period that the concept of Imam transformed from a leader who would rise to redress the wrongs of a particular community in the near future, into an eschatological figure who would reappear in the end of time to rearrange the world according to the plan of God.

Regarding the question of the duties of the followers during the absence of the Imam, the traditional Shia texts preserved the last Imam's saying: "As for the events which may occur [in future when you may need guidance in religious matters] refer to the transmitters

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1 According to the Shia belief, each believer has to submit one fifth of his annual income either to the Imam or to his deputies.
(ruwat) of our sayings (hadith) who are my hujja (proof, reason) to you and I am the Hujja of God to you all" (Ibid., 101). Although there exists no priesthood in Islam, and in principle no activity, including the performance of rituals, is limited to a particular class or group of experts as it is in Christianity, by the eighth century a class of professional religious Shiia elite had been formed, which, because of its religious knowledge, considered itself as the exclusive interpreter and guardian of the Quran and the religious traditions. Later on they became the judges, the lawmakers, the theologians, the jurists and the educators of the community. In Shiia Islam, the jurists, by considering themselves as the only legitimate transmitters of the sayings of the Imams, claimed the exclusive deputyship of the Imam at the time of the occultation. Therefore they not only preserved the aforementioned performances, but also sanctioned for themselves a type of sanctity that basically was an exclusive privilege of the Imams. The sanctity and the divine right that the Church has enjoyed for the sake of its attachment to Jesus Christ, was claimed by the Shiia jurists too, though differently. In this way in the Shiia Islam a strong religious institution came to be established which in the name of its deputyship of the infallible Imam claimed superiority and authoritative power over any type of independent human reasoning in matters of life, private as well as public. The people also bound themselves to the leadership of the Ulama (clergy) which became the sole source of guidance for the community.

The Shiia clergy had to wait a long time and explore many avenues to establish a pope-like figure and to transform their organization into an independent institution, first as a parallel institution to the king's court (from the sixteenth to the end of the nineteenth centuries), then in the twentieth century the Shiia clergy considered politics as a subdivision of the Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and a part of jurists' expertise. We will now examine this process.

The establishment of the Shiia Safavid dynasty in Iran in AD 1500 has
a fundamental importance in the Shi‘a history. It was not only during this period that “the Shi‘a transformed itself from a minority and heterogeneous group within the Islamic community into the official religion of the state, with a violent and compulsory character,¹ {but also} it was during this time that we are witnessing the formation of the organizational and hierarchical priesthood in Shi‘ism.” (Echghi, 2000, p.111, Own translation). The demand of the Safavid kings for religious legitimacy induced them to foster the formation of an independent class of clerics, who ideologically were separate from the Sunni Islam, the official religion in the neighboring Ottoman Empire. “Within Islam the poet Ferdausi(b. 941) in his epic the Shahnameh created an image of Iran as the people of purity and truth, confronting Turan, the evil of savagery and barbarism pressing on Iran from Central Asia in the shape of Turkish tribes.” (Watt, 1988, p.128). Although it was a national rather than a religious image, the self-image of the Iranians from the sixteenth century onwards was predominantly associated with the kind of Shi‘ism that carried the Iranian cultural elements in its heart. The pure and upright figure of Husayn was the embodiment of the purity, braveness and innocence of the ancient Persian prince Siavash. Moreover, the absence of the last Imam and his promised return in the end of the history recalled the Zorostrians’ hope of the coming of Sashyant who would bring justice and freedom to the world. Hence, by accepting Shi‘ism as an continuation of their historical self-image, Iranians continued to see themselves as the citadel of truth and light holders within the Islamic world in which the forces of darkness and evils of the Sunnites prevailed. That is why, although Iran was a part of the Islamic world, it practically managed to continue its cultural life outside the Islamic world. In the Safavid period, the Shi‘a Ulama presented the state as a religious organization with a mission to fight for the realization of religious purity in society. In this battle, the Ulama - like the regular soldiers who were active in military exercises – were part of the state

¹ During this period the Sunni Muslims of Iran were forcefully converted into Shi‘ism.
machinery and at the service of the king. In return, the king guaranteed their exclusive right over the legislator. In order to justify their active absorption into the political establishment, the Ulama referred to the teachings of the prominent Imam Jafar al-Sadiq who believed that, due to the absence of the last Imam during the period of occultation, the unification of the religious authority with the political one should be postponed till the reappearance of the Imam1. As a result, “the leadership of the community was divided into temporal and spiritual spheres. The former was vested in the ruling dynasty, which in theory required proper nass (designation) by the Prophet, but was acceptable as long as its sphere of action was limited to the execution of the law” (Sachedina, 1980, p.17). By claiming exclusive access to the Prophetic knowledge which only the Imams could inherit, the clergy wanted to acquire the position which was secured only for the infallible Imams. The absorption of the Shia clergy within the political system in the beginning of the sixteenth century provoked a quietist trend in Shiism, but with the weakening of the Safavid kings toward the end of the eighteenth century, the clergy proclaimed a more active role and considered its position if not higher than the king’s, than parallel to it.

The jurist Jafar Kashfi (1775-1850) believed that “the religious jurists (high-ranking clergy) and the kings occupy an identical office which is the position of Imamat...but the Imamat has two pillars, “pen and sword”, and although the Imams had access to both of them, in the present time, in the absence of the Imam, it is not possible to have both, therefore they should be separated; while the king has an exclusive ownership of the sword, the pen must only remain in the hand of the jurists” (Tabatabaii, 2003, p.391, Own translation).

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1 Seyd Jafar Kashfi (1775-1850) attributed the following sentence to Imam Jafar al-Sadiq: “since it is necessary to be aware of the rules of judgment and be just toward Muslims, if a Muslim wants to be involved in governance and judicial matters, it is better for him to avoid such a job, because it is secured only for the prophet and his successors” (Tabatabaii, 2003, p.386, Own translation).
continuity of this trend in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries institutionalized the duality of the religious and the political authority which somehow was present in Shiism since the time of the occultation of the last Imam. By considering their status equal to the four particular deputties of the last Imam, who were appointed directly by the Imam when he was in his short occultation, the Shia jurists in the nineteenth century called themselves the "general deputties" of the Imam, with the same prerogatives that the "particular deputties" had enjoyed. The reason behind this claim was the Shia belief in the constant presence of the Imam in the world; the occulted presence of the Imam necessitated the existence of an indirect gate of communication. The Ulama proclaimed that they generally and as a group were the only ones who were qualified for the deputtyship. As a result of this development, toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Ulama were not only considered as the spiritual leaders and the only legal authority, but they were also looked upon by every section of society for guidance, temporal or spiritual. Hence, the Ulama became the only instituion in Iran that could resist the state control.

The cause of the above mentioned development has generally been attributed to "the new predominance of the Usuli School of thought among the Iranian Ulama in the eighteenth century [which] created a kind of religious authority that was independent of the state" (Perry, 1991, pp.114-115). The importance of the Usulies was attributed to their emphasis on ijtihad (a personal strive to discover the truth) by those Ulama or mujtahids [high rank clergy], that their exceptional and highly learned capacity qualifies them to issue decrees on different issues. The development of the Usuli thought in the next century led to the formation of the institution of Marja-e-Taqlid (the source of imitation). "There has not been such institution in the Shia tradition. It was in this period [the middle of the nineteenth century] that the predominant Shia Faqih (high-ranking jurist) Sheikh Morteza Ansari (d. 1884) customized the central leadership of the clergy.
Before this time the jurists had collectively the leadership, but since the time when this thought got predominance in Shiia clerical circles, it was accepted that the most predominant jurist (Mojtahid-e-Alam) deserved to be imitated by every believer" (Enayat, 1983, p.279, Own translation).

The establishment of a central spiritual leadership in religious matters also led to the formation of an independent financial resource within the clerical organization. Unlike their Sunni counterparts, the Shiia Ulama were not dependent on the state for funds. “Instead, their followers contributed alms (Zakat) and the Khums (a fifth of the annual income) directly to the marjas (high-ranking clergy)” (Perry, 1991, p.116). The deliverance from the dependency on the state subjected them to the support of the people, particularly the affluent section of society, which mainly includes the landlords and the wealthy merchants.

This development in the status of the Shiia clergy, in many ways confirmed Iran as a “Church-state” model of sociopolitical formation rather than a “religio-political” community which later on would be proclaimed by Ulama in the Islamic Republic of Iran. If the Shiia had been considered politically active this was due to its rejection of the status quo rather than to its claim for political power. From the mid-nineteenth century and the direct contact of the Iranians with the Western countries, we are witnessing the formative inception of a political thought in Shiism that considers society as an organic formation whose head is the Ulama, instead of the king. The duality which was the hallmark of Shiism within the Islamic world, rather than evolving into an institutional separation of religion and politics as it happened in Western Christianity, eventually melted politics within religion.

The flow of the state - sponsored modernization drove the clergy to the periphery of society. As a result, they were deprived of the prerogatives
they used to have. Under the process of modernization modern exports took away most of the positions that the Ulama had monopolized in traditional life. To avoid annihilation, the Shiia clergy, one more time, reinvented its political doctrine. The apogee of this theoretical transformation which was completely related to the change in reality rather than to anything inherent in Shiism, could be seen in Khomeini's theory of Velayat-e-Faqih (guardianship of the jurist). As mentioned by Seifzadeh, Ayatollah Khomeni's first public statement with a political nature was in 1941 in his book Kashf-al-Asrar 'Revealing the Secrets', "Where he overtly criticized Reza Shah and his attempts at secularization. There, he firmly demanded that Islamic laws and ordinances be applied to all aspects of Iranian life, while explicitly disclaiming any direct role for the fuqaha in the political leadership of Iran" (Seifzadeh, 1994, p.200). Although Khomeini demanded the supervision of laws by fuqaha (jurists), he has no claim over the political leadership of the faqih. The continuation of the policy of secularization and the Shah's resentment to apply Sharia to society, compelled Khomeini to develop a view in which the fuqaha were not anymore considered merely as lawmakers or the supervisors over the implementation of the law, but as its executors and the political leaders of society.

The word "Velayat" which Khomeini interpreted as "leadership" has a history at least as old as the Shiia history: "It has been derived from the root "wali", which means 'to place something besides something else in a way that there is no distance in between'... the word "velayat" has been used with four different meanings: affinity or nearness, victory, love and affection, and being in charge" (Kadivar, 1999, p.21 Own translation). The different branches of the Shiia learnings attributed one of these meanings along with their particular interpretation to the concept of "velayat". In theology it has been equated with the "Imamat", and it is therefore considered as one of the tenets of the Shiia belief. Without believing in it, a person could not be
considered as a genuine Shiite. The Shiai theological tradition held the "velayat" as a concept to explain the continuity of the qualities of the Prophet (except his Prophethood) to his chosen successors: the twelve Imams whom the Shiites believe that to be infallible. Within this tradition of thought there is nothing that could justify the political leadership of a faqih or any other religious authority during the absence of the last infallible Imam. Within mystical learning and Sufi circles "velayat" has been understood as love and affinity to Ali, the first Imam, and his family. Without the love of Ali one could not consider oneself as a Shiia. The meaning of "velayat" in fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) has a different history. Although the jurists, like the theologians, identified the term with "who is in charge"; but this did not stop it with the period of the infallible Imams. The Fuqaha (jurists) were collectively in charge of the implementation of Sharia in society. The idea of vellayat did not necessitate full authority over the community as it did for the Imams, but rather a limited authority. The Iranian cleric and scholar Mohsen Kadivar states that the definition of "velayat" in fiqh has predominantly been based on four main facts or elements: firstly, the belief in the idea that ‘vali’ or the guardian can be appointed only by God; secondly, the presence of a guardian who can be in charge; thirdly, the existence of individuals who, due to any reason (like childhood, madness etc.), are not able to be in charge of their lives as has been willed in the Sharia; and fourthly, a demarcated area where the guardianship can be exercised. Thus, in the Shiia Fiqh only in particular matters which are clearly explained in the Sharia, the fuqaha (jurists) have the general deputyship and therefore the right of being in charge. In most areas of life the Shiia fiqh accepted the non-existence of velayat (guardianship), in other words, "principally it has been accepted that each person is in charge of his matters and no person has the guardianship of Another person... each person, in the framework of Sharia and reason, is the agent of his matters" (Ibid., p.56, Own translation). In this context of thought during most of the Shiia history the fuqaha (jurists) had no
claim to political power or the direct implementation of religious law, but they preserved their right to the general deputyship or *velayat* over society. It is only by the end of the nineteenth century that we are facing the development of a kind of *fiqh* which is inclined to obtain political power. The proponents of this new development argued that, historically, the *caliphs* and kings always usurped the *Imam*’s right over political power and illegitimately disposed them from the execution of the religious law. Henceforth, the jurists as the general deputies of the *Imam,* must undo this history, and by putting themselves in charge of the political power, take back the *Imam*’s right to govern. “History is not in the least supporting the argument. *Imams* never fought to obtain political power. They were dissidents and discontent with the status quo... but on many occasions they have been offered the political power and they rejected” (Echghi, 2000, p.116, Own translation).

That is why Ayatollah KHomeini’s claim to political power during the 1960-70s, rather than being a continuity of the *Shiiia* political tradition, must be considered as a break with the tradition. *Shiism,* during its long history, became able to develop a notion of institutional duality between religion and politics; Khomeini, by disconnecting himself and his ideas from the past and by melting politics in *fiqh,* nullified the usefulness that the *Shiiia* tradition could have offered to Iran in the age of the transformation into modern times. Khomeini repeated the Shah regime’s mistake that he wanted to replace, though differently.

The fusion of politics and religion could not have happened if some basic concepts had not been redefined. Hence, it has been argued that, since governance is a necessary condition in the social life, the existence of somebody in charge as the *vali* (guardian) is also necessary. By designating the executive branch as the practical wing of the *fiqh,* the supporters of the theory of *velayat-e-faqih,* claimed that there were only two types of political formation: one in which power is
usurped and one in which a *faqih* is in charge of political as well as of religious matters. As a result, the idea of the deputyship of the political ruler in *Shi'a* traditional *fiqh* was reinvented as the guardianship of the *faqih* which should be the legitimate ruler of the community. The infallibility which the *Shi' a* had always exclusively attributed to the *Imams* could now be applicable to the *fuqaha* (high-ranking clergy). As has been mentioned in chapter one, according to Khomeini, "infallibility could also derive from the perfection of faith... If a man believes in God Almighty and with the eye of his heart sees him as clearly as he sees the sun, it is impossible for him to commit any act of sin" (Brumberg, 1997, p. 35). According to Khomeini, due to their self-control and moral integrity and their exclusive access to the inherited knowledge of the *Imams*, only the *Fuqaha* can obtain a state of infallibility. Therefore it is only among the *fuqaha* that the political leadership of the Islamic State could be found. The sanctity and attachment to the divine power which were the exclusive qualities of the *imams*, were also transformed to their deputies i.e. the high-ranking jurists. It seems that in the 1960-70s, the *Shi'a* high-ranking clerics obtained the same status as the pope and the Church in the West during the Middle Ages. By establishing a correlation between the right of the ruler, the duty of the citizens and the legitimate rightfulness, the high-ranking Iranian clergy Mohammed-Taqi Mesbah Yazdi declares that in a *Shi'a* society "legitimacy means that the person who has an inherent right to political power be in charge of the government while the people are aware of the fact that it is their duty to obey the ruler" (Mesbah Yazdi, 2002, p. 10, Own translation). The corollary of his argument is that only a particular person or group of persons can have an inherent right to the political power if he/they is/are chosen by God. The righteous and only legitimate rulers are thus limited to the Prophet, the *Imams* and, in the period of the absence of the last Imam, the jurists who are indirectly chosen by God. According to this view of *Shi'ism*, "due to the same criteria that legitimised the government of the Prophet, the political authority of the
infallible Imams, the *velayat-e-faqih* (the guardianship of the jurist) is legitimate, which means that the legitimacy is never subjected to the vote of the people, because it is a divine matter and determined by His appointment" (Ibid., p.18).

Among the clergies Mohsen Kadiver has probably made the biggest contribution to the study of the concept of *velayat-e-faqih*. He rejects the above-mentioned view of political authority as the dominant notion of governance in the *Shiia* history, and asserts that generally in *Shiia* jurisprudence "*velayat-e-faqih* is neither a self-evident fact nor a rationally indispensable idea, neither is it a necessary part of the religion [Islam] nor is it an essential element of the creed [*shiia* belief] and its tenets... *velayat-e-faqih* is among the secondary issues of the *fiqh* according to a majority of nearly all of the *fuqaha* (jurists)" (Kadivar, 1999, p.237, Own translation). Accordingly, the concept has never has been mentioned in the *Quran*, and there is even no synonym that could imply a similar meaning. "*Velayat-e-Shariii-e-Faqih* (The religious governance of the jurist) has neither a rational base, nor has it a base in the religious transcribed religious sayings of the Prophet and the Imams. Therefore the jurists have no religious guardianship over the believers and in principle people are free from guardianship" (Ibid., p.392). As Kadivar mentioned, the adherents of the doctrine of "*Velayat-e-Faqih*" did not present any viable reason or religious proof of the immaturity of the believers, and base their argument on the inherent imperfection of human beings in the public arena. Then they present themselves as the only mature and adult believers who are missionaries to guide the community as a collective body of immature individuals who are interdicted from participation in sociopolitical matters.

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1 In *fiqh*, the jurists have guardianship over the individuals who due to some reasons, like childhood or madness cannot be in charge of their life. By extending the concept of immaturity to each non-jurist member of the society, the proponents of the theory of *velayat-e-faqih* extend the jurists limited right of guardianship to every section of society, and legitimize an unlimited right of supervision for the jurists.
Through the definition that the clerics and jurists give of an authentic notion of the Shia community, we have an understanding of Shiism which describes it as an exclusive and distinctive Islamic community that has accepted the guidance of the holy scriptures and sayings of the Imams in their everyday life. Accordingly, the Shiites are looking forward to the promised reappearance of the last Imam while during his occultation the jurists (fuqaha) are chosen not only as transformers and interpreters of his will and wishes, but also as his political successors who are missionaries to undo the history. According to the adherents of the doctrine of the guardianship of the jurists, the Shia clergy is a missioner to topple the temporal and secular government as the usurper of the position of the Imam and to establish a clerical state to fulfill the goal which the Imam was not able to fulfill when he was not yet occulted: the establishment of an Islamic kingdom.

By referring to the above-mentioned fusion of religion and politics, and the absence of a transmitted saying in Shiism that demands to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Mark, 12;17), Shia critics of secularism claim that secularism is essentially irrelevant and inapplicable to Shiism. This approach suffers from reductionism because it limits the definition of secularism to the internal secularization of the Church and the historical development of Christian theology. On the contrary, we believe the historical and theological developments in Shiism was more apt for a notion of secularism which upholds an institutional separation of religion and politics. The fusion of religion and politics in contemporary Iran rather that being a result of historical development of Shia tradition, has resulted from a break with the tradition. Despite the existence of theological and institutional similarities between Shiism and Catholicism, it is not the similarities or the worldliness of Islam and non-worldliness of Christianity that compels an institutional separation of religion and politics, but it is the resemblance of the social reality in the two communities that
necessitates secularism. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the official clergy, like its counterpart in the Middle Ages of the Christian world considers itself as the representative of the divinity in the temporal world. The clerics believe that they are missionaries to establish God’s kingdom on earth, a sociopolitical condition in which men are forced to be delivered from committing sins. Like the Church of the dark ages, the Shiia clergy considers the will of God as the only source of political legitimacy, therefore in both of them no space has been left to the people to choose their own political destiny. As a result, the excommunication of the opposition and non-believers, the persecution, the torture and even the execution of opponents became an indispensable part of the political establishment in both societies. In both of them, the people who had an affinity with other faiths than the official one were deprived from active political participation. The limitation on freedom of speech and official exertion of censorship became ritualized by the legalization of the religious rules. If the presence of the above-mentioned social conditions urged the West to separate religion from state, it is the presence of the same social reality that compels Iranians to regulate the relationship of religion and politics, not according to the interests and views of a particular group, but according to the reasonable will of the entire nation.

Modernity, essentially, demands the freedom of all. To consider the religious belief as the basis of the sociopolitical establishment is contrary to the spirit and essence of modernity. Hence, the Iranian reformist and scholar Soroush contended that “government founded on the guardianship of the jurisconsult [(velayat-e-faqih)] as based on duties as it is [(in Iran)], conflicts with the mentality of modern humanity as well as with most of the modern political philosophies that base the idea of state on the principles of the rights of human beings” (Soroush, 2000, p 63). The dissimilarity in the theology or in

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1A Habermasian notion of modernity, presents modernity as a framework of communicative interaction in which the people are able to settle the differences and establish a common will.
the shape of historical institutions does not dispel the compulsion of secularism, it just impels us to avoid the duplication of a particular model of secularism. It urges us to be sensitive to the context in which the regulation of the relationship of religion with other public institutions has been required. Although a context sensitive approach does not deny the implementation of the separation at the institutional level, it does not imply a complete separation – a frequent complaint by the critics of secularism. It prescribes a separation only in a condition in which human life, dignity and legitimate freedom and other basic needs and rights have been threatened by the intermixing of religion and the other institutions of public life, notably politics.
As has been discussed in Chapter one, by upholding a comprehensive view of Islam and combining religion with politics, Islamic reformism played a crucial role in the formation of the theocratic state in Iran. In the rest of this chapter, by describing the views of two Islamic reformists and one secular thinker, the study attempts to demonstrate the influence that the events of the post-Islamic Revolution had on Iranians' understanding of modernity, and to show how they prescribe the relation of politics and religion differently from their predecessors. Following Iqbal's definition of the "self", authentic thought considered modernity as a self-constructed project, in other words, an authentic notion of modernity sees modernity as a historical manifestation of the particular self which is situated in a particular context. In contrast with the Enlightenment's view of the self, the authentic thought believes that "human beings are not first and foremost mind and consciousness but flesh and blood, born into particular families in particular social circumstances... the sources of the self lie within, but the nature of what lies within necessarily takes its particularity from the context. Existential particularity is thus the bedrock of authentic thought." (Lee, 1997, p.16). By rejecting the status quo and the universalism of the dominant modernism in Iran of the 1960s, the champions of authenticity or the Islamic reformists, tied the coming of a better future to the fact that the sources of its realization be taken from the past. Although the authentic thought in the form of Islamic modern reformism presented itself as equally revolting against the dominant modernism and the traditionalism, by choosing all the sources of the self within the traditional life, the reformists unintentionally brought into the political stages the forces of Islamic fundamentalism. The defenders of authenticity were right to see the past as a part of the present, but, by bringing an un-reflected past into the present in order to overcome the tyranny of universalism,
they fashioned the past as the mere alternative to the present. They failed to see that most of the promises of modernity are un-thought in the thinking framework of the past. As a result, not only their project failed to regenerate the Iranian authentic self, but on the contrary, by bringing on the political stage some selected and un-reflected concepts of the past such as Imam (Leader) and Umma (community), they unintentionally helped to replace the despotism of universal modernism with the more horrible tyranny of Islamic fundamentalism. The belief in the mutual dependency of the preservation of freedom and the thought of self-realization made the followers of Shariati and other Islamic reformists the first victims of the intolerance of the Islamic government.

The experience of the post-Islamic revolution and the failure of the authentic thought to establish a non-imitative modernity did not make the thinkers of authenticity go for alternative paths: either as a return to the official modernism of the ex-regime or as any other conceptual formations which deny modernity. By accepting human reason and freedom as the focal point of modernity, they continued their efforts to reconcile the Iranian self as a cultural authentic existence with the tenets of modernity. To discover the wrongs of the past, the authentic thinking re-examines the idea of the self and its relation towards modernity and tradition. It does this while it is aware of the possible disastrous eruptions of the traditional elements of life. Therefore, this re-examination is within the modern framework of reasoning and open to independent reason. The post revolutionary thought of authenticity knows that man's power to shape his history is limited to historical conditions, and the mere revolt and destruction neither can stop the continuity of the undesired reality, nor can they initiate the formation of a wished future. By mixing modern ambitions with religious elements, the authentic thought had the biggest share in the coming about of the Islamic revolution and the further transfer of the political power to the Shiia clergy in Iran. “Shariati’s Islamic ideology offered a
theory of radical change which insisted, on religious grounds, that to be a good Muslim one must fight to overthrow the existing social order” (Mirsepassi, 2000, p.116). The overthrow of the Shah’s regime brought the religion in a place where, according to most Iranian thinkers including the defenders of authenticity, it should not be there. Nevertheless, as a result of the experience, the post-revolution champions of authenticity are still committed to tie religion to the project of modernity and, want this to happen in a way that would not sacrifice modern ideals like the preservation of human rights, individual liberties, democratic procedures and other components of cultural modernity.

Abdol-Karim Soroush, the most prominent Iranian post-revolution thinker, has projected a view of Islam in which Muslims can uphold modern political values as well as scientific development. “If we can reconcile Islam with revolution [as a modern phenomena], why not reconcile it with human rights, democracy and liberty?” (Soroush, 2000, p. 22). According to him, the main reason to ignore these values in post-revolutionary Iran is related to the view which defines religion as a mere group identity and presents it as a comprehensive ideology in order to carry on its own battles. As a result, he considers the ideologization of religion as the main deviation, because it situated religion in the wrong place. This is how Sorush, who was basically known for his critique of Marxism, by extending his critiques toward every ideology, distances himself from Shariati as well as from the official clerics of the Islamic government. Shariati described Islam as a particular worldview that has a detailed program to change and transform society. In other words, for him Islam was a revolutionary ideology directed at realization of a particular set of goals and values. Soroush on the contrary, believes that “It is not necessary to ideologize religion in order to realize our demanded values. We should not go for a superficial, official, inflexible and absolute interpretation of religion. We should not imprison religion in such a limited place...
to ideologize religion means to take away its timelessness, enigma and strength, and transform it into an entity which has very limited potentialities” (Soroush: 1999, p.122, Own translation). According to Soroush, the unity which ideology undertakes for society, is based on a shallow acknowledgement of differences, therefore, although it can be utilized in the time of mobilization and transformation, in the time of the establishment and construction it creates hatred and separation. Contrary to religion, which is for every time and place, ideologies are limited to the expediencies of particular groups in a particular time. “In order to enter in the temple of an ideology, human beings are forced to get away from their reasoning power. Ideology has clarified their duties, and made known to them what they should think on society, morality and history” (Ibid., p.141). As a result, in an ideological society, in which the government presents religion as a mere group identity, the society is forced to change itself according to the official interpretation of religion and to confront or deny the other identities. There is neither a place for independent thinking in social matters, nor an opportunity to be at peace with the holders of other worldviews. The ideologues become the governors and the policy makers. Therefore, rather than to invite man voluntarily at the service of God, as is required by religion, the ideologists sit on the place of God and force people to follow the official wishes. In Soroush’s definition, “ideology is the platform of the acts of a person who behaves like a God” (Ibid., p:373) while he has forgotten that he is as human as others are. Soroush is against the insertion of a religious interpretation into every aspect of human life. Contrary to Khomeini and Shariati who, though differently, expanded religion’s presence in social realm, Soroush “wants to make it leaner” (Soroush, 2000, p 21). The clergy, by occupying political seats and blending power with the Sharia, infected the religious knowledge with at least three kinds of blights. “Firstly, the Hozeh (Shiia religious school) speaks in a language of power rather than of logic, secondly, whenever religious knowledge is not able to explain the issues with reason, it
tries to compensate up its theoretical inadequacy by utilizing force and power, and, thirdly, in facing the political power, rather than being in a position of criticism and a guidance towards good, clergy becomes an ideologue and the justifier of the political power, and therefore issues decrees in the interest of the rulers and forcefully closes the gate of theoretical debates” (Soroush, 1999, p.26, Own translation).

For Soroush the basic problem in Islamic countries, rather than being political or social - despite its sociopolitical manifestation - is an epistemological problem and related to the Muslim notion of understanding. By considering Mohammed as the last Prophet and interpreting the end of prophethood as the sign of the completeness of the Islamic society, Muslims had stagnated their knowledge capabilities and entered into the deadlock of imitation and repetition. The Muslims' understanding of the world has not developed while their surrounding world has changed. To overcome this stagnation, Sorush introduces the theory of “the contraction and Expansion of Sharia or religious interpretation”, which is also his most important contribution to the further development of the authentic thought in Iran. He wrote, “[r]econciling eternity and temporality, the sacred and profane... reviving innovative adjudication in religion... acquainting Islam with contemporary age... these have been goals of the religion revivalists, but they require an epistemological theory that is absent from the revivalist literature” (Soroush, 2000, p.30). Sorush claims that his theory can live up to this task. It provides a theoretical framework which allows the Islamic thought to adjust itself to the developments of the world while still preserving the spirit of religion in the process. By separating the everlasting essence of religion from its temporal understanding, he affirms, “it is true that sacred scriptures are [in the judgment of followers] flawless; however, it is just as true that human beings' understanding of religion is flawed... that which remains constant is religion; that which undergoes change is religious
knowledge and insight" (Ibid., p.31). Soroush links religious knowledge to human conditions and history. Like any other branch of human knowledge, it is incomplete and bound to socio-cultural conditions, therefore it is open to constant reform and progress as well as decay. In other words, a change in human understanding in the non-religious part of knowledge and a change in the human way of life, necessitate a change in religious understanding. For Soroush, the genuine reformists are those who recognize this development and accordingly replace an outdated form of understanding with a new and more comprehensive kind of understanding. They transform society through reconstructing and reinventing the religious understanding of the world and of human relations. Soroush’s theory of the contraction and expansion of religious interpretation, “not only reconciles the categories of eternity and temporal change, tradition and modernity, heavenly and earthly, reason and revolution, but it also unites the elements of purity and potency in religious knowledge [which is the goal of revivalists and reformers] and presents a plausible interpretation of both” (Ibid., p.35) Unlike the Fuqha (jurists) who in their encounter with new issues, are merely aimed at removing the problems, Soroush concentrates his efforts to harmonize the religious knowledge with the scientific knowledge and other products of independent human reasoning. For him harmonization cannot happen without freedom of critique and independence of the religious understanding from political power.

Soroush upholds a desacralized notion of politics which is susceptible to criticism and human reasoning. Although he does not deny the possibility of mixing religion and politics in a modern Iran, he rejects any institutional intermingling of the two, which blends the sacred religion with secular politics. Despite his idea about the institutional separation of religion and politics, Soroush does not deny the possibility of the establishment of a democratic religious government. Contrary to the view of the fuqaha, who merely see the foundation of
existence of a religious government in the observance of *sharia* in the society, Soroush sees as its basis the individuals' free faith and the collective reason of the faithful. "A government is religious, not because it makes people faithful by force... it is religious because it has emerged from the non-religious right of religious people" (Soroush, 1999, p.187, Own translation). In other words, since a democratic religious society is made up of the believers who are freely opting for the faith, and the state policies are shaped by the people's will and participation, the government is religious because its policies are made by the faithfuls and it is democratic because it represents the free will of its members. In such a government, "religious morality would be the guarantor of a democracy, where the rights of the faithful to adopt a divine religion would not vitiate the democratic, earthly, and rational nature of the religious government." (Soroush, 2000, p.154). Religion reigns over the hearts of people but not over their bodies through legal rules. According to Soroush, the different prophets had been divinely called, not to establish a particular sociopolitical order as claimed by the Islamic jurists, but to invite people to accept religion as the ultimate arbitrator in their everyday life. Therefore, the only difference that Soroush's ideal society has with other democracies, is related to the fact that in his society people are preoccupied with the question as to whether their behavior may be in contradiction with the religious rules or not. Religion is present in society, not through the enforcement of the rules of some particular institution, but through the hearts and free will of the faithful in a rational management of their society.

Soroush has no problem with secularism if it is merely indicating the institutional separation of religion and state. But for him, secularism is much more than a mere institutional separation. By keeping silent on the existence of any supernatural order and the possibility of a transcendental reason, secularism allows people to make without religion. For him, "secularism is not an anti-religion... but it is worse
than an anti-religion, it is a hostile rival" (Soroush, 2001, p.58, Own translation). Secularism is not merely a prudent political mechanism which separates religion from politics, it also provokes people not only to think without religion but also to do things without being preoccupied whether their action is in harmony with their religious belief or not. Hence, without actually fighting against religion, secularism eliminates it from society, and for Soroush this is unacceptable.

We think the above-mentioned critique of secularism is an unfair critique. The weakness of which is related to its reductionist approach. It seems that because of the suffix "ism", Soroush considers secularism as an ideology that aims at making everything, including mere thinking, secular or non-religious. The way that secularism has been presented at least in this study does not support Soroush’s view. If in a secular democratic society, people are less and less preoccupied with religion as the arbitrator of their actions, this is not related to the hostile rival character of secularism, but rather to the feebleness of the adherents of the religious belief in their dealing with the issues in the new age. Secularism provides a fair space in which different thoughts and views race against each other according to the rules of a fair game. If believers cannot win the race it is not related to the nature of the game but it is related to their lack of exercise of being present in a context in which everybody has equal rights and is bound by equal duties. The other objection that we may have to Soroush’s political view is related to his affirmation of a religious democracy. Like the situation in any other democratic society, he accepted collective reason as the mere yardstick by which the sociopolitical arrangement or rearrangement could be formed, but he never clarified the boundaries of the collectivity from which the reason could emerge. In his theory, the situation of non-believers and adherents of other faiths remains unexplained. It seems that for Sorou...
endowing with reason in the management of the public arena exclusively consists Shi'a believers with a right to form the sociopolitical order.

The prominent cleric and doctor of philosophy, Mohammed Mojtabahed Shabestari, is another contemporary Islamic reformist who acknowledges the historical character of religious knowledge. To continue its evaluative development, like any other branch of human knowledge, religious knowledge needs to be aware of its limitations that implies its openness toward the extra-religious sources of knowledge. Within Shabestari’s framework of thought, the revival and the reform of Islam do not indicate to trim heresy and historical innovations which occurred in the Muslim understanding of Islam off from Islam. For Shabestari, an authentic religious revivalism strives to offer “an understanding of religion which is in harmony with the understanding that modern man has from the world and other human beings. It means each understanding is accommodative in a way that it does not contradict with other understandings in other fields of knowledge” (Shabestari, 1996, p 148, Own translation). As a result of this approach, if Islamic reformism is looking for an answer to the Muslims’ present problems, Shabestari believes that it must go through a mind which not only is preoccupied with the questions which emerged from the modern conditions but also the problems must be approached within a modern horizon of thinking. Islamic revivalism has to refer to the Holy Book and other religious resources not to reestablish the sociopolitical order of the past, but to reconstruct its thought and belief system in a way which is answering the questions of modern man and is in harmony with the modern thinking.

In Shabestari’s view what is essential and eternal are the general values of Islam but not the particular form which had been realized in the early Islamic society. “There is no emphasize on the methods and the forms of government in the Quran, but the presence of justice in
government has been emphasized...the methods and systems are
taking different shapes within different people in different times but
what remains as an essential value in the Quran is that the rulers
should rule according to justice" (Ibid., p.56). By separating values
from the concrete orders and methods, Shabestari leaves the
arrangement of the society to human beings and the necessities of
their particular historical condition. As a result, Shabestari radically
separates himself from other clerics and jurisprudents who believe
that not only Islam clarified the eternal values, but also that the forms
and methods of sociopolitical formation in society have been explained
by it. Therefore, according to Islamic conservatism, God is not only
value giver but also the only lawmaker. Shabestari does not reject the
fiqh (religious jurisprudence), but gives it equal status vis-à-vis the
other branches of human knowledge. Accordingly, "none of the
decrees and interpretations stated by jurists is a part of the exigencies
of Islam. Like any other branch of knowledge, it is created by man and
is open to change and controversies. The jurist, by referring to the
Book and tradition, merely finds out the value-based principles...
politics... and what could be called 'governance' are attributed to
human reason and the sciences" (Ibid., p.82). That is how Shabestari
demarcates the boundaries of religion and human reason. Politics,
and economic and social arrangements are within the territories of
human will and reason, and they should not be in contradiction with
eternal values and the constant aspects of human life that are
religiously expressed. "To keep religion vibrant and alive in public life
does not mean to keep the presence of the traditional political system
unchanged, but to keep the flow of the principal values of religion
within the process of sociopolitical life and to harmonize them with the
change that society undergoes" (Ibid., p.66).

Shabestari rejects the idea that ijtihad (the personal efforts in the
understanding of the religious sources) belongs to a particular group
of people such as the Fuqaha (jurists). Every believer, in order to know
the eternal values, is free and independent to approach the religious sources. There is no exclusive right for their understanding as predominantly the jurists have claimed. Shabestari believes that the present narration of Islam in the Islamic Republic of Iran is just one among the many, therefore there is no reason that the other narrations be prohibited in favor of the dominant narration, and people be forced to avoid the changes of their understanding of Islam. By considering democracy as a method of arranging worldly affairs, he finds no reason in religion to deny the people's right to form a democratic government. "It is true that in democracies people are lawgivers, but that does not give the people's will priority over God's will. If the people wants to follow the divine laws, the legislators of the democratic government will follow the will of the people" (Interview with Razavi, 1999, p. 141, Own translation). Shabestri goes even farther and, by rejecting the dominant religious absolutism, separates himself from the official clerical circles who, in the name of their expertise in understanding of the religious texts, deprive the people from any rights in the process of political formation. He adds that “the necessity of a democratic government can not be derived from the meaning of faith or the religious texts. However, since social realities demand such form of governments, people of faith must forge a relationship with this reality, reconcile themselves with its requirements, and follow a faithful life along its riverbed” (Sadri, 2001, p. 261). By declaring the limits of the clerical understanding of the religion and by rejecting their claim over the execution of the divine laws, Shabestari upholds a political view which propagates the institutional separation of religion and politics, and welcomes pluralism in the realm of thought and politics.

In this study Soroush and Shabestari represent the tradition of thought which can be traced back to the formative thoughts of Said Jamal and Iqbal at the end of the nineteenth century. This tradition looked at religion as a source not only of resistance and struggle, but
also of change, transformation and modernization. The experience of the last hundred years, particularly the Islamic revolution (1978-9) and its disastrous results in the post-revolutionary era, compel Islamic reformists to be more modest in their approach toward religion. Although they consider religion as the main source of selfhood and identity, they do not consider it as a viable source of political formation, particularly in the form of a government. In other words, Islamic reformism in post-revolutionary Iran has accepted to separate religion from state and government, while it still put a great deal of emphasize on the importance and utility of the presence of religion in public life. The reformists see no contradiction between this presence and the democratic values of a free society. In order to pursue a notion of modernity which is not hostile toward the cultural foundations of the society, they made a synthesis of Islam and modern concepts and institutions, but "no Islamic reformer or modernist meant so far as to shift from the theo-centric to the man-centered view of the world, as did, for instance, the Christian Jesuit René Descartes" (Tibi, 1998, p.31). The Islamic reformers believe that modernity can be projected without making the world a disenchanted world. Therefore, despite giving value to human reason, they do not think that it is good that the public arena be considered as a space, which can be formed or managed merely by secular reason or independent human reasoning.

The expelled teacher of Tehran University and secular thinker Javad Tabatabai like the Islamist reformers he considers modernity as the outcome of the change which happens in the thinking of a contextualized self which is endowed with existential peculiarities. But, contrary to the Islamic reformism which sees religion as the main manifestation of self-identity, Tabatabai sees religion just as a cultural element among other elements that shape the long cultural tradition of Iran. He is not preoccupied with the revival of a weakened religion. The main dilemma for him is "how to understand the gap that has
developed between us [(Iranians)] and the West since the Renaissance" (Mirsepassi, 2000, p. 183). The failure of efforts to eliminate the gap, within the last hundred and fifty years for him, rather than be related to the objective circumstances, is related to a subjective condition or a cultural milieu in which it is beyond the possibility of the nation to think productively. In other words, the decadence of thought, particularly political thought, precedes the sociopolitical decadence which in the last four hundred years shaped Iranian history. To overcome the gap, Tabatabai, unlike the Islamic reformists, has primarily attempted to raise the fundamental question regarding the nature and the causes of decadence rather than to attempt to come up with a solution to the problem. Rather than being a sociological problem directed toward the organizational management of a pre-modern society, the problem of modernity in Iran is a philosophical question which thematizes the whyness of the present situation in its historical totality. “With the end of the golden age' of Iranian culture... any remains of rational thought were annihilated. This was the start of an era in the history of Iranian thought and action in which Iranians failed to act or to think effectively [in order to overcome the crisis]” (Tabatabai, 1995, p.7, Own translation). Tabatabai defines this situation as the deadlock of actions and the abstention of thought in Iranian history, which according to him continues to this very day. The absence of rational thinking rendered the Iranian tradition of thought incapable of raising valid questions to resolve the crisis. In such condition tradition congealed and became more and more sluggish. In the absence of a reflective understanding and because of an exhaustion of the potentialities of tradition, the Iranians were pushed into the vicious circle of repetition, without being able to question their tradition or to look for the root causes of the stagnation. It is only in modern times and the emergence of a fundamental change in the worldviews regarding the world that Iranians became able to be

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1 Around the twelve and thirteenth centuries when Iran had been invaded and occupied by the Turks, by the Saljuqs and the Mongols.
alerted to the situation and to see the incapabilities of their tradition. “In the absence of rational thought which is necessarily the foundation of any civilization, the new era of the West... since there was no other option, has been inevitably imposed on Iran, without Iranians having any reflection over its theoretical foundations and the conditions in which it has emerged” (Ibid., p.29).

The Iranians’ ignorance regarding the theoretical basis of the modern age, which itself resulted from the deprivation from a rational tradition of thought, made them susceptible to accept the Western ideologies as a means of transformation. By replacing the speculative thought of modern thinking with ideologies, Iranians of the modern times, not only failed to raise their questions rightly, but also blocked the path of transformation and farther development. As a result, the present condition of Iran, “is in a fundamental deadlock; only through questioning the foundations of the tradition, is there hope to find a way out of this situation, therefore any effort for change which is not directed at questioning the basis, is in vain” (Ibid., p.53). According to Tabatabai, being able to question the foundations of tradition itself shows that the lively and productive presence of the tradition has been ended. But this does not mean that we have historically transformed to a new phase. “To be able to question the essence of tradition philosophically indicates that the transformation from tradition has been started” (Ibid., p 62). By ignoring the importance of renovation and revival, the Iranian tradition of thought failed to preserve its productive continuity. Since without tradition of thought reflective thinking is impossible, from the end of the nineteenth century Iranians had an opportunity, by absorbing the theoretical foundations of the modern West, to re-approach their tradition, and, at least at a speculative level, rightly understand the crisis. But the replacement of the reflective thought by the modern ideologies kept Iranians away from this opportunity. Here re-approach does neither mean as some pan-Iranists are propagating to return to an earlier
period in history, nor does it mean as reformers like Shariati would like to do to bring unrenovated or unexamined elements of a non-functioning tradition into the modern world. By adopting the basis of Western philosophy as the basis of thought Tabatabai, rather than being interested in revolutionizing social life, searches to revolutionize the Iranians’ mind and language. As he stated in his interview with Mirsepassi, “we have to express new ideas with our medieval vocabulary and language... (therefore) we can re-read ibn-Sina (Avicena) with a Western horizon in mind.” ([Mirsepassi, 2000, p.183]).

For Tabatabai, reapproaching tradition through a modern horizon, is the only way in which we may be able to establish a productive tradition of thought, which not only can reflect correctly over the crisis, but also can provide us a basis to attempt to find a solution for the misery of our present situation.

By accepting Western modern philosophy as a yardstick, to find the root causes of the decadence, Tabatabai reexamined the Iranian tradition in its historical situation. In his book “An Introduction to the theory of the Decadence of Iran” by dividing Iranian history into different periods, from one hand, he explains the constant political and cultural elements of the Iranian civilization and the essentials which define its continuity as a civilization, and from other hand, he relates the political collapse of Iran to the decadence of rational thinking. He identifies the years between 1522 (when Iran lost the war against the Ottoman Empire) and 1828 (the year when along with the war Iran also lost a big portion of land to Russia) as the period of transformation. In this period, the Iranians had the opportunity, by fundamentally changing their tradition of thought as it happened at the same time in the West, to provide the basis for the establishment of a modern and reconstructed tradition of thought. But, due to the absence of reflective thinking and the impossibility of a reformative action within the political system, in the period when “Europe was awaking from its long slumber during the Middle Ages... and was
fixing its place within the international order, for ever... Iran, irreversibly, tumbled into the slope of the complete decadence and for ever lost its place on the international stage” (Tabatabai, 2003, p.190, Own translation). The main reason for this miserable situation, rather than being related to foreign invasions, is related to the Iranians, particularly to the Iranian kings, who, in the sociopolitical management of the society, ignored the constant elements of the Iranian culture and failed to develop a viable mechanism to deal with different crises—whether caused by external or internal forces.

By referring to the work of the Orientalist Emil Benveniste’s writing about the concept of ‘raj’ and ‘rri’ (king) in Sanskrit, Tabatabai claims this concept has been absent in ancient Persian languages. He relates the non-existence of this term to the lack of the concept in the ancient political system of Iran. From the very beginning Iranians used the term Shahanshahi (the kingdom of the king of the kings), which, according to Hegel, is an equivalent of the modern concept of Empire. “Padeshah (the monarch) in the thinking of the Iran-shahri1, was a key element for the unity and solidarity while the ethnic multiplicity of the nation was preserved. He was a ruler who through justice and a fair policy transformed the unstable balance among the ethnic groups into a lasting stability of the nation. Therefore if there was suppression, it was not directed toward the domination of one ethinical group over others, but it was pointed to reestablish balance and peaceful co-existence” (Ibid., p.143). Accordingly, whenever this multiculturalism has been ignored, the political unity of the country, if not collapsing, was in real danger. The history of Iran should not be reduced to the history of the kings and the political systems. The real history of Iran is a history of literature, arts, thoughts, languages and different rituals. It is a history of unity in diversity. “The Iranian

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1 Iranians used this concept vis-avis the Greek concept of the polis. The latter refers to the political management of the city with its particular citizens while the former refers to the political management of a collection of states with different ethnic and religious groups.
kingdom from its outset was a cultural domain, every time after each collapse, Iranians returned to the idea of Iran-Shahri and made it the basis of their revival. It is not the idea of the monarch that supports Iranian national unity, and the unity of Iran has a cultural foundation and has been established much before the establishment of the nation-state in modern times" (Ibid., p.153-154). By going beyond the particular historical events and by seeing the history of the Iranian civilization in its totality Tabatabai considers the coexistence of the differences (linguistical, ethnical and religious) as the political foundation of Iran. This foundation, which is essentially a cultural phenomenon, calls forth a democratic political formation, therefore there is no place for the formation of a clerical regime as currently is in power in Iran. In other words, the establishment of a theocratic state is against the political and cultural foundation of the Iranian civilization.

Tabatabai's idea regarding the end of the procreative life of tradition in Iran, radically separates him from the Islamic reformists who still look at tradition as a generative source of a historical transformation. His account of the Iranian traditional thinking in modern times is not dissimilar with the state that Kierkegaard defined as "subjective death". "In contrast to biological death, 'subjective death' is an 'absolute uncertainty'- something of which we can have no intrinsic understanding.... For if we cannot understand 'subjective death' then death is no more or less than the transition from being to non-being" (Gidens, 1991, p 49). In such a situation, revivalists create a false consciousness and a wrong self-image that mistakenly believes in its self-sufficiency. Therefore, by ignoring the infertility of their tradition, they hinder the path of the transformation of the Western knowledge and obstruct the generative formation of a modern horizon in the mind of people who are in pain for their long drive toward a better future. Tabatabai's view, despite its depth, is very pessimistic, and it therefore leaves us little hope for a better future.
From all that has been mentioned in this chapter we can conclude that there is no contradiction between the Iranian cultural character and the development of a modern democracy in the society. The occupation of the political stage by the clergy in recent years, rather than being the result of the development of the inherent elements of the Shi'a belief in history, resulted from a particular sociopolitical condition. The Shi'a clergy, to escape the annihilation by the forces of modernization, put religion in a place which was never recommended by the authoritative sources of Shi'ism. For this transformation the modernists are equally responsible. By misunderstanding and misinterpreting modernity and tradition and their relation, the modernists helped to mislead the process of modernization and farther mislocation of religion in society.

We agree with Soruosh, Shabestari and Tabatabai that to live in a modern democracy - although it is necessary to implement the institutional separation of state and religion does not compel us to deprive religion of a public presence. Much like Catholicism and Judaism, Shi'ism has different potentialities, therefore it also has a capability to be reoriented toward its natural presence in the sociopolitical arena. By considering modernity as a process in which a nation is able to remove the falsehoods of its life context through communicative interaction, rather than by considering it as an established rational entity, the Shi'a believers along with the non-believers in Iran are able to remove or to reform the ideas which block the path of a modern democratic experience of coexistence. It seems that the three above-mentioned modernists of contemporary Iran, though differently, uphold the same view of modernity and value its inherent democratic values. They do not find secularism a necessary component of the process of a democratic modernization. According to them the essential differences of the religious institutions between the West and the Islamic societies and the difference in the religious demography of these societies, make a process of secularization and a
theory of secularism unnecessary in Iran. This study disagrees with them on this issue. As has been discussed earlier, it was not some particular qualities in the religious institutions that led Europe to separate religion from state and to specify the areas in which men were able to do things without being bothered by the interference of the religious authorities, though indirectly this had played a crucial role. In fact, it was the change in reality ( economical, social and political) and the necessities of a peaceful coexistence of believers and non-believers that imposed secularism on Europe. We have not only shown the presence of crucial similarities at the level of the social reality of Europe in the Middle Ages and present day Iran, but we have also asserted the presence of these similarities at the institutional level. The critics of secularism refer to Europe's religious demography and emphasize the importance of the religious polarization of Europe which had resulted from violent clashes between Protestants and Catholics in the formation of a secular society. They claim that since there is no such religious polarization in the Iranian society, naturally there is no need for secularism. However, we believe that for more than hundred years the Iranian society has been polarized between the holders of different worldviews with an ideological manifestation. The process of modernization created new group identities with different ideological blends, which includes the different types of modernists and the forces of traditionalism. Within the last hundred years Iran has witnessed constant violent clashes of the ideological worldviews and identities. While in Europe the religious strife took away the presence of a peaceful coexistence from the society, the ideologies and group identities are doing the same thing in contemporary Iran. If democracy and peaceful coexistence of the people in European societies could survive and proceed farther through the institutionalization of secularism, there is no convincing reason why secularism could not do the same thing in Iran. It seems that the critics are more upset by the literal meaning of the concept of secularism, than by its real content.

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Concluding Remarks

The failure of Iranians' encounters with modernity rather than being defined as a failure in the realm of action and doing, must be considered as a failure of understanding. To understand the present crisis of Iran in a more comprehensive manner, the present study tried in a descriptive way to re-approach the different currents of thought which had a share in the formation of the present situation. The failure of a comprehensive modernization in a country like Iran where already the generative life of traditional thought has been ended, is to a considerable extent related to the created image of modernity in the West and its farther transformation into a non-Western context which strives to modernize herself. As a result of the wrong imagination regarding modernity and its essentials, not only modernity had a deformed manifestation, but also modernization has unnecessarily been presented as a clash of the Western thoughts and institutions with their local counterparts in non-Western countries. One important portion of this study is attributed to clarify the share of the Western thought in the formation of this wrong imagination. The critical attitude of the study towards the views of the founders of modern philosophy and sociology is not aimed at establishing a correlation between colonialization, imperialism, modernization and the western philosophy. Our critical approach toward the process of modernization and the different upholders of modernism, does not also lead us to consider modernity as a failed experience which belongs to the past. By seeing modernity as the only viable future for Iran, the study strives to present a notion of modernity that not only helps Iran to recover from a deformed and incomplete modernization, but also makes her able to reemerge while effectively stops the current of the falsehoods and damaging part of tradition into the social order of her modern life. As a result, in a country like Iran, a proper modernization has to project itself in two levels. At one level, it has to challenge the fictions of a wrongly imagined and incompletely
projected modernization; and at another level, it has to challenge the forces of traditionalism, which believe that Islam as a belief system can still be the basis of a universal sociopolitical order. The correlatedness of these two levels of our objective in this thesis makes secularism an undeniable variant within the process of modernization.

By considering modernization as a project that brings to the local context the Western entities which the region inherently lacks their existence, the early modernists of Iran failed to see modernity as the openness to the world and the expansion of what they already had. On the contrary they saw modernization as the mere import of what they lack. The modernists, unintentionally, provided a ground for the forces of traditionalism to claim that the genuine alienness of modern democratic political institutions to the Iranian context, and the conceptual absence of some crucial concepts like human rights and the non-existence of a tradition of secular thinking as the basis of social order, in the sociopolitical life of the region, provide enough reasons for the upholders of the Islamic tradition to resist the modernization, particularly regarding the establishment of the democratic institutions. In other words, by the definition that the modernists gave to modernity and to the process of modernization, the counter modernism succeeded to provide enough reasons to deny the implementation of a democratic modernization into the region.

By toppling the monarchy and pushing religion into a position which neither Shiia traditional political thought nor modern living condition recommend, the Islamic revolution of 1979 compelled Iranians to rethink the condition of the presence of politics and religion in society. Traditionally since very ancient times (at least from two thousand years ago), Iranians saw the state as the guardian of the truth of the established religion. This coexistence of religion and monarchy in Iranian history is well depicted in Ferdausis' epics (Tenth century) of the legends of ancient Iran. In one of his epics when the ancient king Ardashir addresses his successor, he wrote:
"When the king admires the religion, means that they are in a fraternal relation,

Neither without the support of the king, the religion can survive, nor without the presence of the religion, can the state continue to exist.

The ultimate wisdom created them in such a way that the foundation each of them in its foundation rests on the other's support...

When the king is the guardian of the religion their relation cannot be defined in any other but the brotherhood."

(Shabani, 2000, p. 111, Own translation).

The Islamic revolution not only raised the question of the continuity of the monarchy as the most prominent and perpetuated character of Iranian civilization, but also the events of the post-revolution and the fusion of religion with politics by the clerics provided Iranians an opportunity to rethink the relation of these two aforementioned institutions. Within this context of rethinking the present study, imperatively, links the concept of modernity and the process of modernization in Iran, to a particular concept of secularism; a concept which does not stand to undo the history, and therefore does not require the destruction of religious institutions. It merely stands for a notion of separation in order to put the religion and state in their due place in the modern sociopolitical order. A country like Iran which has a minimum of two thousands years experience of the presence of an established religion in society, cannot uphold a notion of secularism which propagates a complete bar of religion from entering into the realm of state. Primarily it is due to this quality that we consider Bhargava's notion of secularism, according to which due to some upheld principles, state and religious institutions are separated or are allowed to inter into the realm of each other, is an appropriate model to the polito-cultural condition of Iran. Modernity principally authorizes human reason to define the basis of sociopolitical
formation. In a country like Iran where traditionally religion was in charge of the above-mentioned definition, without some notion of secularism which demarcates the exact area in which man is allowed to do without religion, a democratic modernization from its very beginning is a non-starter.

In many ways, in the present time, Islam has been considered as the main cause of the resistance of the countries of the Middle East toward a democratic modernization. By opposing the views which merely depend on a successful democratic modernization on the cultural elements of society, this study believes that the relation between the cultural elements and the sociopolitical reality rather than be a causal relation is a dialectical relation which through interconnecting the subjective world of the individuals with the social reality, the society produces and reproduces the sociopolitical environment. "Society, therefore, is not only an outcome of culture, but a necessary condition of the latter. Society structures, distributes, and co-ordinates the world-building activities of men" (Berger, 1969, p.7). Islam like all other religions can potentially be a dynamic force while interacting with the social reality. The different, sometimes even contradictory, incarnations of the political institution in the Islamic societies in the long history of Islam, is proof of the presence of political dynamism in Islam. Therefore the prolonged resistance of the region toward a democratic modernization, is probably related to the sociopolitical conditions of the region rather than to the presence of "non-rationality" in Islam and its refusal to legitimize a secular order of society, as many Orientalists may believe. In this sense Islam is not different from Christianity or Judaism: the mere belief of God as active creator in the universe, preserves the supernatural as non-rational element in all of these religions. It took more than a millennium of historical development and struggles before Christianity accepted a rational secular order, there is no reason to accept that why the same could not happen in Islam. "History has shown that nations and
religious traditions are capable of having multiple and major interpretations and reorientations. The transformation of European principalities, whose rule was often justified in terms of divine right, into modern Western democratic state was accompanied by a process of reinterpretation or reform" (Esposito, 2000, p.149). As we have seen in the last chapter, at least at a speculative level, the reorientation of thoughts and actions so as to fit in a modern condition, is accepted in many parts of the Islamic world, though in many different ways. The lack of a concrete change must be related to the concrete conditions, like the absolute power of the authoritarian regimes and the form of the distribution of wealth and other social goods in society, rather than to the mere subjective orientation of Muslims. “When religion is manipulated for political gain by religious and secular elites, it may become a source of social conflict or stasis and sometimes of sociopolitical and economic stagnation” (Abootalebi, 2000, p.58).

Therefore, it is not only for the sake of peace and the preservation of pluralism that makes secularism an imperative within the process of modernization, but it is also a principle requirement if believers wanted to deliver religion from the manipulative forces of the political and economic interests.

To accept the view that modernity, at its institutional level, is predominantly a Western entity, does not mean to see the Western path of modernization as the only viable project of modernization for the non-Western countries. By accepting Habermas' view on modernity, the study envisions modernization as a undertaken task which deliver societies from inhuman, oppressive and injustice conditions. By giving priority to language and human understanding, Habermas connects the change in reality with the change in the human mind and his understanding of reality. Modernization could not be considered any more as a mere “catching up” program of a non-Western country that strives to harmonize itself with the international order. More closer to the objective of the Enlightenment,
modernization as a project is related to human striving for truths and the removal of falsehoods, in order to provide a better condition of co-existence in a particular context. This is the reason that makes Habermas' notion of modernity so important to this study which aimes at knowing the misunderstandings of the past while hopping to understand the possibilities of the future in a more appropriate manner. As has been mentioned by Marshall Berman, "the process of modernization, even as it exploits and torments us, brings our energies and imaginations to life, drives us to grasp and confront the world that modernization makes, and to strive to make it our own" (Mirsepassi, 2000, p.3) We cannot develop our own modernization unless we are able to differentiate between the universal aspects of modernity and the peculiarities that it gains in a local context. Habermas' notion of rationality which distinguishes between purposive-rationality, dominant in the area of economic and administrative activities and a notion of rationality which results from the communicative reasoning and the inter-subjectivism of members of a particular society, the members of which are aimed at a mutual understanding in order to co-ordinate their social relation, makes it possible for us to bring about our own project of modernization. The peculiarity of a society is determined by the sharing of its members of a common lifeworld which shapes the thinking horizon of the society. Within this framework of thought, the study conceptualizes a notion of modernization that if in many areas strive to rupture the current of tradition, in order to realize the universal elements of modernity, in many other areas, it serves to transmit and renew the common cultural knowledge of the past. It does this through a process of rationalization, which means that it passes on the traditional heritages to the new generations which has already filtered the heritage through its critical interrogation in the public arena. Hence, the tradition is handed over but in a regenerated form that suits the modern conditions. Therefore, modernization is not any more a mere conflicting encounter of traditionalism and modernity but also it is a
process of absorption and fusion of the past into the present.

In a country like Iran in which the society has gone through an unreflected modernization, we are dealing with the formation of different and contradictory traditions. For example from one hand we have the continuity of an un-renewed tradition, like the management of the society according to the rules of Shariia, and from other hand we are witnessing the existence of a modern tradition of political participation. In such a context if modernity were defined as a cultural entity which according to the ambitions of autonomous self-conscious subjects, opposes the traditional cultural values, modernization takes society to a no-where land, a situation that is neither modern nor traditional. By accepting a Habermasian approach, we continue to see modernization as a process of rationalization and the gradual rise of reason in a particular history. Reason and rationality are not implying the thinking faculty of the subject or of any particular historical entity, it indicates the communicative interactions of subjects with themselves and with their social conditions while they have a common ideal situation in their outlooks. In this condition of modernity, tradition cannot enter into the public arena as an established and timeless order. In modern political society, “religious people must be prepared to see their religious beliefs be challenged...The religious, and religious institutions, can only help to complete the project of modernity [that is, releasing the social enterprise from all false necessity] if they advance their beliefs as something other than unchanging and unquestionable” (Davis, 1994, p.36). Religion cannot be any longer the structural basis of the sociopolitical formation as it is in the present Iran. It can relate itself to politics and socials in many different ways but it cannot be the principle ground of a modern political society. As a result a country like Iran cannot transform into a proper modern condition unless the society be moved “in the direction of a primarily functionally differentiated system in which each functional sphere gains greater self-reliance and autonomy but
also becomes more dependent on how the other functions are fulfilled" (Tibi, 1988, p.131). In such a condition secularism cannot be considered as an intellectual conspiracy to exterminate religion. It merely compels religion to give a different nature to its presence in society. It implies that secularism must be defined as a liberating development in the history of the nation that searches to constitute a modern structure of political integration and solidarity. This notion of secularism does not prevent the state from upholding the religiously defined goods, but it upholds them when the religious goals are supported by secular reasons and therefore are accepted by different communities of the nation and they impose no threat to the basis of the democratic co-existence of the people.

Because of the particular situation of Iran in which the country is suffering from the deformity of the social institutions - traditional as well as the modern ones - a condition in which the different world views are manifested as group identities and ideologies in the sociopolitical life, the present study stands for a contextual notion of secularism. As Rajeev Bhargava puts it, "contextual secularism is the view that under certain conditions religious and political institutions must be separated on the basis of non-sectarian principles consistent with some features constitute of the modern political arena" (Bhargava, 1998, p.536). Therefore, secularism is not only a political configuration, but also is a moral concept. It outlooks society as a common ground on which different identities enjoy from an equal right to cooperate in the arrangement of society. The correlation that this study envisages between the modern political formation and secularism, does not allow Iranians to define the country and its nation according to some selected cultural and ethnical historical heritages. By reproducing itself Modernity not only regenerates and renews the old form of identities and co-existence, it also introduces new identities and values. In such a condition, "national identity' no longer should be conceived as something essential, tangible,
integrated, settled, and fundamentally unchanging" (Boroujerdi, 2002). It is time for Iranians to acknowledge the fact that by making the religion and language the focal point of their definition of nation, they deny the Iranian minorities the right to participate actively in the arrangement of the society. This notion of nationalism is not only immoral and in contrast with the inherent values of modernity, but also is dangerous for the national unity and the political integration of Iran. It is only through a secular political formation in which every member has an equal share in the definition of nation-ness that Iranians can constitute a ground of sociopolitical action on which every member as an active citizen can equally stand on an equal footing and enjoy his/its membership of the collectivity of the nation. 

By linking the project of modernization with the concept of secularism, the present study believes that, it envisions such a political formation for the coming future of Iran.

The present Iran is a deformed reality, the fusion of religion and politics is the main symptom of this deformation. Contrary to the views which attribute the aforementioned intermingling to the cultural qualities of Iran and Shiism, This thesis considers it as an outcome of the historical change and the political maneuvers of different social forces in Iran. As has been shown in previous pages, the cultural properties of Iran were more opt for a change which could take Iran into the political path of institutional separation of the realm of politics from the religious realm. But due to the definition which has been given to modernity, modernization was presented as the replacement of the traditional values and institution with the Western ones. This rapid change happening in a time, neither the Western thoughts nor the modern institutions have a place in the lifeworld and the horizon of thinking of Iranian people. The clerics and other forces of traditionalism, in order to stop the process of annihilation by the project of modernization, by mobilizing all the forces and transforming

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1 http://web.syr.edu/mbroouje/
them into the political forces, were able to subdue the entire society to their ambitions. The experiences of the post Islamic revolution convinced the majority of Iranian to dislike the institutional fusion of religion and politics. To be relieved of the deformation does not necessitate the banishment of religion from entering into public arena and completely barring its involvement in politics; at least Shi'ism does not support such a development. Bhargava's notion of secularism as a principled distance gives us opportunity to settle religion in the society in a way that neither disqualifies its public characters, nor allows religion, by becoming the basis of sociopolitical formation, misuse its position. Shi'ism in most part of its history was critic of the status quo, and most times in the interest of the common man Shi'ism confronted the state power. By accepting secularism as a principled distance, on the one hand, Shiism is able to retain its historical peculiarity, and as a critic keep its presence in the political life of the people, and on the other hand Iranians are able to live their lives without religious interference. Modernism crowns independent human reasoning, and it is only through a theory of secularism that Iranians can demarcate the areas in which they can think and manage their lives independent of the religious or political authorities.