Chapter 2

The Western Secularization, and the Illbreeding of Secularism in Religious Societies

As has been shown in the previous chapter, as a result of the particular history of Islam from its early days, Muslims enmeshed religion and politics in their worldly affairs. The flow of modernity into the Islamic world was basically the result of the extension of Western history into non-Western countries. The Islamic world encountered modernity in various ways, going from a total surrender to Western cultural hegemony to a total resistance against all aspects of modern life. In between, some of them, by adopting a critical approach towards modernity and tradition, tried to choose a moderate way vis-à-vis these two extremist alternatives. But all of them, in one way or another, dealt with religion and its relation with politics. As a result, Muslims were always troubled with the question of the precise relationship between religion and politics. It is due to the above mentioned problematic that a proper understanding of secularism becomes an imperative in the course of this study. Because of the fact that the implementation of Secularism in the region was extremely complicated and problem-ridden, many critics contended that the Islamic world, as a socio-cultural entity, was by nature resistant to secularism. The present study believes that the stubbornness of the region and its resistance to accepting any democratic secular change is not essentially related to Islam and the high sociopolitical status of religion in this part of the world. However, this study does believe that this failure is related, on the one hand, to the failure of Muslims to understand the complexity of modernity, and on the other hand to the incapability of Muslims to recognize the limits of their tradition while projecting change onto society. The relationship between religion
and politics was continuously mishandled, either by unnecessarily taking politics into religion, or - optimistically, without caring about the exigencies of modern conditions - by combining religion with politics. In both, the result was nothing but disaster for the people, either in the form of anti-modern fundamentalism, or in the shape of progressive dictatorships. It was human life and freedom that have always been sacrificed. The modern history of the Islamic world, particularly that of Iran, reveals that prior to any other solution to our requirement for a modern democracy, a theoretical framework of separation is required by which a regulation of the relationship between politics and religion can emanate in a way that suits the modern Islamic context. In the realm of political theories, secularism is the only theory that properly deals with the problem. This is not to say that we consider western secularism as a universal pattern, which could be indiscriminately applied to any part of the world. As in the case of modernity, it would be wrong to consider it as a mere Western property - although in any type of incarnation that modernity attains, it carries many of its original Western characteristics. Like modernity, secularism can also be modified without undermining its inherent values. This must be done according to the needs and exigencies of a particular context, so that secularism can regulate the relation between politics and religion and give both the space that is due to them. As has been mentioned earlier, due to the misunderstanding of the essence of modernity and tradition and the wrong projection of modernization in Iran, we are facing a deformed reality in which religion is placed in a wrong position. In order to change their societies positively, Iranians have no choice but to place religion in its proper position. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to have a proper understanding of the process of transformation as well as of the concepts that explain this process. It is also necessary to understand the context in which the project of democratic modernization has to take place. A theory of secularism is very important in this context since it limits the expansion of religion in public life, and demarcates
its place clearly.

To have a suitable notion of secularism and to understand its real nature, in the following pages, we will first trace back its origins in the Western context. Then we will discuss the views of critics who think that, due to its Western origin and nature, secularism cannot be adopted to non-Western societies.
A. The Western Political Secularization

By referring to theories and framing events into a conceptual framework, social scientists are able to grasp and describe the nature of particular social events, and discover the possible presence of a common trend among a group of events. By a comprehensive explanation and description of the happening or happened not only do they demarcate that event or events from other socio-historical events, but they also make the study and the understanding of the related social phenomena easier. Through a theoretical explanation they are able, conceptually, to halt history in its motion and catch the change, while still observing the continuity of the past in the present. Despite the usefulness of applying theories in the field of social studies, theories sometimes cause an oversimplification of historical phenomena and a vulgar understanding of the facts. Theories may also be transformed into instruments with which the social scientist approaches events in a way that reality and theory match; in other words, the theory, rather than being a means and a pattern of a better understanding, could become a deterministic law in the hand of social scientist. As a result, reality, rather than being understood, is explained according to the truths of the theory which the social scientist has chosen. "Experience should by now tell us that history moves along nudged and deflected by a multitude of contingencies. [Social scientists] seeking to discern general trends and comparative patterns should not deceive themselves that they will discover deterministic laws underlying the manifest empirical diversity. What they may hope to find are explanatory models, representing typical patterns in ideal – typical circumstances". (Wallis and Bruce, 1999, p.8).

Hence, in this study we are referring to the concept of secularization

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1 By the political secularization, we are referring to the historical process which allowed Europeans to form their political formation without taking in account the sensitivities of religious institutions.
as a pattern of study that indicates the process by which Western societies and their belief system have shifted from a more religious into a more secular one. This historical transformation, rather than being dependent on a single major factor like the thoughts of Enlightenment, or the transformation of attitudes from non-worldliness into worldliness, must be considered as the result of a variety of social as well as intellectual changes. The substance and nature of the western secularization is not only related to the contingency of the particular type of historical events through which it realized itself, but also is related to the complexity and the type of relations - social as well as intellectual - that surrounded those events. The advance of secularization with different speeds and different incarnations in Western countries is related to the dissimilarity of events and ideas the West underwent during its process of secularization.

Bryan Wilson sees secularization as the "process by which religious institutions, actions, and consciousness, lose their social significance" (Wilson, 1982, p.150). Secularization is thus regarded as a type of replacement that changes society and its fundamental organizing elements into a framework in which the social system functions without being necessarily affiliated to religion. However this does not mean that the people have lost their interest in religion. The diminishing role of the social function of religion does not imply the decline of religion in human life. Modern history shows us that by changing its function, religion can continue to play a crucial role in social life. This can happen either as being the symbol of national identities, as in the case of Israel, Ireland or Pakistan, or as a means of cultural resistance, widely used in modern times by nationalists and fundamentalists of different brands including Islamic fundamentalism, or it can continue its existence by being a mere civil religion which provides meaning and solidarity feeling, as in the case of the United States of America.
"The word secularization began as an emotive word, not far in its origins from the word anticlericalism. Sometimes it meant a freeing of the sciences, of learning, of the arts, from their theological origins. Sometimes it meant the declining influence of churches, or of religion, in modern society. Then the sociologists, heirs of Comte... made the word unemotional; a word used to describe a process" (Chadwick, 1995, p.264). The process of changing the institutionalized relation of religion and other constituents of society which took place within the broader context of modernization. This process de-monopolized the power of religion over the western society and therefore provided man with a chance and a right to do without religion.

The origin of the term in the modern times reaches back to the late thirteenth century when the Latin form of 'secular', 'saecularis' was used to distinguish two types of clergies, the clergy who lived in a monastery and was engaged only in spiritual matters, and the clergy who was living and working in society, concerned with civil and temporal matters. The secular, with a negative connotation, was used for the latter one. Since the sixteenth century the term gradually started to lose its association with 'non-sacredness'. "The word 'secular' was flung into motion and used to describe a world thought to be in motion. To 'secularize' (from the French 'séculariser') meant make someone or something secular. It meant converting them from ecclesiastical to civil use or possession" (Keane, 2000 p.6). Derived from the 'secular', secularization was attributed to a process in which the ownership of religious institutions or legal properties passed from the hands of the church and transformed to the hands and control of the princes. Hundred and forty years later, after the French Revolution, the princely ownership of the ecclesiastical properties was transformed into the state property as the representative of the nation. But secularization was much more than a mere ownership transformation in its legal terms. It was a tendency towards the institutional separation of religious authority from political power,
arts, science and economy. The anti-religiosity which is attributed to the process, must be mainly related to the particular context and historical events that preceded the secularization of Europe.

Bryan Wilson sees secularization as the happening of three interconnected processes in which society is transformed in its basics. The "differentiation", the "socialization" and the "rationalization" are the processes by which acting, thinking and the life order of western man was transformed from its medieval pattern into the modern one. By "social differentiation" Wilson refers to the process that led to the specialization and separation of roles and institutions. In medieval times, education, health, social care, legal system and the means of social control were dominated by the church or the religious institutions. With the advent of modernity and the progress of modernization these above-mentioned roles were released from the authority of the church. The disentangling of religious institutions from other spheres of social life led to the autonomy of different social institutions which until then had been directly or indirectly controlled by religious authorities. The second process, according to Wilson, is "the process in which social organization itself changes from one that it communally-based to a society-based system". (Wilson, 1982 p.153). Accordingly, religion gets its strength from community. However, in the modern age, due to the advent of the industrial revolution and other sociopolitical changes, the individual was no longer dependent on the community. In a public domain where religious beliefs are not the concern of social interests, and where individuals are connected to each other through their role performances rather than through their communal allegiances, and where social affairs are based on impersonal roles and relationships, religious commitment becomes a private matter. Therefore it becomes less relevant to the social order of society. The third significant process which Wilson associates with Western secularization is that of "rationalization". In a Weberian sense he considers it as to be a process which changes the way people
observe and contemplate the world; as the result of the change in
their mind, they act differently in the world. "Rational precepts affect
not only the economic system, and through it, the cultural sphere;
they have powerfully affected the political organization of social life
{too}. The rationally constituted economy has been followed by the
rationally constituted society and this has increasingly become the
conscious goal of modern states. Social functions are increasingly
systematized." (Ibid., p.157). Peter Berger considers rationalization as
the core element of secularization and the prerequisite of any modern
society. Therefore, if the structural differentiation and separation of
religious institutions from other spheres of society is the hallmark of
secularization, it could not have happened if was not enjoying the
presence of a high degree of the internal rationalization within the
church.

The original location of secularization as a systematized rational
activity, released from the religious authority, is the economy. The
capitalist economy was the first secular force that was able to create
an autonomous space, freed from religious interference. The extension
of this liberated space into science, culture, politics and other sections
of society, shaped the Western process of secularization. This process
could not have happened - or at least could not have expanded itself
from the economical arena - if it did not co-exist with the
secularization of mind and consciousness, not in a sense that man
became faithless, but in a sense that man was mentally able to act
without religion. It is only in this way that we can establish a causal
relation between Reformation, and later on the Enlightenment, and
secularization.

If we accept Weber's notion of "disenchantment" as a process of
elimination of magical thought from religion, as the measure of
rationalization of a religion or a "worldview", we can say that the
Judeo-Christian religions from their outset included a considerable
degree of rationalization. Antiquity was overwhelmed by the presence
of many types of gods, demons and other supernatural entities. By having only one God as the creator of every thing, the Judeo-Christian religions established a transcendental notion of the supernatural which was detached from the objectivity of the world. The Church systematized worship and the other relations between man and God. In "organizing a regulated public cult to replace private and individual attempts to harness the spiritual forces supposedly operative in the world, the great religions were incipient agencies of secularity" (Wilson, 1999, p.208). This notion of rationalization did not last long in Christianity. Despite the Church's ability to defeat paganism, the non-Christian past of the West also entered the Church. The entrance of new followers brought old beliefs into the new religion. Therefore it would not be wrong to consider the Middle Ages as the age of "re-enchantment" and return of the magic and other supernatural forces into European Christianity. The continuity of pre-Christianity in the Middle Ages, clearly can be recognized in the following statements of "Saint Augustine's preaching in Carthage: There are those who say: God is good, he is great, eternal and inviolable. It is He who will give us eternal life and that incorruption which He promised as the resurrection. But these things of the physical world and of our present time belong to the daemons and to the invisible powers" (Brown, 1995, p.9). God was not anymore the only supernatural force of the universe as had been thought by the founders of the Judeo-Christian religions, but there were many other influential forces too.

To revive the absolute transcendental notion of God as the creator of everything on earth and heaven, the Reformation and Protestantism, by eradicating the mysteries and magic from Christianity, manifested itself as the process of re-rationalization of the religion. A radical separation of the sacred from the profane was the starting point of the movement. The Church was no more considered as the single gate of salvation, in which the believers were born into and died. Individuals were equally subjected to the grace or to punishment, without being
attached to any particular community or church. There was not much distance between the equality before the eyes of God and the equality before the law. The process of secularization and the separation of law from morality of the established Church took away the above-mentioned distance. The Reformation broke down the unity of the Christian kingdom, but it brought a fragmentation which led to the devastating religion wars that in the end compelled the Europeans to enter in a state of tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

In the Middle Ages intolerance and persecution were a matter of course and a normal happening in everyday life, whereas tolerance was a sign of weakness and disrespect toward the Church and a danger for the coherence and the integrity of the community. According to this pattern of conduct, the Protestants were in the beginning as intolerant toward non-believers as the Catholics. All the main branches of the Reformation were eager to establish Christendom in their respective territories. They "were as violent in their efforts to exercise monopolistic control over their territories as the Catholics. But once the unity of Christendom was effectively broken, a process was set in motion that made further fragmentations much easier of accomplishment and which eventually, for practical rather than ideological reasons, led to an ever-widening toleration of religious deviance both in the Protestant and Catholic territories." (Berger, 1969, p.136). Due to the historical changes that accompanies the Reformation, it became clear that state and society had to be tolerant in order to survive. The wars of religion convinced Europeans to tolerate if they wished to save their national integrity, while living peacefully with their neighbors.

As a result of the acceptance of a pluralist secularization, religious groups were forced to compete with non-religious groups in defining the world and the social order. Religion was forced to distance itself from its monopolistic situation that it was enjoying during the Middle Ages, and it was forced to enter a market situation and compelled to
follow the rules and logic of market economy. It was no longer a question of 'who could be the chosen of God?'; in a market-like situation man was choosing his God. In the new pluralistic situation the Christian solution to the human condition was considered irrelevant. The seizure of the different spheres of social life by the forces of rationalization shifted religion into the irrational realm of human life. Only through the use of human reason in a purposive manner, was it possible for Europeans to establish a suitable sociopolitical order that could bring the highly demanded political unity into society. Europe did not reach the pluralism of worldviews and rational political management of society through mere philosophical debates and gradual rationalization of their religion. It took years of wars and a huge amount of bloodshed that Europe had never experienced before. If Europe had not reshaped her political identity, it would not have been possible for Europeans to live in a pluralist situation where politics and religion are institutionally separated.

Although in its opening move the Reformation was taking place almost free of bloodshed its peaceful development did not last long. The French wars of religion during 1562 – 1598 transformed a political rivalry into a bloody conflict between the followers of the established Catholic Church and the new churches of the Reformation. During three days, in August 1572, more than twenty thousand non-combatant Protestants were hunted down and executed. This massacre shook the Protestants, and as a result they no longer considered the Catholic Church as a deviated form of Christianity, but as the devil that was determined to exterminate the Protestants. Protestantism became a militant struggle for survival, abandoning its identity as a reforming movement. This long civil-religious war in France ended only in April 1598 when, with the support of moderate Catholics, Protestants got “the right to worship publicly, to occupy public office, to assemble, to gain admission to schools and
universities, and to administer their own towns." In the other parts of Europe the situation was not better. Spain, the strongest Catholic monarchy of the sixteenth century, used religious faith to defeat Muslim Turkey. Then it continued with the same zeal against Jews and Protestants, and nothing could stop it until it was defeated by the united armies of English and Dutch Protestants in May 1588.

The Thirty Years' War (1618 – 1648) was the most devastating of the series of wars which Europe observed. The main battlefield was the Holy Roman Empire, extended from the North Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, a loose collection of a huge number of autonomous city-states or province states, half predominately Protestant and the other half predominantly Catholic. When in 1618 North Bavaria (Protestant) and South Bavaria (Catholic) entered into the war, almost every state in Europe was in war, in support of one side or the other, a kind of war that Europe had never witnessed before. It only ended by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. As a result of the treaty, Calvinism got recognition and each state of the Holy Roman Empire was allowed to decide its own religion.

The uneasy path which Europe took towards political sovereignty and the formation of nation-state, ended with the secularization of the state and the autonomy of the legal and political system from religion. The secularization of politics was simply a necessary political expedient. Europe separated religion from politics not because it hated religion, but because it was the only way to survive and to live in peace with the neighbors. The universalism that the Roman Church was propagating was no more possible. The church could not survive under the old fashioned internationalism of Christianity. The overthrow and execution of Charles I in England in the middle of the seventeenth century by unhappy Protestants who did not want to have a Catholic King, changed the face of Europe: religion became part of national consciousness, therefore a constituent part of political identity, but was no more a source of political management, a fact
which could not have been welcomed by the Roman Church.

Despite the crucial role that the Reformation played in the formation of the European secular state and society, the Reformation is not identical with secularization. Reformation basically was a religious movement that led to establishment of new Churches, which resulted in the disposition of new political allegiances that polarized Europe and took her to the long series of civil and national wars. The founders of the Reformation never wanted and planned to do without religion, it was more of a different religious approach. The separation of state from Church was the result of the extreme religious intolerance, which, following advent of the Reformation, ushered into Europe. The contingencies of the historical events of Europe imposed the secularization of politics and demanded a new foundation for social order in which “the public domain had to be regulated by certain norms or agreements which were independent of confessional allegiance, and could in some way be ensured against overturn in the name of such allegiances. Rules of peace, even with heretics, and obedience to legitimate authority, even where schismatic, had to be put beyond revocation in the name of one or other version of orthodoxy” (Taylor, 1998, p.32).

Although we accept the political secularization of Europe as a political necessity, we cannot deny the importance and influence of the new outlooks and political thoughts on the shape and the type of the manifested secularization. Surely if it was not due to the ideas of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke and the thinkers of Enlightenment that the realization of secularization would not have been the same in Europe. In other words, by the middle of the seventeenth century, conceptually and mentally, Europe was prepared to erect a secularized form of political arrangement.

The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 was the official end of traditional Europe with the anchoring of Roman Catholic Church in society and
politics. But there was a long way to go for society to get rid of intolerance and tyrannical rules. The brutality of the new despotic monarchs was much more than that of the kings of the Middle Ages. Europe entered its secular absolutist phase. As mentioned by Wallbank, "since the late medieval period, rulers had been attempting to centralize their authority at the expense of feudal nobles and the church. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, however, religious strife blurred political issues and somewhat restricted developing monarchies. After the Peace of Westphalia which ended the era of disastrous religious wars, absolutism rapidly gained popularity because it promised to restore order and security." (Wallbank, 1998, p.1). The court of Louis XIV and his absolutist way of ruling became the ideal pattern for other monarchies of Europe. The kings were not the only ones who had interest in an absolute form of government. The importance of order and peace for the development or even mere survival convinced every section of society to welcome absolutism. Businessman and emerging capitalism had more interest in this political transformation than others did. The age of absolutism was also the age of mercantilism, where kings and businessmen needed each other. The capitalism of this age depended on the overseas trade, and it could not develop without government protection and different types of subsidies. The absolute state also needed a lot of money to manage the society. Capitalism was providing the vital sources and taxes for the king. Mercantilism and the European states' competition for the colonization of other parts of the world resulted in this partnership between kings and newly emerging capitalists. The organized religion remained important under absolutism but with a different function. Earlier dominating the ideas on politics, from the middle of seventeenth century, the Churches – Protestant as well as Catholic - became subordinate to the court and to the secular ends of the despotic Kings, degenerating into an agency of political authorities.
Contrary to the entire continent, where a French style of absolutism was dominating, England took another path of political development. The second half of the seventeenth century in England was marked by the struggles and wars between the English kings and the Parliament. In 1688 by the dethroning James II and the "Glorious Revolution", England subordinated her King to the Parliament, and therefore enjoyed a different pattern of political secularization, which, compared to its French style, was more tolerant and democratic while less hostile toward the religion and the religious institutions.¹

By directing our study towards the historical events that led to the political secularization of Europe, we tried, in brief, to describe the political secularization as one of the ancestral roots of secularism, in its original context. In next part we will try to study another important root of western secularism: the Enlightenment as an intellectual movement, which provided secularism with many of its political values.

¹ The information regarding the dates and places of wars, and peace treaties and other historical information in this section has been collected from the website: WIKIPEDIA, The Free Encyclopedia, www.wikipedia.org
B. The Advent of the New Outlooks and the Further Conceptual Development of Secularism

As mentioned in previous pages the political secularization of Europe, by which we mean the separation of the Church from state, was basically an outcome of specific historical challenges. As a result, it will be wrong if we consider the process as a hostile pre-planned intellectual project against religion, although it is undeniable that in its historical formation and the shape secularization attained in Europe, intellectual developments played a major role. The new intellectual developments not only targeted the theoretical basis of the traditional establishments of church and state, but also they were aimed to outline the path of further developments. By eliminating "mystery, miracle and magic" from the sacred and religion, the Reformation paved the way for the further rationalization of the world. The reality pictured by Protestantism is a reality "polarized between a radically transcendent divinity and a radically 'fallen' humanity that, ipso facto is devoid of sacred qualities." (Berger, 1969, p.112). The depoliticized notion of religion allowed the European man, at least in the realm of thought, to establish a man-made order of society. In beginning it did not mean, "man" per se but only "one man": the king, the divine shadow on earth, was allowed to enjoy this privilege.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Europe witnessed a movement that aimed at regaining the dignity by giving respect to human creativity, which was believed to be lost due to belittling of man by the Christianity. The movement attempted to achieve the glory, which ancient Greeks and Romans had enjoyed. The movement is known as 'Renaissance' or the rebirth of Europe. In the hands of the Renaissance thinkers antiquity and the pagan tradition became a means of novelty, creation and pride. It was contradictory to the dominant Christian tradition in which, in the name of glory of the Church, man was advised to keep himself away from a worldly glorious life.
Nicolo Machiavelli, a witness to the suffering of Italy under the division and instability of its city-states and subjected to intervention of foreign powers, belongs to this period of rebirth. In the name of real politik, he emphasized the separation of morality from politics. As a result, he was able, at least theoretically, to lay the foundations of a secular absolutist government, released from the type of morality that was imposed on politics by religion. If we consider secularization as a process in which Europe rejects the Christian solution for its sociopolitical context, surely Machiavelli should be considered as the first theorist of secularization. He banishes religion from politics because in his view it is irrelevant to politics. Therefore, whenever it enters into the political arena it will bring hindrances rather than solutions to the difficulties that states have to face.

Under the condition of prolonged wars, Europe's value preferences had been changed. The desire of peace and order replaced the desire of religious salvation. As a result of the requirement of the age, the religious principles were no longer considered as a foundation in the different realms of society. “The religious foundation of society, law and culture was replaced by another, and that new foundation was called human nature. Thus there arose systems of natural law, natural morality and even natural religion. And, of course, there was a natural theory of government, presented in the form of social contract theories” (Panneberg, 1996, p.29). Thomas Hobbes is among the first who by referring to human nature theorized the compulsion of an absolutist state. He was a materialist who under the influence of the mechanical philosophy of Galileo considered world as a matter in motion. Being a part of the world, human social life was thus determined by nature and the conditions, which his social life was imposing on him. In this way, in the making of social order there is no place for the agents of heaven. According to Hobbes, man basically enjoys a vicious character, by nature he is a “brutish”, “nasty”, and “selfish” man, cruel as a wild beast. “Hobbes believed man may exist
in a "state of nature" at any time. What the "state of nature" refers to is man's basic instincts or how man will act when not guided by any external authority" (Anger, 2002, p.1). "Liberty" and "self-preservation" are the constituent elements of the "natural law"; to retain the above-mentioned principles man has to enter into a continuous war with his neighbors. Due to this human nature, the "state of nature" would soon be replaced by the "state of war" in which man acts like a wolf. The "state of war" which Hobbes pictures is not so dissimilar to the situation in Europe in 1648, in which all states were fighting each other. To cease to be in such a desperate condition, man voluntarily gives up the principles of natural law. To gain peace, man accepts the establishment of an "external impediment" which Hobbes calls 'Leviathan' or state. Being in favor of peace and order, man therefore submits all of his rights to the state that he establishes through the social contract, an external power that dominates every aspect of his life.

Hobbes's trend of thought, which was in favor of state determination and absolutist government denounces the freedom and public's role in the process of sociopolitical decision making, did not become the predominant tradition of political thought in Europe. The Hobbesian theory of social contract denied in human nature anything inherently good, which could be considered as the basis of the social contract. It was a mere outcome of human fear. As has been mentioned by the Jewish author, Mendelssohn in 1783, " if there is, in the state of nature, no binding obligation other than that based upon fear and powerlessness, contracts will remain valid only as long as they are supported by fear and powerlessness. Thus, men by their contracts, will not have come any closer to their security, and will still find themselves in the primitive state of universal warfare" (Mendelssohn,2001, p. 212)

As Europe grew distant from a state of war and by growth of absolutism, mainly in France, in continuity with the Renaissance's
humanism, some intellectuals of Paris and London pioneered a new trend of philosophical thought that eventually shaped the main part of our modern political values. This intellectual development was happening while Europe was simultaneously rediscovering two worlds, one in space and heaven by scientists like Copernicus and Galileo, and another on earth by the information, which was coming to Europe by the merchants, travelers, conquerors and missionaries, regarding the life of other nations outside of Europe. The new knowledge led to creation of a new cosmopolitan outlook. The man of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries came to know that there was nothing special and inherent in the European sociopolitical pattern of life, and there was no reason for him not to attempt to change the dominant order in favor of a better pattern of life. But this awareness did not take them to immediate action. “The Age of Enlightenment was an age of ferment but most of the ferment was expressed in words rather than action. Not until the close of the 18th century did the arguments erupt into revolution and war” (Gay, 1966, p. 165). The uniqueness of the age was related to the idea that the formation of better living conditions could be attainable by merely leaning on human reason. By elevating human reason to the illuminative force of combating superstition, ignorance and tyranny, the intellectuals of the eighteenth century named their age, the age of Enlightenment, the crowning of human reason. The Enlightenment once more cherished the idea of social contract, not because of fear and man’s powerlessness, but because man’s conviction in human reason and his ability to construct a perfect world.

Denis Diderot in his Encyclopaedia (1751) considers his age as a “philosophical age” with a more demanding intellectual quest than in previous ages. “All things must be examined, debated, investigated without exception and without regard for any one’s feeling... (We must) overturn the barriers that reason never erected.” (Diderot, 2001, p.158). It was a daring project and could not have happened without
the entire reconstruction of the edifice of Western philosophical thought. This reconstruction work began with Descartes’ Discourse on Method in 1637, when the author was in the Netherlands, far away from the French Catholic censorship system. To bring back philosophy to its rational foundation and in order to arrive at certainty, he called for a “clear and methodical thinking” by which one could reach self-evident axioms. “He wanted to build a view of the world that all rational man would accept ... the student of nature, he argued, must discard all questionable preconceptions and begin his intellectual construction from clear and distinct ideas”(Gay, 1966, p. 16). By applying methodical and radical doubt to the contents of his thinking, he reaches a clear fact: the only incontestable truth which one cannot argue about, is the act of thinking itself, the starting point of modern philosophy: I think, therefore I am, “cogito ergo sum”.

Before Descartes, philosophy was a way to explain the existing truth of the world, but with Descartes this relation changed and the reality and existence became conditioned by the truth of thought. The Enlightenment saw itself as a illuminating force penetrating the obscurities of the Middle Ages, a home to “ignorance, superstition, clerical dominance, religious intolerance, social hierarchy, inequality in the distribution of wealth, pre-emption of the best positions in society on grounds of birth, and other states of mind and social institutions which were the objects of rationalistic and progressivistic censure” (Shils, 1983, p.6). Although the brutality of absolutism was forcing the intellectuals of the age to be softer in their criticism towards the monarchs and states than towards the Church, they had strong faith in the idea that diffusion of rationality and scientific knowledge would not only terminate the domination of the Roman Catholic Church, but also restrain the power of the state.

Predominantly the Enlightenment does not reject the existence of God, although many thinkers of the age were atheists. To release God from religious institutions, the Enlightenment thinkers viewed God and
nature with the same substance, therefore, like Hobbes, they believed moral rules of social life to be extracted from natural law rather than from the instructions of the Church. Yet, this notion was very different from Hobbes’s materialistic notion of nature and far from his distrust regarding the natural goodness of human beings. There is still a Christian echo, particularly in Rousseau and Locke’s views. According to Locke, “without a belief in God, the individual (a) cannot be counted a rational being; (b) is no better than a dangerous beast..., (c) is incapable of holding society of fellowship with other beings ... ‘without notion of a law-maker, it is impossible to have a notion of law, and obligation to observe it” (Aschcraft, 1996, p. 201). In the Catholic Church the concept of freedom was linked to the concepts of original sin, redemption and salvation, but in continuity with the Reformation, the Enlightenment considered man’s conscience as a matter of private interest, and nobody has right to interfere in others’ belief matters. As mentioned by Locke, “it is out of the power of any man to make another a representative for himself in matter of religion” (Ibid., p. 204). By making salvation a personal affair, the Enlightenment releases social rules and morality from the domination of the Church, but unlike Hobbes, does not give them to the state but hands them over to common man and society. The critique of religion turns into the critique of social formation and in this way a new meaning was given to the concept of freedom. For the Enlightenment, freedom meant freedom from restraints and from the conditions which do not allow man to apply reason to his life. This idea was in a large measure related to the Enlightenment’s belief in human nature: man was basically good, owning some sense of “a common humanity, some concern for fellowship” and if man be free to choose, “good shall be chosen rather than evil”, thus men were not wolves to each other, but friends and concerned about the welfare and well-being of other human beings. It was due to this belief in human nature that Enlightenment thinkers honored liberty and equality before law and held the idea that, “if we ask in what precisely consists the greatest
good of all, which should be the end of every system of legislation, we shall find it reduce itself to two main objects, liberty and equality” (Rousseau, 2001, p. 195). As a result they considered the official institutions, basically the Church and the state, as the main reason not only for man’s evils, but also the main hindrance in man’s development toward a perfect society.

Contrary to Diderot, Luther and other philosophers, who were considering themselves enlightened and obligated to illuminate others, Kant, while acknowledging that the time was an age of enlightenment, did not consider himself obligated to enlighten others; rather, he encouraged people to think independently and more deeply. Basically this was due to the fact that Enlightenment was related to a few who dared to get rid of their immaturity; therefore he considered it to be a personal endeavor. For Kant, “immaturity is the inability to use one’s own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of Enlightenment is therefore: Have courage to use your own understanding” (Kant, 1996, p.51). Kant believed that man had a long way to go to reach the daring position of questioning everything, including religion. For Kant prejudices were the main constraints on man’s way to enlightenment.

On the contrary, the majority of the Enlightenment thinkers believed that the way to enlightenment was not so very far, optimistically hoped that man would shake off all prejudices very soon. They thought enlightenment would be realized through the employment of reason and the expansion of scientific knowledge into every corner of man’s life and society. The Enlightenment was presented as a project of ‘scientification’ to remove the prejudices of the traditional life. The man of the Enlightenment believed that “dogmas and formulas...are the ball chain of his permanent immaturity” (Ibid., p 52).
In favor of reason and freedom, Kant appreciated doubt and skepticism. Science became the new religion of the age; at least for the philosophers of Encyclopaedia, science was the only legitimate foundation of any thought and principle. They were convinced that man could not affirm anything that science denies, and not reject anything that science affirms. This extreme faith in scientific reason pushed all non-rational entities of human life, including religion, into the realm of irrationality. The radicals of Enlightenment, particularly in France, were committed to annihilation of religion through disposing its untruths. The Bible was reduced to a historical text that could be rationally criticized, and untruth of its stories could be revealed. It was almost only in the French Enlightenment that the truth of religion had been challenged radically. On the contrary, in France and Germany the enlightenment did not display hostile feelings towards religion to such an extent.

The confirmation of the above fact does not lead us to blame the Enlightenment thinkers for all anti-religiosity that emerged from France. The Church was the official legitimizing agency and defender of all brutality and corruption that the political system imposed on society. Therefore it is not related to the ideas of the Enlightenment if we read that "[e]arly in the eighteenth century a French man wanted to strangle the last King with the guts of the last priest; that is, he regarded throne and altar as the two pillars of the prevailing order of society which he wanted to overthrow" (Chadwick, 1995, p.107). The hatred toward the aristocrats, clergy and the king was mainly rooted in the old regime and in the stubbornness of a tradition which neither had enough honesty to respect its own principles, nor enough courage to adjust itself to the new conditions of life. The clerics, who were inviting people to self-abnegation and following the path of life that was believed to have been practiced by Jesus Christ, had a style of life which was closer to those who crucified Jesus. The Roman Church officially legitimiz 88
which were executed on the people. By giving a divine right to the King, the church tied its fate to the fate of the political system, and reduced itself to a political agent among other agents of the king. This is the fact which explains why secularization in the non-Catholic part of Europe and America did not possess the same anti-religious character that it had in France.

Nowadays it is fashionable to criticize the Enlightenment thinkers, usually without mentioning the suffering of man in the pre-modern society. They are blamed for an oversimplification of reality through a shallow critique of the sociopolitical order. Without knowing the exact direction, they led people into the revolution, Robespierre and the age of terror. They violently uprooted the social institutions including religious and political, and then did not know how to stop their own created flood. It may be true that the Enlightenment thinkers were wrong in many of their convictions, like seeing nature as a machine, or in their deism, or in their messianic hope in a perfect future, and in their absolutist faith in the completeness of human reason, but none of these imply that the basic values of Enlightenment are irrelevant to our current conditions and that we should reject these values completely. Most of the values which Enlightenment praised are still fundamental values of any modern society: the strong desire for freedom of thought and speech. The hatred of ignorance and tyranny are as crucial to us as they were to the Enlightenment. Today nobody goes for a total scientification of the world, but nobody can also deny the importance of science in modern life. The Enlightenment's requirement for self-determination and its belief in man's capability to use his reason, not only in order to understand the world but also to make it a better place, are our primary principles too. This hope and trust in human reason for a better future are also the main factors that make the Enlightenment's thought relevant to our Asian conditions. Many of the non-western societies are suffering, in different ways, not only from an overwhelming presence of the past
but also from presence of the modern institutions, which are projected wrongly.

In this chapter we tried so far to study the two crucial processes of European history which both were part of the greater process of modernization. First we briefly studied the political secularization (the institutional separation of church and state) of Europe and considered it as the outcome of the political necessities without any ideological background. The second was the Enlightenment, the main intellectual process that in many ways influenced the future trends of thought in Europe. The Enlightenment disconnected the concept of good from its religious base, and advocated a notion of civil virtue that it was good to do good, in this way it paved the way for a notion of morality which could be based on secular reasoning, but not necessarily Christian or anti-Christian. By changing man's framework of thinking in the next centuries the Enlightenment changed the entire intellectual horizon of Europe. Man became committed to the idea that the social processes are controllable and man is able to fix or to change reality in a way that he desires.

The nineteenth century witnessed a Europe which under the pressure of modernization, industrial revolution and "print capitalism", was enjoying a fast development, particularly in the realms of economy and science. The new developments created new cleavages and differences in society. The class division was among the worst. This situation led to emergence of many kinds of social and political groupings, supported by some kind of ideological background. Hence, in the mid-nineteenth century, the first "secular society" was founded in England; "secularism" being the concept by which the group differentiated and separated itself from other sociopolitical groups. In 1851 the term 'secularism' was coined by George Jacob Holyoake, a socialist who did not want to be considered and recognized as an atheist. On the advice of a friend, he called himself a 'secularist', and became the founder of the "secular societies" in various towns of
England. "They were an offshoot of socialist inheritance... some of the groups in the West Riding, were almost wholly and scarcely at all irreligious... Secularists campaigned to make the state more secular... for the most part, by men without desire to make society more secular" (Chadwick, 1995, pp.91, 93). However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the secularists became more hostile toward religion. Unlike the philosophers of Enlightenment, they were not challenging the truth of religion, but from a moral point of view they attacked the injustice of the Christian Church. They disapproved the religious establishment and the official role of religion in the social formations, not in the name of knowledge, but in the name of equal freedom. As a result, secularism was not considered to be a rational argument against the truth of Christianity; as it was not rejecting the truth of religion, but just considered religion as being irrelevant for social management. The secularists were arguing that the welfare of society requires a type of knowledge, which can be tested, experienced and extended, therefore social arrangement needs secular knowledge and not the religious dogmas, and this has nothing to do with an anti-religious feeling.

To understand the concept of secularism in the way that the present day understands it, we have to trace its origin back to before its early incarnation in the secular society of London in 1851. According to Charles Taylor, "the origin point of modern Western secularism was the wars of religion"; therefore, a search to get out of the horror, and a need for a common ground for the coexistence of the different Christian denominations led Europe to secularization of politics and the institutional separation of Church and state. Despite the close relationship between secularism and secularization, conceptually and historically they are different. The concept of secularization indicates processes that are happening in different realms of society, for example the secularization of art, or the secularization of science and education, or of politics and so forth, where secularization means

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detachment from religion and where religion is excluded from any exercise of authority over these matters. But secularism is mainly a matter of political outlook and therefore more philosophical than practical; it is a value-based framework in which secularization can be projected. Secularism is also related to the Enlightenment, to the process in which man tried to lay the philosophical foundation of a secularized notion of good, independent of the religious reasoning. Similar to the Enlightenment, secularism also propagates human reason and values science, and by applying them to human affair, it makes man able to improve his living conditions.

From all that has been mentioned up to now, we might say that the origin of Western secularism can be related to three correlated and crucial moments of European history: (a) The internal rationalization of the Church and the separation of some mundane activities from the spiritual ones and its further development during the Reformation movement (b) the wars of religion and the political secularization followed by the separation of the church from the state, (c) and to the Enlightenment where man by mere philosophical reasoning planned an alternative sociopolitical formation, and laid the foundation of a secular morality. Each of these three processes, which enjoy an ancestral relation to secularism, can offer a different ground for a secular morality. Considering the modern western social order, Charles Taylor distinguishes two different processes which each, by using a different set of reasons, provided a peculiar ground for the public morality of a secular order. Accordingly, in the first process, “[t]he aim was to establish a certain ethic of peaceful coexistence and political order, a set of grounds for obedience, which while still theistic...was based on those doctrines which were common to all Christian sects.” [However with reference to the second process, we are] “trying to define an independent political ethic ... we look for certain features of the human condition which allow us to deduce certain exceptional norms, including those of peace and political
obedience...the basis of an independent ethic" (Taylor, 1998, p.4). The ancestral roots or the starting points of secularism offer different strategies for different situations. In non-Western societies where the process of political secularization is absent or is not fully implemented, the forces of pro-or anti-secularism, according to the situation and context and their interests, only associate secularism with one of its original premises. In a country like Iran where the society is in pain by excessive intervention of religious institutions in every matter of social life, the separation of mundane from non-mundane can be a better choice to ground a secular morality.

Secularism may be defined as a process that decides the outlines of the shape that secularization will take. In other words, it may be termed the ideology of secularization. Logically speaking there is no problem in this definition, although it may imply a systematic exclusion of religion from the different areas of human life. According to Bradlaugh, being a secularist in the nineteenth century was necessarily associated with being an atheist therefore radically hostile toward religion. Contrary to the above mentioned notion of secularism, Bhargava believes that a complete secularization of society is neither desirable nor possible, therefore a proper theory of secularism should not only justify the separation of religion from politics, but also offer a sketch of how the two must be related: "it follows that an adequate theory of secularism must answer at least three questions: first, is it possible to separate religion and politics? Second, why must religion be separated from politics? What justifies the separation of religion and politics? Third, how, after separation, must the two relate to one another?" (Bhargava, 1998, p.488). Considering these questions, we have to assume that only a context-sensitive theory could be regarded as a proper theory. As mentioned earlier, in Western societies the political secularization preceded the conceptual formation of secularism; and while the former was considered as the process of separation of the Church from the state and the privatization of
religion, the latter was considered as a project outlining the continuation and farther extension of secularization in society. Therefore it was expected from a secular state to be disconnected from religion and religious ends. The reason forwarded was the need to provide an equal access to the state for every member of society, and an obligation to the state to treat its subjects even-handedly, regardless of their religious allegiances. Therefore the de-establishment of the religion was the primary requirement for the realization of the project which aimed to institutionalize the equal citizenship.

The above-mentioned notion of secularism was an answer to a particular problem in a particular context within its specific historical conditions. The context-specificity of secularism does not deny its transformability to other societies that are facing similar problems. The differences in context, history and nature of the institutions – religious or non-religious – which are involved in the process, compel secularism to have a different incarnation, compared to its original realization in its Western context. Whether we consider secularism as an ideology, or as an outlook of attitudes, or as a framework of living peacefully in a diversified society, or as a framework of action which clarifies that area of society which should go under secularization and the area which should be kept away from the process of secularization, or even if we equalize secularism with secularization, in every case, it always stands for the particular end. Passing through internal rationalization in the Church, referring to its origin in the wars of religion, the attaining and preservation of peace, and an openness toward the world are in top priority of secularism. Passing through the Enlightenment and experiencing the social cleavages of the nineteenth century and its further extension into the twentieth century, make liberty, equality and trust in human reason among the other top preferences of secularism. Therefore wherever these values are threatened, and somehow deprived from realization, secularism is
applicable. According to the priority that society gives to the various values, and according to the available options in a particular context, the separation of religion from politics can take many kinds of shapes and formations, as Bhargava mentioned from a total exclusion to a "Principled distance". That is why in a society where people are mainly religious the principles of equality and liberty force the secular state to opt for a policy of equal respect, rather than of equi-distance, to the different religious groups. Contextual sensitivity of secularism means that in a country, which, due to an uncompleted modernization and lack of modern elements of nation building suffers from ethnic and cultural diversities, secularism may be viewed as a framework which provides each community its due space, therefore bringing peace among the contending communities. To respect the liberty of each community to attempt cultural self-preservation, secularism may transform itself into an anti-secularization force, which preserves diversities and differences. Therefore we assume that, rather than having a universal pattern of secularism, we have various kinds of secularism. In chapter four we will thus try to choose and foster a more appropriate notion of secularism to our particular context. In the remaining part of this chapter we will examine the views that consider secularism as a mere Western production which cannot be transferred to the religious countries of Asia.
C. Omnipresence of Religion and the Awkwardness of Secularism: A Reality or a Prejudice?

The history of the twentieth century shows that secularism did not know any of high days in Asian countries, which have a reputation for a heavy presence of religious identities in their public life. This is not only the case of the Islamic countries where secularism never peacefully coped with reality. It is same with a country like India with a strong tradition of democratic institutions, but still suffering from a huge amount of violence that religious issues periodically cause in. This had two implications for Asian societies: one was that the harsh truth of reality strengthened the religious fanatics and fundamentalists who always considered secularism as an illegitimate theory and its basic values irrelevant to Asian culture. The other was that it also led a group of academicians and social thinkers - while appreciating the political and cultural tolerance and the coexistence of different communities - to conclude that in Islamic societies or in India secularism is either a non-functioning factor and therefore irrelevant to Asian life, or malfunctioning and thus creating more harm than good, and therefore not to be trusted as the basis of the political formation of society. Both these groups believe in an alternative concept of political coexistence, mainly derived from the pre-modern sources of the sociopolitical order. In the following pages we are going to discuss and examine these ideas to find out whether the presence and continuity of the problems are to be attributed to the inadequacy of secularism or rather to the way by which secularism has been understood and implemented in society.

Among the critics there are those who consider secularism as the ideology of modernization, and a part of a full package of concepts, institutions and ideologies, which were set up in order to create a Western man in the East, "[not] the Western man of history, but the Western man as the defeated civilization of our times have construed him. This Western man rules the world, it seems to the defeated,
because of his superior understanding of the relationship between religion and politics" (Nandy, 1998, p.334). Through this psychological analysis of history, Nandy sees the adoption of secularism in the East, from its beginning, as the result of the misunderstanding of an elite group who, under the mal-influence of a particular time consciousness, failed to recognize the capabilities and strengths of their own tradition, which during thousands of years was able to grow the mechanisms and accommodations by which the different faiths and communities were able to live together, not always, but mainly, peacefully. In traditional life religion was the main source of the presence of tolerance and coexistence in society. Accordingly, accepting the values of secularism and restricting religion to private life, means depriving society from its most important means of "accommodation and adjustment", therefore leading society to disorder and disability. Usually beyond the above-mentioned trend of critique there is also a nostalgic longing for a dreamland, a social order in which "tradition was said to be an integral part of that order. Tradition was alleged to be a guarantor of order and of the quality of civilization." (Shils, 1983, p.19). By referring to the presence of religious tolerance and cultural pluralism, for example during the reign of emperor Ashoka or emperor Akbar, on the one hand they are indicating the capabilities of traditional life to arrange the relationships between different communities and groups in a peaceful manner, and on the other hand they are claiming that the presence of violence and communal strife in society is related to the encroachment of modernism and the impotency of secularism in settling the newly emerged problems – mainly communal ones. Consequently, they recommend the return of traditional sources of social order, because, "{t}he traditional ways of life have, over the centuries, developed internal principles of tolerance, and these principles must have a play in contemporary politics" (Nandy, 1998, p.336). Apparently this is a reference to the kind of Gandhian politics during the Indian struggle of independence, which believed that by bringing religion into public
The main flaw in the above-mentioned approach is related to its hell-and-heaven based notion of history. As mentioned earlier, according to the trend, traditional life had its own principles of tolerance and coexistence, "cultural pluralism within the state was an accepted fact and the Hind King was everybody's protector within the Kingdom. The basis of a common state was the recognition of the legitimacy of cultural differences" (Madan, 1983, p.12). In this way traditional life was not only able to provide a meaning for society but also to develop the principles of tolerance and coexistence through which the order of social life could be sustained. Accordingly, everything was fine till the emergence of modernity and the introduction of new principles of social order into society, which uprooted human beings from their natural way of life and took them from the heaven of traditional life into the hell of modern life. Therefore "to accept the ideology of secularism is to accept the ideologies of progress and modernity as the new justification of domination, and the use of violence to sustain these ideologies as the new opiates of the masses" (Nandy, 1998, p.343). The attribution of these epithets to modernity and to describe it as a mere process of rationalization and domination, rather than explaining modernity, is unfairly aimed at debasing secularism as the ideology of modernism. Nandy and Madan are thus inclined to present secularism as an exclusive property of Western life. They prefer to link secularism to Protestantism and the internal rationalization of Christianity and its further mingling with the Enlightenment and modern sciences. Deliberately they disconnect, or at least overlook, the relation of secularism with the political secularization of Europe at the end of the Wars of Religion. They ignore that political secularization in the first place was a mere political expediency to end one of the worst types of collective violence that human history ever witnessed. Violence was not due to a disruption of the traditional
social order by introducing the modern values and the modern ways of life. The eruption of violence and its continuation before the age of modern ideologies displayed the failure of the Christian tradition to develop a new resolution to the problems that brought devastating disorders and divisions into society. The Wars of Religion were the continuation of the intolerance of the traditional life, the continuation of a tradition which has firstly shown its intolerance to paganism in the beginning of the Christian era, then during the fifteenth century at the time of the Spanish inquisition and the violent uprooting of Jewish and Muslims from Spain [1492], and secondly its further expansion was manifested during the persecution of Protestants in the sixteenth century. Therefore, secularization, rather than merely being considered as the process of separation of Church from state, must be considered as a political prudence which was set up in order to bring peace and the possibility of coexistence of believers and non-believers, while the traditional based political system failed to provide this highly required demand. Seeing how secularism originally developed in Europe Bhargava asserts that, "[i]n conditions of religious warfare more generally in the face of irresolvable conflicts ... whenever conflicts became uncontainable and insufferable, something resembling a politically secular state simply had to emerge" (Bhargava, 1998, p.497), and it does not matter whether this is in Europe or anywhere else. Secularism should be separated from the idea which considers it to be an exclusive property of the Christian history. Hence, wherever man's life has been threatened because of his belief, or he is being deprived of his fundamental rights because of what he believes, secularism can be projected. The absence of the Christian church does not make secularism irrelevant to the Asian societies, but it is the presence of horror and the imposition of tremendous violence on the life of innocents in the name of religion that makes secularism an imperative to the Asian societies.

Secularism is in much more pain when it wants to accommodate itself
in Islamic societies. From its very beginning Islam has been considered as a religion of state as well as a religion of faith. “As Mohammed was both head of state and messenger of God, so too were the envoys and soldiers of the state the envoys and soldiers of Islam, its first missionaries. Along with their treaties and armies, they brought the Quran and the teaching of their faith. They spread a way of life that affected the political and social order as well as individual life and worship. Islam encompassed both a faith and a sociopolitical system.” (Espoasito, 1998, p.33) The new order had encompassed a community of believers, who, as the mere name of Islam conveys, accepted to surrender themselves and their will to the will and the law of God, as prescribed by the Quran and the words of Mohammed. Describing Islam according to this ideal type of Islamic order leaves no place to distinguish between “God and Caesar” as is the case of Christianity. This is the fact which makes some of Muslims to think that secularism is in total contradiction with the basic principles of Islam. They consider the emergence of secularism and the secularization of politics in Western countries as the corollary of the development of particular elements of Christianity in history, therefore a lack of those elements in Islam and its history constitute enough reason to consider secularism as irrelevant to Islam. The semi-divine character of Jesus Christ and the incarnation of this quality into the body of the Church and considering pope as the successor of Jesus Christ vis-à-vis the emperor, is the characteristic dissimilarity of Islam with Christianity.

As has been mentioned by Davutoglu, these distinctions led to the formation of two alternative outlooks and “self-perceptions”, of which each one establishes a particular type of threefold relationship between man and his God, his surrounding world and his other fellow human beings. The Christian self-perceptions “lead to an image of the semi-divine being an intermediary ontological category. The divine character of Christ and its immanence in the Christian church
provided an ontological-theological justification for the special mission and status of the clerical class. These were then transformed into an intellectual and political control mechanism led by the clergy throughout the medieval centuries. (Davutoglu, 2000, p.178).

Accordingly, secularization must be considered as a process directed towards the rehistorisation and rationalization of religion in order to eliminate the semi-divine character of the Church. By referring to the different concepts of divinity and the absence of any semi-divine character in Islam, Davutoglu dismisses the formation of a holy Church and sacred class of clergy in Islamic societies, mainly because neither Mohammed nor any of his followers claimed a meta-historic existence. Hence, from its early days Islam enjoyed the presence of human rationality, from the collection of the holy book and the selection of the successors, to the interpretation of the Quran and the words of Mohammed, in short, “the irrational elements in Islamic thought have never been the main stream” (Davutoglu, 2000, p.185). As a result, these differences not only led to a different ontological self-perception of man in the Islamic world as opposed to the western Christianity, but also resulting in the establishment of two distinguished types of sociopolitical institutions. This is the main reason why Davutoglu believes that the secularization resistance of the Islamic world cannot be explained through the Church and state model of separation, because there has been “no organized class of clergy in the form of a religious institution throughout the history of Muslim societies.” (Ibid., p.178) The consciousness over one's own ontological existence and its effect on the sociopolitical formation of society is the alternative model by which Davutoglu tries to explain the difficulty - or the virtual impossibility - of secularization in the Islamic world. Despite the apparent conceptual firmness of Davutoglu’s argument, there are many problems regarding the premises of his theory, which make his conclusion unsatisfactory. The
main theoretical flaw arises from the fact that he does not distinguish secularization from the Reformation. Secularization is basically directed to a process in which human beings wanted to do without religion or at least in some areas without religion. The rationalization and rehistorization of the religion through the elimination of the meta-historical qualities from the Church, are related to the Reformation and Luther's movement to make the Bible the only resource to which believers can refer. There were many elements of the Reformation, which indirectly helped the secularization of politics in Europe but the Reformation, as a historical event, is different from secularization. Luther and his followers were as fanatically religious as their counterpart Catholics were. The process of rationalization and rehistorization that Protestantism stood for, was aimed at presenting of an authentic notion of religion but surely had not the aim of secularization, although indirectly it may have helped the process. The historical events that followed the Reformation that led to the separation of the Church from the state, not the internal rationalization of the Christian faith although it helped the process.

The second problem is related to his comparison and the dissimilarities, which he attributes to the various religions. The Islam, which Davutolgu depicted, is an ideal type of Islam that the presence of Islam in the society must logically have been more like an actual manifestation of that ideal type, but historical accounts of Islam give us a total different view. It is true that Mohammed did not have the semi-divine Character that was attributed to Jesus, but in a lower degree it presented itself in the Quran. "The Quran is not simply the Muslims' bible. Muslims believe that the Quran is uncreated and coexistent with God. Quran means recitation and the text is the world of God delivered to the Prophet Mohammed by the Angel Cabrial... In Christian terms, the Quran functions less as the Bible than as Christ" (Aldridge, 2000, p.125). The sacredness of the Quran led to the

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1 Rehistorization here means to make the variant of study explainable historically, or
emergence of a particular class of scholars who had the exclusive right of interpretation of the Quran and the words of Mohammed. Their understanding of Islam was recognized as the Sharia, or the will of God, which should be observed in the Islamic society. Therefore the understandability and interpretability of the Quran by human reason that Davutolgu attributes to Islam is limited to the Ulama (few high rank religious scholars). About thousand years ago, mainstream Sunni Islam closed the gate of ijtihad (rethinking) in favor of the Taqlid (imitation) of the early scholars. Although a sacred class of cleric did not emerge in Sunni Islam, in the way that it appeared in Christianity, this does not mean that any notion of the sacred and the secular is irrelevant to Islam. The Islamic civilization developed its own notion of duality. The Ulama with an exclusive right to issue laws and give legitimacy and the Caliphs (Islamic rulers) who considered themselves the successors of Mohammed constituted the Islamic duality of religion and politics. “The Ulama were called upon by the political authorities to religiously indoctrinate all spheres of society. To be sure, they had no political power, but they did have the monopoly over the religio-political legitimization of rule.” (Tibi, 1988, p.133). The exclusive right of the clergy as providers of legitimacy for the system gave them a semi-divine status, and in modern time, in countries like Iran and Afghanistan in the time of Taliban, the religious scholars or jurists occupied the political authority of the society, which allowed them to erase the above-mentioned duality and fuse the religious authority with the political one.

Although in his statements Davutolgu does not mention anything about Shiism, it should be mentioned that there are fundamental similarities between Catholicism and Shiism, particularly regarding the presence of a semi-divinity and the presence of a sacred clergy class. During the eighteenth century, toward the end of the Safavid dynasty, the Shia clerics in Iran were able to establish an

by historical facts.
independent religious authority vis-à-vis the authority of the state, which in its organization was more similar to the Church than to its counterpart in the Sunni Islamic world. This common element did not lead Shi’ism toward secularization, as happened in the Christian world, but to the fusion of religion into politics. This is the reason why we think that in the process of secularization there are more crucial elements than the presence of a semi-divinity and a duality of the sacred and the secular as has been mentioned by Davutolgu.

The process of modernization and the way that modernism got a hold in Islamic countries, was mainly in contradictory with, in Davutoglu’s term, the ontological self-perception of the majority of the people. The secular absolutist states of the region have been considered as allies of the foreign infidels, who want to destroy the Islamic structure of society. In this context, secularism has been considered as an ideology that projects the dissociation of Muslims from their cultural roots, while religion as the core of the culture was considered as the last defense against the Western encroachment. In the West, secularism got a reputation for bringing peace and providing civil liberty and a system of power sharing in the political arena when the nation is divided into many groups. But under the historical circumstances in the Middle East, “secularity has won a reputation for humiliating Muslims- humiliating them through the exercise of Western double standards in Kuwait, Algeria and Palestine, through the corrupt despotism of comprador governments, and through the permanent threat of being crushed by the economic, technological, political, cultural and military might of the American-led West” (Kean, 2000, p.36). Correspondingly, for many Islamic thinkers, secularization is rather a western plot, which by inducing the state to intervene in the religious matters of society, plans to subordinate the religion to the state, thereby depriving Muslims from the only means of resistance that has been left.

1 In chapter five we will discuss in detail the Shi’a Islam.
Somehow differently, some critics compare the different functioning of secularism in the Islamic world to its original incarnation in the West, to the cultural roots of secularization, to the evolution of Christianity in its European context. As a result, they assume that “if secularism was justifiable in the West due to the nature of religion there, it is entirely unnecessary in the Muslim world. Muslims can progress and develop without having to create a wall between their religious values and livelihood. Secularization of Muslim societies, though short-lived, has been possible only through force as wielded by despotic government.” (Tamimi, 2000, p.22).

This pessimistic approach to the concept of secularism can be traced back to Iqbal and other Islamic modern reformists, who appreciated the modern concept of self-determination and strove to project it in Islamic societies, but the ‘self’ that they were projecting was rooted in culture. The cultural context was the characteristic of man’s identity and modernity by providing new possibilities could help the farther development of the identity by which Muslim were able to establish an authentic notion of self, appropriate to the order of the new world. The Cartesian self-established notion of man, disconnected from the tradition and from his cultural roots was the reason for them to be scared of modern rationality. The society, which was projected by the Cartesian self, was a society devoid of any notion of the transcendental. To save Islamic societies from the Cartesian notion of rationalization, the Islamic reformists propagated a cultural sensitive notion of modernization. They considered modernity as the continuation and extension of the rational elements of one’s own culture. In this project the concept of secularism was irrelevant, and was considered as an irritating idea that belonged to another context, an alien concept and inappropriate to their project of modernity. It may be true that the Islamic modern reformists of the Iqbal type saved Muslims from a Cartesian notion of self, but by upgrading the religion to the sole source of the cultural identity, they opened the gate for
Islamic fundamentalism and its irrational aversion toward any type of understanding that searches the sources of self and its farther development within human possibilities.

Islamic fundamentalists consider the state as the political incarnation of religion, mandated to present man in society in a way that the religious authority wished him to be presented. Therefore the state cannot be considered as a different entity or as a distinct institution separable from religion. In the neo-Islamic fundamentalist point of view state is a part of religion, and “the major task of the Quran is to govern” (Qaeam-maqami, 2000, p. 132, Own translation). If the neo-Islamic fundamentalists, who are searching to take over the state, are asked why the Quran is silent on the issue of government and political formation of society, they refer to the time of prophet Mohammed as the ever lasting political pattern, and claim that by having such a perfect pattern of political involvement, there was no need to be mentioned the issue in the Quran. Neo-Islamic fundamentalism sees the state as part of the fiqih (Islamic jurisprudence) which directs the implementation of the Sharia and Gods will in society. The rise of this trend of thought goes back to the fourteenth century when Ibn Taymiyyah, a well-known jurist, denounced the legitimacy of the Mongol rulers by stating that the “rulers had not merely neglected much of Sharia, but also applied the Yasa”, the traditional Mongol legal system, instead. Ibn Taymiyyah proclaimed that “he who forsakes the law of Islam should be fought, though he may have once announced, the two formula of Faith” (Perry, 1991, p.110). Considering Ibn Taymiyyah as their spiritual father – contrary to their Shiia counterparts - Sunni fundamentalists are not much preoccupied to put the clerics in charge of the political system, but whoever is in power must implement the Sharia as the sole law of society. Since the Sharia has already been compiled, the mere duty of the political power is to implement the Sharia in society, and it does not matter whether this takes place by the clergy or the layman. The authority that the
Church enjoyed in the West was transformed, in the Islamic world, into the jurisprudence and its exclusive right to the knowledge of the *Sharia*.

Secularism has been attacked in many ways; some attacked it for its Western origins and therefore emphasized its inadaptability to non-Western cultures, some found it unnecessary because the indigenous traditions of their region could perform better and accomplish more easily the goals which secularism stood for; and some saw it as a part of the Western conspiracy and continuing Christian invasion of the Islamic world. In all the cases we dealt with, critics somehow preferred an alternative concept.

If we consider secularism as a process which replaces the traditional mechanisms of the social order by introducing a new mechanism based on a functional differentiation of the institutions in society, this does not necessarily mean that secularism everywhere will be simply a duplication of its Western model. The political secularization of the West could only emerge when the traditional sources of social order failed to provide the conditions of a normal life. Therefore, in harmony with its main ancestral roots, secularism, rather than having a commitment to any ultimate ideals religious or non-religious, has a commitment to ordinary life, and people's living conditions. It must "be seen as part of the family of views that arise in response to a fundamental human predicament. It is neither purely Christian nor peculiarly Western. It grows wherever there is a persistent clash of ideals perceived to be incompatible." (Bhargava, 1998, p.498). The context specificity of secularism allows a non-Western society to form its own model of separation and differentiation, as noted by Bhargava; within the limits imposed by the general form of secular doctrines, each society can work out its own model. The emergence of different types of religious fundamentalism and devastating conflicts, labeled by religious identities, does not indicate the extinction of secularism, as many critics are proclaiming; but, on the contrary, it shows that in
an age when no section of society is untouched by the flow of modernization, and within a cultural context in which religion did not pass through a critical process of reformation and revision, the only possibility that religion can open to the society, is to manifest itself as an ideology at the service of the political ends of some particular groups. That is also why Gandhi, when he was using traditional sources at the service of the nationalist struggle of independence, was successful, but when he wanted to use the same sources for the purpose of tolerance and a peaceful coexistence of the clashing communities, he failed and he himself was among the first victims of his failure. To the critics who refer to the violent resurgence of different religious identities in Asia as a sign of rejection of secularism, we should mention that it is the reality and troubled history of Asia, with its stories of ethnical cleansing, communal massacres, mass executions of non-believers and opposition members, lack of freedom of women, and many other related issues in countries ruled by religious authorities that convince us to consider secularism not as an option but as a historical imperative to Asian's troubled societies.

The conceptual debate about secularism belongs to the larger argument of modernity. Its realization is fundamentally dependent to a successful process of modernization. The present study assumes that many of problems which are attributed to secularism basically are related to the understanding of modernity and the way which it has been projected in society. Therefore we can not have a proper understanding of secularism if we could not fix our understanding within a wider understanding of modernity and the process of modernization. In the next chapter we will examine the dominant notions of modernity, and we will see how they affected the understanding or the misunderstanding of modernity and modernization in a country like Iran. After a conceptual discussion of modernity, we will returns to the debates over secularism in chapter four.