Introduction:

In this thesis I will study three intellectual responses that arise from a conscious engagement with modernity in the second half of the twentieth century in Iran. Three responses represent this axiomatic proposition that when modernity emerges on the scene, it cannot simply be ignored. Theorist of all shades and hue react to modernity: some reject it, others accept it, and a few affirm selected aspects of modernity. In Iran these three fairly distinct position are expressed in the writings of Ali Shariati, Reza Davari, and Abdolkarim Soroush. Davari embodies the anti-modern position, Soroush accepts systemically the tenets of modernity, and Shariati throws a critical light on modernity. It is through the writings of these theorists that the encounter between Islam and modernity is being analyzed here.

Such a three-fold classification helps me to go beyond the Orientalist views, which identify and represent the East, including Islamic societies, through the grid of the West. In fact Orientalist views postulate two distinct areas: the West and the rest. In such presentation the West, modernity particularly, is held as the touchstone, and Islam’s otherness is imagined and defined through its distance from the West. This three-fold classification on the other hand, establishes a dialectical relationship between Islam and modernity, for it does not postulate Islam as an embodiment of tradition, which must be placed against modernity. This classification also provides a way of disengaging oneself from theories of modernization which are indeed versions of Orientalist views. According to
these theories modernity demonstrates only positive traits, while tradition bears primarily negative ones. What is important in these theories is the postulation that all the societies have only one choice for development. This choice is based on the pattern which is indicative of the Western Europe and North American social, economic, cultural, and political systems. In these theories of modernization, indeed religion belongs to the traditional world, and therefore there would be no constructive dialogue between Islam and modernity.

The efforts of Iranian Muslim intellectuals in the 20th century to formulate a theory of society can be categorized into fairly distinct phases. Since the turn of the century to 1960s modern ideas and institutions were held as desirable. Muslim intellectuals were more or less satisfied with modernity, and consequently they tried to prove the compatibility of Islam with modern ideas and institutions. From 1970s onward, by comparison, modernity came to be viewed as being problematic. Here it was subject to systematic criticism and careful consideration.

The positive relationship between Iranian Muslim intellectuals and modern ideas and institutions goes back to the Constitutional Movement of Iran during 1905-11. At that time all the Iranian intellectuals were attracted by the main tenets of modernity: reason, science, progress and secularism. Among these intellectuals the ones who leaned towards Islam tried to interpret Islamic ideas as being compatible with such ideas as those of, people’s participation, representation, equal citizenship, fair treatment to all persons, and democracy, and the existence of a parliament and constitution. In this earlier phase of the relationship between
Islamic intellectuals and modernity the bearers of modern Islamic thought, had almost no profound knowledge of the basic questions of Western philosophical bases of modern social and political ideas, as well as the foundations of Enlightenment and modernity. Fascinated by the scientific and technological progress as well as, the democratic political system in the West, these intellectuals postulated modern as pathbreaking and constructive. The most significant effort in the late 1950s and early 1960s was made by Mehdi Bazargan, a leading activist and a modernist Islamic thinker. Bazargan tried to show the compatibility of scientific achievements, democracy and human rights with Islamic beliefs. However it was in the early 1970s that Ali Shariati, a social theorist, educated in France, posed a challenge to modernity and made distinction between what he regarded as positive as well as negative aspects of modernity. In fact Shariati’s ideas were formed in the late 1960s and flourished in the early 1970s. During these years, Iran was economically and socially involved in a large scale and quite intensive process of modernization. Development based on such a process seemed uneven for social mobilization lagged behind economic democratic and corresponding political institutions were not also formed. In the throes of these events Shariati threw a critical light on the process of modernization in Iran. In doing so he went deep into the essence of modernization and criticized what was, to him, a process affiliated to capitalism culminating in oppression, alienation and loss of meaning. Even he undertook the ambiguous task of criticizing the essence of a modern rationality as well as the institution of modern science. Shariati was also quite aware of the obstacles created by negative, reactionary
aspects of religious tradition that prevented Iran's society to enter into modern era. For this reason, while rejecting the linear path of modernization, he posed a harsh challenge to the obsolete ideas and institutions of the classical system.

In a sense, Shariati's ideas may be considered as a cultural response to the encounter of Iran's society with modernity. Since Shariati was critical to both modernity and religious tradition he sorted out the negative and positive aspects of both sides and created a paradoxical combination of opposing concepts. His reconstruction of the Islamic symbols and myths in the light of modern ideas, such as freedom, justice, social rights and genuine democracy emerged as a powerful motivating force in mobilizing the youth, particularly the students against Shah's regime in the late 70s. Although he died in 1977, he has been widely recognized as the ideologue of the Islamic revolution of Iran occurred in 1979. His ideas contained what he chose to designate as the positive elements of both tradition and modernity. For this reason his theory of society was seen as being an effective symbol representing the convergence of the different, and sometimes opposing social sectors, entering into a mass revolution. However the convergence was not able to go on much longer. In the initial stages of the post-Islamic revolutionary era, when the clergies usurped the government run by many of Shariati's colleagues, the fragile nature of the convergence came into the light.

It is true that the dominant trend in the revolutionary process, at the time of the victory of Islamic revolution, was expressive of Shariati's ideas. Even many of the prominent and leading clergies tried to pose their ideas by borrowing
Shariati's language and notions. However, after two years, with the consolidation of clerical establishment within the power structure, a shift occurred and Shariati was gradually pushed aside by the effort of traditional clergies. Although, Shariati's ideas were appropriated in the context of a social and political movement, at the time of establishing of the new political system his ideas seemed inviable at least to some of the clergies.

Along with these developments, in the early 80s, at the intellectual plane, two rival intellectual positions substituted the stream of 'critical Islam' represented by Shariati. One was represented by Ahmad Fardid, a philologist philosopher educated in France and his student and colleague, Reza Davari, a teacher of philosophy, and the other by Abdolkarim Soroush, a philosopher of science educated in Britain.

Fardid has never codified his ideas, however most of his ideas have been incorporated in Davari's writings. Davari demonstrated a radicalized continuity of the Islamic revolutionary discourse, characterized by an anti-Western orientation, and a reconstruction of religious tradition. In fact Davari's ideas were consonant with a vast Islamization campaign which began form the early 1980. Such a campaign was supported by masses who obeyed conventionally the clergies as well as by many bazzaries (traditional merchants) who benefited from the absence of Iran from the world economy. The repercussion of this campaign in the universities was the movement called as 'cultural revolution' and resulted in the closure of the universities for two years. Now the war between Iran and Iraq (1980-88), which was defined by the official religious authority as a war between
Islam and blasphemous Iraq’s government backing by the West, emerged as a powerful impetus for such a campaign.

Following Professor Fardid, Davari endorsed what the traditional religious leaders had maintained about the authenticity of religious tradition, and shifted from the traditional discourse to the modern one by appropriating a Heideggerian tradition in challenging modernity. In so far as this tradition negated Western grand narrative of modernity, Davari employed it to establish an alternative narrative for a reconstructed religious traditionalism. Davari’s main concern was to reveal the crisis, decline and end of modernity. Although his outlook was essentially based on negation of the West, it implied a positive defense of the political theory based on “Guardianship of Jurisconsult” (Velayat-e-Faghih), being practiced now in Iran, as an Islamic alternative to liberal democracy. He was attracted by anti-modern spirit of philosophical postmodernism and assigned that modernity ruins individual moralities, family integration and social norms. Since Davari was against individual liberalism and human-centrism, his social and political ideas were imbued with a sort of communitarianism and they favored a political society similar to that of Platonic Republic, the only significant difference being that it is to be governed by the authority of religion, not reason.

Of course Davari’s reliance on Islamic tradition and his effort to reveal the declining nature of modern civilization is not a brand new stance. Rather many

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1 In such a political system there exist judiciary, executive, and legislative powers. The president, members of the parliament, and the members of high-ranking expert clergies whose job is to assign the responsibility of “Guardianship of Jurisconsult” to a qualified religious leader are
of the reactionary oppositions against Constitutional Movement of Iran in the early 20th century laid emphasis upon the incompatibility of what the traditional clergies called the blasphemous Western based constitution with the authentic Islamic tradition. However what is peculiar in Davari is his effort to formulate his ideas, though against modernity, within the discourse of modernity by appropriating Heidegger’s views. Since Davari’s orientation towards the Islamic tradition and the West was a sort of endorsement for the dominant stream of clerical thought, the intellectual circles were not so receptive to his ideas as they were to those of Shariati and Soroush. However, the clergies saw Davari’s Heideggerian criticism of modernity and the West as a rival for their castigating the West through the traditional religious discourse.

The end of the Iran-Iraq war coincided the emergence of a new generation with a new outlook towards religion and the West. The radical anti-Western ideas were no more satisfactory for this generation. Soroush’s ideas captured this spirit and met the post war social and political demands of the youth and educated people (mainly among the urban middle class). Although Soroush began to formulate his theory of society during the war, but the post war condition of socioeconomic reconstruction prepared the ground for his ideas to be widely received. Soroush posed his ideas in the context of the epistemological approach of analytic philosophy. His emphasis on rationality, a strong civil society, and a dialogue with the West showed signs of discontinuity from the Islamic revolutionary discourse. He tried to shift the center of reference groups from the clergies to the
educated groups, and such a shift was largely received favorably by the youth, particularly the students. Soroush’s main task was to represent an Islamic version of modern institutions, which recognizes the authority of modern rationality and science. He accomplished this by posing a pluralist interpretation of religion. He maintained that one’s image of religion is merely his/her understanding, not the unique truth. Religion is here related to the ethical life of individual and restricted to the private realm. Soroush advocated secularization of social and political theory, and in its particular sense, he supported an open society, liberal democracy and a pluralist civil society, accompanied with capitalist market economy. For him it was individualism, liberty and pluralism that modernity presented to non-modern societies.

In fact all these three thinkers, as representatives of three Islamic intellectual streams, set out to deal with modernity from an Islamic vantagepoint. At the same time they are all aware of the fact that their theorizing is part of the discourse of modernity. The particularity of these thinkers may be understood under at least three points. First, the context in which the ideas of these thinkers existed was completely different in comparison with that of the previous ones. It was for the first time in Iran’s contemporary history that the Islamic thrust become as the motivating force for an all-encompassing social and political movement. Furthermore in the post-Islamic revolutionary era all the aspects of public life were redefined in the light of Islamic ideas. It was in this context that Shariati’s ideas were re-read and those of Davari and Soroush were formulated.
Second, the writings of Shariati, Davari, and Soroush are particularly significant for they reflect an important moment in the social and political history of Iran. All these three thinkers represented one moment of the post-Islamic revolutionary era. In the early stage of the era, Shariati represented the continuation of a revolutionary thrust. No doubt, the language and concerns of Islamic revolution was the language of Shariati and his concern with capitalism, imperialism, justice, and freedom. Davari, in turn, radicalized the anti-Western aspects of Islamic revolution by addressing Islamic traditionalism. However, Soroush made a shift to normalization and modernity by projecting liberalism as well as secularism. Although Shariati’s powerful presence was short in the early stage, the challenges posed to Davari and Soroush’s works have once again directed the attention of many Iranian Muslim intellectuals to Shariati’s critical viewpoints.

Third, in contrast to the previous Iranian Muslim thinkers all these three thinkers, particularly Davari and Soroush were quite acquainted with Western philosophy, and consciously appropriated the Western ideas to reconstruct their desired Islamic theories. Social and political ideas of these thinkers indeed have been constructed in response to modernity and through the discourse of modernity. It will be my endeavor in this thesis to draw attention to the ways in which elements of modern western thought being appropriated by these thinkers to formulate their own Islamic theories in modern times. Generally the works of these three thinkers are not only held as responses to modernity, but as part of the perennial intellectual movement for revival of
Islamic ideas. Terms such as *Ihya* (revival), *Tajdid* (renewal), and *Islah* (reform) are familiar in Islamic discourse. In the course of history, many Islamic revivalist movements have been contributory to the productivity of Islamic thought, and the enterprises of these three thinkers also deserve to be studied under the rubric of Islamic revivalism. However, in this thesis I will not focus my attention to the role Shariati, Soroush and Davari have played in the revival and development of Islamic ideas. Indeed, my main concern is to show the relationship each thinker established with modernity, and to display the modern basis on which they tried to reconstruct their own version of Islam. In this way, I will lay bare aspects of modern Western thought which have been contributory to laying the foundation of the ideas presented by Shariati, Davari, and Soroush. This is important to underscore the point that these reflections on modernity are not coming from a position which is uniformed or narrowly within tradition. Rather it is awareness of the discourse of modernity that have contributed significantly to these responses. Moreover, it is through concepts and ideas closely associated with the Western philosophical tradition that these three positions are articulated. For this reason, they occupy the same position as all other discount, including those that have emerged in the West, that have attempted of respond to the experience of his denity.

The thesis will show that the counterparts of Davari and Soroush’s ideas in the West are the Heideggerian approach and analytic philosophy. However, despite Shariati’s avowed appropriation of Hegel, Marx, and Sartre respectively his ideas do not fit neatly into a Hegelian, or Marxist, or even, Existentialist category.
Recently, a new interpretation on Shariati signifies that his ideas are more in harmony with critical theory of Frankfurt school than any other circle or school of thought. This interpretation of Shariati has come from a revised study of his idea, in the second decade of post-Islamic revolutionary era.

The importance of the period 1980-1995 lies in its constructive characteristics. For during this period two main intellectual currents were supported by Davari’s as well as Soroush’s theorizing. There was also a third current, pioneered and constructed by Shariati few years before the Islamic revolution, which was to some extent practiced in the early stage of the post-Islamic revolutionary era, and more than a decade later was reconsidered. The period of 1980-1995 is also important for the crucial experience in which Iran’s society was engaged. It was for the first time in the contemporary history of Iran that the whole society entered into an Islamic social and political practice in an interaction with modern requirements. The people challenged the whole system of Shah’s modernized regime, while demanding an alternative republican system, based on modern processes and institutions such as participation, election, powerful parliament and separation of power. The demand of several sects of the society, particularly urban middle class, including students and intellectuals, for freedom and equality under a republican governmental system, was expected to be realized in the form of a participatory democracy. However, when traditional version of Islam became the foundation of society the most important challenge came in the sphere of social and political institutions and practices. For, basically the institution of ‘Guardianship of Jurisconsult’ was essentially against democracy, not recognizing
people's sovereignty. When the controversies over the doctrine of 'Guardianship of Jurisconsult' led to the recognition of this doctrine as the most important principle in the Constitution of Islamic Republic, there remained no doubt that modern institutions were to become subject to traditional principles. Nevertheless, the problem was deeper than a struggle between traditional and modern versions of an Islamic government. In fact, Islamic revolution lacked a theory of society and a defined political theory. The utopian ideas of Shariati did not provide a pragmatic basis for social institutions as well as organization of government. Also, clergies' image of an Islamic society and government was far from the modern requirements. It was in such a situation that the need for formulating a pertinent social and political theory became the preoccupation of Muslim intellectuals. Therefore from 1980 to 1995 we witness the genesis and growth of two rival trends represented by Davari and Soroush in response to the inapplicability of Shariati's ideas. It is also in the end of this period that the signs of decline of Davari and Soroush's theories became manifested, and one more time, Shariati was reconsidered.

On the whole, the spirit of this thesis revolves around three main concerns:

1- I will try to surmount the mainstream views in the West which define all forms of Islamic thought within the dichotomized world of tradition against modern. In so doing, along with explaining and analyzing the nature and constituent elements of both tradition and modernity, I will open up a gray area which provides me with two possibilities: a) the possibility of seeing a
constructive dialogue between tradition and modernity; b) the possibility of defining types of Islamic thought that bear traditional as well as modern elements.

2- All the three Islamic intellectual trends in the post-Islamic revolutionary era in Iran, which represented by Davari, Soroush and Shariati, will be held as reconstructed version of Islamic thought through appropriation of different intellectual trends in the West.

3- It is only with reference to the philosophical foundations of Davari, Soroush and Shariati's intellectual enterprises that the impact of modernity on the social and political ideas of these thinkers can be explained and analyze in a complete and comprehensive manner.