Chapter V

Critical Islam

I. A Sketch of a Life

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Iranian intellectuals were dreaming a future comprising of modern ideas and institutions. In the course of time, historical developments were often directed towards modernity and occasionally toward tradition. At the inception of the Constitutional Movement, the impetus of modernism was strengthened, and traditionalism became weak. With the decadence of Constitutionalism, in Reza Shah’s period, the process of modernization began to accelerate, and in the period of the rule of his son, Mohammad Reza Shah, this process reached its culmination. Tradition, in turn, posed an aborted challenge against Constitutionalism, right in the throes of people’s movement in the first decade of the twentieth century, and the hanging by the Constitutionalists of Sheik Fazlullah Nouri indicated its defeat. Later tradition reconstructed itself in the time of the Nationalist Movement against Shah, during 1950s with the emergence of the group, Fadatian-e Eslam (Devotees of Islam) led by Navab Safavi. Also in the mid sixties, Ayatollah Khomeini expressed an anti-Shah opposition from a traditional position, which led to the oppression of the insurrection and exile of Ayatollah Khomeini by Shah’ regime. Finally after the victory of Iranian revolution of the 1979, traditionalism has gained ascendancy over modernism. In the midst of these upheavals the intellectuals, on the one hand, exerted their influence on these historical events, and on the other, were effected dramatically by the events. Prominent figures of
the late nineteenth century, such as Malkom Khan, Akhundzadeh\(^1\), and Talebof\(^2\) were the harbingers of modernity and secularized religion, while influential personalities such as Sheikh Fazlulah Nouri, in the early twentieth, or Navab Safavi, in the mid of the century, advocated tradition as expressed in religion. Such a trend was not confined to the clergies. Rather among the intellectuals, Jalal Al-e Ahmad, to some extent, and Ahmad Fardid, to an extreme extent, with an anti-Western orientation and a sort of postmodern narrative set out to defend tradition.

In this context, Shariati emerged as a critic of both tradition and modernity. He tried to embark on a third path by appropriating the discourse of modernity. He sees modernist intellectuals as imitators of the West, who are neither able to adapt with the realities of the society nor to lead the people. Despairing of traditionalists who were only able to criticize modernity negatively, Sahriati maintains that the ideas of the traditionalists cannot solve the problems of the society. Reflecting upon the specifics of his historical time Shariati is alive both to the weight of tradition as well as the contributions of modernity. Consequently he neither wants tradition to transcend modernity nor does he expect modernity to dispense with tradition. In its place he questions aspects both of tradition and modernity, and hopes to present a third path through these twin critiques. His prescription is to “launch a religious renaissance through which, by returning to the religion of life and motion, power and justice, will on the one hand incapacitate the reactionary agents of the society and, on the other hand, save the people from those elements which are used to narcotize them” (CW 20: 294). “By launching such a

\(^{1}\) Mirza Fathali, Akhundzadeh (1812-1878), the Azarbajjanian playwright whose role in disseminating modern ideas in Iran is of great significance.
renaissance”, he continues, “these hitherto narcotizing elements will be used to revitalize, give awareness and fight superstition” (Ibid). He also thinks of other consequences of “returning to and relying on the authentic culture of the society [which] will allow the revival and rebirth of cultural independence in the face of Western cultural onslaught” (Ibid.). In his dialectical oscillation between tradition and modernity, he condemns emphatically the irrational and prejudicial character of traditional ideas and he expresses his dissatisfaction with worshiping of modern science by modern man.

Because of the presence and influence of Shariati’s ideas in years after Iran’s revolution, many Iranian intellectuals prefer to talk of Shariati’s life and thoughts, rather than his life and times. Now, after more than two decades from his death, in Iran, social discourse, in general, and religious discourse, in particular, has come under the influence of Shariati’s ideas. A charismatic leader and teacher, his radical interpretation of Islam mobilized a whole generation of young Iranians during 1970s. For this reason Ali Shariati is, almost regarded as the ideologue of the Iranian revolution. He died in 1977, two years before the victory of the revolution, however his ideas have remained alive and have influenced many Islamic intellectual trends in post-revolutionary Iran. In the throes of revolutionary era his ideas emerged as an umbrella covering divers and even conflicting Islamic trends. Ali Shariati was born in Mazinan, a suburb of Mashhad, Iran. After graduating from college in 1960, on a scholarship he pursued graduate studies in France received his doctorate in sociology in 1964 from Sorbonne University. When he returned to Iran he was arrested at the border and imprisoned on the pretext that he had participated in political activities while studying in France. Released in 1965, he began teaching at

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2 Abdorahman Telebev (1834-1911), the Iranian social writer, one of the prominent modernist intellectuals who was aware of the liberation movements as well as social democratic ideas of his
Mashhad University, and then was transferred to Teheran. His lectures at Housseini-e-Ershad Religious Institute attracted not only six thousand students who registered in his summer classes, but also many thousands of people from different backgrounds who were fascinated by his teachings. The first edition of his book ran over sixty thousand copies which were quickly sold-out, despite the obstructive interference by the authorities in Iran. Faced with the outstanding success of Shariati’s courses, the Iranian police surrounded Housseini-e-Ershad Institute, arrested many of his followers and thereby put an end to his activities. For the second time, he underwent an eighteen month prison term under extremely harsh conditions. Popular pressure and international protests compelled the Iranian regime to release Shariati on March 20, 1975. However, he remained under close surveillance by the security agents of Iran. He realized that he should migrate out of the country. Successful in his attempt, he went to England and three weeks later on June 19, 1977 passed away. The reason of his death is still ambiguous, and it is often rumored that he was killed by Shah’s intelligent Service.

Shariati grew up in the midst of several political upheavals. He witnessed the First and the Second World War as well as the short period of political freedom in September 1941, after more than two decades of Reza Shah’s dictatorship. Later, as a member of Sosialisthay-e Khodaparast (God-Worshiping Socialists), he was involved in the National Movement of the 1950s under the leadership of Mohammad Mossaddeq and was then affected by the American-Shah’s coup of the 1956. Later, “the five years Shariati spent at the university of Paris provided him with the opportunity to ... make the acquaintance of books generally unavailable in Iran. He was able to examine and gain time.
direct knowledge of different schools of social and philosophical thought.... The analytical and critical school of French sociology left a considerable impression on him” (see Algar 1979: 13-16).

Shariati’s checkered experience helps him to become as a figure not fitting any classical stereotype and his synthetic doctrines is a redefined amalgam of different paradigms. For this reason different people can relate to his different worlds and different lines of his work can come to symbolize different facets of his ideas.

The works and ideas that Shariati left behind, in the form of recorded lectures, class notes, books and articles, after his death, were collected in thirty-four volumes with regard to the subject matters discussed. Here a brief account of his works and ideas which were constitutive of the formation of the foundation of his ideas as well as the formulation of his social and political ideas are provided:

**Islamiology:**

Islamiology consists of 27 courses taught by Shariati during 1972-3 in Husseinieh Ershad, a modern mosque recognized as the main base for his intellectual campaign. Containing the main themes of Shariati’s ideas, all the courses were subsequently arranged in three volumes. The first and second courses delineate the contours of, or in Shariati’s word, the geometrical scheme of School of Islam. This scheme contains four main topics: the worldview of *Tauhid* (seeing the whole universe as a unity) as the infrastructure of the School; anthropology based on the story of the creation of Adam (showing symbolically that man is compounded from the spirit of God and putrid clay); philosophy of history based on the story of Cain and Abel (symbolizing the beginning of dialectical contradiction between social classes which culminates in an inevitable
revolution); sociology based on the unity of opulence, power and deception, against
oppressed masses which takes different forms in different courses of history.

From the third to the fifth courses, Shariati explains *Tauhid* in its philosophical, social,
historical, and moral forms. In the sixth course he deals with the task of intellectuals in
the society and the necessity of knowing the history of Islam as a passage to reach the
awakening sources of Islam. He continues this course with explaining the task of Seyyed
Jamal Addin Asadabadi and Muhammad Abdu and their hopes and predicaments. In the
seventh course Shariati probes into the ancient texts, such as, Avesta, Upanishads, Rigg
Vedas and Greek religious texts to show that religious insight of man began with *Tauhid*
(monotheism) and not *Shirk* (politheism). In the eighth course he raises the issue of ethics
and tries to compare the religious ethics with the ethics based on utilitarianism. Then he
concludes that the crisis of the modern man is the crisis of ethics which emanating from
the modern philosophy which is not able to create a proper source for a modern ethics. At
the end of this course he discusses about the conception of alienation and explains the
elements of alienation. In the ninth course Shariati talks about the questions of individual
and society, and continues to deal with the ethics in this respect. In the tenth course he
addresses three pivotal elements on which ideology is based; namely, man, history, and
society. Here Shariati focuses on ‘history’ and its definition, as well as its Quranic
conception. He continues the discussion on ‘history’ in the eleventh course and refers to
the views of Marx, Weber, and Sheller in this respect.

Now Shariati focuses on Marx and Marxism, and from the courses twelfth to twenty fifth,
he deals mainly with this issue. First, Shariati addresses three different phases in Marx’s
life, that is, Phases of philosophy, sociology, and political leadership, and analyzes
Marx’s works in this relation. In the first phase, Marx fought against religion under the influence of a romantic love. In the second phase Marx is a complete social scientist. And in the third phase Marx converted his scientific views to a complete ideology. He proceeds to explain the basic ideas in Marxism, such as, class, productive force, relation of production, structure, and praxis, and sets out to analyze the reason why Marxism became so much popular. Shariati also explains different versions of Marxism under the rubric of ‘scientific Marxism and governmental Marxism’. Then he tries to explain alienation and what he calls the dialectics of work and need. At the end of his courses on Marxism, Shariati discusses about becoming rationalized of capitalism to prevent the occurrence of socialist revolutions.

In the twenty sixth course, Shariati shifts his attention to a Quranic philosophy of history. In this relation he claims that the role of prophets is to notify, and they have no responsibility for the course of history. And in the last course, Shariati compares existentialist thinkers like Sartre, Jaspers, Heidegger and Kierkegaard with each other.

**Safavid and Alavi Shia:**

A lecture made in 1972, and later it was revised and published in 1973. This is one of the most important views of Shariati on traditional Islam. In this lecture Shariati analyzes genealogically the roots of the dominant version of Shia. He shows how the genuine Shia (red Shia) as a progressive social movement was converted gradually to a conservative social system (black Shia). Then he explains how Safavid dynasty consolidated such a system by borrowing religious elements from Christianity. One of the main traits of this conversion, in Shariati’s view, is the conversion of the learned scholars to clergies. This
lecture, in fact expresses Shariati’s historical position toward Islam, in general, and Shia, in particular.

**Extraction and Refinement of Cultural Resources:**

A lecture in the university of Abadan. Shariati explains that every nation has spiritual resources, similar to material ones. The precondition for spiritual progress is to extract and refine these resources as we do in dealing with material resources. The task of a committed intellectual is to accomplish this extraction and refinement and offer it to the society. Then he refers to the negligence of the intellectuals about their own cultural resources, and their imitation of the West. In continuation, Shariati stresses on the role of colonialism in elimination of the historical identity of the oriental countries.

**What Is To Be Done:**

A lecture given in Husseinieh Ershad. Shariati begins with discussing about the role of what he calls ‘pseudo intellectuals’ and non-religious intellectual as well as the role of what he calls ‘pseudo clergies’ in elimination of religion and indigenous culture in the oriental societies. Explaining the very situation of Iranian society and religion, Shariati puts forward the necessity of extraction and refinement of cultural resources as the only way to get rid of backwardness. Now he talks about the group he calls ‘intellectuals’, the ones who are neither traditionalist nor modernist. Shariati mentions their characteristics, responsibilities, and their tasks to bring about change in the society.

**The Third Path:**

A lecture given in 1973. In this lecture Shariati deals with the different ways of confrontation with the Western civilization. Here he delineates three ways: absolute negation, complete imitation, and gaining awareness selectively. With respect to these
classification Shariati explains the position of modernists, traditionalists, and intellectuals. In his view the path of the intellectuals, the third path is the path to development and emancipation.

**The Community and Leadership:**

A lecture made in four sessions in 1970. This is one of the most controversial Shariati’s works, for in this lecture he accepts the institution of religious leadership. In the beginning Shariati offers an introduction under the rubric of ‘Reformism, the context of Renaissance’, and by maintaining that it was Protestantism which paved the way for Renaissance, he focuses his attention on a change in method as a condition for revival of Islam. Next he gives a sociological account of the religious community, and then he argues that leadership naturally comes out of the community. Here he criticizes Western democracies and refers to the advantages of the institution of *Imama* or corrective ideological leadership. He points out the way through which a leader is recognized and in this respect he mentions heredity, revolution, coup, and appointment. However, in his view within the institution of *Imama*, leadership is not achieved through the aforementioned ways. For this kind of leadership depends on the characteristics of the leader, which is objective and real. Now he poses the thesis that a corrective ideological leadership is necessary for a particular phase of the development of a society. In this respect, Shariati marks the role of leadership in anti-colonial movements against colonial powers and in ruining successfully the country in the post-colonial era. He argues that the independent, nationalist, and revolutionary societies in the post-colonial era were not able to continue under a Western democratic system. Instead, he adds, only a controlled
democracy based on revolutionary leadership could save them from retrogression into the ancient regime.

**Favorable liberty:**

A text written in the last years of Shariati's life. He addressed to self-consciousness as the most prominent attribute of man. In continuation he refers to the relationship between three factors, that is, science, economy, and power.

**Ijtihad and the Theory of 'Permanent Revolution':**

A text dealing with *Ijtihad*. Here Sahriati claims that the main traits of Islamic insight are objective observation, rational thought, and scientific research. He proceeds to prove that contrary to other divine texts, Quran adheres this insight. Next he tries to show that *Ijtihad* is another feature of this Islamic insight which, in the course of history of Islam was crucial in preventing the Islamic instructions from being obsolete and stagnant. Nonetheless, he laments that at present the situation has changed and the spirit of *Ijtihad* has died. For achieving a permanent revolution, Shariati believes that a scientific movement must be launched on the basis of *Ijtihad*’s way of research.

**New Scholastic:**

A lecture made in Sharif Institute of Technology. Among the topics discussed in this lecture are the imprisonment of science in the hand of the Church in mediaeval age, emancipation of science from the Church's domination, the genesis of scientism, the relationship between inversion of sciences task and alienation of man, the reconciliation of science and money, and new scholastic (science in the service of capitalism).

**If Pop and Marx did not Come into Existence:**
In this article Shariati claims that without Pop and Marx history would go in a different direction. By Pop he means the clergies and by Marx he means all the anti religious movements in the course of history.

**Existentialism:**

A lecture made in 1969 in the National University of Iran. In this lecture Shariati tries to explain Sartre’s views with advocacy. He addresses the question of the priority of existence to essence in existentialism, and explains notions, such as, abandonment, anxiety, freedom, commitment. In the end he makes a criticism on Sartre’s existentialist ethics.

**Ideology:**

A lecture made in Abadan University in the late 1960s. In this lecture Shariati refers to two sort of religion. One is ideology and the other is tradition. Then he analyzes the role of diverse ideologies from mediaeval to 19th century in Europe. For Shariati the main characteristic of intellectuals is their belief in one ideology. In Shariatie’s views prophets are the intellectuals of their time. For this reason they have to formulate ideology on the basis of tradition; but this should be done with regard to new experiences and views.

**Return to the Self:**

A book in four chapter written in 1972. In the first chapter Shariati indicates the roots of Iranians alienation. Here he refers to factors, such as, the geographical situation of Iran, Iran’s status among the world’s civilizations and religions, Iran’s social system and political geography, frequent invasion of the foreign powers, and new ideologies as the roots of our alienation. In the second chapter, Shariati traces the conception of alienation in philosophy and sociology. Next he explains this conception from Hegel, Fuerbach, and
Heidegger. In the third chapter, Shariati defines culture and compare this notion with civilization. Then notifies the difference between nationalism and racism, and in the end he discusses three kinds of internationalism: religious, humanist, and class-based. In the forth chapter Shariati begins with the ambiguity of understanding the relation between religion and nation. Then he continues to explain the notion of nationalism from the Islamic viewpoint.

**Revolutionary self-construction:**

One of the last works of Shariati written in 1977. In this work Shariati deals with the way of revolutionary spiritual self-construction. Here he indicates freedom, love, and equality, as three main dimensions of human construction. Then he offers praying, labor and social struggle, as three way of reinforcing the three dimensions. Next Shariati emphasizes on the necessity to return to the self against westernization in the context of study and reconsidering the West. He also stresses upon the study of social currents and sociopolitical ideas in the West.

**Civilization and Modernization:**

A lecture made in 1970 in Husseinieh Ershad. First he argues about the necessity of discussing modernization with which all the non-European societies are confronted. Then he tries to define the terms, intellectual, assimilation, and alienation. Shariati conceives of modernization as an imposed commodity. He maintains that European powers in order to export their commodities ideas to the non-European societies try to eliminate the their identity. To Shariati, it is only in this way that civilization is replaced by modernization.

**A Glance at the History of the Future:**
A lecture made in Husseinieh Ershad in 1970. At the beginning Shariati provides a definition of the notion of history. Drawing the social hierarchy of all the epochs, he analyzes the relationship and debates between common people, intellectuals and geniuses in the course of history. Then he studies medieval age and the present time with such a classification. Eventually Shariati reaches the conclusion that the epoch of scientism is at an end and a new epoch is coming into existence.

II. Foundations

Shariati’s work is reminiscent of the writings of classical grand theorists. Like the latter he offers a system of thought, including social and political theory, deeply rooted in a metaphysical argumentation. For instance, he establishes a mutual relationship between the question of who am I in the universe, and the question of identity in cultural, social and political milieus. He is a social theorist who covers a vast range of issues. Although his area of interest is very comprehensive, but in an overview, one can indicate three main themes, which may be regarded as the bases of his social and political ideas, that is freedom, justice and mysticism. He is largely preoccupied with the revival of people’s cultural identity through extraction and refinement of cultural resources. He also proceeds to constantly traverse on the narrow line between modern and tradition. In this manner he finds enough ground to oppose the modernist intellectuals on the one hand, and the traditional Shi’i clerical, on the other hand.

For Shariati Islam is “a socially and a politically committing ideology, open to reinterpretation in the light of modern contingencies”(Sachedina 1983: 192). In other words, he “set out to establish a discipline of ‘islamology’ (Islam shenasi), that is to apply Islam to the needs of contemporary society, rather than further contribute to the
perfection of traditional 'Islamic studies' (maarifat-i Islami). (Sachedina 1983: 211). He also conceives of himself as the one who has a prophetic role to awaken the consciousness of the people. Such a feeling propels him to focusing upon the relation between theory and practice (see CW 2: 129-184).

It is not easy to identify Shariati's intellectual ancestors. From the Constitutional Movement onward, Iranian intellectuals were intensively involved in discarding religious tradition in favor of modernity. However, religious intellectuals of the first half of the century, while defined themselves in the modern side of traditional-modern dichotomy, were became puzzled to find a place for religion in this dichotomy. In this respect, Shariati may be regarded as a pioneer to extricate himself from the dichotomy, and in a sense, represents an unprecedented trend in Iran: namely, critical Islam or a philosophy, which is both critical to modernity and tradition. Of course, if we shift the focus of our attention from inside to outside of Iran, we will obviously see the name of the Indian thinker, Mohammad Iqbal. Shariati shows his intimate affiliation to Iqbal by introducing him as "a great mystic, with a pure spirit, delivered from materialism and, at the same time, a man who respects and honors science, technological progress, and the advancement of human reason in our age" (CW 5: 34-5). In fact Shariati finds himself in Iqbal and praises him for he is not "a proponent of 'dry' factual science like the science of Francis Bacon or Claude Bernard, which is limited to the discovery of the relationships between phenomena or material manifestations and the employment of natural forces for material life" (Ibid). Rather he announces that Iqbal, "regards reason and science in the very sense they are understood today as allies of love, emotion, and inspiration in the evolution of the human spirit" (Ibid.).
Shariati conceives of modernity as not a totality, but “sets of sweet and bitter experiences, good and bad values, unstable (uncertain) criteria, and a world which God and evil cooperate to lay its foundation” (CW 20: 208). For him, it is not entirely either an ‘absolute truth’ or ‘something evil’ (Ibid.). Although he praises many positive aspects of the West he claims, “we neither want to construct an Europe or an America. We want to construct a human society, the one which they remain unable to construct” (Ibid.: 605). “Civilization and culture” he adds, “are not exportable commodities...an exported civilization is a perennial repetition of a significant, but false illusion which has no [fruitful] result....Those who are under the impression that it is possible to perform a century long task in one night, either are not aware themselves or do not want others to become aware” (Ibid.: 86). Here, he avows the aim of becoming independent from the West and in doing so, he stresses upon having a deep understanding of the West and reaching “a situation in which the individual gains complete autonomy” (Ibid.: 508). For this reason, one of Shariati’s main criticisms of pro- and anti-West trends is their lack of understanding of the West. He laments, “nor the enthusiasts for the West, neither the fanatic, prejudiced reactionaries who contest with the West and its civilization, do not know the West totally and systematically, as well as wisely and properly” (CW 5: 100).

He poses his critique of modernity by making a distinction between modernization, as the process of superficially appropriating modern ideas and institutions, and civilization, as reaching a human rational society based on a rich culture. While he concedes that “modernity is one of the most delicate and vital issues confronting the people of non-European countries and Islamic societies” (CW 31: 361-2), he refers to “the relationship between an imposed modernization and genuine civilization” as a more important issue.
In his view “we must discover if modernization as is claimed is a synonym for being civilized, or if it is an altogether different issue and social phenomenon having no relation to civilization at all”. He continues, “unfortunately modernization has been imposed on us, the non-European nations, in the guise of civilization” (Ibid.: 362). He proceeds to prove the fact that “for the past 150 years, the West has undertaken the task of modernizing men with missionary zeal” (Ibid.). In his analysis, “all non-European nations were put in close contact with the West and western civilization and were to be changed to ‘modern’ nations” (Ibid.). Then he plaintively asserts that “our intellectuals should have understood years ago and made people realize the difference between civilization and modernization” (Ibid.). In line with his image of the West and modernization he is also critical to the conception of Western rationality.

In his writings he refers to various conceptions of reason and rationality, but in the last resort he refers to two sorts of rationality by illustrating the difference between rationalism and reason. The former “provides man and society with an accelerative progress towards being logical, while it weakens many aspects in man” (CW 12: 12). Instead, he maintains, “man can understand and achieve many beauties and values by reason, a faculty which is not logical, and all its aspects remain dormant and undergo decadence with the reign of rationalism” (Ibid.). Shariati tries to find such a meaning of reason in the Orient. He defines reason as “another sort of understanding which rooted in our oriental culture and has affiliation with the substance of religion” (CW 5: 175). Here he appropriates Sorvardi’s terminology and asserts, “we can talk of a red reason rather than the cold, sterile, and philosophically passive rationality” (Ibid).
Shariati conceives of modern science as the consequence of calculating rationality. Here he argues that modern science is directed and led by bourgeois system. “In the ancient times”, he believes, “the value of science depended on the extent it helped man to achieve truth and beauty. But at present, its value depends on the extent it makes man to gain profit” (CW 12: 48). He tries to show that after the collapse of feudalism and domination of the spirit and philosophy of bourgeois class, science as well as arts and ethics were subjected to bourgeoisie. “In this way”, continues Shariati, “old culture and worldview of feudalism, including religion, virtue and community, is replaced by that of bourgeoisie, including materialism, pleasure, and individualism; value is replaced by utility, intuition by calculating rationality,...” (CW 23: 27). Now he indicates the manner in which science has also been put in the service of capital, machine, and bureaucracy, and calls such a phenomena as “modern scholasticism” (CW 12: 49).

In his analysis of modern science he comes close to the ideas of such contemporary writers as Leyotard who conceive of science as a narrative similar to religion. Shariati advances the argument that, “whereas religion said that one must accept what is in the approved religious texts and that anything not mentioned in them must be rejected, they [the scientists] said that they only believed in what they think and can prove through science and experience” (CW 31: 269). Sahriati calls such scientists “the worshipers of science” (Ibid.). He compares scientists with the priests and asserts that they have the power of priests, “but the spirit of the new era belongs to the educated who worship science, not God. If we look at the new era from the point of view of religion, we see that according to the sociological model of a cone of culture, religion both restricts and forms the basis of the opinions of the common people. We see that there is also a group who
worships science” (Ibid.: 270). Of course, Shariati is not anti-science at all. His point is that science which once revolts against the religious prejudices of the middle age to find the truth, following Bacon’s view that science has to appropriate powers of the nature, has now ceased to find the truth (CW 20: 127-137). For he characterizes modern science by monologic rigidity as well as by becoming part of a system represented and dominated by bourgeoisie.

Shariati praises scientific method of natural sciences, but he criticizes the positivist method employed in social sciences. Here he refers to the separation modern scientists made between facts and values, and asserts, “they isolated and separated science from the people with arguments like ‘objective truth’, ‘free research’, ‘pure science’, ‘the non-commitment of the scientist’, ‘avoiding prejudgments’, ‘pre-fabricated ideas’, which were all attractive and understandable” (CW 16: 21-22). Then he concludes, “what happened was that, using these arguments, modern science could no longer propose solutions, make value judgment, determine directions, explain aims, prove or deny ideas, give methods for procedure, show the way, criticize existing realities, suggest proposals for improvement or foresee suitable situations” (Ibid.: 22). Criticizing the methodological orientation of the positivists, Shariati embraces hermeneutic approach to social sciences and points out, “in human and social problems we must not apply strict scientific methodology. For instance, when dealing with a scientific issue, we concentrate upon its validity or invalidity. However, in social problems we must not pay attention to the logic of the statement, rather, we must focus on the circumstance in which something is expressed” (CW 31: 210).
Separation of science from the fabric of society, he continues, made science to become “a tool to further the decline, ignorance, intellectual and social servitude of the human being. As we see today, the natural sciences have been released from their commitment to search out the truth of the universe or to prove or deny the existence of God, but for all practical purposes, it has become the slave of capitalism” (Ibid.: 23). Of course Shariati does not set out to adapt religion with the achievements of science. In fact he assumed two places for religion: below and above the science. The former is antithetical to and the later coexists with science. To develop his argument, he refers to an educated man whose “religion is taken from below and he pulls it along with him like a spare part. He has become an engineer or a doctor, and he has retained his religion. He took it from the masses and pulled it up with him. This is abnormal and must be thrown away. If he lacks religion, in my opinion, he is closer to a religion of meta-science which is above and beyond science. Then again we have an educated person who is religious, and we see how he follows a religion which is above science” (CW 31: 274). Thus such a person does not view religion from the vantagepoint of science. In fact, by proposing the model for coexistence of religion and science, Shariati establishes a relationship between modernity and tradition.

III. Social Theory:

Being recognized essentially as a social theorist, Shariati has formulated most of his key ideas in a way to construct the edifices of an Islamic social theory. His social theory has its root in, and is systematically compatible with his metaphysical beliefs. His interwoven philosophy of history, anthropology and sociological theory are based on his hermeneutic
interpretation of the universe, his philosophical image of man and the relation of man with god and the universe. He stresses that his worldview is based upon a “hermeneutic interpretation of the universe”, according to which, “being is not a material, unconscious, purposeless and absurd system. Rather it is a living, sensitive, self-conscious, and intelligent organism possessing will, knowledge, ideal, and creativity. Thus, it is constructed on the basis of an entity consisting of a consonant set of phenomena and signs which is developing toward a transcendental supreme goal” (CW 4: 395). Shatiati terms the metaphysical bases of his social theory as ‘the world view of Tauhid’. Tauhid is a Quranic term signifying the oneness of God, however, Shariati mentions, “Tauhid as a worldview, in the sense I intend in my theory, means regarding the whole universe as a unity, instead of dividing it into this world and hereafter, the natural and the supernatural, substance and meaning, spirit and body. It means regarding the whole of existence as a single form, a single living and conscious organism, possessing will, intelligence, feeling and purpose” (CW 16: 35). As a theist, then he tries to draw a boundary between his interpretation of existence and those of the atheists, and sets forth, “the difference between my worldview and that of materialism or naturalism lies in this, that I regard the world as a living being endowed with will and self-awareness, percipient, and having an ideal and a purpose” (Ibid.: 36).

On the basis of his perception of the unity of existence, he tries to explain the status of man in the world. Not only does he believe in the “unity of nature with metanature” (Ibid), but “of man with nature, of man with man, of God with the world and with man” (Ibid). He conceives of man as “a manifestation of God’s will, the absolute will and consciousness of all being, and man, according to [this philosophical] anthropology, is
the representative of God in the world, his viceregent upon earth" (CW 16: 51). In such a relationship between man, nature, and God, "the history of man, which consists of the record of man's becoming and the formation of his essence, cannot therefore be accidental, something fashioned by events, the plaything of adventures, banal, vain, aimless, purposeless and meaningless" (Ibid.). Indeed, his image of purposive and meaningful creation of man constitutes the two bases of his philosophy of history, as well as the core of his theory of society. Shariati conceives of history as "the movement of the human species along the course laid down by time" (Ibid.: 51). Shariati's philosophy of history may imply his belief in a severe determinism. For he has no doubt that history is "a reality, just like the other realities in the world. It began at a certain point, and must inevitably end at a certain point. It must have an aim and a direction" (Ibid.). He simply asks, "where did it begin? And immediately answers, "like man himself, with the beginning of the contradiction" (Ibid.). But his image of the self of man as a free will opposes the determinist view of man's history. Now he formulates a theory of freedom and introduces it into his image of philosophy of history. His view of freedom stems from his philosophical anthropology, the image of man who has the ongoing task of choosing between good and evil. He refers to the story of Adam and his creation in Quran and poses the idea that "the creation of man, that is the essence, spiritual destiny and attributes of the human race, as it appears in the story of Adam, has its own formula: the spirit of God + putrid clay = man" (Ibid.: 41-2). In explaining the formula he mention that "'Putrid clay' and the 'spirit of God' are two symbols, or indications....The first of the two terms refers to lowness, stagnation and (absolute passivity, and the second indicates an endless movement toward perfection and
infinite exaltation” (Ibid.). In fact, Shariati regards man as a pendulum between these two infinities, “a free will faced with a weighty and difficult choice—the choice of the spirit, the spirit of God, while contained within putrid clay and buried beneath mud and sediment” (Ibid.: 45). He concludes that man as “a compound of opposites, is a dialectical being” who, as Shariati takes, “is an ‘infinite direction’, either toward clay or toward God” (Ibid.: 46). This self as “the stage for a battle between two forces” constitutes another basis of his philosophy of history. In his view, “history represents an unbroken flow of events that, like man himself, is dominated by a dialectical contradiction, a constant warfare between two hostile and contradictory elements that began with the creation of humanity and has been waged at all places and at all times, and the sum total of which constitutes history” (Ibid.: 50-1). While, Shariati’s anthropology is based upon what he calls the symbolic narrative of the story of Adam, the main source for his philosophy of history is again what he calls the symbolic narrative of the Quranic story of Cain and Abel. He interprets the war between the two as the beginning of class struggle in the history. He advances the argument that Abel “represents the age of a pasture-based economy, of the primitive socialism that preceded ownership, and Cane represents the system of agriculture, and individual or monopoly ownership” (Ibid.: 51-2). Then he reaches the conclusion that “thereafter, a permanent war began so that the whole of the history became the stage for a struggle between the party of Cain the killer, and Abel, his victim, or, in other words, the ruler and the ruled” (Ibid.). This permanent struggle between the two parties is also the basis of his sociological view. He argues, “if we remove the concept of time from the history of a people, we will be left with the society of that people” (Ibid.: 63). For him, “society, like history is composed of two classes”
In a more precise word, he believes that there are "only two possible structures in all of human society—the structure of Cane and the structure of Abel" (Ibid.: 63). The structure of Cane, he continues, generates ruling class consisting of a "political manifestation-power, an economic manifestation-wealth, and a religious manifestation-hypocrisy (Ibid.: 67). He traces these three manifestations in all periods of history. Here again he refers to Quranic terminology and claims that "mala, mutraf, and rahib, meaning, respectively the avaricious and brutal, the gluttons and overfed, and the official clergy, the long-bearded demagogues" (Ibid.). To overcome these ruling forces of wealth, power, and hypocrisy, he formulates his famous theory of mysticism, equality, and freedom. Shariati maintains that in studying all the important currents in human life, generally we will come across three basic currents. For him "all the remaining issues are either ramifications of these three currents, or, are in essence derailed from the main course and as such, of secondary importance" (CW 2: 60). "These three fundamental currents", in his views, "are mysticism equality and freedom" (Ibid.). In this theory he outlines three basic human existential needs; namely, love, justice and will to freedom. He conceives of love as "the root of all mystical schools (and religions too, which in their true sense, are but a manifestation of love)" (Ibid.: 81). Then he widens justice to "the establishment of material justice between and among nations and classes both in a foreign colonialist relationship and a domestic exploitative" (Ibid.). And he sees will to freedom as "man's existence meaning that man should rely on and go back to his intrinsic humane values, and that the human should enjoy freedom and a free choice in order to grow and fully evolve in his own human nature and value his own 'existential self"
which, according to advocates of this philosophy, is destroyed in a capitalistic order, negated in a religious order and becomes one dimensional in a socialistic order". (Ibid.).

Here he reaches the conclusion that “the most perfect man or school of thought, therefore, who or which wishes to salvage human beings, is the man or the school who or which contains these three main features in himself or itself” (Ibid.: 86). In other words, the ideal situation would be realized when “we feel ourselves as advocates of Mazdak [as the symbol of equality], we establish within ourselves the magnificence of Buddha [as the symbol of mysticism] and we honor the freedom of man to the extent that we tolerate even our intellectual enemy for the sake of sacredness of freedom” (Ibid).

At another plane of the elaboration of his image of freedom, he identifies freedom with knowledge, and puts, “the greater the human being’s knowledge of the customs and rules of society, the more responsibility he has as well as more freedom in changing and transforming society” (CW 28: 81). Shariati establishes a link between obligation and freedom by posing the view that man “is obliged to follow the rules existing in nature in order to exercise that freedom” (Ibid). For Shariati, this is also true in the philosophy of history when he refers to his belief “in the freedom of individual and his human responsibility, which lie at the very heart of the process of historical determinism” (CW 16: 62). Therefore, he sees no contradiction between individual freedom and historical determinism. In this respect, he argues, “history advances on the basis of universal and scientifically demonstrable process of determinism, but ‘I’ as an individual human being must choose whether to move forward with history and accelerate its determined course with the force of knowledge and science, or to stand with ignorance, egoism, opportunism in the face of history, and be crushed” (Ibid.: 63).
For Shariati, freedom is a basic value. In his view "freedom is one of the basic aspects of man's existence". Yet even while adoring freedom, his concept of individual freedom is non-liberal. For him freedom needs socio-political prerequisites. In fact, he believes that freedom can be only fulfilled in the light of justice. Then he refers to religious conception of freedom termed as 'salvation'. Here he compares salvation with liberty and states that "liberty merely means to be free from prison, but salvation contains the developmental freedom of our existence" (CW 2: 44).

His unitarian monotheistic metaphysics lays also the foundation of his natural theory of justice. He maintains that the conception of justice for a monotheist defers to the conception held by a materialist. For, "justice for a materialist who praises it is a contract people establish among themselves having no real foundation and base in the world. The worldview which depends on Tauhid, however, poses the idea that justice is the foundation of existence and the universe" (CW 23: 224-5). Therefore, he concludes, in a religious view, "an unjust society is an unnatural and abnormal society" (Ibid.: 225). In a more objective definition he elaborates two meaning of justice. He tries to indicate that justice in its current usage is almost dealt with from a legal point of view. While, he characterizes, the term 'Qest', a Quranic term which signifies justice, with the true share of individuals and groups from material and mental social provisions in proportion to the role they play in society. Comparing these two terms, Shariati conceives of the former as a legal conception that is confined to legal relationship between individuals and groups but 'Qest', in his view relates to the social basis. His theory of property is also defined in the light of his theory of justice. In this respect Shariati believes that Quran addresses to labor as the only source of property and maintains, "therefore property is materialized
through labor and naturally those who work can become owner” (CW 10: 9-10). In the whole, the Islamic social system “is based upon justice and equitable allocation. It is a community in which the people collectively hold property, and no class differences exist” (Akhavi 1983: 136).

IV. Political Theory:

Shariati is not a political theorist, though his theory of society has inevitably its political consequence. Also, as a figure who feels a prophetic mission of changing the statusque, his theory for action inevitably engenders a theory for politics. However, his political theory is a most controversial part of his ideas. The point of controversy is that while he adores freedom and accepts popular government, when he comes to the question of government he nevertheless places certain limitations on the democratic process. In fact Shariati tends to the Leninist concept of revolutionary leadership” (Rahnema 1994: 241). Bearing the experience of the post-colonial new democracies in mind, Shariati tries to find a way for the consolidation of the independent, nationalist, and revolutionary societies in the post-colonial era. In doing so, he indicates two stages that must be understood by the leaders of these societies. The first stage is temporary and revolutionary, while the second one represents a genuine democracy. Now he refers to the revolutions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and mentions the fact that when revolutionary leaders “want to build their society, they see that if they act according to the votes of the people and rely upon them, these people are people who sell their vote for a nickel” (CW 30: 130). Shariati calls this temporary stage ‘revolutionary’, or ‘democracy engaged in social action’. Then he poses the idea that this stage continues
“until the time when the votes of the people are equal to the real number of people in the population” (Ibid.: 131).

Here again he tries to verify his ideas with reference to some Islamic resources, particularly Shia’s belief in the Prophet’s appointment of his successor. Shariati argues that “when a teacher has brought a new school of thought into being where he gives a special class, and no one else can teach that class the way he can, and he has initiated that particular approach, when a group of his students gather around him and have found faith in him, it is the teacher who recognizes which of his students or friends is most worthy to continue his teaching” (Ibid.: 75). He continues, “a teacher or a professor is not selected from the votes of the people” (Ibid.). In the meantime he mentions that the Prophet’s tradition “permitted the people to vote and express their opinions” (Ibid.). He refers to the value given by the Prophet to the vote of the majority in social affairs, and concludes, “counsel by council (showra) in Islam is the most important principle in running society, while leadership of a social group is a universal principle” (Ibid.: 76). Then he comes to solve the paradox by asserting that “there are two historic phases after the Prophet. One is a temporary phase...to foster Islamic society” (Ibid.). Then he adds, “again we should adhere to the second principle which is also an Islamic principle, the principle of council and allegiance” (Ibid.).

Shariati shows a great deal of preoccupation with the superficial democracies based on power and money. He maintains that democracy relies upon the masses, and the masses almost follow emotions and feelings rather than rationality. “Therefore” to him, “democracy mainly relies upon emotion, and not reason... It is true that the illusory elements in creating beliefs are more effective than rational ones, particularly, when our
audiences are the masses... in the Orient where religious, artistic and emotional insight exist, it is easily possible to ruin the substantial votes by illusory elements” (CW 12: 229-233). Then he criticizes liberal democracy for the key roles played by the possessors of power and money in making people’s vote for certain candidates, policies, or political trends (CW 26: 611-13). He terms freedom in liberal democracy as ‘false freedom’ or ‘determined choice’ and argues that “in democratic liberalism of social system of the West, the individual is free to choose whatever he/she likes. However in reality an atmosphere is created by cultural, political, artistic, and advertising factors in which the individual chooses whatever is determined for him (CW 12: 47).

Shariati’s advocacy for a leadership institution for the guidance of the people as well as his critique of liberal democracy is no warrant for his propensity towards a religious government. For he maintains that a religious government is the one in which the statesmen are replaced by clergies, and “the corollary of such a government is despotism” (CW 22:197). He states that Islam does not result in religious government. From Islamic point of view, continues Shariati, there is no mediator between man and God, and study of religious science is not allotted only to certain people, and there is no official clergy. Then he tries to show “the dimension of individual liberalism of Islam” (Ibid.:198) by acknowledging that all the Muslims are autonomous individuals.

In fact, as far as political theory is concerned, Shariati is clear about what he perceive negatively, and what he refuses to accept. However, his positive formulation for a political theory compatible with his Islamic perception has remained dormant, and has raised a number of controversies between his interpreters.
V. In the Light of Hegel, Marx and Sartre

Shariati’s image of God, nature, and man, his cosmology and metaphysical basis of philosophy of history is harmonious with those of Hegel, and when he comes to analyze the realities of the history and society, he propels towards aspects of Marxism and historical materialism. In fact his whole philosophy of history is an amalgam of Hegel and Marx’s ideas. Shariati comes close to Hegel when talking of the cosmos and the philosophy of existence. He explains further the factual events of the history and analyzes social process, by leaning toward Marx. In the meantime also he finds Sartre’s existentialism as being supportive to his philosophical anthropology. The idea of human freedom and the anxiety and loneliness of man and his destiny to choose between right and wrong seemed to be effective in Shariati’s interpretation of the freedom and anxiety. Undoubtedly, among the ideas posed by Shariati, his image of cosmos is more close to Hegel than other philosophers. To construct a cosmology, Shariati characterizes the universe with self-awareness and purposefulness (Ibid., 36); he regards the whole being as “a single living and conscious organism, possessing will, intelligence, feeling and purpose” (CW 16: 35). This image of the universe is analogous to what Hegel portrays when talking of the ‘Idea’ or ‘Reason’ that “is the True, the Eternal, the absolutely powerful essence”, the substance of the Universe. To Hegel, the sole and final aim of God is to realize his existence, and to come to a self-consciousness, and “this final aim is God’s purpose with the world”. For Hegel, “God is . . . the absolutely true, that from which everything proceeds and into which everything returns, that upon which everything is dependent and apart from which nothing else has absolute, true independence” (Hegel 1984: 368).
Referring to Quran, Shariati, also conceives of the components of the universe as the signs of God and posits, “the relationship of man with God, of nature with metanature, of nature with God… is the same as that of light with the lamp that emits it” (CW 16: 40). Shariati continues, “All the particles, processes, and phenomena of existence as being engaged in harmonious movement toward a single goal. Whatever is not oriented to that goal is by definition nonexistent” (Ibid.). Although Shariati supports these ideas by referring to Quran and Islamic tradition, but his reference to the beginning and the end (purpose) of the process of becoming of the world as well as the human history, shows the extent to which he is influenced by Hegel’s ideas, particularly when introducing dialectical movement to this process of becoming. For this reason Shariati endorse the reality that “behind the atheist and profane face of Hegel’s school there lies a truth that is very close to theological philosophy” (Ibid.: 146). In fact, Shariati’s acceptation of dialectical logic places him in a Hegelian discourse. Referring to some Islamic propositions, Shariati announces that “Islamic perception is closer to dialectic logic than to Aristotelian formal one” (C.W 23, 281). Then he concludes that man is a dialectical phenomena and “the inability of the precedent Islamic thinkers to envisage man as he himself does is not due to their insufficient knowledge and intelligence but their heavy dependence on Aristotelian logic” (Ibid., 282). In this way Shariati, becomes harmonious with Hegel and grasps the belief that “history is the movement of the human species along the course laid down by time, and the human species itself is a microcosm, representing the most perfect expression of being, there most evident manifestation of creation” (Ibid.,40).
Hegel conceives of man as the manifestation of God and makes the argument that "God is absolute spirit. But he also desires to manifest himself and to know himself. So it is part of his essence to become real, in particular material things, in individual persons and in the process of change and history. God is present and active in the real world. He acts through humans, and is conscious of himself through humans (Hegel: 1956). Shariati also perceives man as "a manifestation of God’s will, the absolute will and consciousness of all being, and man, according to [This philosophical] anthropology, is the representative of God in the world, his viceregent upon earth" (C.W 16, 51). In such a relationship between man, nature, and God, "the history of man, which consists of the record of man’s becoming and the formation of his essence, cannot therefore be accidental, something fashioned by events, the plaything of adventures, banal, vain, aimless, purposeless and meaningless" (C.W 16, 51).

Following his philosophy of history, Shariati formulates a theory for the history of human society as well as a theory for society. In so doing, he shows a great deal of affiliation to Marxist social theory. If we strip up the symbolism of Quranic Cane and Abel we reach to a pure Marxist account of the history of human societies. To him Abel and Cane represents respectively the age of a pasture-based economy of the primitive socialism that preceded ownership, and the system of agriculture, and individual or monopoly ownership" (C.W 16, 51-2). From this point onward, he argues, "a permanent war began so that the whole of the history became the stage for a struggle between the party of Cain the killer, and Abel, his victim, or, in other words, the ruler and the ruled" (Ibid.: 52). Explaining the 'structure of Cane’ through economic monopoly, Shariati appropriates Marxian stages of history and argues that "slavery, serfdom, feudalism, bourgeoisie,
industrial capitalism, and—as its culmination-imperialism, all belong to the structure of Cane” (Ibid.). To show how much Shariati is effected by Marx, it is enough to refer to, for instance, the Communist manifesto in which Marx maintains that “Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes” (Marx and Engels: 1969: 99).

There are of course significant differences between Shariati’s views and Marxism. Indeed he himself raises some objection to Marx’s view on economic structures of society. As Marx regards, “in the social production that men carry on, they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material forces of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure, and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness” (Marx 1964 : 20). However, for Shariati economic structure of society is not the real foundation or the infrastructure upon which cultural, social and political structures rely. He does not perceives “slavery, serfdom, feudalism and capitalism as constituting social structures” (C.W 16: 63), but as “part of the superstructure of society” (Ibid.). In his view only “two structures can exist in society: one where society is the lord and master of his own destiny, and all men work for it and its benefit, and another in which individuals are the owners, and the master of their own destinies and the destiny of society. However within
each of these two structures, there exist different modes of production, forms of
relationship, tools, resources and commodities; all these constitutes the ‘superstructure’
(C.W 16: 63). Nonetheless, in foreseeing the liberation of the oppressed and delineating a
happy end for the history, Shariati comes to terms with Marx. As Marx put forward, “The
proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense
majority, in the interest of the immense majority” (Marx and Engels 1969: 104). He talks
of a perfect, good end, communism, for the whole history of human beings delineating
this end as “the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and Nature, and between
man and man- the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between
objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual
and species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and knows itself to be this
solution” (Marx 1959: 97). Shariati too maintains that “a universal revolution will take
place in all areas of human life; the oppressed classes of history will take their revenge”.
Here he refers to Quran, “we have willed that we should place under obligation those
who have been weakened and oppressed on the earth, by making them the leaders of men
and heirs to the earth” (Quran, 28:5). Enjoying the support of Quran, Shariati continues,
“This inevitable revolution of the future will be the culmination of the dialectical
contradiction that began with the battle of Cane and Abel and has continued to exist in all
human societies, between the ruler and the ruled. The inevitable outcome of the history
will be the triumph of justice equality and truth” (C.W. 16: 62).
Despite Shariati’s image of “the inevitable direction of history” (C.W. 16: 62), his
interpretation of the myth of the creation of man indicates his deep belief in man’s
unlimited freedom in determining his own destiny. To him, man is totally free in leaning
upon the devil or godly essence of his existence and is always performing the perennial

task of choosing between the spirit of God and putrid clay (Ibid. 45). “Man” for him, “is a

‘choice’, a struggle, a constant becoming. He is an infinite migration, a migration within

himself, from clay to God; he is a migrant within his own soul” (C.W. 16: 47). Here it

seems “he accepts Sartre’s point that man is free to choose...man is absolutely free to

make his own decisions and consequently absolutely responsible for the choices he does

make” (Akhavi 1983: 134). Sartre is of the view that “man first of all exists, encounters

himself, surges up in the world - and defines himself afterwards. If man as the

existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because, to begin with, he is nothing. He will

not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself” (Sartre 1977:

23). Then Sartre comes to the question of responsibility and argues, “if, however, it is

true that existence is prior to essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, the first

effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and

places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders. And,

when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible

only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men” (Ibid.: 25-26).

Man’s responsibility, particularly for the others is the point of Shariaties objection to

Sartre. Shariati’s contention with Sartre arises from his belief that “nothing will be

changed if God does not exist”. Sartre maintains that atheist existentialists will

“rediscover the same norms of honesty, progress and humanity, and we shall have

disposed of God as an out-of-date hypothesis which will die away quietly of itself”

(Sartre 1977: 34-5). Here, Shariati addresses Sartre’s rejection of religion as a source for

ethics as well as universal consciousness and stresses that in absurdity no norm and value
makes sense. Shariati notifies, “if there is no absolute criteria without our individual deeds...any action we takes cannot be exposed to criticism” (C.W 24, 327).

VI. Shariati’s Harmony with Critical Theorists

While Shariati’s frequent reference to Hegel, Marx and Sartre shows his propensity to appropriating the ideas of these thinkers, his approach to modernity is in a quite harmony with critical theorists of Frankfurt School. Going deep into Shariati’s writings, one can find out that there is “meaningful analogy between Shariati’s ideological conceptions and those of Frankfurt School” (Navah 2000: 383). Ironically, it is inferred from Shariati’s writings that he is not acquainted with Frankfurt School. He only refers to the Persian translation of Marcuse’s One Dimensional man (CW 16: 59, 265, 266). However, a close scrutiny of Shariati’s ideas brings the common grounds between Shariati and critical theorists of Frankfurt School into the light. Shariati avowedly concedes that he is heavily under the influence of the young Marx and Hegel (CW 4: 272). Also Shariati became familiar with humanist Marxism through Sartre’s ideas (CW 24: 67-9). Now such common grounds justify the claim that Shariati’s approach to the tenets of modernity, particularly rationality, in fact, amounts to an oriental version of critical theory (Pedram 2000: 76). For, similar to thinkers such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Habermas, Shariati also believe in the distinction between ‘substantive rationality’ and ‘instrumental rationality’. As we read in Eclipse of Reason, Horkheimer makes a distinction between ‘objective reason’ and ‘subjective reason’ (Kellner 1989: 101). For him, objective reason is “connected with the philosophical tradition in which reason is to produce a
comprehensive theory of nature, society and human beings and is to develop on this basis theories of values, goals and purposes of human life so that inadequate social conditions can be criticized” (Ibid.). However subjective reason in Horkheimer’s word “is essentially concerned with means and ends, with the adequacy of procedures for purposes more or less taken for granted and supposedly self-explanatory. It attaches little importance to the question whether the purposes as such are reasonable. If it concerns itself at all with ends, it takes for granted that they too are reasonable in the subjective sense, i.e. that they serve the subject’s interest in relation to self-preservation” (quoted in Ibid.: 101-102). In their famous work *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno show an important function of subjective reason and mention that, “what men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it and other men” (Horkheimer & Adorno 1995: 4).

No doubt, Shariati’s distinction between ‘rationality’ and ‘reason’ carries the connotation based on the distinction made by critical theorists between ‘substantive’ rationality’ and ‘instrumental rationality’. ‘Rationality’ for Shariati is a power that explores only the facts and sees the facts as means for goals, and choose the goals on the basis of self-interests (CW 12: 11). He concludes, “rationalism provides man and society with an accelerative progress towards being logical, while it weakens many aspects in man” (CW 12: 12).

Now Shariati deals with the definition of reason and states that “man can understand and achieve many beauties and values by reason, a faculty which is not logical, and all its aspects remain dormant and undergo decadence with the reign of rationalism” (Ibid.).

Not only Shariati’s view of modern rationality is close to that of critical theory, but his contemplation on modern science, cultural deception (analogous to ‘culture industry’),
relying upon Marx as well as Weber, interdisciplinary approach, and concern with theory and practice, shows the conformity of his ideas with those of the members of Frankfurt School (Pedram 2000: 76-77). Such conformity of Shariati with critical theorists is something that has become realized during the late of the second half of the post-Islamic revolutionary era (see Navah, 2000: 380-396). It is in this way that Shariaties ideas are being exposed to a more careful reconsideration.

In sum, after the early Islamic post-revolutionary era, criticisms of Shariati revolved around main three main themes: revival of tradition through designating religion as an ideology, imaging religion as an ideology in a modern form, and favoring utopianism against realistic development. (Rahmani 1998: 25). The question of the revival of religion by Shariati was mainly raised by a group of Iranian intellectuals who do not see Islam as a proper source for modern social and political ideas. These intellectuals placed Shariati in the circle of those intellectuals whose ideas “rules out the possibility of modernity through an ideological interpretation of the tradition” (Tabatabai 1996: 10). In their views, there exists no genuine thought in Shariati’s ideas supporting the possibility of formation of modern social and political theories. They maintained that what Shariati called ‘Islamic protestantism’ is nothing but an illusion, based on a superficial interpretation of the developments of Christianity (Ibid.: 351). In their view Iranian society has to surpass the discourse of tradition, for such a discourse implies the impossibility of modern thinking.

The second theme was introduced by Muslim intellectuals who were under the influence of Soroursh’s critique of Shariati’s ideological interpretation of religion. According to them, Shariati believed in a dialectical, evolutionist interpretation of Islamic worldview, a
critical view of society based on contradiction rather than reconciliation, and a radical change in socioeconomic relationships (Alavi Tabar 1997: 42). Such beliefs, in view of these Muslim intellectuals, link Shariati’s ideas to versions of Marxism, and thus endows these ideas with an ideological characteristic. In their views, the term religious ideology is an inappropriate amalgam which prevents both, proper protection of tradition as well as genuine realization of modernity.

The third theme of criticisms made of Shariati, his utopian trends, was set forth largely by diverse Muslim intellectuals, including even Shariati’s advocates. Criticisms based on this theme, mainly evolved out of the post-Islamic revolutionary practice. Endorsing Shariati’s ideas in his own era, these sympathetic critics of Shariati maintained that Shariati’s image of ideal man society no more applicable in running the country and organizing society. From this viewpoint, the era of utopian thoughts and ideas has come to an end, and it is necessary to deal with new, realistic models and patterns (Rahmani 1998: 25).

Shariati’s main project was to bring about a total change in different aspects of Iran’s society through awakening cultural self-consciousness of society. However, the romantic expression of his cultural discussions, very soon politicized his ideas under the Shah’s regime. The Islamic revolution also reinforced this process of politicization, and actually undermined his cultural project. Shariati’s romantic expression along with his utopian outlook highlighted the ideological characteristic of his ideas. Shariati also tried to direct the attention of the intellectuals to viability of the refined and reconstructed indigenous-Islamic culture. In the post-revolutionary era, this effort was interpreted as a justification to the domination of traditional religious over social and political life of the society.
After the subsidence of the fever of revolution, in the mid of the second decade of post-Islamic revolutionary era, Shariati’s ideas were studied from a cultural angle. Through this angle, instead of Shariati’s romantic expression and utopian outlook, his realistic identification of Iran’s society with both traditional and modern elements, and his cultural criticism of these elements attracted the attention of many of the Iranian Muslim intellectuals.