Giving Words: Translation and History in Modern Iran

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Anthropology

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Critical Theory

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Spring 2018

Abstract

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Based on two years of ethnographic and archival research in Tehran and Qom in Iran, *Giving Words* recovers histories of violence, secret connections, and political hopes that have brought Iranian state officials, Shi'i seminarians, academics, and activists to read, translate, and write in direct relation to European traditions of political philosophy and social theory. Engaging the insights of anthropology on synchronic forms of difference, and of historical epistemology on diachronic shifts in coordinates of truth, it reads the political history of modern Iran as a contested terrain of translation that is formed at the intersection of Islamic legal and philosophical discourses, Iranian historiography, Persian literary traditions, and currents of European thought. It traces the history of translation to the Perso-Russian wars of the 19th century and to the anti-Western discourses of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Through ethnography, *Giving Words* demonstrates that the proliferation of translation after the Revolution is at once a manifestation of a political crisis and the travails of cultural regeneration. The post-revolutionary practices of translation issue from, and extend, the conflation of the Shi'i tradition and national politics on the one hand, and struggle to conceive of religious and political belonging anew, on the other.

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Acknowledgements

I was fortunate to receive the mentorship and friendship of Stefania Pandolfo, Saba Mahmood, and Wendy Brown who inspired my pursuit of graduate studies. Stefania's curiosity about the fullness of life, I hope, is reflected in the pages of this dissertation. Saba's commitment to the study of non-European history and politics lives within this inquiry and what might follow from it. I was lucky to conclude this project in her presence, and to be a witness of her incredible commitment to living and learning with others. I am thankful for Wendy's incisive intellectual, professional, and personal insights. This dissertation is also indebted to the generous guidance of Xin Liu and William Hanks, and all my teachers and colleagues at Berkeley.

My parents' encouragement to pursue my questions, which are also theirs, is reflected here. My study of translation as a way of coming to terms with an unknown history reflects my mother's appreciation of the gift of language and her capacity to conjure history in poetry. Without the love and care of Golayoun and Vandad, and Chris, I would not be able to embark on the path that led to this dissertation. Chris also shared with me his own personal and intellectual journey, which in turn grounded mine. Jeanie, Simon, Alex, and Andisheh arrived into our family at different points during this project. They fortified a loving home that made me able to finish it. I am excited to what comes next with Alex.

This project wouldn't be possible without my family, friends, and interlocutors in Iran and in California. They shared with me their homes, stories, and aspirations, and in turn made this project possible. I am particularly thankful to Zohreh, Fariba, and Fazel Ghalamkarpour for always being there, to Javad Tabatabai for pointing the way, to William and Naveed for thinking with me, and to Sepideh, Sahar, Sepehr, and Stefanie for enduring friendships.

I am also thankful for Queso who patiently kept me companied while I wrote this text.

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INTRODUCTION

The Kharej/ "Outside" of the Tradition in the Aftermath of the Revolution

In mid-twentieth century Iran, the Heideggerian philosopher Ahmad Fardid declared that Iranian history cannot be rendered a footnote to the history of Europe. Though Fardid was not a historical thinker, he was writing after the failures of the Constitutional Revolution, the 1941 Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran, the 1953 coup against a democratically elected government, and the re-institution of absolute monarchy. Fardid captured the emerging historical sensibilities of despair and hope that would animate an anti-Western Islamic revolution. But within the global condition of European supremacy, what other concepts and rationalities, if not European ones, can non-Europeans use to think their history such that they do not merely become a footnote to the history of Europe?

The generation of the Revolution answered defiantly. Islamic revolutionaries turned to the Shi'i tradition to inaugurate a politics free of Euro-American political and cultural influences. Paradoxically, however, they founded an Islamic *Republic* and reproduced European norms of national politics in Islamic garb. In consequence, the post-revolutionary generations not only face an enduring Euro-American hegemony, but also social and political failures of a self-proclaimed Islamic state that demands absolute *and virtuous* commitment. In a reparative gesture, unlike their revolutionary forbearers, post-revolutionary thinkers and activists have revised Fardid's declaration as a question of translation: In what relations with their own cultural traditions on the one hand, and with European ones on the other, can non-European actors render legible and enact their history?

Giving Words offers an examination of practices of reading, translation, and history-writing in post-revolutionary Iran where translation of European social thought has emerged as a central form of intellectual production. Drawing on two years of ethnographic and archival research in Shi'i seminaries, the Iranian academy, and private translation circles in Tehran and Qom, it addresses Iranian translations of European thought as an index of "historical precarity" and "political hope." [1] I read the political history of modern Iran as a contested terrain of translation that is formed at the intersection of Islamic legal and philosophical discourses, Iranian historiography, Persian literary traditions, and currents of European thought. I recover histories of violence and crises of cultural transmission that have disrupted Iranian politics along with classical paradigms of knowledge centered around the Shi'i seminaries and the Iranian court, and

[1] Drawing on Johnathan Lear's *Radical Hope* (2006), as well as the Aristotelian and psychoanalytical traditions of thought that his text engages, I conceive of "historical precarity" as the loss of concepts necessary for the temporal unfolding of a form of life, and of "political hope" as the pursuit of a political exit from conditions of such a loss. The Aristotelian elaboration of place of concepts in constitution of a form of life has also been theorized by Alasdair MacIntrye (2007[1982]) as well as Talal Asad (1986, 2015). My engagement with Aristotelian ethics and Asadian anthropology is informed by the continued presence of this tradition of ethics as part of the Islamic tradition in Iran, as well as attention to crises of cultural and historical transmission specific to the Iranian context. I understand and theorize crisis of cultural and historical transmission in part by drawing on Javad Tabatabai's critical historiography of modern Iran, and on psychoanalytically informed anthropological inquires of recent past –Michel de Certeau (1986, 1995) –and present –Stefania Pandolfo (1997, 2018).

led generations of Iranians to turn to Europe and European thought in order to mitigate the travails of religious and political belonging. I argue that practices of translation and contrastive self-fashioning of Iran in the modern period at once reveal and respond to what I theorize as an "epistemic confusion" that is the mark of the Iranian order of things and underlies the cyclical disruptions which characterize Iranian politics.[2]

The 1979 Islamic Revolution sought to rid Iran of the destructive effect of Western political and cultural influence by refashioning Islam as the basis of Iranian national culture and creating a modern Islamic state. As part of this unprecedented project, Shi'i seminarians who found themselves in political leadership were tasked with the elaboration of Islamic norms of social and political conduct and the invention of "Islamic" social and political sciences. The seminaries were expanded to include research centers such as those in a modern university or a think-tank. Merged with the institutions of the state in an unparalleled fashion, they were transformed to compete with universities and offer degrees in newly established programs in "Islamic human sciences" and "Islamic social sciences." At the same time, and as part of the agenda of the Cultural Revolution, seminarians were put in charge of universities and all institutions of education and research as to render them fit for an Islamic polity. Norms of Islamic conduct and thought were devised and put into effect as part of the selection criteria for selection of professors and graduate students, and Islamic sources were drawn upon and commissioned for creation of the curriculum and scholarly references.

The Iranian project of the Islamic Republic was not only unprecedented, but the very concepts and rationalities of making a modern Islamic polity were non-existent. The Islamic revolutionaries, however, demanded what was not historically given. In order to expand the domain of Islamic knowledge and create the socio-cultural basis of an Islamic state –what Wael Hallaq has recently called "an impossible state"[3] –, Iranian seminarians and academics have had to rely on reading, translation, and what they call *boomi-sazi* ("nativization") and/or *islami-sazi* ("islamicization") of Western social discourses. As a result, despite the anti-Western ideology of the Islamic Revolution, as well as the extensive purge of dissenting voices that are often addressed as seditionist allies of Iran's Western enemies, the project of the Islamic state has paradoxically intensified the translation of European social thought. Post-revolutionary translations are invested with the ethical and political force of the Islamic Revolution. Indeed, the post-revolutionary practices of translation continue as part of the same revolutionary dream of creation of an unprecedented modern society that was led by both Shi'i scholars and leftist activists. As a result, although many of post-revolutionary translations are instrumentally recruited as part of the project of the Islamic state, they necessarily exceed it. On the one hand, readings and translations of European thought engender attitudes inassimilable –and often critical and even opposed– to the Iranian project of the Islamic state. On the other, given Iran's historical significance in the transnational Islamic tradition, and particularly the Shi'i tradition, the effect of the Iranian project of creating the Islamic state far exceeds the historical contours of Iran.

The intellectual work of Islamic revolutionaries and those who walk in their paths bring these groups in contact not only with European texts, but also with translators of different religious and political sensibilities. For example, in translation, partisans of the Islamic

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[2] Foucault, M. 1994 [1970]. *The Order of Things.* New York: Vintage Books.

[3] Hallaq, W. 2012. *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament.* New York: Colombia University Press.

revolution and the state join those who have been systematically purged from the highly controlled public spaces of the Islamic Republic. Indeed, translation is one practice that unites political adversaries in the aftermath of the Revolution. The Iranian public of translation is comprised of a diverse group of people who are brought together by their struggle with religious and political belonging in an Islamic state on the one hand, and in their commitment to translation on the other. Some of the voices in this dissertation belong to those who dreamt a modern Islamic state, got to create one, but are now translating Christian and secular discourses of "hermeneutics" and "political theology" into Persian and Shi'i education to rethink the relation between Shari'a and the state. Others belong to Marxist-Leninist partisans of the Revolution who found themselves blindsided by Islamic politics, and today attend seminars on Hegel and Marx to rethink their political past and future. Others still belong to the children of the revolutionary generation who passionately read Charles Taylor and Jürgen Habermas on "secularism" and "civil society" so as to think religious and political belonging outside the revolutionary dreams of their fathers, and beyond what they feel as the limitations of the Islamic Republic. Since practices of translation bring together diverging political projects, *Giving Words'* study of translation will reveal characteristics of Iranian politics that exceed sectarianism of revolutionary and post-revolutionary politics and relate to the condition of possibility of diverging political projects. It contributes to the contemporary studies of Iran by putting into relief the narrow framing of Iranian politics in terms of religious, anti-modern, anti-democratic vs. secular, leftist, progressive, etc.

How is it that despite the anti-Western character of the Revolution, I ask, the Constitution of the post-Revolutionary "Islamic Republic" as well as its institutions, language, and grammar of politics were all adopted from European models? And how is it that in the midst of a campaign aimed at the "Islamicization" of education, the seminarians in charge of the Islamicization project, academics sidelined for their political divergence, and middle-class youth, well-versed in English while awaiting migration to the West, all read, translate, and write in direct relation to European political philosophy and social theory? What is, after all, the place of the translation of European thought in the political development of Iran?

Giving Words traces the twofold operation of translation in this context: (1) as the instrumental replication of European social and political discourses in Islamic garb, and (2) as the search for a novel understanding of Iranian cultural traditions and the possibilities they hold for a renewed political life. In its instrumental mode, translation has been central to the process of refashioning Islam as the basis of both national culture and the state. This mode replicates political forms who owe their historical genesis to European traditions as "Islamic" in Iran by eliding the specifics of the Islamic tradition as well as European and Iranian politics. I trace the genesis of this mode of translation to anti-Western discourses of the Islamic Revolution, and describe how post-revolutionary state officials and the cultural elite who inherit this mode reproduce it in their effort of Islamicization of practically everything –the creation of not only *Islamic* human sciences but also of *Islamic* governance, *Islamic cinama* ("cinema"), *Islamic femenizm* ("feminism"), and even *Islamic* self-help books and literature.

By discerning the mimetic quality of post-revolutionary translations, this dissertation illuminates a broader political and historiographic crisis that is otherwise obscured by the discourses of Islamic politics, insofar as this discourse unreflectively reproduces the concepts and rationalities of European thought even as it articulates itself against European hegemony. I trace the emergence of a political crisis in the aftermath of the Perso-Russian Wars (1804-13, 1826-28) that in turn led the Iranian court *as well as its critics* to turn to translation of European

thought as a remedy. *Giving Words* follows the unfolding of this crisis and shows how it leads to the politicization of Islamic tradition. It also demonstrates the different forms of political Islam in reference to the clerical discourses of the 1906 Constitutional Revolution and the anti-Western discourses of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. I argue that traversing popular and clerical debates, the latter discourse obfuscates the underlying political crisis by reimagining and promoting Islam as a remedy to Iran's social and political ills. *Giving Words* complements its historical-genealogical inquiry with an ethnographic one. It explores the capacities of ethnography as mode of inquiry in relation to historical difference that as different, test the limitations of western methodologies and concepts. Through the ethnography, I demonstrate that the very concepts and rationalities that order the experience of time and history, enable cultural transmission and communicative exchanges across generations, and chart out a viable future are lacking. *Giving Words* captures a scene of cultural devastation that it theorizes as one lacking the words to be spoken, illuminated, and metabolized. It registers a historical condition that is embodied, passed on in silence, and expressed in cyclical plays of revolt and suppression, in individualized-yet-widespread experiences of excess and addiction, as well as in attempts at suicide and migration.

Closely tied to the instrumental translation of European discourses, *Giving Words* shows that there exists a second, poetic and non-mimetic, mode of translation that directly confronts the inadequacy of ready-made Islamic and European concepts for rendering intelligible the experience of history and the enactment of possible futures. I locate this mode of translation in relation to the imaginative capacities of the Islamic tradition as well as classical Iranian traditions of historiography and advice literature (also known as referred to as "mirrors for the princes" genre): the tradition of scholars ranging from Abu'l Fazl Beyhaqi (995-1077) to Mirza Abul Ghaesm Ghaemmagham Farahani (1779-1835). I also theorize the generative work of translation in relation to the reparative capacities that Sigmund Freud and Walter Benjamin ascribed to the work of language and memory. *Giving Words* addresses the poetic mode of translation as a prelude to the revival of Iranian historiography of religion and politics that welcomes the alterity of Iranian history and its multiple traditions, translating, transforming, and refining European concepts in order to re-encounter the lived history of Iran and to conceive political and religious belonging anew. In contrast to anti-Western discourses of the Islamic Revolution that defiantly denied the impossibilities of politics within disordered times of epistemic confusion, non-mimetic practices of translation become mediums of mourning the death of the past while holding open the possibility of its regeneration. They are, in other words, at once a compromise solution to a historical crisis and a critical attempt to carve out an exit from it.[4]

Translation and the Kharej (*"Outside"*) *of the Tradition*

The word *kharej*, adapted from Arabic and widely used in modern Persian literally means "outside," "outer," "exterior," "abroad," as well as "external," "foreign." For example, Iranians refer to international travel as going to *kharej*. This term also refers to one of the highest levels of

[4] "Enlightenment is man's *exit* from his self-incurred immaturity." Kant, E. 1996 [1784]. "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment." In *What is Enlightenment: Eighteen-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions.* Schmidt, J. Ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.

courses in the Shi'i scholastic education as practiced in the seminaries to-date.[5] In the seminarian sense, a *kharej* is usually led by a cleric of the highest rank who is called *marja-e taghlid,* that is, "a source of emulation," or a teacher who is a model of ethical conduct. In a *kharej*, the cleric considers a new "case" or a pressing question that has no set precedence within the textuality of the tradition –and it is therefore "outside" of the tradition– and provides an authoritative elaboration. This practice is called *ijtihad,* which denotes, at the same time, "authoritative judgment" and "renewal" –in providing an authoritative judgement on an unprecedented case, the tradition itself is renewed. To practice *ijtihad* in the context of *kharej,* the cleric employs the four sources of Islamic scholastic reasoning –the Quran ("the Revelation"), *hadith* ("prophetic sayings"), *aql* ("reason"), and *ejma* ("consensus")– and thereby brings the authority of the tradition to bear on the new case. The practice of *ijtihad,* within the dominant Twelver Shi'i tradition, is not only predicated upon the four sources of reasoning but also on the divine presence in the world. The hidden presence of Twelfth Imam, who is presumed to be with us but in the period of "the Great Occultation," is the grantor of *ijtihad.* Through the four sources of reasoning, a highly-trained cleric tunes into the divine presence and extends the authority of a tradition to a new case. The Hidden Imam, in other words, guarantees that which is new and "outside" of the order of tradition can be brought within.

Giving Words is an anthropological exploration of *kharej,* ("the outside") in all the meanings of the term. In his remarkable 1985 study of modern Iran, *The Mantle of the Prophet,* historian Roy Mottahedeh tells the story of a young seminarian who grew up in Qom and studied with jurists of the highest ranks such as Ayatollah Khomeini, and became a learned scholar of Islam just prior to the Revolution. Drawn from interviews, Mottahedeh's protagonist Ali Hashemi beautifully portrays the cultivation and transmission of Shi'ism as a tradition of practice and debate, of philosophy and law, with the capacity to incorporate and indeed expand different forms of thought such as Persian poetry and mysticism. With the advent of the Islamic Revolution, Ali, who was at the time also a professor at Tehran University, left Iran for a life of scholarship in the US. In the mid-1980s Motaheddeh and Ali witnessed the revolutionary transformation of Shi'ism into a program for state-making and nation-building in Iran from the halls of Harvard and Princeton universities.

Although Mottahedeh does not directly state it, Ali Hashemi's move from the seminaries of Qom to an American university signals a crisis of transmission of the Shi'i tradition in the context of transformations of modern Iran; transformations that made *kharej,* here in the case of Mottahedeh the geographic "outside" that is the United States, an anchor for a traditionally trained jurist from Qom. The life and words of post-revolutionary seminarians, political activists, and the youth who are my ethnographic interlocutors bear witness to the same transformations that came to de-center Shi'ism from seminaries into the political battles of revolutionary Iran. They live and work within a world where Islam has transformed into a totalizing tradition that has no outside. In search of an "outside," some have had to follow the path of Ali Hashemi to the exile of the European and American academies. Others, however, have turned to translation. *Giving Words* argues that Iranian scholars who inherit the tradition with its violent politicization in the Islamic Republic seek in translation *a kharej* ("an outside") to re-activate the imaginative

[5] For a discussion of *kharej* and *ijtihad* in the context of Shi'i eduction see: Mottahedeh, R. P. 1995. "*Traditional Shi'ite Edcuation in Qom."* Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review 2. 1:89-98. - 2016. *"The Najaf Hawzah Curriculum."* Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. May 2016: 1-11.

capacities of Shi'i tradition and deduce an authoritative judgment –an *ijtihad*– for what they perceive as unprecedented social and political realities. As a result, while interrogating the limitation of the particular politicization of the Islamic tradition around the Islamic Revolution, I demonstrate the continued significance of Shi'i tradition for Iranian scholars who are dispersed across the Iranian academy, seminaries, and private institutes of research and teaching, in and outside Iran.

Outline of the Chapters

Giving Words is organized in two parts and five chapters. Part One: A History of the Present is informed by the historical and textual focus of linguistic anthropologists (Keane 2007; Hanks 2012) and historical epistemologists (Foucault 1966; Mitchell 2002; Hacking 2002; Asad 1993; El Shakry 2007, 2017). It situates translation of European thought by grounding it first in the epistemic transformations that construct "modern Iran" as the historical-theoretical location of inquiry, and second, in the political history of the country, from the Perso-Russian wars on the nineteenth century to the present, and punctuated by the two Revolutions of 1906 and 1979. Part One consists of two chapters. Chapter 1: Crisis begins with the Perso-Russian wars, and the fate of a letter sent by Napoleon to the Persian monarch soliciting his collusion at a time when both France and Iran were at war with Russia. The letter was in French. The Iranian court could not find anyone with the knowledge of the French language, and as I argue, nor could the court find anyone with the knowledge of the political "order of things" that Napoleonic French represented. Iranian defeats in the war were devastating, and included loss of a territory encompassing modern day Armenia, Azerbaijan and eastern Georgia. In turn, however, these defeats inspired a project of learning European languages and translating European texts. Indicating a consciousness of crisis, one of the first texts translated was *The History of Decline and the Fall of the Roman Empire* by Edward Gibbon.

Crisis reads the travel writing of Mirza Saleh Shirazi, the first Qajar student sent to Europe for the purpose of studying English, French and Latin during this time and shows how in a moment of crisis, the translation of European concepts such as "constitutionalism," "despotism," and "liberty" emerged as a way of apprehending and addressing Iran's politics. Through a discussion of the translation of British judicial and legislative processes into Islamic jurisprudential language, Crisis theorizes the relation of translation to an "epistemic confusion" that conditions Iran's political developments in the modern period. Excavating the epistemic significance of European concepts and terms in formation of modern Iranian politics illuminates the condition of possibility as well as specific forms of politicization of Islam in the subsequent decades. The very terms "constitutionalism," and "representative government" that came to be the basis of discourses of religious and political reform of 1906 Constitutional Revolution were first translated in the travel-writings of those such as Mirza Saleh. Once translated, European concepts are shown to provide the discursive basis within which the emerging politics of the Islamic state were perceived and enacted.

Chapter 2: Revolution examines twentieth-century Iranian anti-Western discourse of Islamic Revolution in relation to their turbulent local and global context. It continues the analysis of the previous chapter by demonstrating that anti-Western refashioning of Islam and Iran in the twentieth century is conditioned upon an internalization of the West as a site of Iran's contrastive fashioning, itself predicated upon a historical crisis of representation (Foucault 1994). Revolution is centered around an analysis of the influential 1962 text by Jalal Al-e Ahamd titled

Westoxification (translated alternatively as *Westitis*, *Oxidentosis* and *A Plague from the West*), which –along with Ali Shariati's 1964 "Return to the Self" and Dariush Shayegan's 1978 *Asia Against the West*– set the intellectual context of politicization of Islam as a discourse of revolution and the state.

This chapter situates Al-e Ahmad within a tradition of thinkers known as *rushanfekr* ("enlightened thinker"). *Rushanfekrs* stepped onto the scene of Iranian politics after the Perso-Russian wars. They appeared from the outside of the classical discourses of knowledge of Islamic tradition and of the Qajar court. As figures of "the outside," I describe them as (false) prophets of the times of epistemic confusion. They represented the emergence of a new form of knowledge. Recalling the analysis of the emergence of translation in the previous chapter and extending it further, this chapter shows that this new form of knowledge was in large part produced through the selective translation of European thought and transposition of European concepts and rationalities onto Iranian history. Examining Al-e Ahmad's *Westoxification* within this genre, this chapter shows that although Al-e Ahmad's thinking and writing is deeply indebted to selective translation of European thought –and particularly to twentieth century post-war French existentialist literature and thought, which he translated into Persian– he nonetheless neglects to reckon with the significance of European thought for the historical development of Iran in the modern period. *Revolution* argues that the revolutionary identification of Iran's cultural and political maladies in terms of "a plague from the West" ignores the epistemic crisis internal to Iranian travails of religion and politics in the modern period. Al-e Ahmad and his contemporaries did not only neglect this crisis but covered over it by reducing Iran to the counterpoint of the West. In this anti-Western discourse Iran was mimetically imagined as a European nation-state with Islam as its national culture. Revolution builds on this analysis to suggest that the overthrow of the Pahlavi monarchy and the rise of the Islamic Republic expresses the *impossibility* of religious and political belonging, and not a founding of politics.[6]

Part Two: Faces of Today offers a history of the Revolution though an ethnographic engagement with the generation that animated the event and their children, the generation born into the violence of the post-revolutionary period and the devastations of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88). It locates the rise of translation of European thought in the history of the Revolution by showing how, for revolutionaries, translation emerges as a reckoning with the unfulfilled dreams and unforeseen consequences of the event, and how, for their children, translation constitutes a search for the elements and the coordinates of a discourse that might illuminate the cyclical nature of revolt and suppression found in the Islamic Republic and engender a practicable politics. Lastly, in an engagement with post-revolutionary debates on politics, historiography, and the role of translation therein, Faces of Today examines the limitations and potentialities of the post-revolutionary practices of translation, addressing the historical question of continuity and rupture between the pre- and post-revolutionary practices of translation.

Part Two consists of three chapters. Chapter 3: Cultural Revolution argues that the elision of the historical incommensurability of European discourses in Islamic translation of European thought renders the enacted Islamic tradition foreign to itself. It traces the unfolding and the effects of the discourse of Westoxification after the Revolution through the post-revolutionary Cultural Revolution –the attempt to modernize the seminaries, Islamicize the Iranian academy, and bring the seminaries and universities together to produce modern "Islamic Human Sciences" and "Islamic Social Sciences." Through ethnography, it shows how the Islamic Cultural

[6] Arendt, H. 2006 [1963]. *On Revolution.* New York: Penguin Books.

Revolution has paradoxically promoted the translation of European thought and invested the practice of translation with the ethical and political ethos of revolutionary Islam. After a brief history of the Cultural Revolution, the chapter turns to the practices of reading and translation of the European discourse of "political theology," and the writing of the controversial German jurist Carl Schmitt, by a group of seminarian-academics in one of Tehran's leading post-revolutionary universities. It shows how Carl Schmitt, among other European writers, comes to mediate the relation between seminarian-academics and the enactment of the Islamic tradition, its forms of knowledge, and its modern politics.

Chapter 4: Occultation of Politics interrogates the limitation of Shi'i politics of revolution and reform amidst Iranian indeterminacies of religious and political knowledge explored in the earlier chapters. It critically examines the politicization of translation and its association with political activism and with sedition (*fitna*) in the politics of the Islamic Republic. Occultation of Politics is centered around the political career of a former Islamic revolutionary, Saeed Hajjarian, who after taking part in establishing the Islamic state turned to the study of European discourses of secularization and civil society and emerged as a leading figure of political reform. The chapter identifies Hajjarian's turn to European thought as part of the post-revolutionary reckoning with the absence of a viable political discourse and the emergence of a reformist movement of *Eslahat* ("Reform") in the late 1990s. Following the 2009 disputed election of Mahmood Ahmadinejad known as "the Green Movement," Hajjarian –among other revolutionaries-turned-reformists– was accused of the theological-political charge of *fitna* ("sedition") and put on trial. Accepting this charge, his court testimony blamed his seditionist slippage from the righteous path of the Islamic state on his readings of Max Weber, Talcott Parsons and Jürgen Habermas. In his public defense Hajjarian argued that the Cultural Revolution had failed and post-revolutionary "uncritical" translations of European social theory had come to undermined the Islamic state from within.

In thinking with Hajjarian, Occultation of Politics interrogates politics in a world where translation of European concepts and theories constitute heresy and sedition. Beyond Hajjarian, I identify the historical amnesia that is constitutive of Islamic politics of revolution and reform. Ignoring the epistemic significance of European historiographic concepts for the development of law and politics in Iran, the chapter argues that in the period of presumed occultation of the Twelfth Shi'i Imam, the Islamic politics of the state constitutes an "occultation of politics." Present Islamic politics resembles a play of musical chairs where the players are reactive to the temporary silences. In this game revolutionaries become state bureaucrats, statesmen become seditionists, and religious reformers become exiled intellectuals in search of a home in the West where their religiosity is reduced to a private affair.

Chapter 5: Khorooj/Exit [7] argues that the proliferation of practices of translation and the formation of a public around translation in the post-revolutionary period constitute a form of what Freud called "working through" the crises of transmission of the Islamic tradition and the

[7] *Khorooj*, derivative of *kharej,* literally means "exit." It is the term that appears on "exit" signs in Iran, and it is also how Kant describes Enlightenment: "Enlightenment is man's *exit* from his self-incurred immaturity." Kant, E. 1996 [1784]. "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment." In *What is Enlightenment: Eighteen-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions.* Schmidt, J. Ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.

politicization of this crisis in the anti-Western discourses of the Islamic revolution.[8] Moreover, this chapter explores the place of translation in development of what can be described as a critical historiography of religion and politics, one that produces the means to relate anew to Iran's forgotten past and inaccessible present as to illuminate an exit from the politics of the "Islamic state" that pegs a politicized understanding of the West and Islam against one another. Through an engagement with post-revolutionary debates on historiography and translation, Exit argues that generative translation can allow Iranian historiography to account for differences internal to Iranian history –and that of the West–, and not simply face the West and abdicate Iranian crises.

The chapter is centered around the Porsesh Institute of Political and Economic Research, a private institute where academic and seminarians purged from their respective institutions join translators, literary figures, and other public intellectuals and offer a variety of courses on European social thought to the interested public. Situating Porsesh and its attendees in the post-revolutionary field of knowledge production, I turn to the life and work of Porsesh's most popular scholar Javad Tabatabai. Keeping in mind the intimate relationship between his thinking and that of his students with their lives, this concluding chapter elaborates the reparative and critical work of translation in relation to what the earlier chapters have demonstrated as the limitations of a viable discourse of religion and politics.

Anthropology, Translation, Politics

Since the 1980s and continuing today, the self-consciousness of the colonial past and the imperial present of anthropological knowledge has engendered a critical awareness of the limitation of anthropology as a discourse of cultural translation. Anthropologists are increasingly preoccupied with questions of untranslatability –of incommensurability of words and worlds, of productive or destructive equivocations, partialities, failures, and impossibilities of translation therein (Asad 1986; Strathern 2004; Mahmood 2004, 2009). Attention to untranslatability does not simply highlight difficulties of finding equivalences across distinct languages, or of mediating between divergent world-making practices. It also brings to focus the one-sidedness that is internal to any language, tradition, or culture, and characterizes its universal drive (Lévi-Strauss 1962; Foucault 1966). Un/translatability, in other words, points to the inadequacy of the dichotomy of the universal and the particular, which has been conceived in theological, philosophical, historical, and cultural terms, and has long animated scholarly and political enterprises.

Inheriting this dichotomy on the one hand, and reckoning with contemporary political predicaments on the other, anthropologists have sought strategies to come to terms with it, subvert it, and find avenues to move beyond the assimilation of alterity to their habits of thought and ready-made categories (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Talal Asad, a leading figure in this critical turn, has identified empiricism as a culprit in subduing the alterity of the West's others by translating their forms of life into Western concepts. In the context of his work on Islam, Asad has proposed the concept of "tradition" as a *theoretical location* for analysis while re-articulating

[8] Freud, S. 1914. "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II)" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XII (1911-1913): The Case of Schreber, Papers on Technique and Other Works,* 145-156.

anthropology as a form of epistemological exploration of difference across distinct traditions and forms of life.[9] Scholars who follow Asad have come to thematize the limits of epistemological exploration of difference as the theoretical and political locus of their work (Mahmood 2004, 2009, 2015; Hirschkind 2006; Fernando 2014). They have questioned, for example, the limitations of the secular public –and liberal politics more generally– as a space of translation where racial, sexual, and religious minorities are cunningly invited to represent themselves in terms of majoritarian politics.

Other anthropologists, in conversation with Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, have come to address the epistemological non-transparency of worlds –including human and non-human worlds– by conceptualizing difference in ontological terms (Viveiro de Castro 2014; Latour 2013; Severi 2014; Kohn 2013; De La Cadena 2015). Since culture is constitutive of forms of life, they argue, difference is ontological. These approaches, despite their differences, rearticulate anthropology as exploration of the different ways human and non-human life is curated. They place the question of translation –and untranslatability– at the center of the anthropological enterprise. The challenge is less about inventing the proper cultural contextualization to make sense of the "unfamiliar," or about the re-articulation of anthropology and ethnography in terms of a dialogical enterprise. Instead anthropology as a practice of translation expresses a willingness to reckon with alterity so that difference between and across human/nonhuman worlds can begin to appear as such.

Giving Words contributes to the study of difference and un/translatability by reversing the direction of anthropological problematization of difference, generally predicated on a difference from the West. In contrast to the anthropological model that must depart from the "self" to find irreducible difference in the non-Western other, my study of Iranian translations of Western thought demonstrates how a history and a culture already contains irreducible difference within itself. What anthropology offers us as "different" is characterized as internal forms of difference. Hence, we shall see that articulations of positive difference between self and other –theoretically or ontologically construed– are predicated upon foreclosure of internal forms of difference that render Iranians other to themselves by way of Western concepts. This situation lacks a clear parallel in the history of the West and as such cannot be reduced to however critical theoretical representations of the West of itself.

As a study in movement of concepts and thought across distinct cultures, *Giving Words* affirms that knowledge is perspectival. It argues, however, that cultural difference cannot be reduced to one culture's representation of the other. The recent anthropological problematization of difference and translatability is predicated on a necessary blindness and an unnecessary elision. Anthropology proceeds to cohere as such by eliding forms of internal difference such as those found in Iran today, and this kind of elision is the condition of possibility for anthropological inquiries that seek to find a non-Western other through which to reflect upon, renew, or provincialize the self. Anthropology, however, elides forms of difference that it can otherwise explore in considering the other's blind interlocution with anthropology and the anthropologist. This critical problematization of the other of anthropology, I argue, is the only remedy to positivistic seizure of the other from its concrete historical unfolding and reduction to theoretical frames of anthropological discourse.

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[9] Asad, T. 1986. "The Idea of Anthropology of Islam." Washington, DC: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University. - 2015. "Thinking About Tradition, Religion, and Politics in Egypt Today," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Autumn: 166-214.

Giving Words begins and ends with forms of difference that are internal to the historical constitution of Iran. "Iran" is the theoretical location where I explore, historically and ethnographically, questions of religion, politics, and indeed translation. Islam, in the context of this inquiry, is indeed a tradition, one that is irreducible to Iran and its time-space, but also one that is analyzed in the context of its unfolding in Iran and in its simultaneity with other Iranian traditions –political, literary, philosophical. My study of translation moves between Iran and Iran, as it is mediated by Europe. The status of Europe (or the West) and European thought, I argue, is undecidable with respect to Iran: it is impossible to situate the West exclusively inside or outside Iran. As my analysis of Iranian anti-Western discourses demonstrates, this leads to a secondary process by which a regressive politics fetishistically memorializes the other in its self-constitution against it. Yet the secondary process cannot be properly understood without reckoning with the more fundamental impasse, the reality of which is put into relief by a study of the specific problem of translation in Iran. The political lesson of this inquiry for anthropology might be that an anthropological politics that proceeds by a positivistic and non-critical problematization of the other risks exacerbating a form of sectarian politics that forecloses transference and negotiation and contributes to prevalent sectarianism of our times.

CHAPTER ONE

Crisis: Translation and a Rupture in the Order of Things

Translation and the Nomos of the Earth

Chronicles have it that in the early nineteenth century, at a time when both Persia and France were at war with the Russian empire, Napoleon wrote a letter to the Persian monarch Fath-Ali Shah Qajar and engaged his collusion (in Azerang 2014: 218). Napoleon's letter was in French. The Persian court could not find anyone in Iran who could read French. They had no choice but to send it to Baghdad, then part of the Ottoman Empire, for translation. Despite the Shah's success in finding a translator in Baghdad, the collusion with one imperial power against another did not succeed. Subsequently Iran lost a significant portion of its northern territories, an area that includes modern day Armenia, Azerbaijan and eastern Georgia, to the Russian Empire. We might argue that "translation" failed; that the challenge of translation was not simply to understand the French language, but to understand "the order of things" that nineteenth century Napoleonic French entailed. During the Perso-Russian wars (1804-13 and 1826-28), as Iran entered a relation of contemporaneity with Russia and France, it entered a relation of incontemporaneity with its own order of things. Iran was in need of the *power* of guns and imperial allies but it had the *knowledge* of swords and an insulated monarchy. Prior to attaining what had become basic historical necessities the country encountered different orders and was forced to "translate" across them. This chapter traces the emergence of translation of European thought in Iran to the Perso-Russian wars and a crisis of knowledge amidst a changing Iranian order of things. It demonstrates how the emergence of translation at once indexes a historical crisis and a quest for a way of apprehending and addressing the changing nature of time and politics.

In the century that culminated in the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 in Iran, a series of humiliating concessions to the Russian Empire in the north and to British Colonial rule in the south and southeast (parts of present day Afghanistan) shrunk Iran to its present day borders. During the same time, and in stark contrast to the beginning of the century, there emerged a number of individuals capable of reading and translating various European languages. More importantly, shrinking borders coincided with the expansion of Persian political vocabularies. Shortly after the Constitutional Revolution, Ayn al-Saltaneh, a member of the Qajar Royal family, noted in his journal that new words and terms have come to dominate the political culture of Iran. His list recounts, and I translate: *mashruteh,* "constitutionalism;" *mustabedeh, "*despotic;" *azadi,* "liberty;" *baradari, "*fraternity;" *barabari* and *mosavat,* the Persian and Arabic words for "equality" with different epistemic resonances; *jalase,* "meeting," "congregation;" *janan malan,* an Arabic phrase denoting radical devotion to a cause, literally: *"*with my life and possessions;" *ba tamam ghova,* "with all power;" *zendeh bad, "*long-live;" *past bad,* "down-with;" *ghoveyeh mojriyeh,* "executive power;" *ghoveyeh moghananeh,* "legislative power;" *ekhtar, "*warning;" *tozih* "justification;" *vojdan,* "conscience;" *anjoman,* "assembly;" *meliyat,* "nationality;" *ghomiyat,* "ethnicity;" *mojahed,* someone who struggles for a cause, or embarks on *jahad; fadaye-e majles,* "devotee of the parliament;" *alani,* "public;" *serri, "*secret;" and lastly, "commission", "cabinet", "archive", and "party," which were transliterated in Persian and thus require no translation (in Tabatabaei 2012: 87).

It is noteworthy that Ayn al-Saltaneh was fluent in French; that at the time, *the journal* that brings us his observation was of a new genre of Persian writing; and that the Iranian adaptation of this form, along with translation of European novels, contributed to the transformation of Persian prose to its contemporary form in the nineteenth century.[10] The guiding question of this chapter, however, is the following: how did the terms recounted by Ayn al-Saltaneh, which bear witness to the movement of European political culture and the historical and political order of things of the Enlightenment, emerge in the linguistic frames of Iran's history and come to dominate Iranian political culture at the turn of the twentieth century? How do terms and concepts that are part of European political discourses interact with the transformations of Iranian political discourse in the nineteenth century? What is the relation between textual and cultural translations from European political discourses to Iranian ones and the transformations of Iran in the nineteenth century?

Conceptualizing Modern Iran

Scholars of Iran concur on the significance of the transformations of the country in the nineteenth century as the locus for the histories of the present. In the conventional scholarly approach, nineteenth century Iran is brought forth within the sociological frame of "modernization" in the non-West. Within this frame concepts and terms such as "modernist," "reformist," "nationalist," "secular," and their derivatives are deployed in order to make sense of the Iranian transformations, its projects and personalities. The central shortcoming of this approach is the mobilization of theoretical concepts, whose various registers – cultural, political, ethical, etc. – are related to their emergence in European history for an understanding of the transformation of Iran. Said differently, this approach generalizes European conceptual frames of representation, or epistemic categories, and leaves aside the investigation of the representative linguistic and conceptual frames of Iranian history.

In contrast to this approach, there has emerged a category of theoretically informed scholarship that theorizes "modern Iran" in light of its historical and cultural complexities. Among this group, Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi's *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (2001) is the paradigmatic example in the English language. Social scientists and humanists writing in English predominantly draw on Tavakoli-Targhi's theorization in order to situate their inquiry in relation to modern Iran. Tavakoli-Targhi moves away from what he characterizes as de-historicizing accounts of modernization in the non-West, or "Westernization," for they are unsatisfactorily based on a temporal assumption of non-contemporaneity of the West and the non-West (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: ix). Instead he proposes the theoretical construction of "Persianate modernity" as a culturally hybrid product of simultaneous global processes. The theorization of Persianate modernity moves away from a state-centered account of modernity within which rationality and individualism are often the celebrated or despised ideals. While it accounts for the emergence of Iran within a global circuitry of "national selves," it demonstrates the irreducibility of the political culture of Iran to a narrow conception of the nation-state (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: x).

Tavakoli-Targhi's theorization of Persianate modernity creatively recasts the earlier scholarly attention to the role of cultural and intellectual exchange between Iran and Europe as a significant factor in Iran's transformation in the nineteenth century. An important element in this

[10] For the history of Persian prose, see. Mohammad-Taqi Bahar. 1943. *Sabk Shenāsi* ("An Examination of Genres.") Tehran: Bi-na.

exchange is the contribution of Persian travelers in Europe in the nineteenth century. In Tavakoli-Targhi's words:

> These and other Persian travelers, by constituting Europe as a differentiated site of analysis and gaze, produced a significant body of knowledge about European history, politics, culture, science and economy. The knowledge about Europe, instead of constituting an isolated branch like Orientalism, was integrated into a general repository. The dialogic interaction of European and Persianate knowledge set in motion the dynamic process of modern cultural (trans)formations. Whereas European modernity actively suppressed the heterotypic context of its emergence, Persianate modernity celebrated its transformative conversance with Europeans. This active remembrance of the creative process of cultural hybridization and diversification is often misunderstood by the historians of modern Iran as an undifferentiated process of Westernization. Thus the rich textual sources of Persianate modernity, instead of being viewed as hybrid texts containing a double consciousness, are often dubbed as bad copies of originally European views and ideas." (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: 44)

While I share Tavakli-Targhi's criticism of the de-historicizing effects of the framing of modernization as Westernization and his focus on complex intellectual exchanges that underlie Iranian transformations, I worry that the valorization of the contemporaneity of global processes as well as the heterotopic and hybrid quality of Persianate culture do not move us closer to a critical and historical understanding of modern Iran. A critical engagement with European historiography is necessary for clearing a space opening towards the historicity of modern Iran. Such an opening, however, is not possible unless we pay attention to the transformation of the Iranian political language and culture in relation to transnational forms of exchange. What requires examination are the conditions, forms, as well as effects of exchanges that prompt a heterotopic and hybrid culture and not merely its celebration. Such an examination cannot be indifferent to the fact that the Persian's "transformative conversance" with Europeans was conducted in Persian, in the terms of the Persian culture of the nineteenth century, and in translation. What appears and can be celebrated for us as hybridity and heterotopia in the Qajar-era European travelogues cannot be generalized to the nineteenth century Persian travelers of Europe over and against their frames of making sense of exchange. When we project hybridity and heterotopia onto other and earlier frames of exchange we repeat the shortcoming of the modernization-as-Westernization approach and obfuscate the dynamism and specificity of the history that we seek to elaborate. We generalize the frame of "hybridity and transnational exchange" that is available to us in English and from a European genealogy, cover over and set aside the representative discourses of Iranian history.

I am not yearning for the God's eye view on exchanges between culture, a point-of-view outside history or inside History. As I will demonstrate in the next few pages, I affirm that knowledge is perspectival and differences between two cultures are only discernable in their contemporaneity. I do not, however, think that cultures are therefore reducible to their contemporaneity or that cultural difference can be reduced to one culture's representation of the other. Insofar as we live and think within a culture, the partial view of culture and cultural difference is constitutive of our notion of culture and cultural difference. However, the inattention to the distinct frames of representation of cultures amounts to unreflective elision of what can otherwise be examined. In the case of Iran, the conceptualizations and representations

of modern Iran, such as that of Tavakoli-Targhi, which ignore the transformation of Iranian frames of representation, offer an otherwise avoidable thin theorization of modern Iran.

An examination of translation from European political discourses to the Iranian one, and its relation to transformations that bring us "modern" Iran, is the anthropological contribution of the present chapter to the study of modern Iran and cultural exchange more generally. My examination of translation foregrounds Iranian frames of representation and their transformation in the modern period. Translation is a site where synchronic differences between cultures (Lévi-Strauss 1966) and diachronic differences within them (Foucault 1994) come to the fore. While most English language studies of modern Iran such as that of Tavakoli-Targhi point to the significance of the West as a site of intellectual and political exchange for an emerging modern Iran, no monograph has thematized "translation" or examined it as the significant site of transformation of an Iranian "order of things." Among the Persian language scholarship, the work of political philosopher Javad Tabatabai has critically synthesized the few earlier Persian historiographies of modern Iran and reframed them in an examination of changes in Iran's political discourse from the Perso-Russian wars to the Constitutional Revolution. His work, to which my chapter is deeply indebted, has noted the significance of translation in producing new forms of historical consciousness and their discursive preconditions.

Amidst the shrinking geopolitical borders and expanding political vocabularies of Iran, I elaborate translation as one process through which terms such as those recounted by Ayn al-Saltaneh enter an Iranian frame of representation. I describe how terms that can, and are, described as European, secure meaning on the terrain of Iran's history and became part of the discursive contractions and expansions of Iran, and mediate the unfolding of Iranian forms of life, and death.[11]

Translation of European Discourses in Iran

The systematic translation of European thought in Iran emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century and during the rule of Naser al-Din Shah of Qajar (1848-1896). However, as I have noted by the way of Tavakoli-Targhi's account, the first translations of European thought can be traced to Qajar travel writing earlier in the century. Naghmeh Sohrabi's recent study of

[11] Life and death, I write, because following Michel Foucault and anthropological elaborations of conceptuality (Asad 2003, 2006; Hanks 2012), I understand the discursive use of language and concepts, be it reflective or unthinkingly, to constitute the possibilities and limitation of forms of life (Wittgenstein 1973; Austin 1962; Bourdieu 1972, 1985; Lear 2006). I follow political and social theorists and anthropologists who highlight the political and ethical registers of linguistic and conceptual practice (Butler 1990, 1997; Povinelli 2002; Mahmood 2004, 2015; Hirschkind 2006; Agrama 2012; Asad, Brown, Butler, Mahmood 2013). Consequently, I elaborate translation as a linguistic process that involves the navigation of the possibilities of political life and putting to rest what has become historically incontemporaneous. What is highlighted in my contribution and remains in the background of the scholarship recounted earlier is forms of incontemporaneity of Iran not with the West, but with itself. We have learned that history is not composed of homogenous empty time – *Walter Benjamin* – and we've learned a few ways to unsettle its objectification and naturalization – *Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault*. This chapter is an exercise in reckoning with Iranian history in its heterogeneity and fullness within the possibilities of contemporary anthropology.

nineteenth-century travel writing, *Taken for Wonder* (2012), recalls 283 travels to Europe from Iran between 1809 and 1897 that are equally split across the two halves of the century. Abdulhosein Azerang's recent history of translation in Iran describes the gradual rise of interest in translation in the nineteenth century and its culmination in the systematic translations of the Naseri period (Azerang 2015: 245). Qajar travel writings, their underlying inspirations, and their particular form, set the stage for the subsequent intellectual, political and courtly interest in translation of various categories of European thought.

Tracing the discourse of the translation to the event of the Perso-Russian wars (1804-13, 1826-28) on the one hand, and the Constitutional Revolution (1905-11) on the other, allows us to discern the particular external and internal political articulation of translation in modern Iran (Foucault 1995: 162). In this chapter I trace the translation of European political culture to the first episode of the nineteenth century Perso-Russian wars (1804-13) and a paradigmatic piece of Qajar travel writings: *Safarnameh,* or "travelogue," of Mirza Saleh Shirazi. Iran's devastating losses in the war made manifest both Iranian's domestic turmoil and its weak position in the global distribution of power. This prompted the Qajars to send their ambassadors and students to Europe for the first time and to commission the translation of European texts. I highlight nineteenth century frames of Iranian history and their transformation in a travelogue written by Mirza Saleh Shirazi, who headed the first group of students sent to Europe and was tasked with the study of English, French and Latin. Although, to my knowledge, there are no monographs on the life and works of Mirza Saleh Shirazi, almost all studies of Qajar era such as that of Tavakoli-Targhi recall him and note his significance as a scholar and a statesman.[12] Mirza Saleh's text introduces some of the key terms that came to constitute the religious and political discourses of the 1906 Constitutional Revolution. Through the analysis of his text, this chapter shows how translation enters the epistemic shifts of Iranian political and religious culture that constitute "the modern" Iran. It elaborates the contribution of translation to the expansion of potentialities and possibilities of concepts and their transformations. I analyze this conceptual transformation by elaborating an emergence of a productive "epistemic confusion" that corresponds to the limits of political practice and debate in modern Iran.

An Example: Legal Representation

Before turning squarely to translation in Mirza Saleh's travelogue, let me offer an example of how translation interacts with the language and practice of politics in Iran in the tumultuous period between the first Perso-Russian war and the Constitutional Revolution. Mirza Saleh's description of British politics in the travelogue, among other contemporary travelogues of his time, introduced a concept of "legal representation" that was unprecedented in the nineteenth century Iranian legal discourses of Islam and the court. In so doing, it set the stage for the political and religious debate that reached its climax in the Constitutional Revolution and continues to the present day albeit in a transformed fashion. Mirza Saleh translated the

[12] See, for example: Mohamad Tavakoli-Taraghi. 2001. *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography.* New York: PALGRAVE. Naghmeh Sohrabi. 2012. *Taken For Wonder: Nineteenth-Century Travel Accounts from Iran to Europe*. New York: Oxford University Press. Javad Tabatabai. 2012. *A Meditation on Iran: the Tabriz School and the foundations of Tajadod.* Tehran: Minoo-ye Kherad

nineteenth century British liberal conception of "legal representation" and the term, "representative," into the Shi'i jurisprudential understanding of *vakalat*, "representation," and *vakil,* "representative" as it was deployed in the Persian political culture of the time. In its genealogy and conception, however, the underlying grammar of Shi'i "representation" radically differed from the nineteenth century British one. It concerned the extension and temporary bestowing of divine will that during the Great Occultation of the Twelfth Imam, resides with the Shi'i *mujtaheds,* "jurists." In the temporary absence of the Iman, the practices of the jurists justified the rule of the monarch provisionally. Gradually, and through translation, however, there emerged a double valance and hence a generative "confusion" regarding the terms *vekalat*, "representation" and *vakil,* "representative" in the Persian political discourse.

The instability and the indeterminacy of *vekalat* and *vakil* made possible divergent political and religious judgments and practices in the subsequent Iranian developments. The divergence reached its height in the debates and disagreements around the Constitutional Revolution. Against the monarch who understood the throne as his divine right, there emerged a new genre of Iranian political practitioners known as *monavar al-fekr,* "enlightened thinkers" who demanded legal representation by insisting on what in modern Iranian discourse can be identified as "the modern European" meaning of the term. More importantly, however, the confusion engendered unprecedented disagreements among the Shi'i *ulama,* "scholars," and promoted an unprecedented execution of a leading *mujtahid* of Tehran, Sheikh Fazl-allah Nouri, in the aftermath of the 1906 Revolution. On the one side of the polarization, Sheikh Fazl-allah Nouri rejected the newly valorized meaning of representation by insisting that representation belongs to *mujtahids*: [13]

> Speaking in public affairs and public good is the prerogative of the Imam or his *nawab* [Muslim prince sitting in place of the Imam] and is none of the business of others whose interference is *haram* and usurping the seat of the Prophet and the Imam…Representing and leading during the occultation of the 12th Imam is with the *faqihs* and *mujtahids,* and not with the grocer, the tailor. Reliance on the majority of opinion is wrong in the religion of the Imams. Writing the law is meaningless. The law of us Muslims is Islam.

Nouri's rejection of the political authority of the state was in line with a long standing clerical position vis-à-vis the state usually characterized as "quietist." This "traditional" position, however, was staged in the context of a changing nature of politics indexed by the newly elaborated meaning of representation. Consequently, in the political struggle between the monarch and the constitutionalists, Nouri's "traditional" and "quietist" position came to signify something quite new: anti-constitutionalism. Other leading *mujtahids* of the time such as Ayatollahs Na'ini and Ayatollah Khorasani were opposed to the monarch and Nouri's however implicit adjudication of his legitimacy.[14] Unlike Nouri, these jurists did not ignore the historical

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[13] For an examination of Shaikh Fazlallah Nuri's argument against the constitution, as well as Ayatollah Na'ini counter view see Martin. V. A (1986). "The Anti Constitutionalist Arguments of Shaikh Fazlallah Nuri" in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 22-2: 181-196.

[14] For an examination of Ayatollah Khorasani in relation to the Constitutional Revolution see: Mateo Mohammad Frazaneh. 2015. The Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the Clerical Leadership of Khurasani. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press. For a history of the *ulama* in Qajar

changes, including the changes within the term "representation," that were underway. In divergent ways they mobilized the Shi'i jurisprudence for an *ijtehad,* "learned judgment," on the confusion within the term "representation". Na'ini, for example, drew on the conception of equality before Sharia and rejected the exceptional position of the monarch in relation to rights, commandments and punishments as understood within the Sharia. Representation as understood within the Constitutionalist discourse, he thus argued, was continuous with Sharia. At a time when despotic sovereignty had become unquestionably untimely, Na'ini's insistence on the equality of all subjects before the Sharia, disentangled the seat of the monarch from the customary religious justifications of the likes of Nouri. Consequently, it provided a religiously sanctioned conception of legal representation. Some scholars of Islam and Iran have interpreted the *ijtehad* of Na'ini as a significant contribution to the emergence of the rule of law from the Sharia and as the most significant political development within the Islamic tradition in the modern period (Tabatabaei 2012; Farzaneh 2015). My purpose for recounting this history, however, lies elsewhere. The emergence of the "enlightened thinkers" and the clerical disagreements over political representation are sites where translation interacts with the languages and practices of politics in Iran.

This example, and others that I will provide, demonstrate the possibilities and limits of politics in modern Iran as they are mediated by the practice of translation. In contrast to the West, where "the modern" is a genesis of "tradition," albeit a discontinuous and genealogical genesis, the Iranian modern is marked by a temporal disharmony of contemporaneous yet indeterminable concepts and practices.[15] In this condition, translation performs the crucial task of elaborating the incommensurabilities that are contemporaneous. While different chapters of my dissertation examine the work of translation from different perspectives, this chapter elaborates the emergence of translation in relation to a historical crisis that amounts to the reconfiguration of the time-space that engenders "modern" Iran. I theorize translation in Mirza Saleh Shirazi's *Safarnameh* in relation to what I propose as an "epistemic confusion" that emerges in Iranian order of things and constitutes the political possibilities and limits of "the modern" Iran.

Thinking Translation with Lévi-Strauss and Foucault

The problematic of representation, and its interconnectedness to translation, has long constituted one of the central debates within the discipline of anthropology. The 1986 volume

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Iran see: Algar, Hamid (1980) *Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

[15] *Indeterminable*, because, the meaning and/or the performative effect of concepts and practices cannot be established in a given discourse. Concepts –such as the concept of representation described here– and practices –such as Nuri's practice of *ijtihad*– can in the same context signal diverging meanings and produce different effects. Philosophically, I have in mind Nietzsche's critique of Kantian philosophy as well as the discussion of indeterminacy in the study of translation as well as interpretive and linguistic practices more generally by thinkers such as W.V.O. Quine and Donald Davidson. While these thinkers address the indeterminacy that marks the nature of all knowledge, linguistic, and interpretive practices, my aim is to identify and locate –by rethinking insights of historical epistemology– a particular historical formation of indeterminacy in Iran.

Writing Culture, an important signpost for present anthropological inquires, was centered on the examination of the poetics and politics of representation and cultural translation in ethnographic enterprises. Since then, James Clifford has moved the anthropological inquiry of culture towards the study of cultural exchange and translation.[16] Alternatively, Talal Asad and his interlocutors have turned anthropology towards examination of the politics of translation within and outside the discipline.[17] More recently, and in light of linguistic and "ontological" examinations of translation in the discipline, William Hanks and Carlo Severi have suggested that anthropology can be defined as a science of translation: "the study of empirical processes and theoretical principles of cultural translation."[18] I do not want to rehearse the history of anthropological reflection on representation and translation here. I want to note however, that informed by and responding to anthropological debates on representation and translation, my inquiry in this chapter encounters these closely related problems and elaborates them while thinking through Iranian history and historiography.

With translation, there is first a simple transposition of words and texts across two languages. For example, along with scholars of Iran who write in English, I use the term "Constitutional Revolution" to represent the 1906 event in my writing and translate what in Persian is known as *enghelab mashruteh.* When we translate *enghelab mashruteh* to "Constitutional Revolution," we take for granted the translatability of the two concepts and the phrase as a whole and proceed with our divergent examinations. Translation, however, also concerns the historicity of a language and a culture. The two concepts here, "constitutional" and "revolution," are only meaningful within a particular historical and political culture and an epistemic constellation without which we risk rendering them as historically meaningless.

The concept of episteme is put forth by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things* (1966) and elaborated in relation to the constitutive role of order in the formulation of culture. Episteme refers to the regularities, discursivities, rationalities and cosmologies that constitute a culture and make possible not only knowledge, but also inter-subjectivity in general. In his words, an episteme concerns:

> [t]he fundamental codes of a culture – those governing its language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices establish for every man, from the very first, the empirical orders with

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[16] See the following text as Clifford's post- *Writing Culture* (1986) interventions: James Clifford. 1988. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. - 1997. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

[17] In addition to Asad's contribution to the *Writing Culture* volume, see: Talal Asad. 1992. "Conscript of Western Civilization" in *Dialectical Anthropology.* Christine Gailey, ed. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. - 2003. Formations of the Secular. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood. 2013. *Is Critique Secular?* New York: Fortham University Press. David Scott and Chalres Herchkind edited. 2006. *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

[18] See Vivero De Castro's work as representative of the treatment of translation in the discipline's "ontological turn": 2004. "Perspectival anthropology and the method of controlled equivocation." *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 2 (1): 1–22. - 2014. *Cannibal Metaphysics.* Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing

which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home. (Foucault 1966: xx)

Foucault's attention to *order* as a marker and thus the site of examination of an episteme recalls Claude Lévi-Strauss' *La Pensée sauvage* (1962) that just a few years earlier, had posited a "drive to order" as a constituent, as opposed to "super-structural," role of "culture." Drawing on the linguistic anthropology of Franz Boas (1911) and the linguist Roman Jakobson (1943, 1959), Lévi-Strauss demonstrated that all forms of cultural production are ordering practices that are predicated upon a process of de-semanticization. What he articulated as the "work of culture" consists in formulation of a particular relationship with concrete historical experience. This original insight, which is his contribution to twentieth century European thought (Derrida 1974; Lacan 1996; Agamben 2005), renders culture not only as a marker of difference but a site of generation of an ordered relation with the materiality of history. Lévi-Strauss thus understood cultural difference to be predicated upon the original similarity of the work of culture. In other words, equivalence can be established on the basis of the generative work of culture. He understood Evans-Pritchard's differentiation between the "magical" thought of the Azande and modern scientific knowledge in terms of divergent ordering practices that he attributed to their respective historicity and different valorizations of perception and imagination.

Foucault's conceptualization of episteme adds to Lévi-Strauss' elaboration of the work of culture a critical attention to the limits and transformation of historical cultural formations. In addition to the Kantian tradition of inquiry into conditions of possibility, his conceptualization of episteme is indebted to the work of historians of science Gaston Bachelard (1968, 2002) and Georges Conguilhem (1988, 1991). The two French epistemologists ushered a novel historical approach to the formation of knowledge that emphasized the constitutive role of contingency, context and milieu in the historical formation of universal rationalities. Following their emphasis on contingent emergence of universal rationalities, Foucault rendered Lévi-Strauss' universalizing drive to order as *historical* in relation to the *longue durée* (Braudel 1966) of Western culture. In *The Order of Things,* he detailed the particular modalities within which Western culture manifests and posits order, links it with space and time as to create a positive basis for sociality (Foucault 1966: xxi). When it came to synchronic difference that Lévi-Strauss explained in terms of relative historicity and different valorizations of perception and imagination, Foucault elaborated how internal transformation of the Western epistemic condition, make possible, and regulate the representation of the West's others in the modern period.[19] In other words, while Lévi-Strauss accounted for the historicity of Western knowledge through the synchronic relativity of cultures, as a historical epistemologist Foucault explained this historicity through internal diachronic transformation of the West. As a result, he explained the historicity of anthropological knowledge of Lévi-Strauss, for example, as a form of knowledge that develops in the *longue durée* that constitutes the West and is punctuated by historical breaks that constitute its modernity.

I will leave Foucault by noting that his archeology of the West identified two breaks that bring us the Renaissance, the Classical and Modern each as an episteme *and as periods* of Western culture. What is noteworthy here is the logic of periodization. What defines a period is the period's particular modality of order. "In any given culture and at any given moment, there is always only one episteme that defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether

[19] Note the distance of Foucault from the Edward Said's project in *Orientalism* (1978). See: James Clifford. *Orientalism. Review Essay* in *History and Theory*. 19: 204-23. 1980.

expressed in theory or silently invested in a practice." (Foucault 1966: 168) What concerns me here is not the totalizing quality of episteme as it is put forth in *The Order of Things,* or the absence of synchronic relations of the West and the non-West (Said 1978; Stoler 1995). I am primarily interested in the anonymous or elusive character and the conditioning power of the episteme. The episteme works in the background and conditions how we perceive and cognize, what we can know, who we are and what we can become. Contrary to an analysis of scientific genius, its movements and progress, as the basis of knowledge, Foucault's archeology elaborates the "positive unconscious" of knowledge, "a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of scientific discourse" (Foucault 1966: xi). While Foucault will revise the totalizing quality of the episteme starting in the *Archeology of Knowledge* (1969) and his subsequent elaboration of discursive formations, the anonymity and conditioning qualities assigned to episteme are only further elaborated in his later works.

Foucault guides us to the historical-geological terrain where formation, deformation and transformation of a culture can be conceived and where we can locate the work of translation. The differences that translation traverses, however, cannot be subsumed to Foucault's elaboration of historical difference. Foucault elaborates historical difference as an epistemic discontinuity that emerges in the diachronic development of Western culture. What is "different" is the modality of order that marks the Renaissance, the Classical and the Modern from one another. Transformation from one order to another is marked by figures that embody discontinuity and historical difference. For example, as the order of the Renaissance based on similitude melts away and the Classical order, based on identity and difference appears, Cervantes' hero Don Quixote emerges out-of-joint with his time. Looking and following signs as a Renaissance man, he cannot but appear as confused in a world were signs and signatures have become unthinkable. Discontinuity and difference produce confusion. In Foucault's account, however, a new episteme will wash over the old, overpowering and sidelining the figures of confusion.

The historical differences traversed in translation are not only diachronic, but also synchronic. The anthropological problematization of synchronic difference that Lévi-Strauss reckoned with resurfaces. In light of Foucault, however, we can conceptualize synchronic and diachronic difference between discernable orders of things. In other words, for the purpose of studying translation in our anthropological discourse, we can leave behind Lévi-Strauss' "savage vs. Modern," to find two distinct regimes of "modern," "modern vs. modern″" each shot-through with their own unique possibilities and limitations. We can see that translation involves moving from one historical order of things to another. In the case of translation in general, and in cases such as mine where translation crosses radically asymmetric conditions of knowledge and power in particular, difference cannot be reduced to a marginalization or temporarily "confused" and "out-of-joint-ness" that will be washed over in the subsequent order of things. Historical difference, confusion and out-of-joint-ness linger. In the case of translation, Don Quixote is not the figure of marginality and transformation of culture but of the culture itself. My inquiry in this chapter can thus be understood as the examination of the epistemic condition of a culture that is shot through with synchronic differences that diachronically linger. Elaborating Iranian culture as Foucault elaborates Don Quixote, I situate translation as part of an "epistemic confusion" that emerges in the Iranian order of things and constitute its modernity. If an episteme provides the condition of inter-subjectivty, epistemic confusion provides the condition of a ghostly and disjointed inter-subjectivity wherein the temporal boundaries of the *past* and *present* and the spatial boundaries of *there* and *here* are radically undetermined and undeterminable. Here

translation is part of a terrain where a culture is dynamic; it forms, de-forms and re-forms, where cultural practices, their grammar and vocabularies may ossify, lapse into untimeliness, or transform, and where cultures pass onto the afterlife, becomes extinct or regenerate.

In what follows I will show that the Qajar translations of European culture took place in the midst of the redrawing of the spatial borders of empires and nations and the temporal boundaries of epochs and traditions. The navigation of linguistic and cultural difference in translation reveal and address a historical archeological rupture that is constitutive of the time-space of *tajadod,* "the modern," or "modernity" in Iran. Translation is elaborated as a symptom of this rupture: a site of elaboration of a fissure in Iranian modes of knowledge and their corresponding social and political formations. Translation as it emerges in the nineteenth century Iran is at once a manifestation of confusion and cultural disablement, and a site of illumination and cultural regeneration.

Safarnameh, Mirza Saleh Shirazi's Travelogue

I start with Mirza Saleh Shirazi's *Safarnameh*, working my way out to the history that is condensed in the text and encapsulates its author. Mirza leaves Tabriz in northwestern Iran for England on April 19, 1815. He travels there through the Russian Empire and returns over three years later by way of the Ottoman Empire. A Qajar statesman, and part of what historian of Iran Mojtaba Minavi has characterized as *avalin karevan ma'refat, "*the first caravan of knowledge," Mirza is sent as a student and as an elder to four other students. His scholarly task is to learn the European languages of English, French and Latin. His travels and stay in Europe that are the basis of his travelogue are over two and half years. On a long journey to and from Britain, while traveling in the Russian territories and the Ottoman Empire, and while residing in London, he comes across and writes about a diverse array of things. His travelogue is not just a journal. It includes, for example, translations of a text on the Napoleonic fate in Russia from the French that he finds in Russia, as well as what can be identified as the first Iranian political historiography of Britain. His writing is one of the first Persian references to the discovery of the Americas as well as the American and French Revolutions. Most of his travel writing, however, is a "thick description" of "everyday" life that notes what appears to him as unfamiliar, new, or a cause of wonder. For example, he writes about the differences between Protestantism and Catholicism; that Western women are not particularly pretty, *khoshgel,* but are beautifully proportioned, *khosh-andam*; that the Russian Kings are crowned in the Church; and that "theology" is the "science of religion."

Mirza learns and transforms as he travels. By the time he arrives in London and visits Westminster's and St. Paul's cathedrals, for example, he knows the difference between Protestantism and Catholicism. He no longer notes, as he did in Moscow, that the Catholic veneration of Christian icons constitutes idolatry. Traveling within the nineteenth century British order of things, he reports how the madhouses as well as the expansive libraries and zoological collections are striking to him. In the collections of libraries and museums, he gasps at the sight of, among other things, Persian artifacts and texts. Imagine the royal representative of Persia, the head of a scholarly and cultural mission, confronting Persepolis in London and in a setting for which he had no easy conceptual equivalent! He is struck that his history, among other "marvels of the lands and the seas," are there for all to see, and that Persian texts are ordered along with texts of many languages and are accessible at no costs to whoever desires to read them. The case of the British Museum is one of the many examples in the travelogue where Mirza Salaeh's thick

description, immediately gives way to conceptual and ideational difficulties that point to the epistemic layers of translation. Consider my somewhat literal translation of how he introduces the British Museum:

> In London there is a house named "the British Museum." It's an expansive and regal house that first belonged to Duke Montagu and was rendered a museum in 1753. Henri [*sic*] Salone Baronet, the Royal physician, had a museum - that is, a collection of the marvels of the land and the sea as well as various subterranean elements that are worth one hundred thousand British *tomans*. He had willed his collection for the British nation. It's been placed in the British Museum for all to see. The *parliament* [English Original], that is *mashverat khane-ye Engelizi,* ["the British house of council,"] allocated one hundred thousand *tomans*, completed the museum and displayed the marvels for the people of the city. (Shirazi 1968: 314)

Note that he keeps "museum" in the original and treats it as a concept demanding an explanation. He explains it in terms that I translate as: "a collection of the marvels of the land and the sea as well as various subterranean elements." Consider the process and the conceptual background that he mobilizes to traverse the incommensurability of the term and to make it commensurate within his own conceptual categories. Keep in mind that the concept of "museum" belongs to Enlightenment forms of knowledge and social and political organization; its translation by Mirza Saleh is paradigmatic of Iran's changing relation with its own modes of knowledge as well as social and political organization. In Mirza Saleh's translation, the "marvels of the lands and the sea" acquires a relationship with state-funded public education. With no immediate reference for the ways in which museums come together, in terms of how they are ordered and enframed, within modern government, in relation to funding processes and different forms of public education, he is shocked at the government's interest in funding the project and for allowing the freedom of access necessary for the creation of museums. He nonetheless grasps that the logic of the museum has something to do with modern government as well as the education of the British public, and their freedoms.

The modern concept of "freedom," part of liberal political thought and legal practice, is novel and wondrous for him. This concept underlies Mirza's description of the "freedom" of the public to use the British Library; of the jury to decide on guilt or innocence in a trial; of men - and only men at this point - to choose parliamentary representatives; and of the parliament to refuse funding for a war decided upon by the British monarch and thus effectively placing a limit on his sovereignty. Through these examples, among others, Mirza's travel writing introduces some of the first articulations of the modern conception of freedom in Persian and within Qajar political culture. In Mirza's language, and subsequently in the epistemic and political culture of Persia, the modern concept of "freedom" runs up against Mirza's presupposed understanding of freedom as the absence of subjection. A layman can freely access books in the library or choose representatives, Mirza explains, because he does not owe anyone anything. Similarly, the legal culture that sustains modern "freedom" comes up against, among other things, the Shi'i articulation of *shari'a* as it was deployed in Qajar Iran. British judges cannot deliver a *fatwa*, he writes, because judgment belongs to the reasoning of the twelve sworn men who witness the procession of the trial. Similar to the example of "representation" in the introduction, but in the opposite direction, the term "fatwa," in Mirza Saleh's use, commensurates the practice of Shia jurists with that of the British jury.

Notice the incommensurabilities traversed and made commensurate in what can be called a space of "epistemic confusion." In this space, the concept of the *fatwa*, for example, is severed

from its epistemic background and commensurated in relation to a liberal legal tradition. The legal conception of the right to choose representatives is put in relation to freedom as *hurriat,* the state of being free from the will of others except that of God and those invested with His will, the Shi'i *Imams* and the *ulama*.[20] Epistemic confusion that characterizes Mirza Saleh's translations is not a "mistake" in translation or a result of a lack of lucidity or rigor. It does not entail collapsing the difference between European traditions, on the one hand, and Iranian and Islamic ones, on the other. Epistemic confusion is the mark of a specific Iranian historical and cultural condition as it emerges in the writing of Mirza. It denotes the withdrawal of classical discourses of knowledge as a way of knowing and acting upon the world, as well as the emergence of new ways of apprehension and action that are indebted to translation of European thought. It is the contemporaneity and (con-)fusion of the classical and new discourses of knowledge that I characterize by the phrase "epistemic confusion."

While Foucault elaborated episteme in relation to regularities that make it possible for "a man be at home," epistemic confusion points to the destabilization of "home" and as a result, the writing of the man. Our man is not at home when traveling, and as it turns out, he is traveling because home might be no longer. Mirza's travel was commissioned by the crown prince Abbas Mirza in the midst of the Perso-Russian wars. The first war, from 1805 to 1813, culminated in the Treaty of Gulestan in which Iran ceded most of modern day Azerbaijan, Daghestan, eastern Georgia and northern Armenia to the Russian Empire. The second war broke out in 1826 and concluded in the infamous Turkmenchay Treaty and the secession of the southern Caucasus, an area roughly equivalent to modern day Armenia and Azerbaijan. The humiliation caused by the defeat was felt in what was emerging as a "national consciousness," and a corresponding "public," and symptomatically captured in the massacre of the Russian diplomatic mission by a mob in Tehran just a year after the "peace treaty." As Qajar historian Abbas Amanat observes:

> In the following decades with varying intensity Russia held the implicit threat of military occupation as a Damoclean sword over the Qajar state in order to accomplish diplomatic and other objectives. (1997: 16)

At this moment, the submission to Russia went hand in hand with Iran's dependence on Great Britain, which held substantial influence in Iran's southern and eastern borders with India. Iran, desperately in need of containing Russia, acquiring military training and instigating reform, developed a highly ambivalent relationship with Britain. The British, of course, proceeded based on their imperial interest in India, Herat, and the containment of Napoleonic expansions east. The Anglo-Persian relation included treaties in 1801 and 1857. The first promised support for Iran against the Russian Empire's southern expansion and the French movement east in exchange for Iranian support against Napoleon's campaign for Egypt. The second culminated in a war between Britain and Iran in 1856-7 over Herat. Iran, which was revealed weak since the

[20] One possible explanation of Mirza Saleh Shirazi's commensuration is offered by Mateo Mohammad Farzaneh: writing in relation to Mirza's translation of the French Revolution – one of the first accounts of the events in Persian, Farzaneh argues: "Mirza Saleh's interchangeable use of the term *fatwa* with decisions made by the French parliament attest to his ignorance that the Catholic establishment was only partially responsible for such decisions… Mirza Saleh mistook the French making secular laws in a parliament with an Islamic decree that is issued by a single high-ranking Shi'ite cleric independent of council." (2015: 33)

earlier treaty, abandoned its sovereign claims to Herat and the other lands of Afghanistan.

Napoleon's letter to the Persian monarch Fath-Ali Shah Qajar recalled in the beginning of this chapter emerges in this context. This is also the background that prompted the crown prince Abbas Mirza and his advisors and confidants, Ghaem Magham Farahani the father and the son, to commission Mirza Saleh as part of a larger translation effort based in Tabriz in northwestern Iran and close to the Russian and Ottoman frontiers. James Morier has documented that Abbas Mirza's effort at military renewal involved the selection of French, Russian and British military and other texts, including the Encyclopedia Brittanica, which he had reportedly studied closely. As Javad Tabatabaei has noted, Tabriz's proximity to the war front and its distance from the Royal palace in Tehran, the capital, allowed for the development of a distinct political ethos and the revival of the Persian tradition of *vezarat,* or "the ministerial office" as somewhat autonomous from *saltanat,* or "the Royal office." Let me briefly mention that for this reason, among others, Tabatabaei points to the developments in Tabriz as the pre-history of Iranian Constitutionalism. Given that in the ensuing decades two important Qajar prime ministers, Mirza Abul Ghasem Ghaem Magham Farahani who was one of the principle figures of the Tabriz effort and Mirza Taghi Khan Amir Kabir, were murdered during the internal struggles of the court, it is certainly plausible to consider their efforts as the pre-history of the Constitutional Revolution.

What I have characterized as epistemic confusion bears witness to historical crises and reformulation of the time-space of Iran in the nineteenth century. Perhaps we can go even further and see that epistemic confusion in the travelogue is not only a symptom of the destabilization of Mirza Saleh Shirazi's "home," but his wandering and wondering *being.* If episteme, as elaborated by Foucault, refers to the pre-subjective condition of cognition and sociality, epistemic confusion engenders confused, multi- or bi-polar cognitive procedures and forms of subjectivity. At the social level, epistemic confusion reflects an unsettled order of things and corresponds to the terrain of reordering, of death and rebirth at a time when the two are not – or not yet – clearly demarcated.[21] At the political level, it marks, for example, the ossification of *saltanat-e mostaghel, "*independent," or "absolute monarchy" and its lapse into "untimeliness." At the same time, however, epistemic confusion corresponds to the condition of possibility of renewal of the tradition of *vezarat* and novel discourses and events such as the constitutional discourse and the Constitutional Revolution. Translation decenters the decaying institutions and practices of *saltanat-e mostaghel,* of the *"*independent," or "absolute monarchy." Javad Tabatabaei has argued that nineteenth century Iran is marked by the emergence of temporal disharmony among various registers of social and political life. He has re-worked Ernst Bloch's formulation – incontemporaneity of the contemporaneous – and articulated *tajadod* as the contemporaneity of the incontemporaneous. I am thinking translation, and epistemic confusion therein, in relation to simultaneity of discordant traditions and processes. In this context, the epistemic confusion in Mirza's travelogue is not due the translator's ignorance but is rather the mark of this very condition. It demonstrates *not* the incontemporaneity of Europe and Iran in the

[21] Drawing on the work of Michel de Certeau (1986) who has demonstrated forms of cultural production that produced possibilities of narrativity during the conditions of socio-economic repression, marginalization by progress and destruction by war at the dawn of modern Europe, and the work of anthropologists Stefania Pandolfo who has shown the heterological and multi-vocal space of cultural production in the post-colonial Morocco (1977), chapter 3 and 4 will develop the relation of translation, marginalization and subjectivity ethnographically.

modern period but the incontemporneity of Iran with herself.

Conclusion: Translation and the Heterological Modern

In contrast to European modernity, the modern in Iran is not defined as a spatiotemporal continuum rendered discontinuous by transformative events but as a doubled discontinuity in which it is both separated from its past and its present. The present, in Iran, is constituted by "past" discourses that remain untransformed and which no longer represent the order of the present. Confusion abounds since this present is not marked apart from its past. In this condition, modern discourses from Europe, which have emerged by way of the act of translation, appear to those living in Iran as more meaningful and representative than Iran's past discourses. Translation is herein at once the realization of a condition of crisis and the regeneration of past discourses in the present. By holding together the discontinuity between past and present, translation, alternatively, is capable of providing a language for engaging the present and making possible the encounter with confusion. It is a way of relating the past to the present towards an open future.

Other chapters of this dissertation develop the limitations and potentialities of translation historically and ethnographically. This chapter has brought forth the emergence of translation of European thought in Iran in the nineteenth century and argued that these early translations are marked by a state of epistemic confusion. Their emergence, as well as their characteristics, demonstrates that translation is never about narrowly construed linguistic difference alone. Translation concerns the historical geotectonic forces, which are encountered, mediated and traversed through the linguistic practice of translation. As a result, translation is not primarily about communication across difference, but about the changing relationship of a language and that history that it represents with itself. In the case of Iran, an event like the Constitutional Revolution is paradigmatic of the political effect of such a change. The event was not caused by the simple introduction of liberal ideas and ideologies from Europe to Iran. Rather, it was an innovation made possible by encountering the historical limits of Iranian political culture, moving passed its ossification and seizing its possibilities. Such innovations are not made by an emulation of Europe as a site of difference, but by remaining open to difference internal to Persian historical and political traditions.

The "task" of translation, as Walter Benjamin has noted in a different context, is independent of the translator. Although translation is a historical and political practice that corresponds to the historical movement of languages and cultures, it precedes independently of the translator's aims and intentions. By the way of conclusion I want to note that although many of the nineteenth century Iranian translators such as Mirza Saleh Shirazi were not lacking in intention and were part of specific social and political programs, we can thematize and study the work of translation in excess of the particular translators, their intentions, and their programs. Much of translation, as I have tried to elaborate, proceeds with curiosity, uncertainty, bewilderment, and confusion. Indeed, in so far as translation affects the epistemic conditions of historical and political discourse, it undercuts the very language of politics within which the specific agendas and programs of the nineteenth century translators or their court patrons were articulated. Political contestation and programs, as a result, are subject to the epistemic transformations within which contestations emerge.

Reckoning with the geotectonic historical forces that brew under the surface of translation, or in between its lines (Benjamin 1996), means that we as scholars of nineteenth century Iran cannot easily deploy labels such as "nationalist," "secularist," "modernizer," or

"traditionalist" to describe various projects and protagonists without paying attention to the historical ruptures and epistemic developments that encapsulated all actors, their intentions and programs. The day that Mirza Saleh left for London appears in his travelogue under the title: *biroon shodan az Tabriz va safar Peterzburgh va siahat darya ela England: "*On leaving Tabriz, traveling to Saint Petersburg, and voyaging the sea for England." On this day in 1815 he could not possibly be sure that he would arrive in London or complete his mission. Traversing linguistic and cultural limits through translation in Iran coincides with facing the risk of crossing geopolitical limits and the contours of social and political traditions. It is these concrete historical limits that defy easy categorization and requires careful attention and elaboration.

CHAPTER TWO

An Islamic Revolution Against Westoxification

Looking Back from Exile

I am speaking to one of my longtime interlocutors by the name of Zahra. It is the 39th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution and the annual state-run celebration across the Iranian cities are ongoing. We chat about the speeches of the Iranian state officials in Azadi square in Tehran marking the Revolution, and also addressing the latest wave of the protests that took Iran by surprise, once again, in late December 2017 and early January 2018. I tell Zahra that I've been writing about the Revolution and re-reading Jalal Al-e Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi* ("Westoxification").[22] "I am trying to make sense of it," I tell her. She laughs. I press her to tell me why she is laughing. She tells me that she is embarrassed that she once took it to be *eyn-e haghighat,* ("the truth").

Today in her sixties, Zahra first read *Westoxification* when she was a high-school student in Isfahan, central Iran. She had read the first draft of the text as a pamphlet and in secret. Originally prepared for The Council on the Educational Goals of Iran from 1961 to 1962, the book was suppressed by the Iranian authorities while undergoing production. It was, however, photo-copied in secret, widely circulated, and read by people like Zahra who were looking for a words and thoughts to express their social and political discontent. *Westoxification* delivered. Zahra, along many others, read it as a call for the detoxification of Iranian culture and politics from "a plague from the West."[23]

"We read Al-e Ahmad as having finally identified our problem. You know that he was part of the left. But he was distraught with the leftists' narrow cultural and religious outlook. When he talked about *din va farhang* ["religion and culture"] it suddenly clicked for me. All of the sudden all the class analysis that I had come to know appeared as foreign to me. My father was a merchant and my parents were *sonnati va mazhabi* ["traditional and religious"]. I don't think I knew a single factory worker in my life. Al-e Ahmad gave me a language that was more familiar and unlike that of the leftists, described the life that I know. I could see my world and my family in it. I thought it described our life. *Fekr kardim ke haghighat ru mige - ke ma ki hastim, dar kodom jaye donyaeem, dino o mazhabemoom chiye, moshkelatemoon kodome, va bayad chikar bokonim.* ["We thought he was speaking the truth – of who we are, where in the world we are, what is our religion and ethos, what are our problems, and what is it that we ought to do."]

"What now?" I ask. "Do you no longer think that he described your world, and that he spoke the truth?"

She laughs again. "You know that it's more complicated."

"Tell me," I insist.

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[22] Al-e Ahmad, J. 1962. *Gharbzadegi* ("Westoxification"). Tehran: Ravagh.

[23] "Plagued by the West" is the title of a 1982 translations of *Gharbzadegi* by Paul Sprachman. The text is also translated as "Weststruckness" by John Green and Ahmad Alizadeh (1982) and "Occidentosis" by Robert Campbell (1984). I will use the term Westoxification for Gharbzadegi throughout the chapter.

Zahra's tone becomes serious: "Al-e Ahmad was not a serious person. I feel ashamed that I took him to be serious. You know, I re-read *Westoxification* for a second time shortly after I learned, to my surprise, that his wife Simin [Daneshvar] was educated at Stanford and in the US. I had thought, as he had said, that American universities, under advanced industrial capitalism, were bastions of mindless reproduction of capitalist and imperialist ideologies, of westoxification. That his wife, who of course I later came to admire as a writer, was educated there was a scandal for me at the time. I think it was then that I started seeing Al-e-Ahmad as *adam-e bi masooliat,* ["an irresponsible person."]. He was not a serious person. The scandal should have been that for the high-schooler me, and for many others, it was a serious book. It represented the West and the East for us. Everyone, left, right, religious and irreligious talked about it as a revelation. He was a prophet. Even Khomeini referenced it. It was one of the texts that made the Revolution. It was the text that closed down the universities after the Revolution. The idea of Westoxification is still central for our Islamic politics. We have *gasht-e ershad* ["morality police"] and *amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkar* ["urging what's good and discouraging the reprehensible"] to fight the Westoxification of the youth. This is an old story. You know it too well."

Introduction

The last chapter related the translation of European thought to the underlying epistemic shifts that define modern Iran. In contrast to the historiography of Europe where the modern is understood as a spatiotemporal continuum rendered discontinuous by epistemic shifts, my chapter invited the reader to interpret the modern in Iran as characterized by "an epistemic confusion." Epistemic confusion is the mark of a double discontinuity where past discourses no longer represent the order of the present, and modern discourses from Europe, which have emerged by way of the act of translation, appear as more representative of the Iranian order of things than do past Iranian discourses. Philosophers and anthropologists have described the condition where "past discourses no longer represent the order of the present" as one of "cultural devastation" (Lear 2006) and "the aftermath of culture" (Pandolfo 2008, 2018). They have not, however, attended to the epistemic indeterminacies and the inability to know and act on the present, or search for an anchor within such a condition. Attention to the epistemic registers of sociopolitical transformations, in the wake of Michel Foucault's work, has been limited to the epistemic transformation of the West. In the context of colonial expansion of Euro-American ways of knowing and acting, anthropologists of non-European worlds often rely on genealogies of the modern indebtedness to the history of the West. When they engage historical difference epistemologically, they do so as an *empirical* counterpoint to provincialize and examine the self-evident truth of Western formations of power and knowledge. They do not interrogate, however, non-European formations of knowledge and power as *theoretical* locations of empirical inquiries. From the point of view of Iran, the condition of epistemic confusion is historically prior to European hegemony, and indeed makes European hegemony possible, effective, hegemonic and colonizing. Translation, in this context, can act as a realization of the crisis of knowing and acting by subsuming and obfuscating the condition of Iranian history and tradition into categories of Western knowledge (Iranian *things,* Western *words*). It is also necessary to create an anchor for knowledge outside of this crisis so as to bring it into the domain of knowledge and respond to it.

This chapter continues the exploration of the translation of European thought in modern Iran prior to the Islamic Revolution. I turn to the major pre-revolutionary intellectual figure Jalal Al-e Ahmad and his influential text, *Westoxification,* and describe Al-e Ahmad as a *roshan-fekr* – the ideal-type of the intellectual of Iranian "modernity" characterized by the double discontinuity characteristic of epistemic confusion. I describe the relation between the translation of European thought and the political work of this type of Iranian intellectual, and read Al-e Ahmad's text *Westoxification* as a site of a significant internal dissonance that befell Western-inspired intellectuals such as Al-Ahmad and obfuscated their indebtedness to their own however inadequate engagement with currents of Western thought. Al-e Ahmad's thinking, like that of the *roshan-fekrs* that came before him, is at once disconnected from the Iranian past and seeks to ground itself –however unsuccessfully— in currents of Western thought. However, Al-e Ahmad is indicative of a second moment of epistemic confusion beyond that described in my first chapter insofar as his epistemic confusion is turned "against the West." In this, he fails to reckon with the structural condition of his thinking, which stands no longer "here, within" the classical traditions that once animated thinking in Iran, nor "there" grounded in the words and worlds of his Western sources. In this no man's land, Al-e Ahmad haphazardly conceives of Islamic Iran as the other of the West and helps give rise to the conception of Islam as the basis of Iranian national culture. In so doing, Al-e Ahmad contributed to an inflection in the history of *roshanfekri* that help re-define Islam contra the West. His contribution helped de-center the Islamic tradition from the scholastic practices of the seminaries to the political and geopolitical battles of his time, and subsequently determine the contours of cultural and political debates of revolutionary and post-revolutionary Iran.

In his recent monograph, *Iran: A Modern History,* the historian Abbas Amanat looks to Westoxification as contributing to the emergence of the Islamic Revolution. His study characterizes Al-e Ahmad's reading of the Iranian past as "erroneous, and highly tendentious," full of "careless and ideologically colored assertions" (Amanat 2017: 693-5). It situates Al-e Ahmad's writing in a context that he describes in terms of excessive popular enthusiasm and naiveté on the one hand and censorship and regulation of criticism on the other. Therein, Amanat characterizes Westoxification as one of "the most damaging Persian texts produced." Conspiratorial and paranoid, Amanat argues, *Westoxifiation* paved the way for a discourse of cultural authenticity that idealized the past and painted the West as the cause of all that was wrong in Iranian society. It paved the way, and contributed to the emergence of an anti-Western and idealized Islamic vision of politics that was formative of the imagination and the conceptualization of an Islamic revolution and the state. *Westoxification,* Amanat writes, backgrounds the demand of the Islamic Revolution: *na gharbi, na sharghi, jumhuri-ye islami* ("Neither Western nor Eastern [but] the Islamic Republic").

What Amanat describes in terms of error, one-sidedness, and ideology, I describe in terms of epistemic confusion. In the no man's land of epistemic confusion, in the context of loss of classical traditions that once grounded thinking, I argue, the very criterion of objectivity and the very means of articulating a subjectivity, are lacking. Formation of objectivity/subjectivity would require historically specific rules and regularities that Michel Foucault, for example, has described in terms of "episteme," Ian Hacking in terms of "historical ontology," and Talal Asad in terms of "tradition." [24] In a context where such rules and regularities are lacking, Al-e

[24] Chapter One offers a thorough engagement with Michel Foucault's conceptualization of "episteme" while Chapter Three shows how I engage Talal Asad's theorization of "tradition."

Ahmad's historiography could not be but "erroneous," and "ideologically colored" for the very criterion of distinguishing accuracy from error are lacking. The Islamic Revolution that emerged in light of Al-e Ahmad's discourse of westoxification expressed *not* a historical possibility of Islamic politics in Iran but instead, the impossibility of political mediation in the context of epistemic confusion.

Jalal Al-e Ahmad as a Roshanfekr

In the aftermath of the Perso-Russian Wars of the nineteenth century a new political figure was born in Iran. This figure was known as "roshanfekr." Roshanfekr is a compound noun composed by the nouns *roshan* meaning "luminous," "bright," or "radiant," and *fekr,* meaning "idea," "view," "opinion." [25] It thus denotes a figure whose thinking is luminous, an "enlightened thinker." Indeed, the emergence of the term "roshanfekr,*"* along with *roshanfekri*– the type of thinking characteristic of this figure– were indebted to the translation of European terms describing European modernity: the English term "the Enlightenment," the French phrase "*le Siècle des Lumières*," and the German "*Aufklärung*," among others. Although many of the nineteenth century Iranian roshanfekrs were indeed inspired by Enlightenment philosophies, it would be mistaken to understand them as the Iranian version of Enlightenment thinkers.
As Iranian political philosopher Javad Tabatabai notes, a defining characteristic of Iranian roshanfekri that contrasts it with Enlightenment thought is the roshanfekri's indifference to and distance from "tradition" (Tabatabai 2012: 45). Roshanfekran (plural of roshanfekr) were thinkers and writers who emerged from "the outside" of official spaces of knowledge production known as *hoze-ha-ye elmiye* ("seminaries"). In reference to Europe and European discourses, they produced a knowledge of Iran that was new and unprecedented. For this reason, I suggest that we not only attend to how the very term "roshanfekr," emerged through translation, but that we consider the figure of roshanfekr and category of thought roshanfekri through the concept of translation. While it is true that most nineteenth and twentieth century roshanfekrs such as Al-e Ahmad were translators of European texts –that is, they rendered texts and terms from European languages to Persian– I do not describe these figures and their thinking in terms of translation simply because of their engagement with the practices of translation. I propose that we consider roshanfekr as a translational figure, or a form of subjectivity, because the very "discursive" grounds of articulation of roshanfekr point to an outside world with its own language and order of things, and an "inside" order that, in its encounter with this outside world and words, must undergo a transformation. Roshanfekri is a space of translation because in reference to an outside world, it produces a knowledge that is new and different from forms of knowledge that precede it. Indeed the emergence of roshanfekr as a new form of thought signals the becoming "old" (or "classical") of the earlier traditions of knowledge.[26]

For "historical ontology," a concept indebted to Foucault's thinking and in the background of Asad's, see Hacking, I. 2002. *Historical Ontology.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

[25] An earlier alternative to *Roshanfekr* in Persian is *monavar-al fekr* which uses the Arabic synonym for *roshan*, which adopted and used in Persian, in the place of "ro*shan.*"
[26] To use the language of Pierre Bourdieu and that of linguistic anthropology indebted to his work, we can describe roshanfekr in terms of a translational habitus and roshanfekri as a form of thought that reveals the transformation of Iranian field of knowledge production. See Hanks, W. 2010. *Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

It would be inadequate, however, to stop at characterizing roshanfekri as a form of thought in relation to Europe and from the outside of Iranian traditions of knowledge. What is important to note, and what characterizes the novelty of roshanfekri in contrast to that of the European Enlightenment, is that having emerged from the outside of seminaries' tradition of knowledge, roshanfekri also failed to relate to it. Despite its mutations, roshanfekri is characteristic of a form of thought that is indifferent to the conception, delimitation, and hence the limitation of "tradition." Tabatabai writes that:

> In contrast to the history of thought in Europe where modern thought was born and founded in the quarrels of the moderns and the ancients, in Iran, *tajadod* ["the demand for the new," "modernism"] was born in the modern's indifference in relation to the ancients and not on a reevaluation of the basis of traditional thought; there was no quarrel between the moderns and the ancients. (Tabatabai 2012: 46).

In order to fully appreciate the significance of roshanfekri and also consider its limitation, it is thus important to emphasize the double discontinuity that is constitutive of this form of thought and define roshanker as the ideal-type "public intellectual" who embodies the double discontinuity of Iranian *tajadod* ("modernity") as described in the previous chapter. Rushanfekr is at once disconnected from Iran's past and its present. He is not only indifferent to traditions of knowledge that once animated sociality and politics, but he is also indifferent to the present state of classical traditions in his life and work. Rushanfekr draws on translation and attempts to diagnose and remedy what he sees as social and political crisis of his time, crises that are contiguous with his status as an intellectual isolate. His historical emergence in nineteenth-century Iran –and his continued persistence to-date – illustrates the epistemic indeterminacies that characterize the modern Iranian time-space of knowledge and power. Where and when it has become impossible to know and act on the present, and an outside anchor has become necessary, roshanfekr delivers.[27]

Jalal Al-e Ahmad is at once a paradigmatic roshanfekr and a twentieth century mutation of this type. He was born on December 2, 1923 in Tehran in a well-to-do religious family.[28] His

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In considering translational habitus of rushanfekri, I also have in mind the work of Mary Louise Pratt, the theorizations of "contact zones," "transculturation," and of linguistic and cultural exchange more generally. See, for example: Pratt, M. L. 1991. "Arts of the Contact Zone." *Profession, 33-40.*

[27] In considering the discontinuity of rushanfekri from "classical traditions" of knowledge in Iran, I am indebted to Javad Tabatabai's theorization of *sunat* ("tradition") in the Iranian context. See Tabatabai's 2013 *A Meditation on Iran. Theory of the Rule of Law in Iran, I: Tabriz School and the Foundations of Renewal,* and particularly the first chapter, *sunat-e ghodamaei va nazari-ye sunat* ["Classical tradition and a theory of tradtion"]. My chapter is also composed in conversation with those such as Hooman Ghasemi who have drawn on Tabatabai in examining rushanfekri: Ghasemi, H. 2017. *Rushanfekri: False Consciousness and Ideology.* Tehran: Minooye Kherad.

[28] Hamid Dabashi's 1992 *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* offers a thorough sketch of Al-e Ahmad's life and writings, while, as Dabashi's title suggests, reads Al-e Ahmad as part of the genesis of a religious ideological formation.

father and grandfather were both clerics. Jalal and his brother were born into a social expectation to pursue religious education and the path of their fathers. However, Jalal's biography expresses that for this to-be-roshanfekr, the clerical tradition had lost its appeal. Despite the best attempt of his father, upon finishing elementary-school education Jalal started working entry-level jobs in the *bazaar* as a watchmaker, electrician, and a sales man. He would not have become educated if he had not, without his father's knowledge or approval, pursued evening education at Dar ul-Funun –the first modern institution of higher learning in Iran.[29] His father's attempt to re-orient Jalal to Shi'i education by sending him to Najaf seminaries where Jalal's brother was a student failed yet again when Jalal returned to Tehran after only two months in Iraq. Upon his return in 1943, Jalal enrolled in *Danesh-saray-e ali,* "the Faculty of Letters of Tehran Teachers' College." He graduated in 1946 and was hired by the Ministry of Education as a teacher, a profession that he continued throughout his life, even after gaining popularity as a writer and a public intellectual.

Divorced from the religious sociality of his early years, and in the context of domestic authoritarianism and foreign meddling in Pahlavi Iran, the young Jalal sought grounding in the leftist and nationalist politics of the era. By the time that Jalal was born, the *sheikh va shah* ("the cleric and the king") order that had been a fundamental feature of Iranian politics was no longer present.[30] As Chapter One suggested, in the nineteenth century during the reign of the Qajar dynasty there emerged a constitutional movement that attempted to reform the relationship between the royal political power and clerical authority and reground the destabilized order of the absolutist state. This effort, however, did not stabilize Iranian politics. Through a military coup backed by the newly established parliament, the Qajar dynasty that had proved ineffective in addressing domestic and foreign crisis of the Iranian state was replaced by Pahlavi dynasty in 1925. Jalal was only two years old at the time.

The newly crowned Reza Shah Pahlavi dreamt a modern Iran and set into motion, among other initiatives, the creation of standardized modern education in the country. This initiative came to replace the traditional education led by the clerics such as Jalal's father. Jalal had escaped his father's dreams of clerical education and embraced education in Pahlavi schools. Like many youth of his time, however, he was dissatisfied with Pahlavi authoritarianism and what he witnessed and interpreted as a never-ending imperialist influence in Iranian affairs. During Hitler's assent to power in Germany, Reza Shah, indebted to the British influence in Iran for his rise to power, tried to strike a counter-balancing alliance with Germany under the

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[29] *Dar ul-Funun* ("The house of techniques," "polytechnic") was founded in 1851 by Amir Kabir as part of the same effort that after the Perso-Russian wars, lead to the travel of Mirza Saleh Shirazi to Europe and the translation of European discourses into Persian as described in Chapter One. Amir Kabir was the son of a cook in the Palace of the Crown Prince Abbas Mirza who lead the Iranian efforts in the Wars. He excelled in his education and responsibilities and became the Grand Vazir of the Royal Naser-al-Din Shah. He is credited with comprehensive reforms including the establishment of modern education in the country. Bearing witness to the internal struggles of the court at the time of decline of Royal power in the nineteenth century, he was murdered at the order of the Royal in 1852 at the age of 35.

[30] On the distribution of social and political authority between the royal and the clerical establishments throughout Iranian history, see, for example: Javad Tabatabai's "An Anomaly in the History of Persian Political Thought" in *Mirror for the Muslim Prince: Islam and the Theory of Statecraft* (2013) as well as Abbas Amanat's *Iran: A Modern History* (2017).

ideology of Arianism. It was the same ideology that had in part led the Iranian King to change the name of the country from Persia to Iran, or "the land of the Arians." In 1941, nervous of the Iranian-German alliance, the Allied Forces took control of Iran, removed Reza Shah from power and installed his son, Mohammad Reza as the King. A witness to this event, Jalal, like many of his generation, saw it as a national humiliation. When Jalal entered the Teacher's College, he also joined the leftist Tudeh Party of Iran ("Party of the Masses of Iran") that was founded just two years earlier at the time of the Allied occupation of Iran as the most vocal opposition to the Iranian monarchy. At the time that he graduated from the Teacher's College and started teaching high-school in 1946, he had risen to membership in the Party committee for Tehran, serving as the Party's spokesman and the editor of its publications. However, he gradually became distraught with the Tudeh and officially left the Party in response to the Soviet invasion of Azerbaijan.

During the premiership of Mohammad Mosadeq and his campaign to nationalize the Iranian oil industry, Jalal re-entered politics and took part in the creation of leftist- and nationalist-minded parties and organizations such as *hezbe zahmatkeshan-e melat-e Iran* ("Toilers Party of the Iranian Nation") and *moj-e sevon* ("the Third Wave"). In 1953, a CIA-orchestrated coup removed Mosadeq from power and established a much more absolutist political rule. Tudeh had played a crucial role in the nationalization of the oil industry in 1951. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was restated as the absolute monarch in the coup and used the occasion to eliminate leftist challenges to his politics. American support for the Shah was not only a response to the nationalization of oil but also part of an ideological battle against international communism and the policy of containment of Soviet power. Having left the Tudeh, Jalal was spared persecution after the coup. He would never forget the defeat of the liberal-minded nationalist movement, and as I will argue below, came to promote a notion of Islam as the cultural basis of Iranian politics in part by reckoning with the limits of leftist and liberal-minded reformist politics.

Through his years as a teacher, Jalal rose to prominence as a writer, translator and ultimately one of the most influential social critics of twentieth century Iran. He published novels and short stories, along with critical essays that attended to social and political themes in an everyday language reflective of his early socialization in a religious family and in the bazaar. In addition, and paradigmatic of his status as a roshanfekr, he published reports of his travels to Europe and the United States as well as works of translations including his Persian renditions of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Gambler,* Albert Camus' *L'Etranger,* Jean-Paul Sarte's *Les mains sales,* André Gide's *Return from the U.S.S.R.* and finally, Eugène Ionesco's *Rhinoceros.* (Later in the chapter I will turn to Al Ahmad's characterization of these thinkers and his mode of appropriation of these texts.) Regardless of his characterizations, or his attitudes towards these thinkers and texts, the social fact of his status as translator of Western thinkers strengthened his public authority. Translation gave him –as it did to roshanfekrs since the early decades of the nineteenth century– the clout of someone who could speak about the West and the world within which the West occupied a seemingly unchallenged intellectual and political status.

In order to be able to offer a historical interpretation of Al-e Ahmad and his *Westoxification*, let me briefly turn to two roshanfekrs who preceded him and defined the genre, Mirza Fath-Ali Akhundazeh and Mirza Agha Khan Kermani. Mirza Fatali Akhundzadeh (1812-1878) and Mirza Agha Khan Kermani (1854-1897) were some of the most influential roshanfekrs of *duran-e jadid-e Iran* ("Iranian modernity") of the late nineteenth century. Not unlike Jalal in the aftermath of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906, these two

roshanfekrs, who had introduced some of the very ideas and ideals of constitutionalism to Iran, were born into Shi'i clerical families. If the times had not changed, they would have followed into the footsteps of their fathers and become clerics. However, as with Jalal, this inherited tradition no longer moved Akhundzadeh and Kermani. After a preliminary Islamic education, the two thinkers would abandon the life of a cleric for a career of roshanfekri. Born into a wealthy family in Azarbaijan, which was then part of Iran, the young Akhundzadeh excelled in the memorization of the Quran, the study of *fiqh*, as well as Arabic and Persian grammar. However, he abandoned religious education and enrolled in a newly established Russian school in Ganja. He would complete his Russian education in Tiflis (present-day Tblisi, Georgia) and at age twenty he became a translator of the Russian mission in Tiflis where he chose to live for the rest of his life. In his exile, out of what he would come to address as the decadent Iranian and Islamic milieu of his childhood, the young Akhudzadeh was inspired by the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin. The death of Pushkin moved Akhondzadeh to his first published work at the age of twenty-three. It was a *marsiye,* a poem of lamentation, written in mourning. Akhondzadeh offered the poem not only to Pushkin but to the Russian culture that he had found so anchoring in the context of his self-imposed exile from Iran and the loss of the Islamic grounding of his childhood. The poem was titled "the lamentation of the East for the death of Pushkin."

Akhondzadeh's "sociological" anchoring in exile outside Iran political order and its Islamic sociality is the outward expression of the loss of an epistemic *a priori* anchoring of Iranian modernity and a search for it through translation of European thought.[31] Many commentators such as Hamid Algar, whose works and lives have been situated within post-orientalist historiography of Islam and politics in the Euro-American academy, have settled on diagnosing Akhondzadeh's identitarian statements as evidence that he was an "anti-Islamic" figure.[32] In contrast, and while attending to the limitations of Akhondzadeh's conceptualization of the Islamic tradition, thinkers such as Javad Tabatabai who write in Persian and in Iran consider Akhondzadeh as one of the first Iranians to have developed an awareness of the significance of religion in the socio-political development of modern society. Pointing to the complex and contradictory statements of Akhondzadeh on his relation to Islam, Tabatabai eschews judgment on Akhondzadeh's stated convictions. Reading him besides himself, Tabatabai writes:

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[31] In addition to Michel Foucault's theorization of historical *a priori* in *The Order of Things* and its uptake by epistemologists such as Ian Hacking (2002), I also have in mind the historical sociology of Carl Schmitt as well as Reinhart Koselleck. For these thinkers, the study of politics is grounded in the examination of metaphysical underpinning of time and history. See Schmitt's *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concepts of Sovereignty,* and particularly his articulation of "historical sociology." See also Koselleck's methodological innovations as exemplified in both *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* and *Futures Past: on the Semantics of Historical Time.* A more contemporary work of anthropology that does not explicitly addresses philosophy of history, but similarly attends to the structuring power that animates time and history and emanates from it, see Saba Mahmood's 2015 *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report.*

[32] H. Algar, "Akundzada," *Encyclopædia Iranica,* I/7, pp. 735-740; an updated version is available online at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/akundzada-playwright (accessed on 13 May 2014).

> Although his knowledge in religious discourses were limited, Mirza Fath Ali [Akhundzadeh], despite his [self-proclaimed] disbelief in all religions, had developed an awareness that religious thought constitutes an expansive domain of human knowledge, that it has an intimate and unbreakable relation with different forms of human knowledge, with cultural and civilizational orders, and that most importantly, in some periods of history, transformation of religion thought is the foundation of transformation of cultural order and different forms of knowledge (Tabatabaei: 160).

For Akhondzadeh's critical awareness of the social and political significance of religion in the development of European modernity, Tabatabai recounts Akhondzadeh's work as part of the history of the conceptualization of "religious reform" in relation to the Islamic tradition in Iran. In Chapter One, I noted how Mirza Saleh Shirazi, the first Iranian student sent to Europe for the study of European languages and cultures, came to face "Protestantism" and "Catholicism" as different traditions of Christianity. In his travel writing, Mirza Saleh transliterated these terms and described them as Christian sects without any knowledge of Christian theology, history, or the significance of religious reform in formulation of modern European politics. Akhondzadeh had developed a preliminary understanding of "religious reform" in the context of European Enlightenment through his Russian education. Based on this understanding, he used the transliteration of "Protestantism," *protestantizm,* to denote "reform," in relation to Islam. This deployment of *protestantizm* can be used –as it has been used by the likes of Hamid Algar— as evidence of the anti-Islamic and pro-Western tendency of Akhondzadeh.[33] But such a judgment does not reckon with the epistemic condition of Iran that precedes the deployment of the term.

Javad Tabatabai's reading of Akhondzadeh's deployment of *protestantizm* as "religious reform" points to the Christian genealogy of the concept of "reform" and highlights how, in Latin-based modern languages, "reform" (from *reformare*) is used in contrast to "conform" (from *conformare*). St. Paul encourages Christian "reformation" (from *reformatio,* related to renovation, *renovatio*) when he warns against conforming to secular temptation ("*conformari huic saeculo*"). Later in the history of Western Christianity, the term reform that was once exclusively used in relation to the Church entered popular language and was used to describe reform of secular institutions. Tabatabai notes, for example, Martin Luther used the term not only in relation to *reformation eccesiae* but also in relation to administrative "reform" of the University of Tübingen. Reading Akhondzadeh's references to the Protestant reformation, he focuses not on the political (or moral) positioning of Akhnondzadeh but on incapacities of roshanfekr to know the very European terms they used (Tabatabai 2013: 167). His own critical examination of Akhondzadeh moves between Christianity and Islam as distinct traditions. He highlights the specificity of Christian theology in contrast to Islam (understood as a tradition centered around Shari'a) not only in terms of historicity. He is also considers the structural and structuring features of Christian theology and reform for the development of modern forms of European politics and culture more generally. In this context, Tabatabai interprets Akhondzadeh's deployment of the *protestanizm* as reform in relation to Islam not as anti-Islamic but in terms that I read, beyond sociological historical determinants, as a loss of the epistemic

[33] H. Algar, "Akundzada," Encyclopædia Iranica, I/7, pp. 735-740; an updated version is available online at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/akundzada-playwright (accessed on 13 May 2014).

anchoring that in turn informs roshanfekri's recourse to Europe as the outside of Iranian historical crisis.

Another paradigmatic roshanfekr of nineteenth century Iran who followed and developed the tradition of thinking pioneered by Akhondzadeh is Mirza Agha Khan Kermani (1854-1896). Kermani was born into an important family in the southwestern province of Kerman. He excelled and completed traditional education in Persian literature and history, in Arabic and in Shi'i scholasticism, and acquired an administrative position in his province of Kerman. He would, however, emerge in tension with the governor and leave to settle first in Isfehan, then Tehran, and finally in Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Like Akhondzadeh, Kermani turned away from his traditional education to Enlightenment European discourses and sought a home outside of Iranian sociopolitical order. His intellectual passage would first start in conversion with Babism, the religion that led to the emergence of the Baha'i faith later in the nineteenth-century Iran. In Istanbul, and while supporting himself as a translator and teacher of Persian, he became familiar with modern discourses, learned Ottoman Turkish and became fluent in English and French. Most of his thinking and writing belongs to his time in Istanbul. There, he founded a circle critical of the Persian government and cooperated with other important dissident Iranian intellectuals in exile such as Mirza Malkom Khan, who was writing and publishing in Persian in London. Kermani also collaborated with Seyyed Jamal al-Din Afghani, the pan-Islamist thinker, and wrote to Iranian religious leaders asking for their revolt and cooperation against the Persian despot. Kermani's years in Istanbul came to an early end after the Iranian court was able to convince the Ottoman court to arrest and extradite him to Iran, where he was promptly executed.

I have emphasized that the discourses of roshanfekrs were not continuous with those of the Islamic tradition. It is important to note, however, that they were not continuous with other existing forms of knowledge in the Iranian order of things either. The thinking of roshanfekrs such as Akhondzadeh and Kermani was discontinuous not only with the discourses of the Islamic tradition but also with the traditions of political knowledge of the Iranian court, political historiography and advice literature (Tabatabai 2012: 311-322). With an eye on the causes of successive Iranian defeat in wars with Russia, Akhondzadeh had examined the European record of the fall of Isfehan, the capital of the earlier Safaavid dynasty, in the face of the Afghan attack earlier in the history of Iran. He had compared the European records with those of the Iranian court and noted, for example, how the Iranian record was lacking practical forms of knowledge that could be incorporated into improving Iran's military capabilities. Tabatabai shows how Kermani extends Akhondzadeh's criticism, and in a space of translation, produces the first "critical history of Iran," outside tradition of court historiography. In relation to the use of the term "critical," it is noteworthy that Akhondzadeh is the first Iranian thinker to render the term "critique" in Persian. He would not translate the term, but like many other French terms of his writing, he would transliterate it to emphasize its specificity and mark it as something foreign to Persian and the context of its use. Tabatabei describes Kermani's history as "critical" because Kermani comes to note and elaborate the inattention of Iranian histories to the bases and reasons of historical events in confronting European historiographies. Kermani's most important text is a history of Iran titled the "Mirror of Alexander." In its preface, he describes it by the term *histuar,* which is the transliteration of the French term *histoire.* The use of the term and its transliteration emphasize the newness of roshanfekri knowledge.

Gharbzadegi ("Westoxification,") as a Translation

Westoxification is a work of translation for more than one reason. Its authorial voice and its authority is indebted to the linguistic translation and transliteration, conceptual commensuration, and textual interpretations of European texts that proliferate within its pages. Through this primary form of translation, which moves European terms and texts to its own pages, *Westoxfication* intervenes in the Iranian orders of things and both knowingly and unknowingly takes part in that transformation. In becoming a point of departure for a new return to Iran, and in setting in motion dynamics therein which far exceed the intentionality of its author, the effects of *Westoxification* are analogous to those of the practice of translation on the second language.

Al-e Ahmad himself suggests that *Gharbzadegi* can be considered a translation by suggesting the text's affinity to Ernst Jünger 1951 text, *Über die Linie,* and pointing to its link to Ahmad Fardid's concept of "gharbzadegi." In the preface to the final version of the text, he tells the story of the text's genesis. The first draft of the text was a report for the Council on the Educational Goals of Iran. The report, however, was excluded by the publication of the Council's report by the Ministry of Education and instead came to circulate among friends and "worthy thinkers" such as Dr. Mahmuid Human. Jalal affirmatively reports that Dr. Human had suggested an affinity between Al'e Ahmad's report and Jünger's *Über die Linie*. "According to Dr. Human," Jalal Writes,

> Jünger and I address the same issue, albeit from two different points of view. We have both discussed one problem, but in two languages. I do not know German, so I appealed to Dr. Human for help and for three whole months, working three hours a day, three days a week, I took advantage of Dr. Human's instruction and guidance. Thus, as he dictated and I copied, *Über die Linie* was translated into Persian. (Al-e Ahmad 1982: 1)

The very concept of "gharbzadegi" can be considered a translation. Al-e Ahmad's preface acknowledges his debt in borrowing the term "gharbzadegi" from one of his mentors, Ahmad Fardid. Fardid studied philosophy in Germany and France. He was a professor at Tehran University and a member of the Council on the Education Goals of Iran. He was drawn to the thinking of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, whom he read and interpreted by drawing from Islamic and Iranian philosophy. In his critical diagnosis of the modern age and the status of Islam and Iran therein, Fardid had translated Heidegger's critical diagnosis of modernity into his context, and coined the term "Westoxification." Al-e Ahmad, who was a student of Fardid, borrows this term and develops it for his concerns. Fardid, as I will show below, would come to criticize Al-e Ahmad's use, and Al-e Ahmad distanced his use of the term from Fardid's. Nonetheless Al-e Ahmad's preface acknowledges his debt to Fardid who coined the term in Persian.[34]

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[34] There are a number of examinations of *gharbzadegi* as put forth by Fardid and taken up by Al-e Ahmad. Mohammad Mansour Hashemi's 2007 [2004] Persian text *Hoviat Andishan va Miras-e Fekri-ye Ahmad Fardid* ["Thinkers of Identity and the Intellectual Legacy of Ahmad Fardid"] provides a thorough analysis of Fardid's thinking and lays out the divergences between Fardid and Al-e Ahmad's respective treatment of *gharbzadegi*. In English, see Mehrzad's Boroujerdi's 1996 *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism,* and particularly chapter 3: "The Other-ing of the West," as well as Farzin Vahdat's *God and Juggernaut: Iran's*

The term *gharbzadegi* in Persian is a compound of three elements - *gharb-zade-gi: gharb* "West," *zadeh,* from *zadan,* "to strike," and the suffix *gi* that is used to generate nouns. The term in Persian parallels the construction of the Persian equivalent of "sea-sickness" *–darya-zade-gi,* literally "being struck by sea"– or "a heat-stroke" *–garma-zade-gi,* "being struck by the heat." It literally translates into "being struck by the West." It has been rendered as "Westoxification," "Westernstruckness," "Westomania," and "Occidentosis." As all these terms suggest, and as Al-e Ahmad explicitly defines *gharbzadegi* at the outset of his text, the term refers to a disease that is not unlike cholera, or different from hyperthermia or hypothermia, but is more akin to how sunn pest destroy fields of wheat. "Have you ever seen how the sunn pest destroy wheat? From the inside. The wheat appears healthy from the outside. But what you see is only a shell, like the discarded cocoon of a butterfly on a tree. In any event: we are speaking of a disease. An illness has come from the outside and has grown in an environment ready for disease." (Al-e Ahmad 2008: 26)

The different chapters of the text elaborate what this disease called Westoxification entails, then finds its cause or causes and its cure. But not far into the text one notices an emergence of statements that are incoherent and contradictory. This quality of the text is demonstrative of what Chapter One described as an epistemic confusion. I note this "confused" quality of the text at the outset, since as an anthropologist whose traditional task is to elaborate a coherent and consistent "culture," I am compelled to give an account of Al-e Ahmad's conception of "Westoxificaiton," and his text more generally, as if it were robust enough for such an interpretation. Yet I am struck by his contradictory and cursory conceptualizations. This is another way that Westoxification appears as a translation: It is as if the text is a bad translation where the translator is unable to *comprehend* (as distinct from *interpret*) the original language and text, and lacks a second language and discourse within which he or she can transmit the original. In the following discussion, the reader should keep this feature in mind. I will return to this quality of the text below.

A Disease, A Receptive Environment, and an "Islamic" Antidote

Westoxification is a disease with its "cause" or "causes" (*elat* or *elat-ha*) "outside" (*biroon*). In addition to the language of "inside" and "outside," Al-e Ahmad uses the term *sar*, "head," *ghotb*, "pole," and *nahayat* "limit," to describe the opposition between the foreign agent of the disease and the diseased entity. On the side of the cause there is the "West," "all of Europe, Soviet Russia, and all of Northern America," "industrialized nations, all the nations that are capable, by the way of machines, develop raw materials, turn them into commodities and offer them to the market."[35] On the side of the diseased is the Al-e Ahmad's "we," who is a

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Intellectual Encounter with Modernity. Ali Mirsepassi has recently published the first book-length examination of Fardid's thought in English titled *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought: The Life and Times of Ahmad Fardid.* In contrast to the overtly polemical and moral evaluation of Fardid and Al-e Ahmad in the English literature on their life and work, my primary interest lies in these thinkers' relation to modern Iranian traditions of knowledge.

[35] Nation, here, is my translation of Al-e Ahmad term *mamlekat*, also translated as "country." *Mamlekat,* which is adapted from Arabic into Persian, has a spatial and political connotation and

"corner of the East," a part of "Asia and Africa," "retarded nations" (*mamalek-e aghab-mandeh*), "developing countries," or "non-industrialized nations that consume the fabrications of the West." As these definitions suggest, in defining the binary of the West and the Westoxified, Al-e Ahmad draws on the singular concept of Western industrial production of commodities based on raw materials, describing those with the capacity to industrially act upon raw materials as Western and those without it as Westoxified. Ascribing raw material to the Westoxified nations, his definition emphasizes that raw materials are "not simply iron ore or oil or gut or tragacanth; they are also myths, beliefs, music, and transcendental realities." (Al-e Ahmad 2008: 26) In the same way that the West has not only extracted oil from the Persian Gulf, spice from India, jazz from Africa [!], silk and opium from China, he writes that it has also extracted anthropology from the Island of Oceania and sociology from Africa. Jalal also locates the Western extraction of anthropology and sociology in South America, from "the tribes of 'Aztec' and 'Inca,' who have been the victims of Christianity, and indicates that the "we" have more in common with these tribes that it might at first appear.

The very next lines of the text indicate that economic, political, sociological, psychological or civilizational definitions of the West and the East are beyond the scope of his expertise and his text. Such a task requires a rigorous work of a theoretician, he acknowledges. And yet, he states that out of necessity, he will draw from these forms of knowledge. He emphasizes that the West and the East of his study are not geographic or even political concepts but economic ones. "The West means nations who are full and the East means hungry nations." (Al-e Ahmad 2008: 27)

> Let us define, therefore, the counties of the first group with the following general characteristics (arranged in no particular order): high wages, low mortality rate, low birth rates, well organized social services, sufficient food (At least 3000 calories per day), an average annual income of more than 3000 *tomans* [in the mid-1950s Iran, about $370.00 and in today's Iran, in 2018, roughly three quarter of a dollar], all the trappings of democracy, and a liberal inheritance from the French revolution.
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> The countries of the second group have the following characteristics (presented in neat little rhetorical bundles): low wages, high mortality rates, and even higher birth rates, no social services or the pretense of social services, malnutrition (at most 1000 calories per day), an annual per capita income of less than 500 *tomans*, no inkling of democracy, and an inheritance going back to the very beginnings of colonialism. (Al-e Ahmad 1982: 4)

To describe the West and the East in terms of hunger and to locate Iran therein, Al-e Ahmad includes an in-text reference to Josué de Castro's text *Geography of Hunger.* De Castro was a Brazilian physician, an expert in nutrition and geography, an activist against world hunger, a diplomat and the chairman of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture organization (FAO). *Geography of Hunger* was first published in Brazil in 1946. An English translation, which is likely what Al-e Ahmad has in mind –he doesn't actually provide a citation– appeared in the US in 1952. Al-e Ahmad also paraphrases a Persian translation of Tibor Mende's text, *Entre la peur et l'espoir, réflexions sur l'histoire d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Edition du Seuil*,* 1958). The text was rendered *mahan-I mian-e tars va omid* ("A World Between Fear and Hope") and was published

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denotes a land under political dominion, kingdom. Hafez's line *salah-e mamlekat-e khod ra khosrovan danand*, "the kings know the best for their kingdom," captures this term well.

in 1960 in Tehran. The French text was translated by Jalal's fellow leftist roshanfekr Khalil Maleki. Maleki, as noted above, was one of the founders of the Tudeh Party who, like Jalal, became disenchanted with Tudeh's pro-Soviet direction and left the Party for a more nationalistic political activism. Jalal's very articulation of *ghabzadegi* reflects this turn away from Marxism as he and his fellow leftist roshanfekrs understood it. He writes that his time is not one where the West and the East can be defined in terms of communism on the one hand and bourgeois liberalism on the other. He suggests that the economic dependencies are more complex by referencing how Russia, while in an arms race with the US, can buy wheat from the US, and how both the US and Russia are brought together by mechanical production and the need to feed their respective populations.

> Just as Marx pointed out about his age, we today have two worlds in a state of conflict. But these two worlds have attained dimensions much wider than those of his time, and the conflict has taken on more complexity than the conflict between worker and his boss. Ours is a world of confrontation between rich and poor, extending over the entire globe. Our age is one of two worlds: one engaged in making, operating, and exporting machines; the other involved in consuming, wearing down, and importing then. The arena of that conflict is the world marketplace. Its weapons are in addition to tanks, artillery, bombers, and missiles launchers, which themselves are the products of the western worlds, UNESCO, FAO, the United Nations, ECAFE, and other so-called international agencies, all appearing to be communal and global, but as a matter of fact, they are the same little western dodges which, dressed in new cloths, are used in the colonization of the South America, Asia, Africa. The basis of the "westitis" [Westoxification] of all these nonwestern counties lies here. (Al-e Ahmad 1982: 5)

Through attending to the distribution of industrialization, production, and consumption across the globe, *Westoxification* seeks to move social analysis beyond a conceived limitation of Marxist focus on the binary of "the worker versus his boss." While such theoretical work in the context of Euro-American left is done by way of attention to hegemony (Antonio Gramsci), habitus and symbolic capital (Pierre Bourdieu), power (Michel Foucault) and mass media and consumption (the first-generation thinkers of the Frankfurt School, Jean Baudrillard), Jalal addresses what classical Marxism considers as "super-structural" from the point of asymmetries of the West and the East. One such asymmetry is produced by the rate of social transformation due to industrialization in the non-West. He suggests that the gradual emergence of the industrial revolution in the West was central to the preservation of cultural cohesion. In contrast, its sudden introduction to Iran was destructive of Iran's "cultural and historical personality (or identity)." In other words, it was *Westoxifying*.

> Everything of ours must meet machine specifications. And if the makers of machines, after a gradual process of change of some 200 years, have slowly became used to this new [machine] god, its heaven and its hell, what about the Kuwaitis who only yesterday found access to the machine, or Congolese or we Iranians? In what manner can we bridge the 300-years of historical gap? Let us forget others and concentrate on ourselves. The basic point of this book is that we have not been able to preserve our "cultural-historical" personality in the face of the machine and its unavoidable onslaught. Rather we have been cruised by events [We have been destroyed by it]. The point is that we have not been able to maintain a well thought out and considered position vis-à-vis this monster of the

> modern age. The fact is that until we have actually grasped the essence, basis, and philosophy of western civilization and no longer superficially mimic the West in our consumption of western products, we shall be just like the ass who wore a lion skin. And we know what happened to him... And the ironic part is that as soon as we are able to make machines, we shall become machine-stricken! We will be like people of the West whose cries about the self-willed technology and machine are heard everywhere. (Al-e Ahmad 1982: 6-7)

In writing the last line, and as evidence of the hellish quality of life in the West as the land of the machine gods, Jalal cities the French author Georges Bernanos's text *La France contre les robots*. He also references the book *Avoir detruit Hiroshima,* edited by Robert Laffort in order to argue that the dropping of the atomic bomb by the US during the Second World War was evidence of the West's intolerance of Japan catching up with the West in terms of industrialization. *Avoir detruit Hiroshima*, including its introduction by Bertrand Russell, was translated into Persian and published in parts in the *Ferdowsi* journal over the course of 1964. In drawing attention to the analysis of "cultural and historical personality" of the East infected by Westoxification, he claims that Africa was most susceptible, for "its natives never had a tradition of urban settlement, nor did they have a widespread unifying faith. Each tribe had its own god, chief, customs, and language. And how diffuse!" (Al-e Ahmad 1982: 8) Referencing "*Du zambèze au Tanganyika. 1858-72, Par: Livingstone et Stanley,* Paris, 1985" in a footnote without any elaboration of this text in Persian, Al-e Ahmad invokes the name of the Welsh-American journalist and explorer Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904), misidentifies him as British, and claims that Stanley's announcement that Africans do not wear any cloths prompted jubilation in the UK for it gave the British textile company a new market.

> More important than all of this, however, was that all the natives of Africa went around naked. Wearing clothes is impossible in that heat. When Stanley, the comparatively humane English traveler [*sic*], returned with this last piece of good news from Congo, there was jubilation and thanksgiving in Manchester. After all, each year three meters of cloth for every person (just one shirt which the women and men of the Congo would wear to become civilized, and participate in Church ceremonies) translated into about 320 million yards of cloths yearly from the mills of Manchester. (Al-e Ahmad 1982: 8)

African nakedness for Al-e Ahmad goes hand in hand with Africa's lack of an urban civilization ("*madaniat*") as to make it an ideal victim of Westoxification. He notes the shared root of the term *madineh*, "city," with *estemar,* "colonialism," which in Persian (and in Arbaic) invokes *omran,* "building [a city, a city-based-culture, a civilization]." He suggests Africa's lack of cities and civilization made it ripe for colonialism. This characterization of Africa sets the stage for Al-e Ahmad to turn to Islam in the Middle East as a force against the West and Westoxification. The Muslim Easterners were resistant to the advance of the West because they were Muslim. Al-e Ahmad argues, albeit incoherently, that it is Islam, and Islam in its indivisibility across nations and into sects and denominations, that resisted colonialism in the East, and as such, became the site of Western enmity. Al-e Ahamd's superficial and revisionist, if not Eurocentric and racist, view of Africa leads to another superficial and revisionist history of the Islamic Middle East. On the one hand, Al-e Ahmad projects upon Africa a lack of cohesion, of a cohesive "cultural and historical personality," which he explains in reference to Africa's division into tribes, languages, costumes, and gods. On the other, this projection allows him to articulate an "Islamic East," an "us" as defined by Islam as a tradition presumed undivided by

denominations, languages, and customs, which is at the same time defined against the West and Westoxification. He refers to this Islamic East as *koliat-e eslami,* "Islamic totality," and argues that because the West could not reckon with it, it engaged in a policy of divide and conquer – dividing the Islamic totality not only into denominations but also empires and nations. His revisionist history suggests that the Safavid promotion and expansion of Shi'ism, the political schism between the Persian and Ottoman empires, the emergence of Baha'ism in nineteenth-century Iran during the Qajar period, and the polarization of the Iranian Shi'i clergy during the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 –important developments that span from early sixteenth century to the Jalal's time– were all committed against the Islamic totality by the West. Yet we can see the fantastical character of Islamic totality in the very language Jalal uses to describe the Islamic East. He writes, *in Persian*, and while counting himself as part of "an Islamic totality" that could not be reckoned by the Western enemy, he also refers to himself in terms of a Persian/Iranian "us" that is defined against Ottomans. He references the political event of the Constitutional Revolution that is uniquely situated in the history of Shi'ism and Iran. Al-e Ahmad's narrative admits these divisions yet holds onto –produces– an idea of Islam that is the antidote to Westoxification and differentiates the fate of the Islamic Middle East form Africa and South America.

> They tried first to turn us into raw material, as they did with natives of Africa, and afterwards bring us to their laboratories. It was because of this that among the many encyclopedias produced in the West, the *Encyclopedia of Islam* is the most important. We are still asleep but the westerner in this encyclopedia has brought us to his laboratory. India was almost the same as Africa, with its "confusion of tongues," and the diversity of its races and religions. Then again, South America was completely converted to Christianity under the swords of the Spanish, and Oceania was a collection of Islands, i.e. the best geography for sowing divisions. It was our lot then to be the only ones, both in the guise and the reality of an Islamic totality to stand in the way of the advance of European civilization (read: Colonialism; Christianity), i.e., in the way of the drive to market of Western industry. The stopping of Ottoman artillery outside the gates of Vienna in the nineteenth [*sic*] century was the end of a prolonged event which began in 732 in Spain (Andalus). (Al-e Ahmad 1982: 9)

Al-e Ahmad paints with a thick historical brush, not without gross inaccuracies, to depict a civilizational-religious clash between the Islamic East and the Christian West. His Islamic East is itself an exception in the Westoxified East that can respond and resist the Western enemy. "How can we view these twelve centuries of struggle and competition between East and West as anything but a struggle between Islam and Christianity?" (Al-e Ahmad 1982: 9) His story leads him to ask if Muslim Easterners can accept the fate of natives of Africa and Australia in the hands of the West: "I, the Asian remnant of that Islamic totality, shall be accepted by the civilized nations of the West and the makers of machines just as much (to the same extent) as the African and Australian survivor of primitive culture or savagery, if I, like them, agree to be satisfied with life as a museum exhibit, satisfied with being only a thing, an object suitable for investigation in a museum of laboratory. And nothing more." (Al-e Ahmad 1982: 9)

History Amidst Confusion

The different chapters of *Westoxification* are devoted to identifying the roots of "the plague from the West," discerning the signs and symptoms of this disease as well as its cure. Jalal insists that the causes need to be identified *historically*, yet it is difficult to read his historiography as anything other than an unsystematic and often factually mistaken reading of the past. It is tempting to say that Al-Ahmad sacrifices history in favor of a cultural and political intervention in the social and political debates of his time. However, to merely appeal to the need for logical coherence and respect for historical facts does not go far enough in grasping the impossibility of a discourse of historical knowledge in Al-e Ahmad's Iran. Al-e Ahmad's intervention in the political debates of his time, and his instrumentalization of history and Islam, are symptoms of an epistemic confusion characteristic of his context *and text*. There are moments of *Westoxification* where Al-e Ahmad demonstrates an awareness of this epistemic confusion. For example, in moments of the text where he grounds westoxification in industrialization and asymmetric development, he points to dynamics of historical crisis that cannot be reduced to the binary Iran vs. the West. In a passage already cited above (Page 23-4) he goes as far as calling westoxification a necessary step for industrial development. Yet Al-e Ahmad's identification of the "cause" of Iran's modern ills with a foreign agent, the West, runs contrary to his ability of discern the nature of Iranian crisis. So does his implicit figuration of Islam and Iran as a previously whole and "healthy" social system whose "disease" comes about by a destabilization from the outside.

In the chapter titled "The Roots of the Illness," for example, Jalal's "historical inquiry" references –without any citation– the European fields of philology and studies of Indo-European roots of the Arian race to present Iran as an intermediate link in the flushing of Western civilizations. His "historiography" is centered around a spatial "we" that left "mother India" towards the West because of inhospitable heat there, in contrast to the temperate Mediterranean climate and abundance or rain West of Iran (Al-e Ahmad 2008: 41-7). "It is true that the sun rises from the East; but the rain-bearing clouds, for us inhabitants of the Iranian plateau, always came from the West." (Al-e Ahmad 1982: 47) He weaves together his observations of geography and climatology with discussion of an Iranian folk history and mythology about hostile neighboring nations from the north-east of the Iranian plateau. In their westward progressive historical trajectory and their search for a more hospitable climate, Iranians, Al-e Ahmad claims, were encouraged to move toward the West by their eastern enemies. Among these enemies, Al-e Ahmad counts Oghuz, Seljuqs, and Mongols, nations that had come to fight, defeat and rule over dynasties centered in Iran at very different historical moments. "Each time we tried to build a house," he writes, "as soon as we got to the ramparts, some hungry invading tribe would come from the northeast and pull the ladder out from under our feet, destroying everything from the foundation up. Our cities on this vast expanse known as the Iranian Plateau have always been like pawns spread out on a chessboard to be moved about, or balls [to be kicked] by hunger-stricken nomadic cavalry form one place to another." (Al-e Ahmad 1982: 20). Hence, folk geography and history demonstrate an almost cosmic movement of Iran "toward the West."

In eliding the differences among historical moments, Al-e Ahmad's historical narrative becomes sectarian and totalizing. It brings together divergent trends and subsumes them under its own trans-historical, or non-historical, arch. For example, he addresses Islam, which had emerged in the Arabian Peninsula in southwest of Iran as a tradition that came to flourish only when it arrived into the sphere of Persian civilization. He reduces the political history of Islam

and its expansion to Iran, as further evidence of Iranian superiority on the one hand and the Iranian predisposition towards the west on the other. The Arab Islamic campaign that contributed to the end of the Sassanian Empire in 651 and the decline of the Zoroastrian religion in Persia, in his reading, becomes re-centered around a "we" who was fed up with what he describes as the petrified and oppressive rites of Zoroastrianism, among other means of oppression during the Sassanid rule. He re-writes the historical record of Islamic conquest east onto Persia and west onto Europe around his theses of Westoxification. The global expansion of Islam becomes the flourishing of Islam –"Islam becoming Islam" – in the Iranian milieu, and also a resistance to the violence of the Christianity and the West. What does not fit his thesis of the Western orientation of Islamic Iran is condemned. For example, he denounces the Persian Zoroastrians who between the eight and tenth century CE, in the context of the Islamic conquest, fled eastward to India and settled there. He refers to them as "stubborn fools" who refused Islamic rule, and accuses and slams their descendants, the Parsi community in India, for colluding with British colonial rule and the industrial domination of the lower classes (Al-e Ahmad 1982: 12-3).

> As for Islam, it was only when it reached the area between the Tigris and Euphrates that it became true 'Islam.' Before that it was merely the nomadism and *jaheliyatt* [period of ignorance] of the Arabs. Islam had never before risen up to shed blood. While it is true we have heard much about the sword of Islam, do you not think that if such a thing were wielded at all it was in the West against Christianity? In any case, I feel that this image stems more from the confrontation between the Islamic *jehad* (holy war) and the self-styled martyrs of early Christianity. And even if this is not so, we know what kinds of things Christianity was capable of as soon as it became established; for example, during the Inquisition in Spain or in the settlement of South and Central America or in its conquest of Africa or the destruction of Khmer civilization in southeast Asia. In any case, the peace offered by Islam is the most pacifistic message of all the world's religions. Aside from this, before Islam came to contend with us, we ourselves invited it to Iran.
>
> … Moreover in the final analysis, was not our turning towards Islam itself a turning towards the West? We will be able to provide a precise answer to this question once we have learned what incredible injustices were visited on people as a result of the ossified customs of the Sassanians. (Al-e Ahmad 1982: 15-7)

It is worth considering Al-e Ahmad's recourse to "history" and "historiography." He seeks to offer *a historical exposition* of what he conceives of as *a historical crisis*. Let us first bracket his identification of a historical crisis in terms of Westoxification. Instead, I want to pay attention to his recourses to the past as a site for elaborating his questions. Al-e Ahmad repeatedly implores his readers, "let us return to history" (Al-e Ahmad 2008: 36, 50)? How does he return to history and translate the past into the present? What books, traditions, or archives of knowledge is he invoking when he invites his readers to turn to history? Where are these books produced, and in what languages and according to what linguistic and scholarly norms? Where would one learn about these books at the time of Al-e Ahmad's writing? In what discourse, tradition, school of thought, and according to what norms of historiography, does he encounter the past and narrate it?

Let us remember that the young Jalal, like many roshanfekrs before him, had chosen the nascent system of modern universities over that of Islamic education based in religious schools that were led by Shi'i seminarians. He had chosen to become a *teacher*, a product of, and at the

same time, an important figure within, this system whose historicity lies in Europe and was still quite new in Iran in mid-twentieth century. The history of modern education in Iran can be traced to the crisis of the monarchy in the aftermath of the Perso-Russian War of the nineteenth century (Chapter One). In confrontation with the War, there emerged an effort to address the crisis of knowledge and power, including that of traditional education in the country. This effort included a campaign for acquisition of new forms of knowledge from Europe that in turn transposed and translated the institutions, disciplines, norms and product of modern European education onto Iran and the Iranian order of things. In the twentieth century, these early attempts became the basis of the Pahlavi project of modern education, which among other things, produced thinkers such as Jalal himself. No longer within the force field of Islamic education, which at time included classical Persian discourses of historiography, Jalal was drawn to the education of Tehran University. There he studied Literature, but eventually left his graduate studies citing the low level of erudition of the faculty of Tehran University. *Westoxification* captures Jalal's attitude towards Tehran University: a factory of production of westoxified persons, which he, not without irony, contrasts to the religious schools which he had not found attractive in his young age.[36]

Al-e Ahmad's position within the institutional distribution of education of his time is reflective of the travails of knowledge production in the context of epistemic confusion. His departure from the seminaries as the classical institution of education, his turn to the university as the institution of modern education, and his dissatisfaction with education there, point to the destabilizing of old norms of knowledge and a confusion that marks a transposition of universities and their norms of knowledge production from their European contexts onto Iran. Indifferent to this structural feature, Al-e Ahmad's work reproduces its confusions: the book brings together the migratory patterns that underlined the constitution of the Parthian Empire of 247 B.C. to 224 A.D., with the emergence of Islam in Saudi Arabia and the Islamic conquest of Persia in 632, with the conquest of Americas and British imperialism in India. He calls this "history." It is noteworthy to remember that the first reference to "history" as a modern science emerged in the work of Agha Khan Kermani, and his text *Mirror of Alexander*. In the preface, Agha Khan describes the text as *histuar,* which is the transliteration of the French term *histoire.* While Agha Khan's transliteration maintains the foreignness of "history," that it is a discipline of foreign norms, Al-e Ahmad assumes the possibility of "history" and produces a confused one. To identify the plague from the West, he draws on terms and concepts that were either redefined in light of translation from European languages, or introduced into Persian by the way of translation from the West. For example, in Chapter One, I described how Mirza Saleh renders the term *museum*, for which he has no conceptual equivalent, in Persian as a house of "collection of the marvels of the land and the sea, as well as various subterranean elements," displayed for the people of the city. A century later, Jalal uses this very term, while he condemns the West for reducing the Westoxified to an object of a "museum." It is as if Jalal needs the West for the terms he requires to condemn the West.

[36] See particularly chapter titled *Farhang va daneshgah che mikonad?* ("What is the Work of Culture and the University?")

Westoxification as a crisis of masculinity

A revealing and overlooked dimension of Al-e Ahmad's thesis of Westoxification is the authors' formulation of Westoxification in terms of feminization. Westoxification, I argue, does not simply address a crisis of norms of sexuality and gender. Westoxification is a sexualized and gendered formulation. Put differently, Al-e Ahmad relies on and mobilizes a particular view of sexuality and gender to diagnose Iran as ill and as westoxified. This diagnosis presumes that a healthy Islamic Iran would be male, and associates femininity with illness. Westoxification is a crisis of Iran figured by its movement from a male-male relationship to the West to a female-male relationship to it.

In a chapter titled "Asses in Lions' Skins, or Lions on the Flag" Al-e Ahmad describes the qualities of the Westoxified man.[37] He uses the term *adam* whose roots can be traced both in Semitic languages and monotheism denoting the first man, as well the Sanskrit term *ahem* situated in Hindu philosophy and denoting "I" or a "self." In modern Persian, a language that is a derivative of Indo-Euopean languages but also deeply affected by Arabic and Islamic monotheistic cosmology, the term *adam* is used to denote "man," and often cultivated and cultured men or people. The gender connotation of *adam* in Persian is very much similar the term "man." It genders humanity as masculine while at the same time valorizing masculinity. It leads to constructions such as *adame gharbzadeh zan sefat ast "*the westoxified *adam* [man] is woman-like." (Al-e Ahmad 2008: 127). Al-e Ahmad uses the term "*effeminé* [*sic*]," the misspelled version of the French term *efféminé*, and provides a transliteration of it in Persian, to describe westoxification in terms of femininity (Al-e Ahmad 2008: 129). His inclusion of the term in the original as well as the translation of *efféminé* make it seem as if femininity is a foreign and Western quality that has come to infect Iranian man, and Iran as masculine, from the West. In Al-e Ahmad's characterization of westoxified man, being "woman-like" comes along with other negative and reprehensible qualities that are not explicitly gendered, and in this process, femininity is staged as a negative quality. The westoxified man "has his legs in the air"; "like a particle of dust he is suspended in the air"; "he doesn't have his legs on this [Iranian] ground, this earth," "he has no authenticity [*asil nist*], he is not principled [*osuli nist*]"; "he is *her-heri mazham* [of the religion of this and that], he has no convictions"; "he seeks ease"; "he has no specialty…he is like the old women who in the course of their lifetime has learned a little bit of everything…but the old-women-version of the thing [the *khale zanaki* version]… of no use"; "he has no character"; "he is *gherti* [precious], women-like, 'effeminé = *efemine'"*. (Al-e Ahmad 2008: 123-128).

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[37] Hamid Algar elaboration of the chapter's title is helpful: The meaning of the metaphor "asses in lions' skins" is apparent. The second part of the chapter heading, "lions on the flag," is an allusion simultaneously to the flag of prerevolutionary Iran, the middle band of which was emblazoned with a lion and sun, and to this line of the Masnavi of Jalal ad-Din Rumi: "We're lions all, but sewn to flags,/ A breath of wind drives our attack" (Book 1, line 603). The line appears in the story of the minister sent by a Jewish king to subvert the Christian belief of his subjects. This he does by propagating various conflicting doctrines. His disciples compare themselves to lions on flags in their supposed impotence and dependence on his guidance. (Al-e Ahmad 1984: 148, note 83)

Al-e Ahmad writes that the westoxified man has lost his grounding such that he "even, sometimes, plucks the hair under his eyebrows [as a woman would]." (Al-e Ahmad 2008: 129) He describes the feminine qualities of the westoxified men in terms of his attention to his appearance, to his shoes and his clothing. The westoxified man not only consumes western goods, but he attends grooming salons, wears tailored cloths and polished shoes. "If he should rise one morning and find that the hairdresser, the tailor, to shoeshiner, and the repairman have all closed up shop, he would turn to the *qibla* in desperation (that is, he would do so if he knew where the *qibla* was)." (Al-e Ahmad 1984: 96)

Another moment of anxiety related to gender and sexuality appears during Al-e Ahmad's discussion of Iranian universities that in his judgment produce westoxified men. Al-e Ahmad points out that the Iranian academy is led by foreign trained scholars, many of whom have returned to Iran with their European and American spouses. Westoxification within the personal and familial lives of these scholars, he argues, renders them socially and politically impotent. Since they are forever preoccupied with domestic incongruities, he reasons, they cannot begin to think of the social and political issues that plague Iran. In this moment of the text it seems that any international and intercultural relationship is a disabling disease. Al-e Ahmad makes this point when he argues that such marriages not only produce impotent families, but more importantly represent the breakdown of the Iranian family.

> …a significant number of young men…come back with European and American wives, and there's also a very small number of girls who come back with European or American husbands. And don't you think that this is itself another problem added to all the other problems? When the basis of the Iranian family with a close and familiar wife and husband of the same blood is falling apart, of course it's obvious what must be happening in this sort of mismatched family. These young people and their families are like homing pigeons with two roosts. They are the ultimate human results of *Gharbzadegi* [westoxification]. To solve the domestic difficulties in a family like this is itself enough of a problem. This group of young people has neither the ability nor the ambition to solve the external, or social problems. (Al-e Ahmad 1982b: 156)

Describing marriage to a European or American spouse as the most acute symptom of westoxification, Al-e Ahmad places Iranians who choose a Western spouse into three categories. While it is difficult to offer a fully coherent account of his categorization, they relate to (1) a break from their lineage and blood ties, (2) rigid and onerous marriage restrictions and regulations in Iran, and (3) sexualization in Europe or America, which in turn renders ineffective norms of sexuality, as contained within marriage, in Iran. I include his categorization below also because it demonstrates a quality of *Westoxification* that is another sign of writing in the context of epistemic confusion. Since the statements of the text cannot be grounded in a discourse of knowledge because such a discourse is lacking, Al-e Ahmad has to appeal to common knowledge in support of his statements. He offers no reasoning for his statements –because the discursive ground of reasoning is lacking— and instead states repeatedly that the truth is self-evident and known to all.

Scholars of gender and sexuality who have written about Al-e Ahmad have noted Al-e Ahmad's condemnation of the spread of European norms of social conduct in Iran but also what they've described as "progressive" the attitudes of Al-e Ahmad in regards to gender issues of his time. Janet Afary, for example, notes Al-e Ahamd's marriage to the distinguished writer and academic Simin Daneshvar, who was in part trained at Stanford University in California, and

writes that Al-e Ahmad "was far more progressive than clerics on some gender issues, for he supported unveiling, the education and employment of women at all levels, and their right to divorce" (Afary 2009: 240). They have not noted, however, how his general characterization of the Iranian cultural and political condition is described negatively in terms of femininity. For Al-e Ahmad, the ill, westoxified Iran is feminine. Femininity is marked in terms of "diseases" or transgressions that require a cure: lust, stupidity, boasting, and vanity. These feminine-qualities have befallen Iran due to Western plague. Iran, rendered feminine, no longer stands for itself, and so it cannot fight and compete with the West. It is no longer in a supposed masculine relation of jealousy and competition with the West, and instead, today, it is feminine, servile to the West while emulating it.

> We have forgotten the spirit of competition and come to feel in its place the spirit of helplessness, the spirit of worshipfulness. We no longer feel ourselves to be in the right and deserving… If we seek to evaluate some aspect of our lives, we do so by their criteria, as prescribed by their advisors and consultants…
> …One of the two ancient rival wrestlers has been demoted to the position of ring keeper; the other owns the ring. And the ring is filled with lust, stupidity, boasting, and vanity. (Al-e Ahmad 1984: 43-4)

Conclusion: Compounded-Westoxification [38]

Recall that Iranian philosopher Ahmad Fardid originally put forward the concept of westoxification. In fact, Fardid was a member of the Council on the Educational Goals of Iran in late 1961 when Al-e Ahmad put forth the first draft of his text, and he distanced his concept of westoxification from that of Al-e Ahmad a number of times. Writing in relation to Al-e Ahmad's contemporary Sadegh Hedayat, who like Al-e Ahmad was a reader of French modern literature, a writer and a translator of Anton Chekhov, Franz Kafka, and Jean-Paul Sartre, among others, Fardid writes:

> What I mean by westoxification is quite different from what the late Jalal Al-e Ahmad has written about it. Westoxificaion for me belongs to the philosophy of history. Its significance concerns the problematic of self-consciousness. I define westoxification in terms of involuntary acceptance of western civilization and culture, and its emulation without questioning, and without developing the self-consciousness that the Westerners, in however way, have achieved. It's clear that our 'renaissance' (renewal) that we've called westoxification has accompanied the tyrannical requirements of history such as imperialism and its means.
> Thus, contrary to what Al-e Ahmad has written in this regard, condemnation of westoxification does not require the valorization of the period prior to Constitutionalism and the naïve wish to return to the wretched life and counterfeit pseudo-religiosity of the past. In any event, I've always divided westoxification to agreeable and disagreeable kinds. And I have said that Sadegh Hedayat was a good westoxified for he revolted against the westoxification of his time with another kind of westoxification (in Hashemi 2007, 106-7).

[38] In formulation of "compounded Westoxification" I draw on Fardid as well as Hashemi (2007) and Tabatabai (2013) development of Fardid's term.

Attending to Fardid's philosophical and historical conceptualization of westoxification– its potentials, inadequacies, and conceits—is beyond the scope of this Chapter. However, Fardid's characterization of Al-e Ahmad's rendition of westoxification as a politicized reduction is telling. Fardid suggests that Al-e Ahmad reduces his philosophical and historical concept to the advent of western industrialization and technological advancement, and to the imperialist and anti-imperialist politics of the West vs. Islamic Iran. Al-e Ahmad does not address westoxification as the inescapable condition of being and history in Iran. In contrast to Al-e Ahmad, Fardid emphasizes the Westoxified condition by calling it *nozayesh,* "renewal," and emphasizes its philosophical-historical quality by invoking the term "renaissance" which he borrows from historiography of Europe.

Where westoxification is a structural condition, the beyond of westoxification cannot be encountered from within westoxificiation. For Fardid, westoxification is hence not posed as an anomaly of a general condition of health. Instead, there are different kinds of westoxifications. This is where Fardid contrasts Al-e Ahmad with Hedayat. Both Al-e Ahmad and Hedayat, like the roshanfekrs that had come before them, are westoxified. While Hedayat was "self-conscious" about his westoxification, and in Fardid's words "revolted against the westoxification of his time with another kind of westoxification," Al-e Ahmad, Fardid suggests, pushed westoxification into his unconscious and the unconscious of Iranian history. In so doing, he fell into the trap of "valorization of the period prior to Constitutionalism and the naïve wish to return to the wretched life and counterfeit pseudo-religiosity of the past."

Fardid uses the term *gharbzadegi* ("westoxification") not as the other of *gharb,* "the west," but in relation to *gharbzadegi-ye moza'af.* This phrase can be translated as a "compounded-westoxification," or "doubly-westoxified." In Persian, this phrase follows the construction of a well-known phrase *jahl-e morakab,* which denotes a form of thought, or a person characterized by it, that is not only ignorant, or lacking awareness, but is also unaware of his ignorance, and hence plagued by a double ignorance. A popular verse by Amir Fakhor-al-din Mahmud, the fourteenth century Persian poet, says *an-kas ke nadanad va nadanand ke nadanad, dar jahl-e morakab abad-an-dahr bemanad – "*the one who does not know, and does not know that s/he does not know, shall forever remain in a compounded-ignorance." Compounded-westoxification, for Fardid, denoted the eternal condemnation of ignorance/westoxification of one's ignorance/westoxification.

CHAPTER THREE

The Cultural Revolution and the Kharej, "Outside," of the Tradition: Carl Schmitt and Islamic Knowledge in Post-Revolutionary Iran

"Culture is a human making factory." – Imam Khomeini [39]

Roughly around the middle of the twentieth century in Iran, there emerged an injunction for Islamic culture: a demand, or a need, to elaborate all social and political phenomena according to the Islamic tradition. This demand, which found its utmost expression around the Islamic Revolution of 1979, is still widely observable some three decades after the Revolution. In the contemporary Islamic Republic, everything from the management of the population and the economy, national defense and international diplomacy, even the manners of metropolitan apartment living and the norms of sexual conduct, all demand recourse to the Islamic tradition. In response to this widespread demand, and due to the unprecedented state support that it has garnered after the Revolution, the Shi'i discourse of knowledge has expanded and transformed to become *the* discourse of knowledge in the country. Accordingly, the seminaries and the numerous, well-funded research institutions affiliated with them have emerged as leading providers of Islamic expertise. Seminarians are today in the unique position of elaborating authoritative norms of conduct in diverse domains, authenticating binding and non-binding judgments of the courts and sanctioning the laws of the state.

Caught by the force of the injunction for tradition, and in responding with authoritative opinions in uncharted social and political domains, seminarians have been relying on discourses of knowledge, texts, and vocabularies that just a few decades earlier were foreign to the seminary enterprise. Most prominently, they have been incorporating modern European discourses of social sciences and social theory that they receive through a process of translation. In doing so, they emerge within a longer movement of the translation of European thought and the contrastive self-fashioning of Iran in the modern period. In the trajectory of this movement, they emerge in the aftermath of the particular depiction of Western culture in anti-Western and Islamic discourses of the 1979 Revolution. Indeed, the valorization of the Islamic tradition against the West prior to the Revolution paved the way for the contemporary cultural politics of the country and the predicaments of the seminarians therein. Today, regardless of their capacities and irrespective of their personal judgments, clerics are in the unparalleled position of offering urgently demanded Islamic knowledge to the pious subjects of the Republic and adjudicating the relevance of European thought for interpreting the Iranian present.

A paradigmatic response to the demand for Islamic tradition can be found in the post-Revolutionary Cultural Revolution. Shortly after the Revolution, there emerged a systematic effort to rid the Iranian academy of foreign and predominantly Western intellectual influence, to modernize the Shi'i seminaries, and to bring the two institutions closer together to meet the demand for Islamic knowledge. The effort was sanctioned by a decree issued in March 1980 by the late leader of the Islamic Revolution Grand Ayatollah Khomeini. A month after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, and amidst the political struggles and intellectual debates on the very meaning and the future of the Revolution, Khomeini resolutely argued that:

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[39] Rohollah Khomeini, *Sahife-ye Nur*, Vol.VI, p.437.

> …for some time the need for cultural revolution, which is an Islamic issue requested by the Muslim nation, has been highlighted but little has been done in this regard. The Muslim nation, specially [*sic*] the believing and committed university students, are worried about this [inaction]. They have also expressed concerns on [*sic*] sabotage of the conspirators… The Muslim nation are [*sic*] worried the chance might be lost without any positive work, and that culture might continue to be the same that [*sic*] it was in the past corrupt regime. During the past regime, this fundamentally important center had been put at the disposal of the colonial powers by uncultured and illiterate employees. The continuation of this catastrophe, which is the wish of some groups affiliated to foreign powers, will impose a deadly shock to the Islamic Revolution and Islamic Republic of Iran. Any moderation in this vital issue is a grave treachery against Islam and against this Muslim country.[40]

In a manner not unlike the establishment of "Revolutionary Courts" after the Revolution, Khomeini demanded the establishment of the Cultural Revolution Headquarters and tasked it with "revolutionizing all universities across the country," "firing university professors linked to the East or West," and "developing the universities into a safe environment for developing and teaching higher Islamic sciences."[41] The Headquarters, which presently operates under the title of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, was to train and select competent and devout scholars for teaching and research positions, to develop criteria for the selection and admission of students in higher education, and to cultivate Islamic teachings and sociability in the curricula and environments of schools and universities.

Meeting the demands for Islamic culture as articulated by Ayatollah Khomeini might strike us as impossible. Against the Ayatollah's mechanistic view of Islamic culture as a "human making factory," for example, an anthropologist might argue that "culture" precedes human designs, however progressive or regressive. Another critic might point out the irreconcilability of the Islamic tradition with modern national culture and its accompanying epistemological and technological apparatus.[42] Both, of course, would be right, for there is a whole host of theoretical and historical difficulties in Khomeini's proposition. In 1979 Iran, however, these difficulties were confronted by the authority of the Islamic tradition invested in the decree of Ayatollah Khomeini as a Shi'i *marjaa* ("source of emulation"), as well as "the collective will of a people," observed and reported by Michel Foucault just before the Revolution.[43] Drawing on the efficacy of Khomeini's speech acts in conjunction with the momentum of the Revolution, the Cultural Revolution closed down all Iranian universities in order to purge allegedly non-Islamic and

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[40] "History of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution," Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution Website (English): http://en.farhangoelm.ir/Home (Accessed April 16, 2016)

[41] Ibid. "the East," at this moment in Iran, is associated with the Soviet Union and socialism, while "the West" signifies liberalism and capitalism, among other pejoratives.

[42] For an early example see Sami Zubaida, "The Ideological Preconditions for Khomeini's doctrine of Government," and "The Quest for the Islamic state: Islamic Fundamentalism in Egypt and Iran" in *Islam, the People and the State: Essays on Political Ideas and Movements in the Middle East.* London: Routledge, 1989.

[43] "Foucault's Response to Claudie and Jacques Broyelle," in Appendix, Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and Seduction of Islamism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

heterodox practices. It haphazardly brought together Islamic activists and seminarians to re-design the education system of the country and infuse it with the teachings of the Islamic tradition. According to Abdulkarim Soroush, one of the chief engineers of the Cultural Revolution who is presently in exile as a critic of the Islamic Republic, there was not going to be higher education in the country unless it accorded with the higher teachings of Islam.[44] The universities were thus closed for a period of three years and reopened as purportedly Islamic versions of themselves – re-designed, purified of foreign and heterodox orientations, infused with the teachings of revolutionary Islam and under the leadership of seminarians.

In the post-Revolutionary period, the Cultural Revolution has become a permanent feature of Iranian politics. The legal mandate of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution has been renewed many times by decree of Iran's Supreme Leader, while its ongoing necessity has been articulated by clerics of the highest ranks. The mandate often emerges most intensely in response to diagnoses by the clerisy of ongoing "cultural crises." The clerics often diagnose "cultural crises" as a sign of the "westoxification" of Iran, caused by "a plague from the West."[45]

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[44] An Interview with Abdolkarim Soroush: "*Setad-e enghelab-e farhangi az aghaz ta konoon*," in *Daneshgah-e Enghelab,* 1980. In the late 1970s the young Soroush rose to prominence as a philosophical voice of the Islamic reform and revolution. His iconic televised debates with the leading left intellectuals and party figures during the deciding months after the Revolution were widely interpreted as a superiority of the Islamic agenda over the alternatives. He was directly chosen by Khomeini as a member of the Headquarters for Cultural Revolution and became widely influential among post-Revolutionary seminarians, Islamic activists and intellectuals. During the 1990s the reformist Islam of Soroush turned critical of Islamic Republic, and despite his wide influence and the prominence of many his followers in Iran, he was forced to leave Iran. In exile he has been celebrated as a voice for reform and compared to Martin Luther. He has been hosted by prominent American and European universities including Harvard University, Wissenschaftkolleg, Colombia, and Princeton. As I write these lines, *Pargar* ("Compass"), a popular program by BBC Persian, broadcasts an episode on Soroush's latest treatise, which argues that the revelation to the Prophet is best understood as a dream. Soroush and Abdul Ali Bazargan, another scholar of Islam and former Islamic Revolutionary currently in exile in the US, debate the merits of such an interpretation, and its potential political consequences against the literal interpretation of the Quran and demands of contemporary Islamic societies. For articles by Soroush see his website: http://www.drsoroush.com or his numerous Persian and English publications listed there. For an example of many secondary literatures on Soroush and reformist Islamic thought in post-Revolutionary Iran see: Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Islam and Dissent in Postrevolutionary Iran: Abdolkarim Soroush, Religious Politics and Religious Reform,* London: I.B.Tauris, 2008. Alternatively, for a critical take on the narrow quality of the epistemological and theological endeavors of Soroush and other so-called "Muslim reformers," and how their endeavors get tangled up in the agenda of US foreign policy and those of neo-conservative American think-tanks, see Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," in *Public Cultures* 18:2, 2006. This chapter demonstrates the intellectual travails of someone like Soroush and its rise and effects in Iran by taking up a more modest figure in Iran.

[45] The term *gharbzadegi,* rendered both "westoxification" and "occidentosis" in English, was first coined by a prominent Iranian intellectual figure Ahmad Fardid in the 1950s. Social critic Jalal Al-e-Ahmad redefined and popularized the term with his 1962 publication of a polemical monograph

They identify, for instance, the proliferation of the Western culture of equality and liberty within the propagation of *monkarat* ("reprehensible deeds"), which include, but are not limited to, modern forms of social conduct between the sexes. In response to the malaise of such forms of conduct and their cultural underpinnings, clerics articulate the need for the elaboration and propagation of Islamic cultural norms. [46] As part of the campaign to meet this demand, and alongside the articulation of the Islamic duty of *amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkar* ("urging what's good and discouraging the reprehensible") as a para-military and policing activity, the Islamic tradition is tasked with the production of cultural counterpoints to what is deemed as at once "Western" and reprehensible. To pave the way for "the good," the sciences of the seminaries have been transformed and incorporated into the design and content of academic and popular education in the country. Just as sermons, recitation and commentaries of Quran, *hadith* and *ravayat* ("authoritative saying and reports of the Prophet and Imam's deeds and speeches") have become a central element of programing on national TV and radio stations, from elementary school to post-graduate training, in all fields, courses on Islam and the Quran are a required part of the curriculum for all students. Practices of Islamic knowledge and rituals, in this context, have become a prerequisite for advancement not only in education, but also employment in government bureaucracy and state-related enterprise.

Thinking Islamic "Tradition" in the Field of the Cultural Revolution

I am thinking the politics of the Islamic tradition between contemporary anthropological and theoretical elaborations of "tradition" and the travails of Revolutionary Iran. In anthropology and social theory, my primary interlocutors for thinking tradition are Talal Asad and Judith Butler. Drawing on Alasdair MacIntyre on the one hand, and Ludwig Wittgenstein on the other, Asad has formulated a powerful concept of "tradition" for anthropological inquiry. In his latest writing on (the Islamic) "tradition," one that is informed by the ascent of the Muslim Brotherhood to political office in Egypt and the subsequent coup and suppression of Islamic movements in that country, Asad offers a clear and succinct formulation of tradition "first, as a

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"Occidentosis: A Plague from the West." An English translation has been available since 1984 through Mizan Press.

[46] Clerics of high and low ranks are not the only ones who demand intensification of the Cultural Revolution. As I write this chapter, I read a typical news story online: a high ranking military official has observed that some universities have emerged as a "threat" to the Islamic Republic. The general has expressed that "the *raison d'etre* of the universities is the fortification of religious government [*hakemiyat-e dini,* حاکمیت دینی], but a number of our universities have strayed from this path and have become a threat to our Islamic society; they have not fulfilled their revolutionary task." The general, who heads the military organization tasked with the recovery and identification of those still missing from the Iran-Iraq war, has argued that the problem of Iranian universities is the "absence of seminary ethos." The news report had complimented the general's diagnosis and prescription by quoting from *valiy-e faqih,* Ayatollah Khamenei, in which the leader proclaims that "the basis of Western human sciences is not divine [*elahi*, الهی]… and as such human sciences are incommensurable with [our] religious sources. Human sciences are only right [*sahih,* صحیح, "according to truth, or (well)being"], beneficial, and amenable for the cultivation of man [*ensan,* انسان] and his individual and social needs, when they are founded upon divine thinking and divine worldview. This is not the case within human sciences in our universities yet."

theoretical location of raising questions about authority, time, language use, and embodiment; and second, as an empirical arrangement in which discursivity and materiality are connected through the minutiae of everyday living." Asad primarily emphasizes "embodied, critical learning rather than abstract theorization" as constitutive of tradition. He nonetheless recognizes that: "Critique is central to a living tradition; it is essential to how its followers assess the relevance of the past for the present, and the present for the future. It is also essential for understanding the nature of circumstance, and therefore the possibility of changing elements of circumstances that are changeable." [47]

Drawing on Walter Benjamin's conception of "tradition," and her development of "performativity" beyond the work of J. L Austin and Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler offers a concept of tradition grounded in embodiment and sociality. Engaging Asad's emphasis on "embodied practice" in theorization of tradition, she writes:

> traditions remain traditions to the extent that they repeat themselves in actions, in conventions, and in what he [Asad] calls embodied practices. In other words, a tradition is not exactly dormant; or rather, if it were completely dormant, or effectively dead, then it would cease to be repeated in all these ways. When we speak about a tradition as effective, we note not only that its basic precepts and teachings are embodied anew, time and again, but that this temporality marked by repetition is the condition of its effectivity. This embodied renewal of tradition, or this practice of embodied renewal that we are calling the living and temporal dimension of tradition, is hardly automatic or coerced. Of course, it can be coerced under certain conditions, but that coercion is not essential to its definition or practice as a tradition. What makes it take hold or indeed make it effective is an embodied practice, one that no one person can undertake alone. Indeed, we would have to rethink the relation between embodied practice and binding relations in order to understand how embodying a practice and binding oneself to others relies upon, and reinvokes a shared sense of tradition. I say 'relies upon and reinvokes' since the recourse to tradition is not only to the past, but to a past that is revised and reinterpreted within the present. And that revision and reinterpretation is to some extent an embodied practice, an interpretation that is enacted by a bodily practice that is one's own and yet shared, defined precisely by the link between what is singular and shared is activated. In this sense, there can be no non-living tradition. A tradition that no longer repeats, that is no longer articulated through an embodied and iterable practice is precisely one that is no longer effective. We can study it, perhaps, even consider how and when it lost its effectivity, but it is no longer exactly a tradition understood as a living and embodied practice. Of course, this way of understanding tradition points to extra-juridical domains of sociability or shared life that are not immediately related to formal concepts of law. And yet, most accounts of law do ask at some point or another what makes a law binding, what binds a population to law such that they

[47] See: Talal Asad, 1986. "The Idea of Anthropology of Islam." Washington, DC: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University. - 2015. "Thinking About Tradition, Religion, and Politics in Egypt Today," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 42, No. 1, pp. 166-214.

become subjects of law.[48]

Foregrounding Asad and Butler's cues on "tradition," one way to make sense of politics of the Islamic tradition in Iran is to try to disentangle the Shi'i tradition and its central institution, the seminaries, from the Iranian state, and to emphasize the irreconcilability of the two despite their most intense entanglement around and after the 1979 Revolution. We can emphasize that the Islamic tradition and its modality of knowledge belong to the extra-juridical domain of sociability or shared life that are not necessarily related to the state and its laws. Even if the authority of tradition legitimizes the power of the state such that the state and its laws become binding to the pious population, the two do not collapse into one another.[49] We can further

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[48] Judith Butler. (Unpublished Manuscript) For two contextually distant yet theoretically relevant critical engagements with the use of "tradition" in social inquiry see John G. Gunnell, "The Myth of Tradition," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 71, Issue 1, March 1978, pp. 122-134 and Mark Bevir, "On Tradition," *Humanities* 13,2 (2002): 28. In relation to Western "tradition" of political thought, Gunnell writes: "The 'tradition' is a retrospective analytical construction which produces a rationalized version of the past. It is a virtual tradition calculated to evoke a particular image of our collective public psyche and the political condition of our age, if not the human condition itself. It professes to tell us who we are and how we have arrived at our present situation." (1978: 132)

Writing on the appeals and shortcomings of the use of tradition as an analytical concept, Bevir suggests: "Tradition can act as an anti-theoretical concept deployed to question the role of doctrine and reason within social life. Traditions allegedly validate social practices by providing an immanent guide to how one should behave. Any abstract doctrine or reason informing such a guide is best – or perhaps of necessity – left unarticulated since such abstracts are inherently destructive in their effect on social order." (2000: 28)

[49] Here I have in mind the doctrine of *velayat-e faqih,* "the Guardianship of the Jurist," as it develops over the course of 20th century among the Shi'i jurists and finds its final expression in the teaching and the practice of *ijtehad* ("learned judgement") of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, particularly his lectures in Najaf, Iraq between January 21 – February 9, 1970. With Khomeini's consent, the text of the lectures was published in Beirut, Lebanon within a year and became widely distributed in Iran shortly after. I am aware that the *velayat-e faqih,* which is also known as *hokomat-e islami* ("Islamic Government,") as articulated by Khomeini is an innovation within the Shi'i political thought and has been rejected by a number of other jurists. I nonetheless write that "the authority of the [Shi'i] tradition legitimizes the power of the [Iranian] state," because however debatable *velayat-e faqih* might be among the Shi'i jurists or scholarly observers – and it certainly is – *historically* the Islamic Republic is established and maintained in significant part due to the authority and force of the Shi'i tradition as articulated in this specific judgement. Rather than disentangling the tradition and the state through invoking dissenting clerics or condemning Khomeini judgement as ideological, I observe the entanglement in order to elaborate its condition of possibility. For Khomeini's text, available in English, see: "Islamic Government" in *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini (1941-1980),* Hamid Algar Translated and Annotated, Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981. In addition to Algar's commentary, for an anthropological history of the gradual rise of *velayat-e faqih* see: Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran,* Oxford: Oneword Publications, 2004 [1985]. For a counter-analysis that demonstrates the ideological character of Khomeini's formulation of

emphasize that tradition surely cannot be reduced to its judgments and the speech acts of its learned men, even if such judgments and actions play a particularly significant role in the field of distribution that constitute the Shi'i tradition. Along similar lines, we might try to disentangle the violence that underlies the reactionary creation of the "Islamic government" and "Islamic tradition" by the post-Revolutionary Iranian state and its juridical and extra-juridical organs from the tradition understood as a field of sociability.

The theorization of tradition qua sociality is an important critical and anthropological intervention, and as the following pages will demonstrate, essential for my inquiry. However, I find it difficult – and ultimately unconvincing – that the domain of "religious" sociability that animates the Shi'i tradition in Iran can be separated from the (political) sociability that backgrounds Iranian political developments, including the Revolution and the Cultural Revolution. Such an approach, it seems to me, assumes that power circulates within predefined domains, and fails to demonstrate how power takes part in the production of the identity of various domains or lack thereof – a condition of indiscernibility of domains or their contagion. Moreover, it assumes that religion is primarily a "social" phenomenon with "political" importance. However, insofar as Shi'i tradition and Iranian politics intersect, and insofar as their temporalities fold onto and at times interrupt one another, the separation of tradition from the politico-juridical field of the state appears theoretically arbitrary. Analytically, the introduction of the separation is predicated upon a historiography of religion and politics indebted to European secularization on the one hand, and a sociological approach that claims "religion" or "tradition" qua "sociability" or "the social" and renders it a discrete – albeit relational – object of study. Domains such as "the juridical" and "the social," and concepts such as "religion" and "tradition," are indebted to the vicissitudes of philosophical and religious traditions that underlie the identity of Europe. Their analytical deployment for the study of Islam and Iran inevitably put forward sociological determinations with a European genealogy.[50] While anthropology or comparative social inquiry in general cannot fully disregard domains such as "the social," or sociological categories such as "religion," it can, at the very least, attempt to consider these domains and categories within a world where they are not given in the same way as they are given in their historical genesis. What requires examination, and thus cannot be assumed, is the very discernibility of the social from the juridical in Iran, or the very conceivability of Shi'ism as a "tradition," both in its intellectual and embodied registers, which are, in any case, interconnected.

Exploration of concepts such as "tradition," within which an entire process is semiotically concentrated –to write with Nietzsche's formulation– requires moving beyond a

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"Islamic Government" see: Sami Zubaida, "The ideological preconditions for Khomeini's doctrine of government," *Islam, the People and the State: Essays on Political Ideas and Movements in the Middle East.* London: Routledge, 1989.

[50] Talal Asad has repeatedly demonstrated this point in a critical engagement with anthropologists and scholars of religion such Clifford Geertz and Winfred Cantwell Smith. See Talal Asad, "Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," in *Genealogies of Religion, Discipline and Reason of Power in Christianity and Islam,* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993 and "Reading a Modern Classic: W. C. Smith's 'The Meaning and End of Religion" in *History of Religions, Vol.* 40, No. 3, 2001, pp. 205-222.

quest for a clear definition.[51] It requires moving to the historical and linguistically mediated field where specific possibilities and limits of discursivity and sociability are established. This field can be conceived through, and at the intersection of, a number of theatrical elaborations of "culture," *not* as a marker of difference, but as the constitutive process of inter-subjectivity.[52] Anthropological emphasis of the constitutive work of culture on the one hand, and historical (genealogical) elaborations of limits of sociality on the other, allow us to elaborate the particular (as opposed to generic) work of concepts and conceptual practices. Within my inquiry this approach allows me to elaborate concepts as part of the conceptual apparatus (*dispositif*) that forms post-Revolutionary Iran. [53] It allows me to distance my inquiry from an analysis of

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[51] "All concepts in which an entire process is semiotically concentrated elude definition; only that which has no history is definable." Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogies of Morals,* New York: Vintage Books, 1989, 80.

[52] I have in mind the elaborations of "culture" as constitutive of the possibilities and limits of sociality in the work of thinkers such as Claude Levi-Strauss and Michel Foucault. Drawing on the linguistic anthropology of Franz Boas and the linguist Roman Jacobson, Claude Lévi-Strauss articulated the *work of culture* in relation to concrete historical experience. His *La Pensée Sauvage* demonstrated how all forms of cultural production are predicated upon a process of de-semanticization, that is, the formulation of a particular relationship with concrete historical experience. As a result, he was able to read Evans-Pritchard's differentiation between the "magical" thought of the Azande and modern scientific knowledge in relation to historicity and different valorizations of perception and imagination (Lévi-Strauss 1962). I build on this original insight, which is Lévi-Strauss' decisive contribution to 20th century thought in Europe (Derrida 1974, Lacan 1996, Agamben 2005), to develop how conceptual practices are generative of inter-subjectivity. Lévi-Strauss helps elaborate that while conceptual practice is produced in relation to particular historical situations, *thinking* cannot be provincialized; that although forms of thought are relative in relation to one another, thinking itself cannot be reduced to relativism. Lastly, he shows that although forms of thought are socially constructed, concrete historical realities are at work in the production and practice of thinking and must be accounted for ethnographically.

The concept of "episteme," put forth by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things* (1966) offers another interpretive model for investigation of the possibilities and limits of a culture and the work of concepts therein. Episteme refers to the regularities, discursivities, rationalities and cosmologies that constitute a culture and make possible not only knowledge, but also inter-subjectivity in general. Foucault's conceptualization of episteme adds to Lévi-Strauss' elaboration of the work of culture a critical attention to the diachronic transformation of historical cultural formations and particular methodologies of historical inquiry: archeology and genealogy. In addition to the Kantian tradition of inquiry into conditions of possibility, his innovations are indebted to the work of historians of science Gaston Bachelard (1968, 2002) and Georges Conguilhem (1988, 1991). The two French epistemologists ushered a novel historical approach to the formation of knowledge that emphasized the constitutive role of contingency, context and milieu in the historical formation of universal rationalities.

[53] I am thinking "apparatus," or *dispositif*, with Michel Foucault who describes the term in the following words: "What I am trying to single out with this term is, first and foremost, a thoroughly heterogeneous set consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic

ideology on the one hand, and a search for an authoritative historical account on the other, in favor of elaborating the productive quality of however ideological discourses. As a result, while I do not deny the ideological value of projects such as the Cultural Revolution, or that such projects were forged violently in the unstable aftermath of the Revolution to eliminate opposing ideologies and to fortify a particular hegemony, I do not take them simply as an ideological project, which rests on a generic understanding of "violence." Instead, I try to show that the discourse of the Cultural Revolution productively corresponds to a concrete historical demand, and that the very limit of the discourse of the Cultural Revolution is inscribed and manifest in its discursive articulation.[54]

Ethnography plays a particular role in what I am calling a historical and anthropological approach to concepts. Ethnography has the capacity to demonstrate how conceptual practice emerges in relation to the demands of a particular historical situation. It can elaborate concepts by staging their emergence in the material and semiotic practices of the ethnographer's interlocutors. "Thick description" can conjure what Walter Benjamin noted as "historical evidence," and create what he called a "force field" within which a concept such as "tradition" appears shot through with actuality, beyond rationalization and without mythologization.[55] I rely

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propositions – in short, the said as much as unsaid. The apparatus itself is the network that can be established between these elements…

…by the term 'apparatus' I mean a kind of formation, so to speak, that at a given historical moment has as its major function the response to an urgency. The apparatus therefore has a dominant strategic function….

…The apparatus is thus always inscribed into a play of power, but it is also always linked to a certain limit of knowledge that arise from it and, to an equal degree, condition it. The apparatus is precisely this: a set of strategies of the relations of force supporting, and supported by, a certain type of knowledge." In Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus?* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009: p 2-3.

[54] To be clear, I do not deny that the present discourse of religion and politics is ideological, or that the Cultural Revolution was a project for hegemony and the monopolization of the state after the Revolution. The Cultural Revolution did rely on the post-Revolutionary political instability, which was furthered by the internationally-backed Iraqi attack on Iran and the ensuing eight years of war (1980-88). Its continuation over the course of the Islamic Republic has unfolded in the shadow of the politically motivated murders of intellectuals and sidelining of seminarians. Indeed, Iranian discourse of religion and politics so heavily and visibly relies on arbitrary violence that it is difficult to speak of it in terms of a generative discourse or an order that can be viewed and elaborated in terms of normativity. However, this discourse, the projects that it has engendered, as well as the violence that they sanctioned – or simply wielded – find their condition of possibility within a particular history that needs to be deciphered and elaborated. It is the language, silences, and grammar of this history, and not its generic violence, that is the target of my inquiry. The present chapter contributes to this inquiry through an ethnographic presentation and analysis of commensuration of Carl Schmitt among other European political-theological discourses with Islamic unfolding in the spaces engendered by the Cultural Revolution.

[55] "Every historical state of affairs presented dialectically polarizes and becomes a force field in which the conflict between fore- and after-history plays itself out. It becomes that field as it is penetrated by actuality." Walter Benjamin, "N[Re the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]"

on ethnography in order to highlight how the demand for the Islamic tradition is registered and responded to, the powers – and force – that it releases, and the forms of subjectivity that it engenders – and endangers. Just as attention to the productivity of conceptual constrictions requires bracketing, a preoccupation with ideology and "real" history, an ethnographic attention to concepts requires to enter its world *and all of its closures.* It requires letting ethnography lead the way and suspending – even if momentarily – our theoretical and anthropological concerns and projections. Accordingly, while I will be using both European and Islamic concepts and formulations (such as "tradition," or *ijtihad,* "renewal"), I invite my reader to let go of their concern with their origin and their imprecise use in favor of attention to the productivity and limits of their articulations. The aim of this historical and anthropological approach to concepts is not the stabilization of their definition and use, or their generic mobilization in different contexts and inquiries. Instead, this inquiry aims at elaborating how concepts enter the language, silences and the grammar of a history, and participate in the composition and decomposition of a shared and historical life.

An Ethnography of "What has happened?"

"What has happened?" in Iran is not only my question here. In fact, it is a question I am borrowing from, and thinking with, an academic-seminarian that I shall call Professor Q. He asks it repeatedly in the space of a graduate seminar in one of Tehran's leading post-Revolutionary universities. The university is one of the exemplary institutions of the Cultural Revolution and one of the top centers of higher learning in the country. Its founding coincides with the re-opening of universities after the three-year period of closure while the Headquarters purged seditionist thought and infused the universities with the teachings and ethos of the Islamic tradition. It is devoted to graduate training, it hosts international students, and its alumni enjoy a relative respect in the fields of *ulum-e ensani,* the "human sciences," across the Iranian academy. Professor Q is among the first recipients of a doctorate in Political Science after the Revolution. In conjunction with his academic training, he has studied in various religious schools and seminaries, including Anjoman-e Hojjatieh, the traditionalist Shi'i religious association that is infamous for strict adherence to orthodoxy, vigilance towards *bed'at* ("heresy"), and ardent activism. His association with this organization, and his work with clerics and Islamic revolutionaries in the late 70s, have been the guarantors of his commitment to the values of the Cultural Revolution and qualified him for *gozinesh* ("selection") first as graduate student and later as a professor in the 1980s, and during the height of a strict screening process by the universities that was part of the systematic elimination of public expressions of heterodox views on religion, politics and culture in general.

Today Professor Q is a respected scholar and a renowned public intellectual. His former students teach across Iranian universities and conduct research in seminary research institutes such as the Islamic Center for Human Rights in Qom. His many books traverse academic and intellectual circles. Popular journals and papers frequently interview him on themes related to religious and political reform, and he is regularly invited to deliver public lectures in various religious and scholarly venues. Today, when Professor Q asks "what has happened?", it is thirty-some years after the creation of *hokomat-e adl-e Ali,* "the government of Ali's Justice," and its

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in *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetic, History,* Gary Smith Edited, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, 60.

required intellectual and religious work, for which he and many others dutifully struggled. "Today," Professor Q repeatedly says, "is a different moment."

Professor Q's course is titled *elahiat-e siasi*, a translation of "political theology" which literally means "divine politics." "Divine politics" is not a standard academic course, nor even a very familiar phrase. It has emerged in Iran by the way of the translation of the term "political theology" over the course of the last decade. During this time, Iranian thinkers became aware of the Euro-American discourses of political theology and particularly the attention paid to Carl Schmitt among critical theorists. In the last decade, Schmitt's texts *The Nomos of the Earth, The Concept of the Political, Political Romanticism* and *Political Theology* became available in Persian, and intellectuals of various persuasions, and even news services such as the BBC Persian, came to use "political theology" in reference to Islamic politics. Professor Q's seminar is part of the Iranian uptake of political theology. His seminar is paradigmatic of the Cultural Revolution's aim to create a space where contemporary social phenomena are elaborated and debated in light of the Islamic discourses of the seminaries as well as modern social scientific thought indebted to the vicissitudes of European traditions. There are about fifteen students enrolled in the seminar, three of them women. They are predominantly not from Tehran, in their late twenties or early thirties, and single. They are all enrolled in the Ph.D. program in the Department of Political Science, specializing in the subfields of "Political Thought," "Iran," or "Islam." This means that they have not only ranked highly in a challenging nation-wide PhD qualification exam and prevailed in the "scientific selection" process in this specific department, but they have also passed the infamous *gozinesh* ("selection") process that, according to the criteria set by the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, tests the applicants' commitment to Islam as well as to the Islamic and political order of the Islamic Republic.[56] Five of the students have had, or are concurrently perusing, seminary education. In addition to the 15 students enrolled in the course, Professor Q has opened the seminar to a number of his advanced graduate students and former students. He has a particular type of interlocutor in mind, and over the years he has attracted and gathered this type. He is interested in *bache-mosalmoon-ha, basiji-ha,* expressions which in the present post-Revolutionary vernacular indicate the earnest and pious adherents to Shi'ism, those who share a certain set of cultural references and sensibilities, and participate in a set of public religious rituals which, more often than not, are sponsored by various state institutions.[57] Members of this group positively – even if critically – appraise the

[56] After meeting the "scientific" criterion, as part of the process of "selection," students are interviewed to establish their moral and political competency. Part of this process might include, for example, asking students to answer questions about technical aspects of Islamic ritual practice to test their adherence. Alternatively, students might be asked about their views on *velayat-e faqih,* or other aspects of Iranian politics. One of the students in the course told me that he had to reveal and answer questions about his particular "source of emulation" – the Shi'i *mujtahid* whom he follows – and read from the Quran in order to establish that he is devout enough to have read and developed the competence to read the Holy Book.

[57] In one of the noteworthy examples, one of the participants took some time off from the seminar to travel and participate in the state-sponsored pilgrimage for the commemoration of Imam Hussein's martyrdom in Karbala, Iraq. Customarily, the seminar participants asked for his prayers at the shrine of the Imam, and congratulated him on his successful pilgrimage upon his return.

Islamic Republic as an embodiment of the "ideal city," an Islamic state.[58] For the discussions of the class to be meaningful, Q thinks, a shared ground is necessary, one that is indebted to the religious sensibilities animated in the Islamic Revolution and *defa-ye moghadas* ("The Holy Defense," Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988), and one that is cultivated in relation to the texts and the sciences Quran, *hadith* and their commentaries. The memory of the Revolution and the War, on the one hand, and familiarity with the textuality of the Shi'i tradition, on the other, renders conversations in the seminar possible and compelling.

Most of the attendees of the seminar fall within this type, which in the contemporary Iranian political lexicon can be glossed as *khodi-ha.*[59] Literally, "of-the-selves," the term indicates not only political "insiders," as the English translation immediately suggests, but also those who pass for the contemporary religious orthodoxy. Most of the students have taken a course with Professor Q and have a sense of the topics and themes of the discussion. Those who have taken his courses on Islam and the Islamic Revolution in the past are here, again, for they perceive the course as a continuation of an exchange, a mode of erudite self-cultivation that is never-ending and that benefits from an ongoing engagement with a guide. Professor Q consciously conducts the seminar as a *dars-e kharej. Kharej*, literally means "outside." Within the paradigm of Shi'i education, *kharej* refers to one of the highest levels of courses in the seminaries.[60] It is usually led by a cleric of the highest rank who is called *marja-e taghlid,* that is, "a source of emulation," or a teacher who is a model of ethical conduct. In a *kharej*, this cleric considers a new "case" or question that has no set precedence within the textuality of the tradition and as such requires elaboration. In order to conduct a *kharej,* he would use the four sources of reasoning: the Quran, ("the Revelation") *hadith*, ("prophetic sayings,") *aql,* ("reason") and *ejma* ("consensus"). He would tune into the unfolding of divine presence in the world and bring the authority of the tradition to bear on the new case. This pedagogy is designed to transmit to the apprentices the practice of *ijtihad* which can be rendered both as "authoritative judgement" as well as "renewal."[61]

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[58] The literal translation of *bache-mosalmoon-ha,* and *basiji-ha* are "Muslim kids," and "the mobilized" respectively, and it refers to a certain class of Iranian "Islamic activist" ("mobilized") who emerged before the Revolution, and who organized and sustained the war effort during the 1980s.

[59] Importantly, one or two of the students don't fit this description. One could elaborate the significance of this group by highlighting how and why the two students don't fit in the description and yet belong to the Shi'i tradition, and/or belong to contemporary Iran differently. The present paper, however, is concerned with the discursive field roughly described here and not with the exclusions upon which it is built.

[60] For a discussion of *kharej* and *ijtihad* in the context of Shi'i eduction see: Mottahedeh, R. P. 1995. "*Traditional Shi'ite Edcuation in Qom."* Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review 2. 1:89-98. - 2016. *"The Najaf Hawzah Curriculum."* Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. May 2016: 1-11.

[61] A term of Islam legal tradition, *ijtehad,* refers to the practice of reasoning of jurists in driving novel and authoritative judgments on new and open questions that arise within the tradition. While Sunni and Shi'i Islam vary on the possibility and the scope of *ijtehad*, for the Shi'i tradition the jurists' practice of *ijtehad,* formed in relation to the predicaments of the pious, is essential for the continuity and renewal of the tradition.

Both professor Q and his students are quite accustomed to this style of pedagogy. This style is popularized by lay clerics who emulate it in mosques, in the context of wedding and funeral rituals, and on national TV and radio stations where they offer sermons or advice. Professor Q draws on this shared practice in order to create a radically modern *kharej* in the space of the Islamic university. Aware of Euro-American debates on political theology and his students' curiosity about them, he refers to his course as a "*kharej* on Islamic political theology." In addition to the textualities of the Islamic tradition, his *kharej* is indebted to the translation of the concept as well as to references regarding political theology. In translating "political theology" as *elahiat-e siasi*, in other words, he strives to re-activate the imaginative capacities of the tradition and deduce an authoritative judgment for what he perceives as unprecedented social and political realities.

What happens, then, when the four sources of reasoning – the Quran, *hadith*, *aql,* ("reason") and *ejma* ("consensus") – are mobilized in this neo-Scholastic form, in a seminar like this one, where the writings of Carl Schmitt and Emmanuel Levinas, among other European modern references in political theology, are read and discussed?

A Kharej on Contemporary Islamic Political Theology

Mr. Sultani, one of the students, presents Schmitt's theses on secularization and sovereignty. [62] He has a printout of the English edition of Schmitt's *Political Theology* and a notebook in front of him on the table. The margins of his English printout are full of annotations of the Persian translations of English terms that he has looked up in the dictionary. As a PhD student, he needs to be able to read and work though texts in English. While looking down on the well-worked printout, Mr. Sultani elaborates the famous Schmittian dictums that "all significant modern political concepts are secularized theological ones," and that "the sovereign is the authority who decides on the exception." After a brief discussion of the meaning of these sentences, students turn silent as Professor Q starts to speak. He tells the students that the debate on political theology emerged in the 20th century in the West in part in relation to the experience of Auschwitz and the gulag: "Is it possible, or how is it possible, to talk about God, the good and evil, about incarnation, or about Christ after these events? How is it possible to conceive of 'friendship' or 'the neighbor' after the Holocaust? Is the Jew the neighbor? How about the Muslim? What about Asians, women, marginalized groups? Here is where political theology emerged in the 20th century West." He tells the students that "the discourse of political theology emphasizes that theology is not neutral or subjective, personal or individual. It has something to do with society, with politics. What is the relation between theology and freedom of speech, violence against women and pornography? What is relation between political theology and workers' movement and class struggle? These were some the questions in the background of politico-theological discourses in the West." Professor Q continues developing this line of questions in reference to Schmitt but also to Emanuel Levinas and more recent writings on political theology published by American and British academic publishers. [63] He concludes by

[62] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concepts of Sovereignty.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985.

[63] While none of Levinas' works have been translated or published in Iran, his series of interviews with Philippe Nemo, translated and published in English as *Ethics and Infinity* (1985) are available in translation. In addition, Raoul Mortley's *French Philosophers in Conversation: Levinas,*

loosely situating these works in the context of 20th century European political crises, and in contrast turns to Iran and its social and political ills. In the oratory style of a sermon, yet as a lecture, he continues:

"Our own Islamic society, which we have created and speak of as an Islamic state, has its own many problems. Evils abound: cultural schisms, class divides, and political dead-ends are numerous." He offers the state statistics on divorce, addiction, and suicide, and tells his students that during the two hours that they spend together every week, 30 to 40 of their brothers and sisters die of overdose. He references the widespread corruption of the officials of the Islamic state, and the entanglement of Shi'i revolutionary virtues with consumerism and this-worldly geopolitics. He states that on the one hand, the state-controlled television and radio channels promote the virtue of *basij* "ethical mobilization." But on the other hand, they advertise, ad nauseam, potato chips and mobile SIM-cards. "It is as if today, our ethically mobilized brothers and sisters are mobilized not by the pursuit of virtues but by the advertisement of potatoe chips and an extra free 20% capacity on a SIM card."

At the time of the lecture in 2014, the Iranian state had mobilized the *basij,* a militant Islamic organization that was assembled shortly after the Revolution, as part of the present Iranian interventions in Iraqi and in Syrian wars. The virtues internal to the cultivation of the *basij* force, which literally means "the mobilized," are *jahad* and *shahadat*, mobilization for "struggle with" and for "bearing witness to" injustice. In his *kharej,* professor Q wanted students to "struggle with" and "bear witness to" the fact that these virtues have been recruited in the state's geopolitical calculations and have thus lost their spiritual qualities; that in the context of the market economy and geopolitics, instead of an offering to God, the virtuous are now bought and sold as commodities, or recruited in military campaigns.

In addition to references to political theology, the translation of a variety of other Euro-American sources were brought to bear on the loss of Islamic virtues. In the course of the seminar, Professor Q would draw on unexpected sources such as the Japanese novelist Karuki Murakami and a lesser-known American political scientist, Ronald Inglehart, to denote what he would paradoxically and somewhat ironically characterize as the Westerner's "participation in God's creation," and the Iranians' spiritual immobility. He would invoke Marukami's memoir on the experience of running, and Inglehart's text on *Cultural Shifts in Advanced Industrial Societies* to suggest that in a period of relative stability after the Second World War, Westerners have moved beyond satisfying their materials needs and towards spiritual self-realization. He would note Westerners' travel and love for running and sports, their diverse expressions of gender and sexuality, new forms of queer kinship, and their care for animals and other sentient beings, as signs of Westerners' participation in divinity. In translation, he would interpret these sources as the sign of Westerners full realization of their God-given potentials and desires, renewal of the sacred institution of the family, and care for God's creations. He would ask: "Is it possible that people in the secular West are taking part in God's creation and we are stuck in our material needs? Is it possible that our present Islamic theology bars us from participating in God's creation, that our religion, bereft of virtues and spirituality, is reduced to a sense of security and calm, precisely because it is security and calm that our historical situation denies?"

Scneider, Serres, Irigaray, Le Doeuff, Derrida, which offers a sketch of Levinas' life and works is available in translation. There are also a number of monographs in Persian on the French thinker, and he has received considerable attention in recent discussions on political theology, ethics and violence both in critical intellectual circles as well as in the Iranian academy.

Some of the students are visibly burdened by the Professor's sermon-like lecture. They feel hurt. In their interventions and gestures express their unease with what is being expressed in class. They are compelled by the association of the Islamic tradition with the social and political maladies which they feel and experience, an association that is importantly enabled by comparison to the European discourse of political theology. The difficulty of the conversation is not lost on the Professor. Attentively, he emphasizes his affinity with their pain by invoking his own experience of pious intellectual and political activism: "Before our Revolution I was in my early twenties. I, along with many religious kids of my generation, felt and thought that we need to change our society and end the reign of despotism. We thought we need a revolution against the evils of the monarchy and for the ideals of Islam. If anyone asked us how, we had ready-made answers – lack of spirituality, humility, friendship, egalitarianism, justice. We knew these virtues. Then after the Revolution we faced a crisis: our problems didn't go away. We said, OK, we need to work and develop solutions for the problems that are not simply institutions and structures but of culture in general. We took over cultural and intellectual centers in order to develop an Islamic revolutionary culture. We had succeeded in the political revolution and we engaged in a 'Cultural Revolution.' We worked hard, in the universities, in government ministries, as our brothers and sisters struggled in the front lines of the Holy Defense [the war with Iraq]. Our problems, however, didn't subside. They only intensified and became more apparent. We wanted Islam and our tradition to solve our problems. When it didn't, we said the solution is *Islam-e Muhammadi,* ['Muhammadian Islam'] and not *Islam-e Amrika-e* ['American Islam,']. When *Islam-e Muhammadi* didn't do it, we emphasized *Islam-e nab-e Muhammadi* ['Pure Muhammadian Islam']. Our problems, again, did not resolve but further magnified."

"We need to ask: What has happened? What is the problem? Is there a divine program somewhere and we cannot reach it? Or, are we a kind of people who are not yet ready for such a program and need to work on ourselves to discern the program? Is it possible that we went wrong from the get-go? Is it possible that we are wrong to think we can reach a program or a key to open all doors?"

Commensurating the Sovereign

There are many ways to enter and exit the world spoken through these words. Before turning to what I'd like to think through, let me note that we can interpret the Professor's sermon as post-Revolutionary melancholy, out of sync with those who came of age in the aftermath of the Revolution. We can consider Professor Q as reading Schmitt, Inglehardt and others to reflect upon a crisis of transmission that has rendered the virtues of Islamic politics something other than themselves. He might be described as the last Islamic revolutionary standing – an untimely figure in these post-Revolutionary times.[64] His words conjure the same historical vibrations that

[64] Indeed, in the margin of one of the sessions, a fellow student and I debated the "fidelity" of Professor Q to the Revolution drawing on Alain Badiou's elaboration of the concept as an intermediary between "subjectivity" and "the event." Disregarding that for the French philosopher the Islamic Revolution is hardly an event, we discussed whether the Professor's relationship with the Revolution would be captured in what Badiou would designate as "the subject of truth," or a "hysteric" subjectivity. Along with other European critical theorists, Badiou has been translated and introduced to Iranian audience in the last decade predominantly by a non-academic critical intellectual circle around Morad Farhadpour. One, among the 15 students in the course, has

one of his long time inspirations, Ali Shariati (1933-1977), captured with the language of Islam and Marxism prior to the 1979 Revolution; words whose emancipatory and religious premises have been debated and questioned – even by Professor Q himself.[65] The last Islamic revolutionary knows, and says: "I know that we are waging a senseless battle here but I am nonetheless trying to show that it is a sound one." When I ask him, in class, about the paradoxical nature of his relation to the ideas and ideals of the Islamic Revolution and Islamic politics, at once rejected and re-staged, he tells me that the paradox is not lost on him. "Today it is clear, and I admit, that the Revolution and the Islamic government which we have created, have failed. But I don't regret having fought for it and I will defend our record." When I press him on the similarity of his re-staging of the tradition politically, albeit for a different end, and his earlier revolutionary staging of Islam, and suggest the limitation of this very form, he tells me one is either interpellated by his discourse or not: "my interlocutors are those who think [politics] within the tradition."

"Thinking within the tradition" is what I want to highlight here. Notwithstanding the force – as opposed to authority[66] – which underlies its articulation, "within the tradition," as it is lived and inhabited in Iran today, the seminary ethos brings seminarians and academics to consider the controversial German jurist Carl Schmitt, whose thought was indebted to developments of Catholicism among other traditions, or a lesser known figure, Ronald Inglehart, a University of Michigan Political Scientist and the Director of the "World Values Survey," and to consider them alongside authoritative Islamic interpretations and elaborations of contemporary political and theological concerns.[67] Schmitt, Inglehart, and others, in this context, enter the interpretive schema of Iranian history and acquire a life independently of their immediate historical formulation. While the German jurist and the American political scientist differ significantly in their historical and cultural origins, their intellectual and political preoccupations and associations, as well as their philosophical significance, the two emerge in the Iranian interpretive schema similarly. Indeed, this similarity is what defines them as "Western" in Iran and brings them into a process of commensuration with the Islamic tradition staged in contrast to them. In this process, for example, Schmitt's formulation of the sovereign enters the interpretive practices of Islamic tradition in Iran, and in a process of commensuration with *valiye-e faqih* – the Muslim jurist (*faqih*) who is chosen through the practice of *ijtehad* ("authoritative judgment,"

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attended Farhadpour's courses in a popular private institute that is open to the paying public. A number of others have attended this translator/intellectual's public lectures or have a sense of his interventions and contributions.

[65] The thought and legacy of Ali Shariati, widely known to be one of the voices of the Islamic Revolution, continues to be debated both inside and outside Iran. Some scholars condemn him to nativism and ideology and others seek to ascribe a revolutionary kernel to his thought and recuperate it for the present. What interests me is the consequences of Shariati's anchoring reference for the work of my interlocutors, particularly the way Shariati's uptake mediates the reformulations the Islamic tradition around the 1979 Revolution.

[66] Hanna Arendt's distinction between "authority" and "force" is illuminating here. However, I do not want to move too quickly to generalize the transformation of the Shi'i "authority" to "force" as a mere case of loss of authority in modernity as elaborated by Arendt. Such a move, I believe, is neither attentive to the historical underpinning of Arendt's theorization, nor to the specificity of the Islamic and Iranian histories.

"renewal") and *ijma,* ("consensus") of senior Shi'i clerics (*maraje,* plural of *marja,* "source of emulation") as the *vali* ("guardian," "leader") of the Islamic community and of the Islamic Republic. Is the *valiy-e faqih,* "the authority who decides on the exception," "the power that makes live or lets die"?[68] Or is he the leader of the pious in the interim of Occultation of the Twelfth Imam, and as such, the continuity of *imamat* whose structure of authority and power descends from the Prophet himself and is distributed in the tradition today?[69] Does he "let live" or does he represent the political life of the tradition? Is "mercy" that which he might bestow upon subjects, or that which defines him for them? Note that in this context, Schmitt, among other European thinkers, is not simply read as one meditation on sovereignty among others. He is read for the purpose of an *ijtehad* on the problematic of sovereignty and the state. That means Schmitt is brought to bear on a judgment – religious, political, historical – that bears on the very "renewal" of the tradition. In other words, the stakes couldn't be any higher. The pious students and seminarians might struggle with Carl Schmitt to reckon with the ethical and political status of the state within which they live, for which they bear arms, or endure the burden of, among other things, various international interventions or regimes of pressure or sanctions. Does their tradition, consciously or unthinkingly, bind them to the *valiy-e faqih*? Or alternatively, does the tradition require them to struggle against the *valiy-e faqih* and so called "Islamic" Republic, which is not only a worldly idol, but has also usurped the name of the tradition? What insights might Schmitt provide?

Each session of the seminar starts with a brief consideration of the social and political events in or around the Islamic Republic. The session continues with one or two student-lead presentation on various European thinkers of political theology. The Professor gradually guides the seminar toward a *kharej* on the political theology that Islamic tradition has fostered in the modern period. Against the political theology of the Islamic state that underlies the creation of the Islamic Republic in 1979, he explores the possibility of a different Islamic political theology. He emphasizes *aql,* "reason," among the four sources of reasoning and proceeds philosophically because the tradition allows him to do so.[70] It is his argument that Islam does not authorize a state: there is no such thing as an Islamic state. Insofar as the Islamic states exist, they are

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[68] Despite radically different stakes, the question of whether the Iranian state apparatus should be debated within a paradigm of sovereign power as elaborated by Carl Schmitt, or of disciplinary and/or bio-power as elaborated by Michel Foucault, or within the interpretive and conceptual schemes indebted to the development of politics and religion in Iran is also a question and a challenge for us as observers of Iranian politics.

[69] *Imamat* is the Shi'i doctrine of leadership of the Islamic community in the aftermath of the Prophet's death. According to the (Twelver) Shi'i doctrine, the Prophet bestowed the leadership of the community upon the Twelve Imams – Ali and his decedents. The Twelfth Imam, is a messianic figure whose presence is presently occulted. The work of Islamic jurists, including their political judgements (such as Khomeini's *velayat-e faqih*), are given meaning in the interim of "Great Occultation" before the Twelfth Imam resumes his leadership.

[70] What constitutes "reason," is an important and ongoing historical and philosophical question. While this question is debated in the discourses of critical theory and anthropology, in this chapter, I rely on scholars such as Roy Mottahedeh who have noted the significance of "reason," *however understood*, in the context of modern Shi'i seminary education and politics in Iranian, and hope to contribute to its elaboration ethnographically. See Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Modern Iran,* Boston: Oneword. 2008 [1985].

predicated upon violence and not the authority of the tradition. To repudiate the political theology of the Islamic state through a reformulation of Islamic political theology, he engages in technical theological discussions about the nature of God's knowledge: "what is the nature of God's knowledge and how is it discernable by men?"; about time and history: "is it possible that God's knowledge includes a vision of a political system that is timeless?"; about God's will: "has God willed a plan for the universe and is this plan presently unfolding? Does God's will pertain to generalities or particularities?"; about good and evil: "if God's will is indeed limited to generalities, what is the nature of good and evil that is willed by God?" Immediately after formulating this last question, professor Q matter-of-factly tells his interlocutors that "Levinas is quite concerned with this question" and abruptly stops.

The commensuration between Shi'ism and the discourses that are indebted to European secularization and which in part define modern Iran, is not limited to specific arguments or distinct interpretations within each discourse; it necessitates moving between distinct forms of knowledge. For example, in the space of the seminar and in the context of a discussion of the genesis of Shi'ism and political succession to the Prophet, a number of *hadith* and *ravayat* ["authoritative accounts"] were debated against Wilfred Madelung's study of the early Caliphate, *The Succession to Muhammad,* published in 1997 by Cambridge University Press. In this discussion the participants debated *elm-e rejal* and *deray-a,* two Islamic sciences pertaining to the sources and the authenticity of *hadith* in relation to a paradigmatic piece of historiography of the Prophet's succession.[71] We can historicize and elaborate the differences of the two forms of knowledge, and recognize, for example, the distinct forms of reasoning, reading practices, or the divergent notions of time and history that animate each form. What is noteworthy, however, is that forms and discourses that can be articulated in contradistinction to one another are evoked in the same practice of reading and the same process of scholarly self-cultivation.

The seminar proceeds by eliding the incommensurability of the two discourses. While Schmitt is folded into the reading practice that is deeply indebted to the Islamic tradition, and in this sense is read as a part of the tradition, the historical difference of his formulation and his discourse is absorbed into the tradition without finding any elaboration. It is presupposed that Schmitt's discourse is historically commensurable with the discourses of the Islamic tradition. In this presupposition, the Islamic tradition is invoked as a historically boundless one capable of incorporating Schmitt and other Western discourses. It is invoked as a tradition capable of offering an *ijtihad* over Schmitt's historical practice and problematization that is now considered (as commensurate with) the historical practice and problematization of the tradition. What I have highlighted, however, is that in this process of commensuration the student-seminarians engage Schmitt by eliding the incommensurability of his discourse with theirs. They incorporate him in the Islamic tradition without being able to relate to him. As a result of this elision of incommensurability (or this form of commensuration), it seems to me, the possibility of *ijtehad* is pre-empted. The failure of relating to the foreignness of Schmitt in this process renders the Islamic tradition into a version that is foreign to itself.

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[71] *Elm-e rejal* (or *rejal* for short) literally "science of men" is the science that investigates the validity of *hadith* through an investigating of the chain of transmission and the qualities of individuals who have brought it forward. Closely related to *rejal* and with the same goal of discerning the authoritative quality of the reports of the deeds and speech of the Prophet and the Imams*, elm-e derayeh,* also investigations the various dimensions of orality and textuality, including the manner of reading, pronunciation of words, grammar and meaning.

Discussions of the course invoke the textuality of the Islamic philosophy, the Quran, and the *hadith* and invoke them in relation to forms of knowledge that are historically distant from them. Both Professor Q and his vocal interlocutors who at times strongly disagree with him and resist his suggestions implicitly or explicitly adjudicate between the two. On the question of time, for example, al-Ghazali and his *tahafut al-falasifa* ("*The Incoherence of the Philosophers"*) is recalled: "Many philosophers believe that the world is old. Theologians think the world is not old. Ghazali, for example, says philosophers are *mortad* ("apostates") because among other things, they believe the world is old…" So are many sayings of the Prophet, which indicate, according to Professor Q, that he conceived of time and futurity differently than we do today. "Our conception of time and history is radically different than that of early years of the Islam. Unlike now, the Prophet and early believers thought that the end of time was near. 'I am the prophet of the end of time' indicates a mentality quite different than our million years' conception of deep time. Six distinct verses of the Quran indicate that the Prophet believes the end of time to be near on the horizon. 'Near,' in the cosmology of the early years of Islam is not what we understand as near."

Professor Q's interlocutors' engagement can be divided into two groups. One group appears more sympathetic to the Professor's *kharej* and consider the Professor's teachings contemplatively and quietly. The second group is composed of mostly outspoken men, who range from mid-twenties to early-fifties in age, and always engage with Professor Q's arguments antagonistically albeit respectfully. They listen to the Professor's commentary attentively and respond in turn in the discussion which follows. In their passionate responses they often cite the Quran and the *hadith* and rely on orthodox readings of them to repudiate the Professor's philosophical arguments. When they strive to argue philosophically, they rely heavily on the *ijtehads* ("authoritative judgments") of the likes of Ayatollah Morteza Motahhari (1920-1979) who belongs to the philosophically inclined class of clerics who provided the interpretive framework of the Islamic Revolution and an Islamic state in Iran.[72] The arguments of the discontented students usually don't go far and the pattern repeats itself such that it turns into a cliché early on in the course. By the third session of the seminar, everyone awaits the engagement of the defiant students. When a member of this group does not speak, or is absent, Professor Q or other participants jokingly recall his turn. Although the responses are oppositional and in the Professor's rendering are articulated from a place of *iman* ("conviction"), and often lack reasoning and rigor, Professor Q listens patiently. He never devalues the responses even if they appear as emotional pleas – and cartoonishly so. He calmly reminds the students that they are speaking from their *iman.* He gently tells then that they have failed to enter the problematic and engage it rationally. "It is difficult for *iman* to leave one's heart; I know. But *iman* changes with the changes in forms and degrees of knowledge." He repeatedly closes the session by saying

[72] Morteza Motahhari (1919-1979) is considered one of the important voices of the Islamic Revolution next to Ayatollah Khomeini and Ali Shariati. Although considered "traditional" in relation to non-clerical figures such as Shariati, Motahhari belongs to the division of clerics who addressed social and political developments of his time and engaged European philosophical and theoretical discourses that offered interpretive schemes for them. Classically trained as a *mujtahid,* he was a prolific author whose writing ranged from technical discourses of *fiqh* to philosophical treaties on "the goal of life," "man and his destiny," and "the rights of women in Islam."

we do not ultimately speak to convince each other but to cultivate knowledge and its metaphysical consequences on the constitution of our *selves*.

Incorporating Difference: The Body as the Site of Incommensurability

Without explicit theorization, throughout my description I have emphasized the affective and embodied registers of the debates about political theology among the seminarian-academics in the context of the Cultural Revolution. In this section I would like to explicitly turn towards the body and its pains as an important site of the negotiation of historical difference unspoken and disavowed in the debates of the seminar and the discourse of the Cultural Revolution more generally.

Drawing on the works of Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and psychoanalytic discourses, contemporary social theorists and anthropologists have elaborated the body in relation to historical operation of power and as a site where capacities and sensibilities with ethical and political significance take shape or disintegrate.[73] Pushing against empiricist and naturalizing approaches to the body, Talal Asad, as noted earlier, has approached embodiment by foregrounding the concept of "tradition."[74] Drawing on his work while emphasizing the movement of "tradition," I highlight the embodied registers of the debates of Iranian academic-seminarians in relation to the lived experience of the Islamic tradition in Iran. The guiding questions of this section that ties it to the discussion of commensuration underway are the following: what are the embodied and affective dimensions of the textual and intellectual practices of reading, interpretation, and translation among the seminarian-academics in the context of the Cultural Revolution? How does the body, the site of cultivated sensibilities of a tradition and a distinct historical experience, register and respond to difference in a text or a textual practice? How does the body reckon with historical incommensurability as it is brought forth in the practices of translation?

During the first session of the seminar, a student of Professor Q who was familiar with the Professor's engagement with the Islamic tradition and its politics told the seminar participants that they should be ready for a demanding and difficult engagement: "I've heard Professor's Q's commentaries over the years and I am still struggling with them. When I first

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[73] I have in mind the works of Judith Butler, Talal Asad, William Hanks, Stefania Pandolfo, Saba Mahmood, and Charles Hirschkind. To different degrees and for different ends, these scholars engage with, and depart from, the novel theoretical insights of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu as well as psychoanalytical and phenomenological discourses and offer historical elaborations of the body. Their works are too numerous to cite, and I will offer more specific citations when applicable.

[74] Asad's approach is instructive for me as it moves away from discussing the body as a generic construction to a historical site that is not necessarily coupled with a narrow construction of individual identity. See: Talal Asad, "Pain and Truth in Medieval Christian Ritural," in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam,* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993. "Thinking about Agency and Pain" in *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003. "The Trouble of Thinking: An Interview with Talal Asad" as well as the editors "Introduction: The Anthropological Skepticism of Talal Asad," in *Powers of the Secular Modern.* Edited. Scott D. and Hirschkind C. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.

heard some of the Professor's suggestions I became sleepless for nights. I had to read a lot of literature, review commentaries, and seek advice [from other religious authorities] both here in the university but also elsewhere. It's been very difficult for me to enter a conversation about Islamic political theology and it has demanded a very serious engagement. I am torn and don't know where I stand in relation to the questions posed by the Professor. Some of the [Professor's] thoughts are very worrisome and difficult for me to accept; but I'm also convinced that they are astute and reasoned observations that I need to hear. This is why I am back. I think I need to hear them again and *ba tavkol be khoda* ['relying on God's grace'] develop a better grounding [in relation to them]. Ultimately I think these exercises increase our *taqva* ('piety') and *tuhid* ('orientation towards the unity of God'); but I really want to urge brothers and sisters to consider the difficulty and the demand of this seminar and come prepared, for it could produce *ya's va parishani* ['nihilism,' 'hopelessness,' and 'confusion,' 'schizophrenia']."

In thinking through the embodied and affective demands of the course, it is important to recognize that pain and its expressions, both bodily as in facial expressions and verbal as in the sighs and words of my interlocutors, as well as my second- and third-order interpretation and rendering of them, maintain various degrees of separation. However, what interests me here is not the range of the interpretation of pain – what it *really* means – as if "pain," or "the body" more generally, can be defined and interpreted outside their particular constitutive discourses. While I do not claim that pain or the body are reducible to their discursive historical constitutions, my interest lies in connecting the textual and intellectual practice of my interlocutors, and the negotiation of the inside and outside of the Islamic tradition therein, to the constitutive discourses of the body. As Talal Asad has shown, within this discursive approach to the body, it is possible to valorize pain as *agentive,* and in relation to Islamic forms of self-cultivation (Asad 2003: 85-92). Within this approach, I somewhat withhold assuming "Islamic tradition" (or assuming a continuous and insular notion of the "Islamic tradition") in order to highlight the relation between pain and the very constitution and de-constitution of the Islamic tradition, wherein self-cultivation can be conceived.[75] In other words, rather than assuming *a*

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[75] In addition to Asad I have in mind the work of Saba Mahmood, Charles Hirschkind and Hussein Agrama, who have articulated distinct practices of moral and ethical self-cultivation in an engagement with Asad and by foregrounding *tradition*. See: Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: the Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004. Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics.* New York, Columbia University Press, 2006. Hussein Agrama, *Questioning Secularism: Islam, Sovereignty, and the Rule of Law in Modern Egypt,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. Differently than Asad and his interlocutors, grounded in a psychoanalytic approach to subjectivity and ethics, as well as a notion of tradition that is not derived from the work of MacIntyre, Stefania Pandolfo nonetheless foregrounds tradition as the ground of ethical and political practices elaborated in her work. See: "'Soul Chocking': Maladies of the Soul, Islam, & the Ethics of Psychoanalysis," in *Umbr(a): Islam*. Edited Copjec, J. New York: The Center of Study of Culture and Psychoanalysis, 2009. *Knot of the Soul: Madness, Psychiatry, Islam,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, *forthcoming*.

To be clear, I am not rejecting the existence or the ethical and political significance of the tradition: quite the contrary, the significance of the tradition in Iran propels my investigation of its developments and the elaboration of its limits. Despite its internal temporality, treatment of the tradition as simply given risks dismissing its historical and intellectual potentialities and

priori, as Asad's discussion does, the existence of a tradition, and then stabilizing embodiment and pain therein, I approach pain in relation to the constitution and disintegration of the tradition. The pain of the tradition, in this rendering, is agentive, but agentive in register*ing* difference and incorporat*ing* the outside. It corresponds to the incommensurability of the tradition with itself.

This rendering of pain, I argue, is the properly historical rendering and registers the contemporaneity of multiple and incommensurable discourses of knowledge in Iran. While the Islamic tradition that is valorized through the Cultural Revolution overlooks the presence and the efficacy of Western knowledge, the pain of the tradition registers this fact. If it is true that by introducing Schmitt and European discourses of political theology, the Professor's *kharej* opens the corpus of the Islamic tradition to its "outside," the difficulty and sleeplessness expressed by the students correspond to incorporation (*corporare*, "form into a body") of the difference introduced by the Professor. More specifically, the elision of the historical incommensurability of Schmitt's discourse with that of my interlocutors', renders the opening of the outside a surgical opening of the corpus of tradition without post-op stitching: the production of an open wound on the social body of the tradition. The Professor is attentive to the difficulty the students experience. His patience and his empathy acknowledge the pain of the incision, and tries to act as a sedative. He fails, however, to "get outside" the wound of a conversation that he has opened and it is pain that marks this failure.

Relating to Pain

Having set aside the range of interpretation of pain, instead I want to highlight the range of *relating* to it between the two poles of *enduring* pain and *rejecting* it.[76] Engaging pain by enduring it on the one hand, and rejecting it on the other, constitute the range of relating to difference for a tradition that is foreign to itself. Most of my interlocutors coupled their expressions of pain and discontent with expressions of their willingness and need to engage with the texts and debates of the course. Some, however, rejected the texts and debates as if the rejection would act as a remedy. In a typical occasion, and in reference to a discussion of Schmitt and *velayat-e faqih,* Ms. H, a woman from Qazvin, expressed that "we need to read these texts and learn from the way they [Western intellectuals] engage with their history and traditions religiously and politically. Even if it produces questions that are difficult and to which we have no answers today, our *din* ("religion") and *iman* ("piety") demands of us to hear these views and

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diminishing its ethical and political significance. I concede, however, that the historical prospect of the tradition might appear differently in post-colonial Egypt and Morocco where the above-mentioned scholars conduct their inquiry. As stated earlier, my point is not to offer final theoretical conceptualizations, but to highlight the particular historical life that is congealed in concepts and their practices in Iran.

[76] Again, I am taking my cue from Asad who highlights the Wittgensteinian insight "that pain is not merely a private experience but a public relationship" (Asad 2003: 81). Asad writes, for example, that when a mother is confronted by her wounded child, the suffering that she experiences is the condition of her relationship with the child. Her suffering is not primarily a reaction to the evidence of the injury, but reflects the very relationship. Asad concludes that: "Only in law does the mother stand as an individual agent with responsibility towards the child regardless of her actual feelings." (Asad 2003: 82) However, for reasons expressed earlier in this chapter I am unsure whether a clear separation of the juridical and the social is tenable in Iran.

adjudicate between them. We cannot be religious independent of these debates and this process of adjudication. My convictions are only stronger as the result of discussions such as these."

In contrast to Ms. H, another student Mr. U intervenes: "Why this philosophical discussion? Philosophy is a particular tradition that belongs to a particular time. What does it have to do with us? I have been reading various texts on Islamic and Western philosophy, their sources and their developments, but these texts and these readings simply obscure our own tradition and our own way of life (*seyre*). Today, many Western thinkers *themselves* argue that the time of philosophy is over. It doesn't even matter in the West anymore! But regardless [of whether the time of philosophy is over, or whether it is still valuable for the Western world], today, in our society, philosophy is coming in the way of our *jariyan-e asli* ['our mainstream']; it only adds to our difficulties and headaches!"

"What is the mainstream?" Ms. H asks. "*Din*, ['religion'] *sunnat,* ['tradition'], Islam," Mr. U continues: "I admit and know that there are many issues and challenges within our mainstream. But we are simply exacerbating them by introducing philosophy, be it of the Islamic kind of Khaje Nasir Tusi (1201-1274) and Farabi (872-950) or of the modern Western kind which we read today. Philosophy and *din* ['religion'] simply don't go together."

"Is this what al-Ghazali says?", another student asks. Yet another responds jokingly, "this view is closer to Abd al-Wahhab." There is a short conversation among students about al-Ghazali (1058-1111) and Ibn Taymiyyah's (1263-1328) views on philosophy and the boundaries of the tradition, as well as their respective renderings of Islamic reform and politics. Mr. U rejects the association of his views with the reformism of Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792) and Ibn Taymiyyah, who within the discussion are understood to strictly and politically define the bounds of tradition, inviting accusations of blasphemy and apostasy. The modern forms of Islamic militancy that invoke Abd al-Wahhab and Ibn Taymiyyah are in the background of the conversation. In the context of contemporary Iran, where "Taliban's Islam" is used as a damning short-hand for interpretations of Islam associated with backwardness, militancy, and fundamentalism, one of the students suggests that Mr. U's formulation of "the main current" and his resistance to Professor Q is "Taliban-like": "We all know our neighbor's *islam-e taleban-i*. It is the Taliban that is closed off to the world." In response Mr. U swiftly rejects the association of his position with that of the Taliban: "No, I follow Imam Hussein's dictum," – and he cites a *hadith* from Allameh Majlesi's *Bahar-al Anvar* (the most comprehensive collection of *hadith* among the Shi'i) where the Imam tells his opponents – "if you have no religion, and if you do not fear the day of judgment, at the very least, live free [courageously, free of subjugation]." "I just worry that reading not only Western philosophers, who are engaged in their own questions and preoccupations, but also reading people from our own tradition who have engaged with classical Greek philosophy such as Ibn Sina and Mulla Sadra, or with modern Western thought such as Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Mottahari, only furthers the rifts and divisions of our tradition."

As the conversation continues, Mr. U's arguments appear less and less meaningful to his interlocutors and he borders on incoherence. The referents of his vocabulary, "philosophy" and "tradition," for example, are no longer clear or stable. His interlocutors withdraw from the conversation and, along with Professor Q, listen patiently and quietly. Everyone seems a little bit embarrassed about the anti-intellectual bent of Mr. U's proposition. When Professor Q intervenes, he tries to engage the concerns and formulations of Mr. U systematically, walking him through its steps, elisions and closures. The ensuing "philosophical" quality of the conversations around the dangers of philosophy for "the main current" is not lost to anyone,

including Mr. U. who retracts with discontent, but with respect. When I think about what Mr. U means by "philosophy," I think he is really referencing thinking about the Shi'i tradition, which as a reflexive activity requires adjudicating its inside and outside – a process of translation and commensuration. My sense is that Mr. U is really rejecting the developments within the tradition that have opened the practices of *kharej* and *ijtehad* to novel historical challenges, and in doing so, at least in this seminar, reveal the incommensurabity of the tradition with itself. He is rejecting *history*, and not "philosophy." Or to put it differently, his *rejection* of philosophy is the modality of relating to the historical difference that is as much internal as it is external. In addition to inhabiting this difference in pain, the demands of Professor's *kharej* conjure this form of relation to pain. Rejection is perhaps the limit of relating to the pain of the tradition that has become foreign to itself.

What is most striking here is how this very form of ~~relating~~ to difference – rejection – repeats the Cultural Revolution's rejection of "the West." Mr. U demands a new cultural revolution within the space engendered by the Cultural Revolution. "Philosophy," in his formulation, parallels "the West" in the discourse of the Cultural Revolution, while his "mainstream" parallels Khomeini's "human-making [Islamic] culture." While I have suggested the rejection of the first pair corresponds to the rejection of history and the incommensurability thereof, what is advanced in the second pair could be understood as an instrumental and narrow conception of the Islamic tradition available for ethical and political self-fashioning.

The resistance to the course and its discussions also come from the outside. Professor Q gets away with his controversial suggestions and class, in part due to his pedigree and ties with his comrades in the battlefield of politics and ideas who are presently in positions of power. But even in this case, the class comes close to being cancelled by the university many times. He has had to report the discussions to the head of the department and defend them against the suggestion of seditionism by some junior colleagues. The department head, we are told, trusts Professor Q and the seminar continues. Besides security concerns of this kind, which I will bracket to remain within the sanctioned and circumscribed space of the Cultural Revolution, a number of senior members of the faculty have called for a friendly meeting with professor Q and expressed their worries regarding the course. Professor Q recounts the meeting in the next session and tells the students that his colleagues have a legitimate concern: "They worry about what happens to you after you hear these thoughts and take it upon yourself to struggle with them. They worry about your *ruh va ravan* ['soul and psyche'], that you cannot incorporate and reconcile all that is said in this class and that they might cause too much pain or disorientation. They said that it is better to promote Mutahhari's Islam, Shariati's Islam, Marxism and anti-imperialism – however naïve, romantic, irrelevant, or ideological they might be – than to produce long-lasting and potentially irresolvable dissonances. They worry about what happens when the however ideological religious ground that we have stood upon is removed from under our feet."

The Professor's colleagues are concerned that the class might be profoundly disorienting for the students; that they might not be able to bear its pain. They also worry about the social and political consequences of the course for the students – for their ongoing studies, for their future careers, and for their freedoms. The faculty, for example, have discussed the fact that one of the Professor's students who was also a journalist is presently in jail for some of his writing and opinions. In return they suggest that the Islamic and leftist discourses of the likes of Muttahari and Shariati are "safe." Not only do they fall within the bounds of free speech in the Iranian academy, but more importantly, they are psychologically and existentially grounding. Given the

difficulty of the course, and the political risks associated with it, their concerns make sense to the Professor and the students. I am at once struck by their level of care for the students' "souls" and "psyches," and how this care folds into a certain kind of enforcement of what is socially and politically observable and expressible in the Islamic Republic and the space of the Cultural Revolution. I am struck by how both the Professor and his colleagues manage a certain level of care for the student's soul in relation to critical social and political commentary, and in this double care, implicitly condone the state's religious and political regulation of inquiry in the academy, or at least acknowledge that it's a measure undertaken in relation to the student's soul.

Reiterating the legitimacy of his colleagues' concern, Professor Q nonetheless, and at once, pursues the limit of his students' souls and permissible speech: "I hear them but I take my task more seriously. I think it is my duty to teach and speak on these topics today. I think we should take religion more seriously; take God more seriously; take evil more seriously. I also take you more seriously and trust that together we can renew our tradition and not simply and quietly partake in its defamation and destruction. I am convinced that if we even move towards this task, and if these kinds of thoughts and ideas are debated and expressed in various spaces such as this seminar, we move towards alleviating many of our spiritual, social, cultural, political and even economic challenges."

The Kharej ("Outside,") of the Tradition in the Aftermath of the Revolution

The post-Revolutionary history of Iran up until the last decade is divided into periods of "Holy Defense," "Reconstruction," and "Reform." Holy Defense refers to the eight-year period immediately following the Revolution where the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) overwhelmed all aspects of Iranian life. It was dominated by an Islamic Revolutionary discourse that corresponded to the mass mobilization in the face of international embargos and under *mushak baran-ha,* "rain of missiles"; years of commemoration of the life/death of half a million of Iranian troops – many without professional military training – amidst the scarcity of basic goods. Reconstruction refers to the period that immediately followed the war, and was dominated by an economy-centered discourse of post-war recovery. The long lines for subsidized and rationed powdered milk, rice and oil gradually dissipated and every week, as the joke goes, the then-President, Hashemi Rafsanjani, celebrated the completion of a dam or a power plant. Electricity, rationed during the war, became a 24/7 *nemat* ("blessing") during Reconstruction.

The Reform period arrived with the 1997 election of Mohammad Khatami and the discourse of *eslah,* ("Reform"). After some years of relative economic security during the Reconstruction, there emerged a relative opening in the otherwise narrow political and religious discourse of the country. *Relative*, I emphasize, because the reformist's critics – *eslah-talaban* – were predominantly from the rank-and-file of the Islamic Republic who had turned critical of the government – people like Professor Q. Importantly, the central figure of the reform movement, President Khatami, was both a seminarian and a philosopher. He had studied "Western Philosophy" in Isfahan and Tehran and had reached the high level of *ijtihad* in Qom's seminaries prior to the Revolution. He continued his studies while heading the Islamic Center in Hamburg, Germany during the Revolution (1978-1980) and returned to Iran to serve as the "Minister of Islamic Culture and Guidance" between 1982 and 1992. Even if critically, and in terms that were until then foreign to the political lexicon of the Islamic Republic, he spoke as an insider. These terms, which appeared as "Western" and reminded his audience of Khatami's philosophical background and his time in Germany, were *azadi-ye bayan,* "freedom of expression," *gofteman,*

"discourse," "dialogue," *jame-e-ye madani,* "civil society," *gotego-ye tamadon-ha,* "dialogue among civilizations." The newly published reformists newspapers at once proliferated in the newly discovered "civil society," and tried to elaborate what this space and their activities therein could mean. In this civil society, the identities of politicians, philosophers of the public sphere, translators of European thought, critical seminarians, activists, and journalists were often indistinguishable and unstable. Together, nonetheless, the protagonists of this space introduced Iranians to European and American academics and public intellectuals *en masse,* at once assuming and advancing their significance for making sense of Iran.

My interlocutors remember, for example, reading Jürgen Habermas' then newly translated texts and participating in "the public sphere": "We finally understood that the real fight was not played at the level of the state, but in the 'public sphere.'" They remember, alternatively, reading Hans-Georg Gadamer against the religious and political orthodoxy and arguing that the truth of the tradition is a matter of historical interpretation. The perceived failures of the Iranian Revolution – that it failed to finally deliver *man* as Khomeini had promised – only intensified the passionate reception of critical European thinkers in Iran.[77] After all, aren't the European critical thinkers similarly reckoning with the shortcomings of the revolutionary promises of the Enlightenment? Isn't it only natural to make sense of the Revolution in comparison to the French and Russian Revolutions?

This chapter has focused on the elaboration of one of the most "scholarly" spaces within the space of the Cultural Revolution. Within this space, it has highlighted the process of commensuration that underlies the Iranian career of Western scholarly discourses of political theology. It has shown that within this space, the commensuration between Iranian and European traditions proceeds with the elision of the historicity of Iranian and European traditions. Instead, the stuff of Iranian history appears ready for representation within the Western theoretical frame: Iranian *things*, Western *words*.

The last two chapters have demonstrated that since the early decades of the nineteenth century Iranian thinkers of various persuasions have drawn on Europe and European discourses as a site of interpretation and self-fashioning of Iran. Chapter One, *Crisis*, showed the significance of European thought in Iran as a mode of addressing a specifically modern crisis of knowledge and power in the country wherein classical discourses of knowledge came to lose their historical and political efficacy. Chapter Two, *Westoxification,* demonstrated that in the twentieth century, there emerged a political discourse whose protagonists engaged Western thought but to reject the West and Western discourses as "westoxifying." I argued that Al-e Ahmad, paradigmatic thinker within this discourse, denied both the inadequacy and withdrawal of classical forms of knowledge as well as the necessity of European thought in the historical development of Iran. Instead, he suggested that sans Westexyfing effect of the West, Islamic Iran could be healthy, whole. This discourse which also politicized the Islamic tradition as a remedy against Westoxification of Iran set the stage of the politics of Islamic cultural revolution elaborated in this chapter.

In this chapter I have shown that the post-revolutionary Iranian thinkers of various persuasions continue to consider themselves in conversation with European thinkers and their discourse. What I have emphasized here is the concrete form of this conversance as well as its

[77] Mehran Kamrava offers an overview of the post-Revolutionary intellectual scene in *Iran's Intellectual Revolution.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

implications in relation to the contemporary unfolding of the Islamic tradition. The present discourse of Islamic knowledge in Iran, exemplified by the Cultural Revolution, presupposes and engenders commensurations between Shi'i seminaries and modern universities, as well as their distinct discourses and forms of knowledge. It presupposes that the institutions, discourses and forms of knowledge that are indebted to European historical developments – including the universities – are commensurable with the Islamic tradition. The conception of the Islamic tradition that underlies this presupposition is a boundless one: an Islam that, having no limits, and no outside, can commensurate all forms of difference. As I have shown, however, this staging of tradition elides the difference of Western discourses and incorporates them without being able to relate to them. When the elaboration of difference fails, *ijtehad* – "the judgment" and "the renewal" of the tradition – is preempted. The tradition of *ijtehad,* and by extension Shi'ism, in this process, becomes foreign to itself.

The Cultural Revolution, and the translation of Western thought in Iran in its aftermath have surely been productive beyond what has been elaborated in this chapter alone. While demonstrating some dimensions of this productivity, the aim of this chapter has been highlighting that the Cultural Revolution has been productive of rendering the tradition foreign to itself. Exemplarily, the discussion of Schmitt within the tradition shows that elision of incommensurability of European forms and discourses plays a crucial role in this process. The enactment of tradition elides the difference in the history that is sedimented and the world that is encapsulated in Schmitt's words. Consequently, *velayat-e faqih*, which can, and is, interpreted authoritatively and debated within the tradition, becomes conceptually available as an embodiment of the Schmittian sovereign. The inquiry that is foreclosed is the conditions of possibility of *velayat-e faqih* in the history of the Shi'i tradition in Iran. Instead, the institution of *velayat-e faqih* becomes available as that of the modern sovereign understood within Western historiography. What the discourse of the Cultural Revolution and the seminarian-academics in its midst elide is more than Schmitt's difference. The very genesis of the modern university both in its European genealogy and also in Iran, and its incommensurability with the seminarians, is elided. The forgetting of history, which is paradigmatic of the (ir)rationality of the enterprise of the Cultural Revolution, corresponds to the conditions of a tradition that, having no outside – no *kharej*, has become incapable of conducting a *kharej* lesson.

When words fail to elaborate difference, I have suggested that the body becomes the site of registering incommensurability. As a site of the cultivated sensibilities of a tradition and of a distinct historical experience, the body relates to difference in a textual practice in anguish and outpour. The agonies of the seminarian-students express the affective negotiation of the participants' belonging to multiple traditions which constitute them – they bear witness to being out of sync, to being part of a tradition, and to this tradition's internalized exteriority. They also highlight a particular disjuncture between the intellectual and the affective forms of relating to difference. Indeed, this disjuncture is an important condition of possibility of not only the intellectual labor of the seminarian-academics but of the promotion of Islamic knowledge in post-Revolutionary Iran. The next chapter, "Occultation of Politics," turns to the political landscape that correspond to the post-revolutionary staging of Islamic tradition. The final chapter returns to the *kharej* of tradition elaborated here and to pursue a *khorooj,* an "exit," from both the Cultural Revolution as well as what the next chapter puts forth as a diminished form of Islamic politics.

CHAPTER FOUR

Occultation of Politics, or
Modern Politics in the Interim of the Great Occultation [of the Twelfth Imam]

Prelude: History, Still: The Location and Politics of Translation

A central contribution of post-colonial thought has been the problematization of "translation" as a way of marking and exploring difference between histories and traditions. Dipesh Chakrabarty's paradigmatic work on translation in this genre proceeds with two important and inter-related observations that are also the point of departure of my exploration of the politics of translation of European social thought in Iran. First, Chakrabarty takes note of the global circulation of categories and concepts whose genealogy lies in the intellectual and theological traditions of Europe: "Concepts such as citizenship, the state, civil society, public sphere, human rights, equality before the law, the individual, distinctions between public and private, the idea of the subject, democracy, popular sovereignty, social justice, scientific rationality, and so on all bear the burden of European thought and history." [78] He observes, furthermore, that the global hegemony of modern European intellectual traditions is not limited to categories and concepts and includes the very scientific and historiographical frames within which historical identity and difference are rendered intelligible. Writing in relation to the difficulty of Indian historiography under such conditions, Chakrabarty writes:

> ...today the so-called European intellectual tradition is the only one alive in the social science departments of most, if not all, modern universities. I use the word "alive" in a particular sense. It is only within some very particular traditions of thinking that we treat fundamental thinkers who are long dead and gone not only as people belonging to their own times but also as though they were our own contemporaries. In the social sciences, these are invariably thinkers one encounters within the tradition that has come to call itself "European" or "Western." I am aware that an entity called "the European intellectual tradition" stretching back to the ancient Greeks is a fabrication of relatively recent European history… The point, however, is that, fabrication or not, this is the genealogy of thought in which social scientists find themselves inserted. Faced with the task of analyzing developments or social practices in modern India, few if any Indian social scientists or social scientists of India would argue seriously with, say, the thirteenth-century logician Gangesa or with the grammarian and linguistic philosopher Bartrihari (fifth to sixth centuries), or with the tenth- or eleventh-century aesthetician Abhinavagupta. Sad though it is, one result of European colonial rule in South Asia is that the intellectual traditions once unbroken and alive in Sanskrit or Persian or Arabic are now only matters of historical research for most—perhaps all—modern social scientists in the region. They treat these traditions as truly dead, as history. Although categories that were once subject to detailed theoretical contemplation and inquiry now exist as practical concepts, bereft of any theoretical lineage, embedded in quotidian practices in South Asia,

[78] Chakrabarty, D. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference.* Princeton: Princeton University Press. Page 4.

> contemporary social scientists of South Asia seldom have the training that would enable them to make these concepts into resources for critical thought for the present. And yet past European thinkers and their categories are never quite dead for us in the same way. South Asian(ist) social scientists would argue passionately with a Marx or a Weber without feeling any need to historicize them or to place them in their European intellectual contexts. Sometimes—though this is rather rare—they would even argue with the ancient or medieval or early-modern predecessors of these European theorists.[79]

Chakrabarty's observations of the global efficacy of concepts that emerge within the Enlightenment and nineteenth-century European order of things ground his conceptualization of "political modernity" (or at times, "capitalist modernity") and the "problem of translation" as part of his critical consideration of historiography and difference therein.[80] *Provincializing Europe* offers original analyses of translation and explores narratives of "translucence" (not "transparency," as Chakrabarty emphasizes) by shuttling between the histories of political modernity that are constituted through universalizing abstractions of European thought, and what he calls "affective histories." Unlike the former, which "tends to evacuate the local by assimilating it to some abstract universal," the latter "finds thought intimately tied to places and to particular forms of life." In Chakrabarty's text, the universalizing trend is championed by "analytic social sciences" which tend toward the demystification of ideology and critique in a horizon of a more just social order. The approach to lived-history, on the other hand, is grounded in the "hermeneutic tradition of social sciences" and their striving toward understanding of the diversity of human life-worlds.[81] These two trends are respectively recognized under the signs of Marx and Heidegger in the text.

I recount Chakrabarty's consideration of the problem of translation because my study of translation of European social and political thought in Iran comes up against what the author of *Provincializing Europe* aptly describes as the contradictory relationship between political modernity in the Third World and European social and political thought.[82] Chakrabarty's observations are relevant to my study because of the contentious presence of European social and political thought in Iran, which has led to ongoing debate among Iranians on the conditions of Iranian historiography amidst the hegemony of European thought.[83] However, I situate my approach to the problem of translation differently from *Provincializing Europe* because I find it difficult to bring forth the travails and stakes of European intellectual hegemony within the book's critical model. This difficulty, needless to say, does not diminish the contribution of Chakrabarty, which has been far-reaching and foundational for the post-colonial school of thought. However, *Provincializing Europe* neglects an important dimension of the problem of

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[79] Ibid, 4-5.
[80] Ibid, 17-18.
[81] Ibid, 31.
[82] Ibid, 22.
[83] This debate is centered around the work of Javad Tabatabai. Trained both in classical Islamic thought and European philosophy, Tabatabai has published extensively on European and Iranian intellectual history, and has been widely influential among academics and seminarians in the last three decades. Chapter Five offers an overview of Tabatabai's intellectual project as well as an ethnographic engagement with him and his students.

translation. To state the issue in Chakrabarty's own categories: *Provincializing Europe* explores the problem of translation in the gap between what it describes as conceptual abstractions of European thought that belong to the concrete historical trajectories of Europe, on the one hand, and concrete forms of life that have other historical trajectories, on the other. In so doing, it neglects both the interdependence of forms of thought that exceed their particularization/historicization as well as the exploration of translation as a necessary part of historical development of traditions of thinking and forms of life that correspond to them.[84] Translation of European thought, in other words, is formative of the historical contraction and expansion of non-European forms of life. The problem of translation is not simply one that we inherit *in the aftermath* of European colonialism and in the context of European hegemony today; it is a constitutive part of establishing European dominance beyond Europe, and –more importantly for my analysis– of charting out a future besides and beyond European dominance. Along with Chakrabarty, I note that European thinkers live in non-European worlds in the death-space of once-alive non-European thinkers and their intellectual traditions. I diverge from him, however, in studying how translation is a part of the historical process of laying to rest dead thinkers and tradition as to make mourning, renewal, and regeneration possible.

The temporal and spatial coordinates of my approach to translation differ from Chakrabarty's and the post-colonial theories that take after him.[85] Chakrabarty's enterprise, often located within Euro-American academy, is self-consciously couched within European traditions of social sciences, and propagates the (particular) conceptualization of the abstract universal in opposition to the concrete particular. The enterprise I set out to practice in this chapter engages traditions of European thought that strive to suspend European historiography's universal and universalistic scope and to inhabit a specific non-European time-space where the abstract problem of translation is made concrete. In moving away from Chakrabarty's conceptualization of the abstract in opposition to the concrete as well as his figuration of translation between the two, I draw on intellectual and methodological resources available or made available through the discipline of anthropology that can think translation's abstraction and concreteness together.

In order to study what Chakrabarty aptly describes as the contradictory relation of modern political developments of non-European worlds with European political thought, we need to account for how European thought is comported, incorporated, engaged or, in a word, *translated* into reigning non-European political discourses, governing rationalities, calculations

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[84] Translation of Greek philosophy into the Islamic fold during the 8th-12th centuries' Translation Movement, as well as the contribution of Islamic philosophy to development of Renaissance thought in Europe are paradigmatic examples of interdependence of forms of thought and the generative effects of translation. On the former, see: Gutas, D. 1998. *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: Greeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbasid Society*. New York: Routledge. – 2001. Greek Philosophers in the Arabic Tradition. London: Aashgate Variorum. Belting, H. (2011). *From Florence to Baghdad: Renaissance Art and Arab Science.* Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. On the latter see: Burnett, C. 1988. *The Introduction of Arabic Learning into England.* London: The British Library – 2009. *Arabic into Latin in the Middle Ages: The Translators and Their Intellectual and Social Context.* London: Routledge.

[85] See, for example, Niranjana, T. 1992 *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

of political means and ends, as well as their epistemic background and the horizons of their futurity. None of this can be done at the abstract and general level of "political modernity in the third world." It requires a program more humble and more rigorous in its specificity of exploring modernity. European intellectual traditions are an ongoing *temporal* process and not merely a given fact. At the same time, the historical conditions of reception and negotiation of difference and identity are part of the ongoing (re-)constructions European thought. These conditions are irreducible to the temporal and spatial unfolding of European thought and will necessarily bring non-European traditions and histories into play.[86] It is in the space of simultaneity of histories and traditions –at once European but not just–, that it becomes possible to investigate how European hegemony is established and fortified, or engaged and weakened.

In contrast to the universalistic Marxist underpinning of the project of *Provincializing Europe,* which continues in the text's conceptualization of "political modernity" and other such global and dis-located guiding concepts and heuristics, I take my cues from the philosophical and anthropological tradition of Michel Foucault and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Foucault's elaboration of historicity and of formations of knowledge together, and Lévi-Strauss's elaboration of the concreteness of the activity of thinking, remain in the background of my problematization of translation throughout this chapter. I approach translation as an active process that is part of the decline or regeneration of cultural traditions because, as Lévi-Strauss demonstrates, although thought is produced in relation to particular historical situations, thinking cannot be provincialized; although forms of thought are relative in relation to one another, thinking itself cannot be reduced to relativism; lastly, although forms of thought are socially constructed, concrete historical realities are at work in the production and the practice of thinking must be accounted for ethnographically. What I hope to demonstrate is how translation as a cultural practice can take part in the crises and renewal of cultural and religious traditions. When I invoke translation, or when I follow my Iranian interlocutors' practice of translation and the use of the term, I understand translation to be part of a practice of forming an ordered relationship with the historical situation within which translation is located, and as part of the process of re-ordering or dis-ordering, or decline and regeneration, of the underlying order of things.

This dynamic (temporal, living) conceptualization opens up as a process what is assumed and hence closed-off in Chakrabarty's historiography of political modernity. It makes possible a theorization of politics of translation amidst modern forms of simultaneity. It also shifts the conceptualization of "politics" from a Marxist and Third Worldist understanding of power and knowledge in terms of uneven development, to one that is indebted to thinkers such Niccolò Machiavelli, Michel Foucault, and the Persian authors of the "mirror of the prince" advice literature who conceive of knowledge in relation to the constitution and distribution of

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[86] I have in mind, among other works, those of philosopher Alasdir MacIntyre and anthropologist Talal Asad on "tradition." MacIntyre and Asad's theorization of tradition within however homogenizing time of modernity offer a way of thinking about times and temporal processes that have their own rationality and as such, require thematization and reckoning. See MacIntyre 1981's. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory.* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. Asad's thinking about tradition has evolved over the course of writing. For a more recent conceptualization, see his 2015 article: "Thinking About Tradition, Religion, and Politics in Egypt Today," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Autumn: 166-214.

sovereignty.[87] In other words, it moves the understanding of politics –including the politics of translation– as the effect of underlying structural conditions, to one that has its own identifiable sphere: its own tradition. A major short-coming of the post-colonial scholarship such as *Provincializing Europe* is its reduction of politics to asymmetries of power and knowledge. Such a reduction, which polarizes global politics in terms of the West vs. the rest (or "the third world" in Chakrabarty's rendering) pre-empts the possibility that an analysis of politics –including the politics of translation– could describe the continued multi-polarity of geo-politics that unfold within the asymmetric distribution of power and knowledge. Thinkers such as Machiavelli and Foucault who render discourses of knowledge (including scientific knowledge) as objects of political philosophy help us ask what kinds of practices of knowledge reinforce the constitution of political sovereignty (however distributed and de-centralized) and what forms weaken it. Their critical inroads in relation to Marxist conceptions of politics (or as Foucault would have it in regard to Marxism, a *lack thereof*) help me ask: what is the political consequence of the translation of European thought as a knowledge-practice for the formation and distribution of sovereignty in Iran? What forms of translation fortify the discursive formation of political sovereignty, and what forms detract from it and can be characterized as seditionist? My readers who are well-versed in Foucault's elaboration of the relation of power and knowledge should keep in mind the continuity that underlies the (re)distribution and (dis)placement of sovereignty from the sovereign discourse of the state to various discourses of knowledge –history, population, life, etc.– constituting the bounds of European modernity. Knowledge, in the light of this continuity specific to the West, is complimentary to the expansion and proliferation of sovereignty in Europe. Our exploration of the politics of translation in the non-West needs to be able to re-think the relation of power and knowledge outside this presumed continuity as to be able to think what kinds of knowledge are poisonous and antithetical to non-Western political sovereignty. Indeed, in addition to reducing politics to power, another short-coming of post-colonial literature is projecting the continuity between power and knowledge as theorized by Foucault in relation to European modernity beyond Europe and failing to conceive of other possible relations between power and knowledge.

Let us now leave Chakrabarty aside and pursue an ethnographic engagement that will show how I have arrived at the problematization of the translation of European thought in the context of my historical and anthropological exploration of modern Iran. As discussed in Chapters One and Three, ethnography offers a unique mode of historical and theoretical engagement with the practice of concepts. This chapter pursues this mode by taking up the translation of European thought in Iran not as a mediation between abstract vs. the concrete, but as a practice that takes part in the constitution and subversion of social and political worlds and traditions. It does so by following the emergence of "sedition" and its association with the translation of European social theory in the context of political crisis that followed the Iranian presidential election of 2009. I start my ethnographic exploration with the sermons by the Iranian leader Ayatollah Khamenei that were delivered during the Friday prayers a week after the vote. I describe how the sermon stages the discourse of Islamic politics in Iran and articulates an intractable limit within this discourse that once crossed, threatens the present "religio-political" (or "spiritual-political") formulation of sovereignty and brings about the charge of sedition. Next,

[87] Machiavelli, N. 1992. *The Prince.* New York: Dover Publications, Inc. On the advice literature, see, for example, see Boroujerdi, M. 2013. *Mirror for the Muslim Prince: Islam and the Theory of Statecraft.* Syracuse University Press.

and in order to further investigate the relation between sedition and translation of European social and political thought in the Iranian discourse, I turn to the court testimony of veteran Islamic political actor Saeed Hajjarian as he defends himself against the charge of sedition. In his defense, Hajjarian points to the translation of European social thought as laying the groundwork of his seditionist slippage. Thinking through this suggestion, I will consider why the translation of European social thought can be threatening to the formation of religion and politics in Iran. I ask: what is the relation between the limit of the discourse of Islamic politics and the translation of European social thought? I explore Hajjarian's testimony as a paradigmatic response of the reformist Islamic tendency in Iran. Towards offering my own take on the politics of translation, I argue that Hajjarian's diagnosis of the seditionist threat and its relation to translation elides the concrete historicity of European social thought *in Iran,* and thereby enacts the same epistemic closures that render sedition an endemic threat to the Islamic politics of the Iranian state.

Fetneh ("sedition"): The Crisis of the Islamic Republic

When the Islamic Republic faced its most intensive domestic political crisis to date in 2009, it used the term *fetneh* (*fitna,* in Arabic) to name it, to make sense of it, and to contain it. The crisis precipitated by the charge of fraud in the 2009 presidential elections. Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, Islamic activists of the 1979 Revolution with leading roles in the establishment of the present political order in Iran, along with many Iranians, rejected the integrity of the election process as well as the official result that indicated the re-election of the incumbent president Mahmood Ahmadinejad. Charging the state with unaccountability and mishandling of the vote, they took to the streets of major cities across the country and helped create the largest wave of the protests since those that brought down the Pahlavi dynasty and gave rise to the Islamic government in 1979. The state's choice word *fetneh,* is the Persian adaptation of the Arabic term *fitna.* It is a pre-Islamic Arabic term with a wide uptake in Persian literary history. It denotes an internal threat to an ethically construed notion of self or community. It indicates giving into ethical temptation and causing strife within the political affairs of the community. The term appears in the Quran thirty-four times, and there and in the *hadith* literature, it us used to denote "civil war" within the Islamic community, and to indicate "persecution," "dissention," "sedition," "trial" and "temptation."

As the different English renderings of *fetneh* suggests, the term does not easily map into the Western problematic of distinguishing "religion" –or "spirituality," "morality," or "ethics"– from "politics." In the context of the 2009 Iranian crisis, the mobilization of *fetneh* reiterated what, following the Iranian discourse, I have provisionally called a "religio-political" constriction of the Islamic Republic. *Fetneh* captured the fact that an internal strife had come to pose a threat to the integrity of the geo-temporal boundaries of Iran conceived as an Islamic state. Using the term, the Islamic Republic declared that the dissenting candidates, Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, had crossed the religiously construed domain of the political "insiders" (*khodi-ha*) and had landed in the field of "the enemy" (*doshman*). They had crossed what in Iran is articulated as *khat-e ghermez-e nezam: "*the red line of the order [of the Islamic state]". The duo were indeed insiders of the Islamic politics. Mir-Hossein Mousavi was a left-leaning Islamist activist of the Revolution and the Prime Minster of Iran during the years of Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) immediately following the Revolution. He was famously favored by the late leader of the Revolution Ayatollah Khomeini [Imam Khomeini], and was dubbed the "Imam's Prime Minister." Cleric Mehdi Karroubi was also a comrade of Ayatollah Khomeini prior to the Revolution and had served time in the Shah's prisons for his revolutionary activism.

Among other positions, he had headed the enormous and powerful post-revolutionary welfare and veterans' organizations, *komite-ye emdad Imam Khomeini* ("Imam Khomeini Relief Committee") and *bonyad-e shahid* ("Martyr's Foundation") in the 1980s and 1990s. Prior to running for president in 2005 and then again in 2009, he had also served as the speaker of "the Islamic National Assembly," the Iranian parliament.

What rendered the dissention of Mousavi and Karroubi an insider's affair, and in turn made their designation as seditionist felicitous, was in part their successful enactment of the idioms and ethos of Islamic politics in order to question both the historical and religious authority of the Islamic Republic. The duo's charismatic association with Islamic politics, and with the sacralized events and personalities of the Islamic Revolution, was a key factor in their designation as "revolutionary" for some and "seditionist" for others. Their 2009 presidential campaigns, particularly that of Mousavi, had gained ground by recalling the ideals of the Islamic Revolution and reactivating the ethos of revolutionary struggle that was further cultivated during the Iran-Iraq war. The two activists argued that the Islamic Republic's politics had strayed from the ideals of the Revolution and the sacrifices of the pious millions during the Holy Defense (the Iran-Iraq war). Invoking *esteghlal, azadi, jumhuri-eslami*, ("Independence, Liberty, Islamic Republic"), a central mantra of the Islamic Revolution, they challenged the state as one that does not guarantee *esteghalal* ("independence") of the country and the *azadi* ("liberty,") of its citizens. They presented themselves as the truthful inheritors of these ideals and suggested that the state no longer embodies the ethical and political qualities of the Islamic tradition or the promises of republican government. They pointed to the grave domestic and international conditions of Iran during Ahmadinejad's first term to challenge the state's legitimacy as a whole. They conjured the power of *adl-e Ali* ("Justice of Ali"), the Shi'i ideal of justice, and *khon-e shohada,* "the blood of the martyrs," and moved to re-define the election from the cyclical rituals of *mardom-salari-ye dini* ("religious democracy") to a singular and rapturous event in the Islamic Republic. Mousavi and Karroubi's insider status must be understood not simply as occupying the bureaucracy of the Islamic state, but inhabiting the time-space of Islamic politics in order to steer it into action as they had done in the 1979 Islamic Revolution, over the course of Iran-Iraq war and then again in June of 2009.

Intractability of the Outside

In 2009 Iran the mobilization of the term *fetneh* was at once an acknowledgement of the shared religious and political grounds of the dissenting voices and a spatio-temporal operation that sought to put the dissention outside of the tradition and in its past. Its deployment went hand in hand with the mobilization of an unprecedented use of violence in the public by the state. The two actions were initiated by a sermon by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei who has succeeded Ayatollah Khomeini to occupy the seat of the "Supreme Leader" in the Islamic Republic. The landmark sermon was delivered in Tehran a week after the elections on June 19th and as part of the ritual of Friday Prayers. In its modern uptake in the Shi'i tradition, the Friday Prayers ritual consists of two sermons followed by the prayers. In the first sermon, the imam leading the prayers offers general religious advice. In the second, he addresses social and political conditions of the Islamic community. Under the paradigm of the rule of the Shi'i Jurist –*velayat-e faqih*– as elaborated by Ayatollah Khomeini, the sermon is a prerogative of the reigning Jurist –*vali-ye faqih*– and is

devoted to elaboration of the Jurist's views and judgments.[88] The capital's Friday prayers are traditionally held on the grounds of Tehran University and the adjacent streets. Loudspeakers transmit the sermon of the imam leading the prayer in the city center and across the temporary partitions that are set up to separate the women from men who occupy the main arena of the university and face the imam. In addition to its religious significance, throughout the history of the Islamic Republic, the ritual has been a space where decisive turns of Iranian society and politics –from elimination of political dissent after the Revolution to Iran-Iraq war to economic and political reform after the war– have been authoritatively interpreted within the religious and political rationality of the Islamic Republic.

Throughout the week leading to the June 19th Friday sermon, the site of the capital's Friday prayers was the space of unrest and protests against the handling of the elections. Ayatollah Khamenei, who only personally leads the ritual on important occasions, had come to address the event of the election and contain the unrest. The leader's sermons, which provide an entry into religio-political discourse of Islamic politics and the mobilization of *fetneh* therein, started with the third verse of Surah Al-Fath ("Victory") from the Quran. The verse affirms: "It is He who from on high has bestowed inner peace upon the hearts of the believers, so that – seeing that God's are all the forces of the heavens and the earth, and that God is all-knowing, truly wise– they might grow yet more firm in their faith." He devoted his first sermon of the day's prayer to recounting the context of the revelation of Surah Al-Fath and distilling its lesson of steadfastness in one's faith as the means to inner peace in the face of various social and spiritual/psychological upheavals:

> The verse that I recited is a promise for the pious; it reminds [them] of the deliverance of divine inner peace ["*sakineh"*]. *Sakineh* [*sakinat,* in Arabic] means tranquility in the face of spiritual and social turbulence. It was revealed in relation to the events that took place in Hydaibiyya. In the 6th year of *Hejrat,* when the Prophet and a few hundred of his followers were traveling from Medina to Mecca for pilgrimage, there occurred a series of events that caused a storm within their hearts. On the one hand, far from their home in Medina, they found themselves surrounded by their enemies. The enemies were well equipped and on their home turf. This promoted anxiety in the heart of the believers. On the other hand, the blessed Prophet, acting according to divine dictum that was later revealed to all, showed softness and accepted the request of the non-believers who had come to ask him to remove the name of "the most beneficent and the merciful," and "in the name of God," from the Book. These, and similar issues, had caused anxious and confused hearts. It caused doubt in the hearts [of the believers]. In the midst of such uneasy situations, be they of personal or social nature, the believer must await the deliverance of divine tranquility. He states [to the pious] that "He is the One who sends down tranquility into the hearts of the believer." He secured their hearts and placed peace within them; he protected them against spiritual anxieties, and the Muslims were psychologically reassured

[88] For a thorough discussion of *velayat-e faqih* and Khomeini's contribution to its formulation and formation, see Roy Mottahedeh's entry on the concept in Esposito J. L. edited *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*. See also Mottahedeh's historical-ethnographic tracing of the concept in *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Modern Iran,* Boston: Oneword. 2008 [1985].

> for the calm that he bestowed upon them. And then, as a result of the deliverance of divine tranquility and spiritual calm, "they grew more firm in their faith." And then the seeds of faith grow deeper in their hearts; the light of faith further illuminates their heart; their faith grows deeper. This is why it is important for an Islamic community, a pious community, to have trust in God, to know God aids its effort, and to know that God is behind those who seek the path of truth. When the hearts are secured, the steps become solid. When the steps are solid, the path is traversed with ease and the one reaches closer to the aim. The enemies of Islam have always wanted to cause anxiety and unease in the hearts of the Muslims. There are numerous examples of this in the history of Islam. Even prior to Islam, in the struggles [*"jihadi* movements*"*] of Prophets that preceded the Great Prophet, the believers who were able to hold steady to their faith, acquired spiritual calm. This spiritual calm directed their movement on the path of faith. They didn't become anxious or uneasy, and they did not stray from the path. Amidst anxiety and unease, finding the path becomes difficult. The human who possesses spiritual calm thinks properly, decides properly, and moves properly. These are the signs of God's blessing.

I quote the beginning of Khamenei's first sermon of the Friday prayers at length as it develops the spiritual-political paradigm within which the post-election crisis of the Islamic Republic is at once authoritatively interpreted and politically sanctioned. The sermon first distills the lesson of Surah Al-Fath, and by way of analogical reasoning, offers a normative reading of the elections and the ensuring crisis.[89] Indeed, immediately after the lines quoted above, the leader asserted that "today, our revolutionary society, our faithful people, urgently need to establish this spiritual calm, this tranquility of the heart, and this serenity and poise within themselves." With the Quranic lesson echoing in the background, Khamenei attributed the successes of the Iranian state in the face of adversarial circumstances to the steadfastness of his audience, the pious citizens of the Republic. He asserted that the successes of the Islamic Republic, including its ability to withstand the Iran-Iraq war, were as at once the sign of political-spiritual finesse of the Iranian people and that of God's grace. Given the relatively young population of Iran, and the state's anxieties about the youth's detachment from the ideals of political Islam, Khamenei's sermon took time to emphasize the political spirituality of the Iranian youth in particular. He contrasted them with their Western counterpart, and asserted that unlike Western youth who are bereft of spirituality and caught in the reign of materialism, the Iranian youth possesses firmness of the heart. The critical junctures in the history of the Islamic Republic, he asserted, have revealed that even those among the youth who appear bereft of spirituality are indeed full of conviction. The leader warned of the destabilizing effect of political excitements for the hearts of the faithful. He characterized the political upheaval as natural and episodic, and expressed conviction that the faith of the nation will keep it on the path of spiritual-political success. Praying for such a triumph, Khamenei concluded the first of two sermons of the day's prayer with the chapter of the Quran titled Al Asr ("Time through the Ages"):

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[89] See Mottahedeh's exposition of analogical reasoning within the Shi'i tradition in *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Modern Iran,* Boston: Oneword. 2008 [1985]. See also Hasan, A. 1986. *Analogical Reasoning in Islamic Jurisprudence; A Study of Judicial Principle of Qiyas.* Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute.

> In the Name of God, The Most Gracious, The Dispenser of Grace: CONSIDER the flight of time! Verily, man is bound to lose himself, unless he be of those who attain to faith, and do good works, and enjoin upon one another the keeping to truth, and enjoin upon one another patience in adversity.

The leader devoted the second sermon of the Friday ritual to the "issue of the day," the presidential election. He enumerated three points, addressed to three district groups. First, the leader congratulated the people for the high election turnout of around eighty-five percent. He articulated the turnout in the Islamic lexicon of *bay'at,* which indicates a performative expression of political allegiance and dutiful commitment to the Islamic community and its leader. The vote, he said, was the triumphant performance of *madrom-salari dini* ("religious democracy"), one that, in his words, shook the enemies of the Islamic Republic. In contrast to dictatorships and tyrannical regimes on the one hand, and democracies bereft of spirituality and religion on the other, the leader attributed the triumph of religious democracy to the system's ability to address the heart of the people, and to the spirituality that moves the people to the political arena. Indeed, he suggested that one can witness the invisible hand of the Twelfth Imam, and the sign God's grace in the rate of participation in the elections. The election demonstrated, he argued, that the faithful hearts of the people espoused trust, hope, and joyfulness in relation to the Islamic Republic.

Figuring the significance of the election in terms of reiterating the people's spiritual-political bond, Khamenei articulated the choice of the candidates and the candidates' diagnoses and proposals, as a secondary matter. Countering the radicalization of the election during the lead up to the event, he argued the importance of the election lies in its expression of trust, at once in God and in the Islamic Republic. In the same vein of de-radicalization and neutralization of domestic political antagonisms, the leader swiftly moved to discuss the foreign enemies of Iran who in his judgment have recognized and targeted the trust of the people as the state's most important asset: "The enemies of the Iranian nation want to break this trust. This trust is the most important asset of the Islamic Republic, [and the enemies] want to take this away; [they want to] produce doubt and uncertainty in relation to the election and the trust that people put into it in order to shake it. The enemies know that when trust is lacking, participation plummets, and when participation and people's [political] presence plummets, the legitimacy of the state is shaken. That's what they want. This is the enemy's goal." Khamenei's sermon went on to describe the history of the commitment of all the candidates, including Mousavi and Karroubi, to the Islamic Republic and emphasize "the [election] contestations is not a contestation between the insiders and outsiders, or between the Revolution and the anti-revolutionaries; it is one between the elements within the system."

The second point directly addressed the candidates and politicians involved in the election process and moved to describe sedition without explicitly naming it. He congratulated them on their vigorous, forthright and lively debates that inspired the high turnout. He also scolded them for tarnishing one another's record during the competition. As insiders of the Islamic Republic, each of their record coincides with the sacralized history of the Iranian state and its religious and political foundations in the Islamic tradition. He suggested that the candidates excessive questioning of one another, accusing one another of fraud, dishonesty and incompetence, crossed the norms of Islamic politics towards blasphemy, and constituted an injury to the pious body of the Republic. The leader's second point drew on the fact that the social and political fabric of Iran is woven with the moral and ethical threads of the Islamic

tradition, and that it is impossible to criticize one without compromising the other. In this context, while a certain degree of honesty and freedom of expression and criticism is welcomed as to inspire trust and participation, there exists a line that when crossed, tears the religious and political fabric of the Islamic Republic. The leader suggested that in the heat of the debates, perhaps tempted and taken over by the desire to win, the candidates had crossed this line. Without using the term *fetneh,* the leader suggested that the candidates had inevitably laid out the groundwork for one. Addressing the candidates and political leaders, Khamenei stated:

> Today is a decisive political moment for the country. Look at the condition of the world; look at the condition of the Middle East; the global economic condition; the issues facing our neighboring countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, or Pakistan. We are in an important point in history. We are all responsible to be attentive and clear. We are responsible to be vigilant and to not slip. In the event of the election, we must admit that the people did their job. They were responsible to show up to the voting stations and they performed their duty in the best possible way. But you and I have a heavier duty. Those who in one way or another serve as a reference point in public opinion –be it a politician or the leader of political party and social movement, and whoever whose voice is heard– must be very vigilant of what he does and what he says. If he crosses the line by just a slight bit, the ripple effects in the social body will reach sensitive and dangerous extents that he or others cannot easily contain. We have witnessed examples of such events. Each excessive measure reinforces others' extremism. If the politicians break the law, or for sorting out minor differences, deliver a major blow to the system, either knowingly or unknowingly, they are responsible for the blood, for the violence, and the disorder. I urge these gentlemen, these old friends, these brothers, to remain clear-minded; to have foresight. To see the hands of the enemy. Hungry wolves are on the prowl and today, slowly but surely, are taking off their diplomatic clothing and reveal their true selves.

These lines demonstrate how the leader's sermon masterfully de-radicalized the domestic political crisis of the state by putting it in the context of contemporary geopolitical conjuncture. In so doing, he acted in accordance to the long-term political strategy of the Iranian state that draws on ever-present international hostility as a means of suppressing domestic dissent and staging the country's Islamic and revolutionary politics. This strategy dates back to the establishment of the Islamic Republic where the internationally backed Iraqi war on Iran became the pretext for centralizing power and the forming the post-revolutionary state. In 2009, the leader referenced the destruction of Iran's Eastern and Western neighbors, Afghanistan and Iraq, by the Euro-American military occupation and the ensuing exasperation of domestic strife, and called timeout for domestic political dissention. Importantly, his spiritual-political discourse placed the locus of geopolitical and realpolitik consideration of Iran in the hearts of Iranian politicians and on their ability to remain lucid in the face of what he described as seasonal excitements. Within this discourse, detractors are not simply political dupes but are also spiritual failures. Like the Prophet's companions in Hydaibiyya who failed the trial of the heart, they too were tempted in their heart, misread the sings of the day, put their trust in the leadership of the

Islamic state, and gave rise to seditionism. They have crossed to the domain of the enemy, which in the discourse of the leader, is at once religiously and politically construed.[90]

Khamenei referenced the violence of the preceding week, including "a few deaths," and attributed the responsibility for the violence to candidates who have not accepted the legal outcome and have taken to the street in protests. He provisionally moved Mousavi and Karroubi from the position of "old friends" and "brothers" to that of undermining the very integrity of the Iranian political system. I say provisionally because the sermon left open the possibility of retreat for the dissenting candidates and their supporters and urged them to proceed on the basis of both fraternity and the law: "I invite these friends, I want these brothers to proceed on the basis of brotherhood, proceed based on mutual understanding, follow the law; the path of law is open. The path of compassion and serenity is open. Follow this path, and I hope that the most Exulted God help all to this path. After all everyone wants the progress of the country. The brothers shall respect the celebration of the 40 million election turnout and shall not allow the enemies to destroy this celebration." Immediately following these conciliatory lines, however, the leader ended the second point of the sermon by a threat: "but of course if some want to choose another path, I will come and speak even more clearly with the people."

The leader's third and last point addressed the enemies of the Islamic Republic, the imperialist powers and "the heads of global arrogance," particularly the United States and Britain. These states, among others, had sided with the protestors and insinuated that the vote had been mishandled. They are also the sponsors of the satellite radio and TV programs such as Voice of America and BBC Persian services, which along with Facebook and other social media platforms had acquired significance in publicizing the protests both in Iran and internationally while the Iranian state media organs suppressed the news. Complementing the containment strategy operative in the sermon, the leader offered an interpretation of the convergence of domestic dissent and Western meddling that shifted the blame of the crisis from the insiders to the outsider-enemies. In his take, the enemies of Iran, through their media, diplomatic and domestic agents, sought to use the election and its aftermath as an occasion to bring down the Islamic Republic. They sought to destroy Iran as they've destroyed Iran's neighbors Afghanistan and Iraq, but they sought to do so through fomenting a domestic crisis. In this feature, the leader compared the Western campaign to the Euro-American support for the color-coded revolutions of Eastern Europe. Weaving together geopolitical facts and conspiracy theories, the leader addressed Western imperialism and double standards. For example, referencing the American billionaire George Soros as an "American Zionist capitalist," he claimed that Soros had boasted about changing the Georgian government through a velvet revolution by spending 10 million dollars, and asserted:

> Idiots think the Islamic Republic of Iran, and this nation, is like Georgia. The problem of Iranian enemies is not understanding the Iranian people. What appeared as most despicable in their action is their expressions of sympathy and worries for our people and their claiming of human rights. American politicians expressed worries for the treatment of our people! YOU are worried for the people? Do you even believe in human rights? Who has reduced Afghanistan to a

[90] "The enemy," and other categories at play in the discourse of the leader are simultaneously religious and political, and are not irreducible to Schmittian formulation where political concepts such as "the enemy" used to be religious and are revealed in their full significance once they are interpreted in relation to their religious source.

> rubble and blood and is still doing so? Who has belittled Iraq under its military's boots? Who provides the Zionist state all this political and material support? In the US itself – and this is really shocking – under the democratic government of the husband of this lady who now speaks for us [Hillary Clinton, at the time secretary of the state], they burned alive around eighty people of Davoody sect [This is a reference to the 1993 Waco siege in Waco, Texas]. This is undeniable! These very dignitaries, democrats, did this! The Davoody sect, or in their own words Davidians, who had fallen out of favor with the American government, had gathered in a compound and staged a sit-in. They refused [the government orders] to come out. They [the American government] set the compound on fire and burned alive eighty men, women, and children. Do you understand human rights?! In my opinion the European and American politicians should carry the burden of shame [instead of human rights]. The Islamic Republic is in the front-lines of human rights. Our defense of the oppressed people in Palestine, in Lebanon, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and in anywhere where they have been oppressed, is the sign of this. It's the sign that we've raised the flag of human rights based on belief in Islam, faith in Islam, in this country. We do not need anyone's advice on human rights.

Khamenei concluded the sermon with a prayer to the Twelfth Shi'i Imam, *saheb-e zaman* ("the possessor of time,"), a messianic figure who is presently hidden but among us. The prayer recalled his own injured body, partially immobile due to an assassination attempt in the early years of the Revolution, and while crying along with the mournful and muffled cries of the audience, he pledged to the Imam:

> We will fulfill our duty… All I have is my life, my disabled body. I will sacrifice all that I have for Islam and the Revolution. Our master, please do pray for us… You are the real possessor of this country and the Revolution. You are our true patron. We will persevere on this path. Please help us!

Ritualization of "fetneh"

The day after Khamenei's sermon, the Islamic Republic forcefully re-launched its campaign against the protest under the banner of the neutralization of the threat posed by the *fetneh.* The state resorted to an unprecedented use of police, military and paramilitary forces and succeeded in wiping out the public expressions of dissent. Mousavi and Karroubi were labelled "the leaders of the seditionist effort" and were put under house arrest along with their spouses. Despite leaked calls by the two candidates for a public trial, they continue to be held under house arrest, purportedly under a classified order of the Iranian National Security Council overseen by Khamenei himself. A mass and televised trial did however follow the elections. The state judiciary grouped together veteran politicians close to Mousavi and Karroubi, journalists, and a number of Iranian personnel of European embassies, and charged them all with undermining national security. In addition to this general charge, the accused defended themselves against particular charges leveled by the state. In bizarre televised confessions, veteran politicians associated with the dissenting candidates recanted their political practices and convictions as well as their earlier rejection of the official results of the election. They sought forgiveness for crossing the religious-political line of the Islamic Republic as described by the Iranian leader during the Friday prayer a week after the election.

The state campaign against sedition succeeded in preventing the outbreak of civil disorder. The voices of dissent were pushed to the margin of the Iranian public by imprisonment, exile, and intimidation. In a curious turn of events, however, the discourse on sedition continues to date. Indeed, the discussion of sedition has been ritualized as part of the discourse of the state. Vigilance against sedition makes sense of many of the state's political practices, as well as the state's juridical and extra-juridical disciplinary operational. Four years after the event of 2009, for example, members of the Iranian parliament questioned and later impeached President Rouhani's Minster of Science and Research, Reza Faraji-Dana, for his previous association with "seditionist" Mir-Hossein Mousavi, and for taking a soft line in relation to "the wave of sedition" in the Iranian academy. The persistence of *fetneh* in the discourse of the state reveals that the practical and conceptual significance of the term exceeds the particular event of 2009. But what more does it reveal? To answer this question, I explore the sources of ritualization of *fetneh* in the testimony of Saeed Hajjarian who stood trial for sedition.[91]

Seditionist Translations

In the fourth session of the mass trial following the June 2009 crisis, veteran politician Saeed Hajjarian was tried for his role in the post-election unrest. The deputy prosecutor of the Tehran branch of the Revolutionary Court prefaced the State's case with a verse from the 28th Chapter of the Quran, *Suruh Al-Qasas,* which recounts how, in the face of God's mercy, Moses declares not to ever support the guilty: "O my Sustainer! [I vow] by all the blessings which Thou hast bestowed on me: Nevermore shall I aid such as are lost in sin!" Aligning himself with the tradition of Moses who prevailed the trails of the Pharaonic times, the prosecutor addressed the court by recounting the outbreak of the unrest and the defendant's role in it:

> As the court is aware, in the aftermath of the great participation of the God-loving and proud people of Islamic Iran in the tenth of presidential election of the Islamic Republic, and the affirmative response to the invitation of the Supreme Leader [Ayatollah Khamenei] and other members of the *nezam* ["government"] for the renewal of the ideals of the Imam [Khomeini] in the 30th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, which showcased the splendid success of *mardom-salari dini* ("religious democracy") and set an unprecedented global record of [democratic] participation, a movement hostile to the successes of the Islamic government, from both within and outside of the country, sought to foment sedition, tarnish the great success, and disrupt social order, security, and public perception… Despite the knowledge of the illegality of assemblies and riots, their timing in the sensitive period following the election, and their adverse security, economic, political and social effects as repeatedly made clear [by the state] through visual, audio and written media channels, and despite the recommendations of government officials and well-wishers including the Supreme Leader for the necessity of legal recourse for objections, the accused [Saeed Hajjarian] took part in illegal assemblies and participated in rioting and causing disorder. The [accused's] undertakings adhered to the invitation by the opposition and anti-revolutionary media [outside of the country] and those who sought to cause

[91] The trail, as many commentators inside and outside Iran have suggested, was a largely a show trail. If not entirely forced, the testimonies of the accused were made under various forms of pressure. Here I am interested in the substance of their however forced speech as well as the intelligibility of what was staged to the wider public.

> disorder within the country. In addition to disruption of public peace, the accused's undertakings prompted social and political anxiety, psychic, social and economic insecurity, infliction of security costs to the state, disruption of the daily movement of citizens, widespread destruction and arson of public, government and private property, creation of terror and public distress, infliction of loss of property and life of the people, creation of a discourse against the Islamic Republic of Iran and in favor of opposition and antagonist groups, and the disruption of state security.

With this damning preamble, the prosecutor enumerated Hajjarian's charges in the court: "(1) action against the domestic security of the state through agitation, rioting and illegal gatherings; (2) insinuation of fraud and corruption in the presidential election of the Islamic Republic; (3) participant in the creation of a Document of Strategic Measures in discordance with the Constitution; (4) propaganda against the sacred government of the Islamic Republic; (5) connection with foreign agents against national security, [and for] agitation and encouragement of the youth and students for participation in illegal protests and sit-ins against state organs in charge of conducting and overseeing the elections; (6) defamation of the legal government-elect through false accusation and allegations through [writing] essays [and delivering] documented speeches, in particular around the 10th Presidential Elections, and by cooperation with anti-revolutionary BBC Persian; (7) insulting and disrespecting government officials and the Supreme Leader. Among the evidences and proofs presented to the court, the prosecutor recounted interactions between Hajjarian and Western news organizations such as BBC Persian, contact with the Open Democracy Foundation funded and chaired by Hungarian-American billionaire George Soros, and a meeting with Jürgen Habermas, described by the prosecutor as "the most famous theoretician of civil disobedience."

From Revolution to Reform

As a young man from a less privileged area of Tehran, Saeed Hajjarian was an avid follower of Ali Shariati and Ayatollah Khomeini's synthesis of Islam and politics. He was trained as an engineer prior to the Revolution. After the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty, and in the tumultuous years of struggle over the direction of post-revolutionary politics during the war with Iraq, he took part in the establishment of the Islamic Republic. He was a founding member of the state's Intelligence Ministry and contributed to its efforts of eliminating domestic dissent and centralizing state power. During these very years, Hajjarian's encounter with what he saw as the shortcomings of the Islamic Republic and his own work as a partisan of the Islamic state propelled him to study social and political theory. His studies focused on predominantly European theoretical discourses on secularization and political development as a way to understand and intervene in the post-revolutionary developments of Islamic politics. A successful member among his kind of disillusioned-yet-committed Islamic activists, he was close to post-war efforts of "Reconstruction" lead by President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani. He rose to prominence, however, as part of the late-nineties still-contentious "Reform Movement" that was inaugurated by the 1997 election of Mohammad Khatami to the presidency, and was re-activated in the candidacy of Karoubi and Mousavi in 2009. Hajjarian was dubbed the "brain of the reform movement." Among his many well-known contributions was the reformists' strategy of "[popular] pressure from below, [political] negotiations on top." As an influential protagonist of this strategy, Hajjarian extensively contributed to the reformist papers and journal that were

central to the emergence and popularity of reformist politics. He was also the chief political adviser to the reformist president Khatami and is believed to have influenced the direction of the insider's political negotiations for an extended period of time.

Hajjarian's critical significance, however, lies in his role in the breakdown of the unified Islamic political front that in his capacity as a security agent, he himself had fought to establish. This breakdown was marked by the exposure of the role of the Islamic Republic's Ministry of Intelligence in the murder and disappearance of over eighty intellectuals, literary figures, and translators between 1988-1998. Hajjarian, who was widely associated with the move to reveal the government's role in the murders, was targeted in an assassination attempt in March 2000. At the time of the assassination Hajjarian was a member and the vice-chair of Tehran City Council. He was shot in the head on the City Council's steps by a young member of the *basij,* Saeed Asgar. The bullet entered Hajjarian's left cheek and lodged in his neck. It caused Hajjarian permeant nerve damage resulting in paralysis and speech-impediments, but spared his life. Popular demands and the pressure of the reformists in power led to the arrest of the assailant and his sentencing to 15 years in prison. A twenty-year-old college student with a soft beard and a kind smile, Asgar accepted the charge and cited the desire to eliminate *fesad* (*fasād*, Arabic, "corruption," "spread of mischief within the Islamic community,") as his motivation. He was released from jail after serving only one year of his sentence.

Translation on Trial

Unable to speak fluently, on August 25, 2009, Hajjarian asked the court's permission to be heard through a hand-written statement read by a fellow-defendant. His statement started with a characterization of the election and the larger geo-political condition of Iran that echoed the post-election sermon of the Iranian leader described earlier. Without referencing the sermon and its uptake by the state prosecutor in the charges against him in the court, Hajjarian's emphasized the presence of the enemies at Iran's eastern and western boarders and the absolute significance of national unity. Accepting his responsibilities in the post-election unrest and in crossing the red line of the Islamic Republic, he devoted the bulk of the statement to the particular and the general reasons for his lapse into *fetneh.* Both set of reasons directly connect *fetneh* and the translation of European social theory in contemporary Iran. Following Hajjarian's statement, I will first recount the general conditions of seditionist politics before turning to analysis of the particularity of his lapse.

Hajjarian accepted his responsibilities in the post-election unrest and in crossing the red line of the Islamic Republic, and sought forgiveness from the court and absolution from the Islamic nation. His apology, which aimed to reinsert him back into the fabric of the Islamic Republic as a devout intellectual, offered the result of his investigation of the underlying condition of *fetneh* in the Islamic Republic. It located the source of sedition in the epistemic preconditions of Islamic politics in the post-revolutionary period. It did so by sketching the general intellectual and practical trajectory of post-revolutionary Iran within which the outbreak of *fetneh* had brewed. As a defense strategy, Hajjarian de-personalized the charges against him by offering a generalized historical-epistemological explanation for the lapse in question.

In three items, Hajjarian's statement attributed *fetneh* to the poor conditions of reception and the dominant mode of translation of European social theory in the post-revolutionary period. The weakness of human sciences in the country, he suggested, and the handicap of Iranian thinkers in identifying the ideological and historically-specific nature of European thought, he

argued, led to the diversion of the country from its presumably revolutionary spiritual and political path:

> 1. In Iran, unfortunately, we are faced with a weakness in human sciences, particularly in the fields of sociology and political science. Despite the expansion of centers of higher education and the number of students in these fields, textuality of the human sciences is bereft of depth. Content is offered to students through translations that are predominantly inadequate and lack a critical preface.
> 2. In the aftermath of the [1979] Revolution, a vast number of [Western] books [of human sciences] have been translated [into Persian]. Many of them have an ideological sway and one can observe traces of different schools of thoughts, from orthodox Marxism to neoliberalism, in them. These books – and one should add journals – circulate widely among avid readers.
> 3. In addition, graduates of human sciences (particularly those of foreign universities) who are tenured in the Iranian academy, unconsciously bring the latest achievements of [Western] human sciences to Iran. Presently we can observe post-structuralism, post-Marxist, and feminist outlooks, and those of other Western schools, offered in the name of science in the academy.

Within this general condition Hajjarian attributed his own lapse to his engagement with Max Weber, insofar as he had equated the German's sociologist's theorization of traditional forms of domination and authority, patrimonialism and sultanism, with Iranian historical conditions. He prefaced his engagement with Weber in the trajectory of post-revolutionary Iranian developments in which Hajjarian was a central protagonist:

> After the passing of the honorable Imam [Khomeni] and in the beginning of the Reconstruction government [of Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani], I was chosen to lead the political division of the Center of Strategic Research. In this capacity, I recognized that for leading the Center's projects, scientific and political experience is not enough and that I needed academic training. I thus studied and received a masters and a Ph.D. degree in Political Science, and it is in this context that my mind was imbued with a plethora of theories and misguided political ideologies, while I lacked the capacity to critique or rethink them.
> With the beginning of the Reform movement, and in particular the formation of the Participation Front, there was a need for theoretical elaboration of practice. It was expected that I'd contribute as a theoretician and offer a scientific analysis of social condition, the state, and political forces to guide political practice.
> With these introductory remarks, I can now explain why the theory of the German thinker of the last century, Max Weber, which was the reference of my analysis, has no relation with the Iranian conditions.
> Max Weber had predominantly drawn his observations from the Ottoman empire, the Chinese empires and the Mongol imperial rule in India, and devised a general theory of patrimonialism and sultanism. The common denominators of these lands, according to Weber's theory, are the followings: (1) These countries were all empires and hereditary dynasties. (2) These empires were pre-modern, without the rule of law, and in their helm of power sat despotic rulers. (3) Government in these countries was formed based on blood and inheritance, also known as

hereditary rule. (4) The people, as serfs, were bereft of any citizenship rights and were bought and sold with land.

This characterization makes clear that the application of Max Weber's theory to the contemporary Iranian situation is unfitting and inapt for a number of reasons: first, Islamic Republic of Iran is a post-revolutionary state with a courageous people, who under the instructions of Imam [Khomeini], are aware of their rights. Secondly, our government has a well-elaborated constitution within which the right of national sovereignty is recognized and government officials are directly or indirectly chosen by the people. Our people are thus citizens and not surfs [or "subjects"]. Thirdly, the government in Iran is not hereditary and is not inherited through blood. The [clerics of the Assembly of] Experts, on behalf of the people, choose the most just and most courageous of the *maraje* [Shi'i clerics of the highest rank of "source of emulation"], who is skillful, resourceful and aware of the historical conditions. Fourthly, the religion of majority of the Iranian people is Shi'ism and the rule of the guardian jurist draws its legitimacy from the divine region of the Imam-e Zaman [The Twelfth Imam, "the Possessor of Time"] and as such, the rule of the *vali-ye faqih* ["the guardian jurist"] belongs to the *velayat* [political authority] of the Prophet.

It is thus observable that Max Weber's theories are not applicable in Iran, and I applied them to the conditions of our country ignorantly and uncritically.

Both the process through which Hajjarian comes to engage with Weber, as well as the form of his engagement with the German sociologist, reveal the formation of the Islamic reformist politics and the engagement with European social theory therein. On the former, Hajjarian professes finding himself in critical positions of power and leadership for which he did not possess the prerequisite know-how. This lack propelled him to acquire relevant forms of knowledge, which he sought through the most rigorous academic training available to him. His education, however, inundated him with European social theory, which eventually lead him astray. In Hajjarian's account, the historical and ideological nature of European social theory and the intellectual inadequacy of Iranian translators and interlocutors of European social theory are the culprits. While he does not sort through the relationship between the two factors, he suggests that the two together created the slippery grounds where well-intended insiders of the Islamic Republic who need to engage with European social theory but have not-yet developed a capacity for a critical engagement cross the line of religion and politics. While I will later return to the suggestive diagnosis of Hajjarian, here I want to highlight that Hajjarian's academic training unfolds in the context of the post-revolutionary Cultural Revolution as elaborated in Chapter Three as well as the strict oversight of Ministry of Culture on all publications –including translations of European social thought– in the country. Presumably in this context students and readers are protected from the seductive and seditionist tendencies of Western thought. Hajjarian's statement thus reveals the failures of the Cultural Revolution and the state's education and cultural policies. It also makes clear the campaign against *fetneh* within which Hajjarian finds himself caught, should be understood as the continuation of the efforts of the Cultural Revolution. While I will return to this point in my conclusion, here is how Hajjarian addresses the court immediately after the citation above and points to the responsibilities of the Islamic state's education and cultural policies in sowing the seeds of sedition:

Your honor:

As you observe the application of unfitted theories, and the lack of effort in finding native theories that fit the Iranian situation, can have grave consequences; may this be a serious lesson [*ebrati*] for all academic friends and political activists. The responsibility of these dears [friends and activists], as the intellectual leaders of society, is to wage critique on everyone even if they are the most important and reputable global thinkers, and proceed cautiously and intelligently in rendering [Western] theories native. Just because one reputable professor or text has offered a critical introduction to a theory, one should not pick it up and use them in practice until one is sure about it.

In this regard the High Council of the Cultural Revolution is not without responsibility for this diversion. Although there have been many warnings that the human sciences are unlike the hard sciences, and that many ideological campaigns are presented under the rubric of human sciences, we unfortunately witness that instead of attention to their quality, ever year they grow in quantity. In the early years of the Revolution there were only four or five state universities that offered up to masters degrees in human sciences. Today, however, in each city there are state, Azad, Payam Nour, and private universities that train students in highest levels [of social sciences] without attention to the mistaken content [of these fields]…
Politicians and political activists are also responsible in this matter [of *fetneh*]. Although this group does not usually engage in the field of theorization, it plays a crucial rule in putting theorization into practice, and creates and leads institutions in line with theoretical goals. The work of politicians and activists is of critical importance. Given that this group serves as the political reference of large sections of society, one slippage on their behalf can produce large ripple effects. Just as the slippages of religious authorities is of critical significance, and as the Holy [Imam Ali] says, "The slip of a philosopher resembles the sinking of a ship: not only he does he sink, but he sinks many with him" ["السفينه كانكسار العالم انكسار وتغرق تغرق "]. Thus, the political leaders must pay attention to the theories that are the source of their strategic political action.
But there exist a group of political activists, who intentionally and with the knowledge of the consequences of certain theories, take part in the proliferation of these theories in the academy, among the political parties and within society. It is upon the proper factions of the state who trace the footprint of the members of this group and bring them before the law.

What I want to emphasize in addition to the radically different context of what might appear to us as a familiar debate, and beyond our various evaluative frameworks, is the double-bind of Hajjarian's engagement with Weber, and with translation of European social theory. On the one hand, Hajjarian seeks theoretical and practical anchoring in Weber's discourses but finds Weber not to easily fit with the Iranian situation. On the other hand, in order to establish Weber's relation to Iran, he needs to engage more deeply with the German thinker and the historical and theoretical backgrounds of his formulations. Stuck in this bind, he dismisses translation of European social theory as promulgating misguided and hidden European ideologies, and at the same time demands a critical approach to translation that is necessarily predicated upon further

translation of European theoretical and historical texts. The latter conclusion, according to the former statement however, can only poison Iran's Islamic politics. Hajjarian's insistence on the necessity of a "critical" (*enteghadi*) approach to translation points to the recognition of this double-bind. But what would be a sufficiently critical approach, and would it, as Hajjarian suggests, ward off against the threat of *fetneh*? His guarantee to the court, which aims to vindicate his seditionist engagement with Weber, is predicated on his demonstration of a "critical" engagement with Weber. In my conclusion, I explore Hajjarian's "critical approach to translation" and whether it overcomes the confines of this double bind, but first I want to return to the closing section of Hajjarian's defense testimony in the court.

The conclusion of Hajjarian's testimony identifies "the feeling of fear" in relation to European thinkers as the belittling of the presumably Islamic Iranian interlocutors of European thought and the cause of unconditional acceptance of European thinkers. Echoing Khamenei's post-election sermon, Hajjarian references the necessity of psychological and spiritual steadfastness as the key in facing the trial of translation. He contrasts what he deems as the successful engagement in the hard sciences with the country's vulnerability in the human sciences. Identifying Talcott Parsons and Jürgen Habermas as European thinkers whose theories, along with those of Weber's, had contributed to the post-election unrest, Hajjarian demanded a revision of the country's long-term approach to human sciences. "If this [protective] action does not take place," he warned "we will arrive at a point of no return, and –God forbids– face *fetneh-ha* [plural of *fetneh,* "trials"] that will mislead even the few wise observers." He immediately cites two verses of the Quran that describe the reach and severity of *fetneh*. The first one warns the believers that *fetneh "*...does not befall only those among you who are bent on denying the truth, to the exclusion of others, and know that God is severe in retribution" (Al-Anfal 25) and the second describes *fetneh* as "even worse that killing" (Al-Baqarah 191).

The Coordinates of Sedition: the longue durée of ~~Sovereignty~~

I want to take up Hajjarian's suggestion that the translation of European thought can subvert the Islamic politics of the Iranian state, as well as his idea that a critical approach to translation can preserve the Islamic Republic from the threat of sedition. In Hajjarian's account, the "application of unfitted [European] theories" in the absence of "native theories" results in seditionist slippages from the discourse of Islamic politics. His exegesis of Weber at once demonstrates such an "unfit" juxtaposition of European theory on the Iranian situation, and exemplifies what he proposes as "a critical approach to translation." His critical approach gestures toward the historical referents of Weberian categories of analysis, and does so as a way of establishing non-correspondence between Weber's historical categories and categories proper to Iran. Since Weber's theorization of traditional authority and domination are predicated on Eastern empires characterized by blood and land relations, and in his take, the formation and distribution of political authority in Iran are not based on blood and land, Hajjarian's critical translation establishes the inapplicability of the Weberian theory for an analysis of contemporary Iran. In Hajjarian's account, the elision of the gap between the history that informs Weber's theory and that of Iran covers over the crucial differences of the Iranian political situation and leads to forms of political action that undermine politics of the Iranian state.

Before following Hajjarian's elaboration of "the Iranian political situation" or inquiring about the possibility of an adequately "native" theoretical framework, let's pursue Hajjarian's suggestion that the juxtaposition of a theory that is not "native" to the Iranian situation leads to

subversion of Iranian religio-political formation. Note that the first part of this claim is not surprising to those attuned to the historicity of thinking and the problematic of commensurability as part of the enterprise of translation. It is the second part characterizing the intellectual act of eliding of historicity while translating as politically subversive that I want to take up. Within Hajjarian's logic, all uptakes of European social theory are condemned to sedition for *European* social theory is by definition not "native" to *Iran*. If what constitutes a "critical" approach to translation and a defense against political subversion is the recognition of the *European* historicity of European social theory, the only purpose translating European social theory can have is subverting Islamic political discourse of the state. Despite forms of control and censorship in the Iranian academia and the publishing industry, the extensive circulation and publication of translation of European social theory in Iran points to a more expansive logic in the discourse of the Islamic Republic than Hajjarian's maximalist condemnation of translation to seditionism. Indeed, the very formation of the "Islamic Republic" is itself predicated upon a long history of translation of European thought in Iran. Therefore, Hajjarian's approach elides not the *European* historicity of European social theory, but the concrete historicity of the translation of European social thought *in Iran.* It ignores the necessity and the place of European thought in Iranian historical developments that exceeds the emergence of Islamic politics in the twentieth century and conditions both its form and content.

In Chapter One I traced the translation of European social and political thought in Iran to the political crisis of the country amidst the Perso-Russian wars of the nineteenth century. Iran's devastating losses in the wars and the threat of political disintegration revealed Iran's weak position in the global distribution of knowledge and power. It prompted the Qajars to send the first group of Iranian students to Europe and commission the translation of European texts. Travelogues of this period offered the first political historiographies of Europe in Persian. They introduced new terms such as *mashruteh*, "constitutionalism," *mustabedeh*, "despotic," *azadi*, "liberty," and *barabari*, "equality," whose locations in the religious and political discourses of the time were as yet undetermined, but came to constitute the parameters of the debate of the 1906 Constitutional Revolution.

Hajjarian's discourse on translation emerges within this long history of translation that has rendered European concepts and rationalities an important anchor for the political developments of Iran. He ignores the epistemic significance of translation of European thought, and valorizes the Islamic tradition as the properly "native" discourse of Iranian history. However, as the significance of the translation of European thought is epistemic, he cannot but rely on the tradition of translation of European thought in describing a properly "native" approach to Iranian history. As a result, when he describes the Iranian political situation in contrast to the historical referents of Weber's theory, he has to elide the European genealogies of his key concepts, and elide their incommensurability with the Islamic tradition by eliding their historical difference. Hajjarian describes Iranians as "citizens," endowed with "rights," as enshrined in the Iranian "constitution" within the framework of "national sovereignty." At the same time, and as if these concepts are commensurate with the political authority of the Islamic Prophet, he situates the constitutional rights of Iranian citizens within the Islamic tradition as enacted in Iran today. Notice how a claim to "native" theory and the invocation of the Islamic tradition *against* the European thought elides the very gap between the historicity of European concepts of "citizenship," "rights," "constitution," "national sovereignty" with Iranian historical situation and the Islamic tradition that it claims to take seriously.

Hajjarian's valorization of the contemporary religio-political discourse of Iran against the West and Western thought emerges within a longer history of recourse to the Islamic tradition as the properly "native" discourse of Iranian politics that I traced in Chapter Two. Looking beyond their celebrated and condemned politics –"revolutionary," "anti-imperialist," or "nativist"– I showed that the mid-twentieth century discourse of "westoxification" elides the specificities of the Islamic traditions and contribute to an anti-Western notion of "Islam" that is ready for social engineering and political experimentation. Despite their cosmetic differences, Hajjarian's revolutionary politics around the 1979 Revolution, his contribution to the establishment of the Islamic state, and his reformist politics today share the key characteristics and the limitations of Iranian enactment of Islam in the twentieth century as elaborated in Chapter Two and Three. A key characteristic feature of this political enactment of Islam is its inability to make sense of its historical circumstance, including the place of translation of European thought therein. As a result, it incorporates European social thought by eliding its incommensurability with the Islamic tradition. This elision, Chapter Three argued, has contributed to the emergence of a peculiar form of estrangement and foreignness within the Islamic tradition that renders it unable to cohere as a generative political tradition in the present.

Hajjarian's travails as a revolutionary, as a rank-and-file member of the Islamic Republic, and as a so called "reformist" critic should be understood as the lived-experience of the closures of politics and religion explored in the earlier chapters. Hajjarian's testimony reveals that, like Mirza Saleh Shirazi, Hajjarian is exploring the closures of his historical circumstance by exploring European historical and intellectual developments. Unlike Mirza, however, he elides the historical incommensurability of Iran and Europe when he claims to know Iran, and to know Iran as "Islamic." In conflating translation and sedition he ignores the concrete closures that lead him to engage with European social theory. Recall his court testimony that recounted his engagement with European social theory as a way of addressing the political predicaments that he had encountered as the head of the political division of the Islamic Republic's Center of Strategic Research. Such predicaments are not addressed but ignored in Hajjarian's reproduction of "westoxification."

Ignoring the historicity of European thought in Iran in Hajjarian's Islamic discourse renders him unable to see that translation could indeed be subversive of Iranian politics and elaborate a remedy that surpasses the ritualized anti-Western discourses of the Cultural Revolution and the campaign against sedition. For the translation of European thought to be seditionist, the place of European thought *within* Islamic political discourse has to be identified. Such an elaboration points to the historicity of translation explored in Chapter One and the simultaneity of discourses that background Islamic politics, and surpass the narrow framing of the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic. The source of the ritualization of the Cultural Revolution and the campaign against sedition lies in part in the indeterminate and intractable relation of a modern political discourse indebted to the translation of European thought and the narrow anti-Western staging of the Islamic tradition in Iran. Unable to elaborate the historical conditions within which it finds itself, the Islamic discourse of politics is plagued by a paranoia of being undone from the inside. Correspondingly, it engages in a witch-hunt for those who cross the line that separates "the insiders" from "the enemy." What I have tried to show is that every one of the insiders in this condition is susceptible to crossing the line, and indeed someone always will. This renders Islamic politics in Iran a game of musical chairs: the most devout partisans of the Islamic Republic might not find a seat once the music stops next. In this game,

the Islamic activists against the state – such as Karroubi and Mousavi –change positions with agents of the state, and then again emerge as seditionist against the state.

Occultation of Politics and the Khaej ("Outside") of Exile

In 2009, I experienced the Green Movement with two of my long-term interlocutors, two sisters by the names of Azadeh and Bahareh. Azadeh and Bahareh were born two and four years after the Revolution respectively. Their names *name* the very dreams and hopes of the Revolution. Azadeh," is the adjectival form of the noun "Azad," which in Persian means "free," "un-subjugated." Bahareh is a derivative of the "Bahar," meaning "spring," and denotes the spring-like quality of renewal. They were given these names by parents who had met working in a fabric-making factory in southern Tehran. They were not typical workers, but covert members of *sazeman-e fadaeen-e khalgh*, a major leftist political organization, and had gotten jobs as workers not only to develop within themselves a consciousness of a worker, but also raise the consciousness of other workers and establish a *jame-e-ye kargari bi-tabaghe,* "an egalitarian workers' society." While they were concerned with the religious direction of Iranian politics, they were nonetheless devoted to the cause of the Revolution, interpreted it as the passage from unfreedom to freedom, and memorialized the Revolution in the names of their daughters.

For these daughters of the Revolution, however, the experience of Revolution hasn't been spring-like. When the two sisters were still very young, the space of political contestation was gradually closed. Their activist father was arrested and handed a 13-years sentence for the crime of "enmity against God and the Islamic state." Their fate was further exacerbated in the context of the international backlash against the Islamic Revolution when Iraq, backed by Iran's neighbors and Western powers, waged a military campaign against Iran that came to last eight years. On July 26, 1988, close to the end of the war, Mojaheedeen-e Khalgh, an Iranian political organization better known as the MEK joined the Iraqi forces in an attack against the Islamic Republic. This Islamic-Marxist group had played a crucial role in the Revolution, but had subsequently emerged in opposition to the Islamic Republic and had taken refuge in Iran's geopolitical adversary, Iraq. While the MEK campaign against Iranian state was unsuccessful, it became the pretext for the Islamic Republic to eliminate all those who challenged their vision of religion and politics. The state executed a large number of its political prisoners regardless of their charge or punishment, and buried them overnight without notifying their families or even acknowledging their execution.

Azadeh and Bahareh's father was among those executed. He is assumed to be buried in the unmarked graves of Khavaran east of Tehran. The exact date of his execution is unknown, but it is believed to be sometime in the late summer of 1988. Azadeh and Bahareh, along with others whose loved ones are thought to be buried there, commemorate their loss during the first Friday of the last month of the summer. My recording of the eve of this date contains memories of trekking to Khavaran with their mother, of the difficult, rehearsed, and cartoonish encounters of mothers, wives, and daughters of those executed with forces of the Islamic Republic, but also good memories of inhabiting a public space where their loss was acknowledged in the state's effort to bar them from praying on the barren grounds of Khavaran, and of being with those who had a similar experience and could openly acknowledge their loss. In this context, their mourning was a protest and their protest, a mourning.

At some point during the conversation, Bahareh tells me that it is no longer the same to go to Khavaran for many whose loved ones are buried there have left Iran. She says: "There is no

sense of comradery and community when we go there. They even allow us to go there now; there aren't many of us left to go anyways; we are no longer a threat in their eyes; they have already won. We are losers."

Azadeh and Bahareh don't blame those who have migrated. Describing a life spent unable to speak about their experience publicly as exhausting, they both intimately understand the desire to leave: "During my adolescent years I became really angry at my mom and dad. I thought of them and their activism as selfish. I didn't like that we had to carry their mantle of the revolution. At some point I hated my dad for leaving us. I thought I had an unwanted inheritance that I wanted to get rid of. I thought if I left Iran, like so many that we knew had done, I could start a new life. I felt suffocated here. I thought of our past as a weight attached to my ankle. I thought I was a prisoner and I was unable to move. I had the idea that if I left for somewhere else, entered in a new time and space, a new language, I could give my life a new meaning."

Reckoning with the difficulty of belonging to the Islamic Republic, both Azadeh and Bahareh have tried to leave, and live trying to leave. Azadeh has the experience of living in India after dropping out of college and trying to settle there. She could have drawn from her life history, as many with similar experiences have, and received political asylum in Europe. But she wanted a clean cut from her political history and chose India instead. After living in India for a few years, she returned to Tehran to her mother and sister because of both financial difficulties and her inability to be away from them. At the time of our conversation in 2014 Azadeh worked as a translator for an English-language financial journal in Tehran and in the evenings –not unlike her parents a generation ago– read theories of praxis. Since that time, she has lived in Istanbul for a year, and is presently –and despite her earlier reticence– in Germany among the community of Iranian leftists there. In 2014, her sister Bahareh was granted a fellowship to study law at the University of Edinburgh. She has since completed a master's program in international law specializing in the rights of children, and has returned to Tehran. She presently lives with her mother, looking for opportunities for work in Europe in order to leave, again.

In 2009, I accompanied Azadeh and Bahareh in the carnivalesque street parades that have become characteristic of the ritual of presidential elections in Iran, and in the post-election unrest that followed. Their mother also joined us in the protest. They were all moved by the expression of discontent in the streets that swelled to hundreds of thousands in numbers and was carried out in their neighborhood of central Tehran. When the government tried suppressing dissent by controlling access to the city center, we were able to attend the rallies from their house, or run

the protests was "Where Is My Vote?" referring to what the protesters saw as the usurpation of the election from its rightful winner, Mir Houssein Mousavi. For Azadeh and Bahareh, this longtime partisan of the Islamic Revolution was forever associated with the unmarked graves of their father who was executed during Mousavi's prime ministership. The sisters were split about the election. While both were concerned about the impact of Ahmadinejad's second term in office, only Bahareh had chosen to vote, and at the insistence of her friends, had voted for the man in power during the execution of her father. Their mother had also abstained from voting. They were nonetheless all there to protest, and even when the protests turned violent, none could convince the others not to go. The uprising for them was not about the vote, and certainly not about a vote for Mousavi. It seemed to express a discontent that like the loss of their father, had yet to find a public expression. The gap between their concrete experience and public discourse as captured in the figure of unmarked grave sheds light on a larger rift between the lived history of religious and political belonging on the one hand and the discourse of Islamic politics, on the other. This gap, I want to suggest, sheds light on the cyclical expression of dissent in the post-revolutionary period. It corresponds to the Islamic politics of revolution and reform, which have not only rendered the tradition something other than itself and in need of an outside anchor (Chapter Three), but as this chapter has tried to show, shrunk the possibilities of politics such that migration becomes one of the only recourses to an "outside."

In the context of "occultation of politics," translation, *not unlike migration,* is an attempt to anchor oneself in the order of another's historical narrative. It is seeking a temporary shelter in the elsewhere of another's words and world, outside crises of one's own, experienced –in Azadeh's words– as an unwanted inheritance and a disabling weight attached to one's ankle. In the interim of waiting to leave Iran, Azadeh and Bahareh both take part in leftist reading and translation circles and public seminars lead by translators of European critical theory as a way of finding political belonging, and as a reckoning with a violent history. Violently excluded from the politics of the Islamic state, they engage with European thought not to recuperate the virtues of revolutionary Islam or create the discursive basis of an Islamic politics, but to develop a new relationship to the violent nature of law and politics in Iran. Chapter Five, *Exit,* explores this possibility.

CHAPTER FIVE

Khorooj/Exit [92]

A Generational Mis-take

When he learned about my research interest in modern Iranian political thought, J insisted on taking me to Javad Tabatabai's seminar on Hegel's *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* at the Porsesh Institute of Political and Economic Research.

In his mid-sixties, J exudes calmness and poise. His insistence, "*I have to take you with me this Tuesday*," was a bit out of character. He is no longer consumed by passionate activism as he once was; no longer short-tempered and self-assured. Although he doesn't stand straight, he is still tall. J is a pharmacist. He works in south-central Tehran. Despite his crowded pharmacy, he takes his time with his patrons, both providing them with their prescriptions and listening to their stories: "What happened to you?" "Where do you come from?" He patiently takes public transportation through the capital's congested streets and visibly polluted air. And more often than not, while commuting, he listens to his recordings of Tabatabi's lectures and those of other intellectuals who offer seminars on various European thinkers and theoretical discourses at the Porsesh Institute.

I wasn't opposed to going to the Institute to meet Tabatabai. I was indeed interested in meeting him. I knew of him as a public intellectual and a well-respected political philosopher. J, however, was unrelenting: "If you don't want to make the mistake of my generation, you need to start with Tabatabai."

I had a sense of what he could mean by "mistake" but I was struck by J's use of the term "generation." I knew J as a part of a community of left activist who found themselves in the front lines of the 1979 Revolution and later subjected to the violence of the post-revolutionary Islamic state. I didn't expect him to invoke "generation" but rather his fellow leftists, *bache chap-i-ha* ("the leftist kids") who found themselves blindsided by the culmination of the Revolution they had helped steer. As a young man and a student, J had been a member of *sazeman-e cherikha-ye fadaee khalgh-e Iran* ("The Organization of Iranian People's Fadaian"). He had taken part in the revolutionary activities of the organization before and after the Revolution up until the closure of the space of political contention in the mid-eighties during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88). For him, this closure meant the loss and displacement of family, friends, and comrades, taking refuge in the nine-to-five of the pharmacy during the Iran-Iraq War, and three decades of melancholic consideration of the Revolution and his activism in its midst. It was this research that had brought him to study Hegel with Tabatabai, and to come to see his generation of activists as "mistaken" beyond religious and political affiliation.

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[92] *Khorooj*, derivative of *kharej,* literally means "exit." It is the term that appears on "exit" signs in Iran, and it is also how Kant describes Enlightenment: "Enlightenment is man's *exit* from his self-incurred immaturity." Kant, E. 1996 [1784]. "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment." In *What is Enlightenment: Eighteen-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions.* Schmidt, J. Ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.

To be clear, J still judges himself and his former comrades to have been naive and uninformed about the political world that they wanted to change and forge. He thinks leftists who had interpreted their history within frames of Marxist class struggle and anti-imperialism, and had acted so as to bring this history to its perceived conclusion, neither understood Marx and Marxism nor the nature of their own circumstance. "*Koor-koorane fa'aliat mikardim*." ("Our activism was blind.") "We didn't understand Marx. We didn't have access to his writings or that of other Marxists except maybe 'The Manifesto' and [Lenin's] 'What is to be Done?' More importantly, we didn't understand the context of European Marxism; we didn't understand *secularisation* ('secularization') or *reformation* ('the Protestant Reformation'), the emergence of modern government and political activism therein. We thought activism [in the West] is the same as activism [here in Iran]; that we [on the left] had it right, and all we needed was a revolution."

J's use of the term "generation" however, was surprising. With this term, J was characterizing himself and his comrades along *with* – and not against – the Islamic partisans of the Revolution and the post-revolutionary state. These were J's generational siblings whom he once considered his adversaries, and who might still consider J as a threat to their virtuous religious and political path. I was surprised because J was diverging from the common leftist story of the Revolution that goes something like this: There was a genuine political revolution against Pahlavi authoritarianism and its Western backers. The revolutionary movement brought together diverse groups with different and incommensurable visions of an ideal society. Despite their differences, leftist and Islamists stood together against the Shah. But Islamists hijacked the Revolution. Slowly but surely they established a semi-authoritarian Islamic government and without reservation eliminated their opposition.

J no longer believes in the narrative of the hijacked Revolution. He doesn't dispute the violence that after the Revolution was used to consolidate power and eliminate diverging visions of the nation and the state. But he sees this violence as a symptom of a lack of a viable religious and political discourse. Moreover, today he believes that the leftists would similarly enact violence if they had emerged in power after the Revolution: "We didn't know our history and culture either. We didn't understand religion or politics. We would probably be as ruthless as they have been, for we, too, could not address the discontents that led us to revolt. No one could."

Instead, and through Tabatabai's weekly seminars for over a year, and a long-term engagement with his writing on the development of European modernity on the one hand and on Iran and Islam on the other, he has come to think of Marxism, both as an intellectual and practical discourse, as a foreign tradition. He has a sense of the European historicity of Marxism. He would tell you, for example, that Marx's category of "religion" as "the opiate of the masses" is only meaningful in the context of the Young Hegelian's understanding of Christianity and in the larger political-theological context of European modernity. "*be in din-e eslam va donya-ye ma hich rabti naradeh."* ("It has nothing to do with the religion that is Islam and with our world.") The study of the history of European political thought in turn has made it clear to him that he was mistaken in his earlier intellectual and political convictions. He has come to think when he and his comrades were apprehending their circumstances in terms of class struggle and imperialism, they were not doing so as subjects of Iranian history:

> We [on the left] didn't really understand ourselves; we didn't know who we were, where we came from, and where we wanted to go. That we thought Marxism explained our situation to us was a sign of our incapacity to know ourselves and our situation. Our Marxism was our symptom that we mistook as

our cure. We were not *sojeye* [the subject] of our history. As Tabatabai says, that subject is yet to emerge here.

J's engagement with European thought has also changed his understanding of Islam and modern Islamic politics. He no longer thinks of Islam as "the opium of the masses," as generic "ideology." But he still believes that the revolutionary translation of Iranian historical discontents into religious and political vocabularies was mistaken. He does not think that Islam can be an expedient project of political reform and revolution. He thinks that key figures of the Islamic revolution such as Jalal Al-e-Ahmad, Ali Shariati, and Ayatollah Khomeini, too, betrayed their critical historical conditions of Iran. In contrast to the leftists, they did so by blaming it on the Western cultural and political influence on the one hand, and on the absence of a genuine Islamic culture in the country on the other. Despite their differences, Al-e-Ahmad, Shariati, and Khomeini attributed Iran's historical maladies to "Westoxification," and had argued for an Islamic cultural and political revolution.[93] Against Westoxification understood as "a plague from the West," they had imagined "a return to self," fashioned by reinterpreting Islam as the discourse of the self, the social, and the political. This interpretation, J believes, not only obfuscated the history it claimed to represent, it also misunderstood Islam as a national religion. He recounts key events in the history of European secularization – from the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages at the dawn of the Reformation to the Peace of Westphalia – to point out the Christian and European historicity of the secular nation-state and in turn, describes the conflation of Shi'ism, national culture, and statecraft as mistaken. Today, the nature of Islam, as well as the Islamic past, present, and future, are open questions that he explores in part through an engagement with European thought.

The Revolution that Is Not

On a hot summer Tuesday at around 4 in the afternoon J and I took the capital's rapid bus line along Tehran's main thoroughfare, Valiasr, in the opposite direction. We met at the Porsesh Institute to attend Tabatabi's weekly seminar on Hegel. The seminar was part of a series that met weekly for about three hours. Even with air-conditioning the room was uncomfortably hot. In a space that despite its size felt crammed, around eighty to one hundred attendees were rubbing elbows while listening to *doktor* ("Doctor") and taking notes. Men, mostly in long-sleeve dress shirts and cotton pants, and women mostly in *mantoo* with scarves or *maghnae*, listened to Tabatabai's close reading of passages of *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* from the original German and his commentary on the text. Tabatabai sat at the end of the room behind a large desk placed on a slightly elevated platform which also held a tricolored flag of Iran imprinted with the Arabic word *Allah* in the center. With an English translation of Hegel and his printed notes on his side, he translated the German thinker into the words and the world of his perspiring audience.

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[93] Al-e-Ahmad, J. (1977). *Gharbzadegi* [*Westoxification]*. Tehran: Ravaq. *Gharbzadegi* is also translated as "Occidentosis" and "Western-stricken-ness." The literal translation of the Persian, however, is "Western-sickness," and is constructed as a parallel of the Persian equivalent for "sea-sickness" (*darya-zadegi).* An English translation of the text was made available under the title of *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West* by Mizan Press in Berkeley, CA .

Javad Tabatabai is one of the most preeminent Iranian political philosophers. Born in the northwestern city of Tabriz in 1945, he grew up during the country's rapidly changing social landscape, the crises of Pahlavi political rule and the 1953 coup, the dissolution of the Iranian national assembly followed by the reinstatement of an absolutist monarchy, and the formulation of social discontent along Islamic and leftist vocabularies. Having found early schooling unsatisfying, he nonetheless developed a passion for literature, philosophy, and theology, and surprised his school-master when he was accepted to study law at Tabriz University. At the time of the Islamic Revolution, he was in his early thirties and had just defended his dissertation on Hegel's political philosophy at the Sorbonne. During his studies in Paris, where Ayatollah Khomeini spent the last years of his exile (1978-1979), Tabatabai was at once in the intellectual circles of the French Left and in conversations with Iranian revolutionaries in the emerging leader's inner circle. His familiarity with the intellectual and religious transformation underlying European modern politics, and the everyday religiosity and social relations of the albeit vanishing world of his early years in Tabriz, made him skeptical of their brand of religious politics and revolutionary hope. A scholar of concepts such as "revolution," "liberty," and "republicanism," he wasn't sure what these terms meant in the Iranian context, how they would sit with and within the political limits and possibilities of the Islamic tradition, for example, or what their popular use would obfuscate about their historical genesis on the one hand, and modern Iranian history on the other. He didn't just find revolutionaries naive and idealist, but oblivious to the world they claimed to represent and re-make. They were not standing on the grounds of Iranian history and were not, despite their claims, revolutionary subjects of its history.

Despite feeling alienated from what he believed to be an unreflective and evasive exuberance of the moment, Tabatabai was nonetheless moved by the Revolution. He abandoned his plans of a life in Europe, and returned to Iran like many of his more hopeful Parisian interlocutors. Rather than devoting himself to building an "Islamic Republic," however, he devoted himself to a life of research and teaching. Upon his return he published two translations whose seeds were born in his marginal participation in the Louis Althusser reading group in Paris: first, Vladimir Lenin's reading notes on Hegel ("Hegel Notebook"), and second, a collection of Althusser's writings on Lenin under the title of *Lenin va falsafe* ("Lenin and Philosophy"). In the context of post-revolutionary political and intellectual closures, however, Tabatabai, soon moved to a different intellectual project and a different project of translation. The aim of this project, if it can be summarized, is the elaboration of the history of the country's present, confronting the closures of its religious, intellectual and political traditions, and seeking a position from which Iranians could speak and act as a political subject of their history.

When I met Tabatabai in 2008, he was as charismatic as he was erudite. In his sixties at the time, he stood proud at around six feet two inches tall. His salt-and-pepper hair and neatly kept mustache, his oval shaped minimalist glasses, and his mischievous youthful smile, gave him a dignified, yet playful look. He sat behind a desk that was elevated, facing and overlooking the audience. He usually started the seminar on a light note that recalled his own days of being a student. He entered a different realm, however, when he started his lecture and brought Hegel to life as someone who had emerged from outside of their history and as a result, could see in their world what they themselves could not see. Tabatabai would keep Hegel in this privileged position, outside, othered, distant, and even almost-unintelligible. In his distance, however, Hegel spoke to his audience's historical and political predicaments. Of course, it helped that Hegel had hailed them as the "first historical people," and had announced their history as "the

beginning of world history." It was as if what we no longer believe as Hegel's universal history, starting from Persia and culminating in Europe, was entirely believable for his audience who see themselves as heirs of Persia and its decadence. Hegel's pull, in this context, was also indebted to Tabatabai's unique ability to use the Persian language, and move between languages to translate and elaborate Hegel's concepts and conceptual configurations in Persian. To render a concept from Latin, German, French, or English into Persian, Tabatabai would draw from the classical and modern Persian literary traditions, drawing from, for example, the fourteen-century poetry of Hafez, or a line by his contemporary Ahmad Shamlu. He would draw on Islamic jurisprudential terminologies and potentiality of Arabic –more familiar to religious and linguistic sensibilities of his audience than European languages– to explicate philosophical and juridical concepts. Through these strategies, he rendered a foreign concept familiar by tapping into dimensions of his audience's linguistic and intellectual archives and tradition that was inaccessible to most of them, and by bringing them face to face with the unfamiliar or "forgotten" dimension of their own "familiar" language. Amidst all of this, the heat and humidity in the room were forgotten.

Over the course of the summer I attended Tabatabai's seminars on Hegel's "Philosophy of Right", and those on *Marx-e javan* ("the Young Marx") that immediately followed. Along with his attentive students, I took notes on Hegel's political philosophy and the early writings of Karl Marx, and I listened to his asides on Iranian historical and political developments. In most of these sessions, I would sit in the front rows next to J and a number of other left activists of his generation. These were mostly men in their fifties and sixties whose lives were largely defined by the event of the 1979 Revolution and their involvement with it. The seminar was an important weekly gathering for them. It was reminiscent of the Marxist reading groups of their youth when they would get together and read photocopies of texts circulated by the *sazeman* ("organization," "the party"). Yet it was different, and indeed redeeming of what they judged to be an ideologically-driven and naive engagement with Marx and Marxism of their years as activists, for it was guided by Tabatabai and was not *a priori* subsumed into a political program. To attend, they would endure lengthy commutes during the capital's infamous rush-hour. The one among them who would get to the Institute first would reserve a row of seats for the rest of the group. They would listen attentively, and despite efforts of the Institute for monopoly over recordings of the seminar, they would record it with their pocket-size MP3 recorders. They would often listen to the recording before the next session, sometimes more than once, and share it with friends who could not attend the seminars. Their mode of listening to Tabatabai, and listening to him repeatedly, often reminded me of the way one listens to a sermon, and the particular ways that Islamic sensibilities inform intellectual and political practices of even those who do not explicitly identify their ethos and practice in terms of religion. They would listen to Tabatabai as if to find an orientation in the trajectory of their lives, and a grounding in the historical trajectory of post-revolutionary Iran. Through Hegel's political philosophy as well as the writing of the young Marx (as translated and transmitted through Tabatabai,) they would not become scholars of Hegel or Marx, but would find an anchor for elaborating the Iranian historical situation and their own activism and struggles therein.

Porsesh Institute of Political and Economic Research

The intellectual labor of Tabatabai and his students, as well as the institutional setting of their activities emerge within the intellectual and political history that earlier chapters have tried

to elaborate. Porsesh is a private space of teaching and learning in Tehran that presents itself as "the school we have been waiting for." It offers seminars by leading intellectuals, translators, and literary figures to the paying public. A few of the lecturers at Porsesh are current academics and seminarians who seek to reach and address a public beyond their traditional institutions or wish to speak beyond their respective institutional restrictions. But the majority of those who lecture at Porsesh are prominent public intellectuals without current teaching positions in other institutions. Some are prominent translators of European social thought without academic training, and others, Tabatabei included, are former academics and seminarians who have been purged from the Iranian academy and seminaries for their intellectual pursuits and/or the direction of their religious and political teachings. They are those who are accused of heresy and sedition, of not being devout enough and instead, being "westoxified" and promoting "westoxification." Given the politicized nature of knowledge production in the post-revolutionary period, and the degrees of control and censorship imposed on the Iranian academy amidst the ongoing Cultural Revolution, Porsesh has emerged as a central and alternative space of knowledge production and circulation.

The format of seminars at Porsesh range from classes to workshops to public talks, and although their topics are quite diverse, they directly or indirectly relate to European social thought as a direct or indirect means of understanding the Iranian present. For example, Porsesh's offerings range from "Marxism and the City: Tehran is Political" to "the Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar," and from "Shi'i Political Philosophy" to "The Return to Freud: The Sexual in Lacan." Attendance in these courses range from 10 to 100 depending on the topic and the speaker. Attendants, too, vary significantly in age and their personal and professional pursuits, but are united in their interest in Western social thought as elaborated and offered in these alternative spaces of teaching and learning in the country, and their conviction of its importance to them and their historical situation.

The institutional and intellectual labor of Porsesh should be understood within the post-revolutionary field of knowledge production as it is, in part, charted out by the discourse of the Cultural Revolution (Chapter Three). Against the West and predominantly Western human sciences, this discourse casts the historical difference of Iran in terms of the Shi'i tradition and aims to promote historically and politically expedient Islamic human sciences. In this process, it simultaneously espouses an openness and a suspicion towards European human sciences. This tension manifests itself in both institutional and intellectual forms. On the one hand, and albeit under the rubric of "Islamicization," the state promotes the central institution of European knowledge production, the university, and the dominant European fields of human sciences, psychology, sociology, and political science as part of the institutional organization of knowledge production in the country. In the name of *elm* ("science"), o*lum-e ensani* ("human sciences") and *olum-e ejtema-e* ("social sciences"), it promotes the translation of and engagement with European social sciences. On the other, and despite long-standing and complex forms of oversight, it espouses a suspicion of the subversive cultural and political potential of the academy. Although under the leadership of the Council of the Cultural Revolution, scholars of the humanities and social sciences are viewed with the suspicion that they might promote forms of knowledge that detract from the teachings of the Islamic tradition and/or undermine the cultural underpinnings of the state (Chapter Four). The translation of European thought is politicized and translators are viewed, both by state actors and their audiences, as public intellectuals whose work can have important political consequences.

The state's worry is a never-ending one, and manifests in negative and positive programs. On the one hand, the state is engaged in a perpetual enactment of explicit and implicit mechanisms of control and censorship that aim to ensure that the knowledge produced through the university and within the fields of human sciences accords with its vision of the Islamic tradition and the political and religious authority of the Islamic Republic. Part of this program is to get rid of academics and seminarians suspected of promoting subversive teaching and misguided research. While the criterion for diversion is never very clear and in this, the state is engaged in a form of witch-hunt, there exists a particular and explicit concern with scholars of Islam and politics as well as seminarians whose historical, interpretive, or ideological persuasions directly and indirectly question the religio-political and jurisprudential basis of the state, *velayat-e faqih* ("the rule of the guardian jurist"). The trend started soon after the Revolution with the exclusion of the high-ranking late cleric Ayatollah Montazeri who diverged from Ayatollah Khomeini and his vision of the Islamic state. In the last two decades, it has continued with scholars and seminarians such as Abdulkarim Soroush, Mohsen Kadivar, and Hasan Yousefi Eshkevari, who have sought refuge from persecution by the Islamic Republic in exile. These thinkers are today housed in the Euro-American academy. Through their publications, their on-line presence, as well as frequent appearances in international media such as BBC Persian and Voice of America, they speak to their audience in Iran that include Shi'i seminarians, academics, and religious and political activists. In part indebted to their engagement with European intellectual discourses, these thinkers' interpretation of the Islamic tradition diverges from the state and threatens the state on its own religious grounds. Their work, despite its quality and political significance, points to the internal and temporal dimension of translation: translation of Islamic discourses, the Quran and Sunna as well as the archive of commentaries across time from the past to the present. It shows how translation of European thought intersects and informs development of interpretive practices internal to Islamic and Iranian traditions.

The positive dimension of the state program manifests itself in unparalleled support for the institution of seminaries, which include research and publication venues. The state, for example, supports large research institutes such as the Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute in Qom. Funded in 1991 by cleric Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, this institute is part of the formation of the Shi'i seminaries in Qom. In 1995 it was accredited by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution and the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology to grant bachelors, masters and Ph.D. degrees in Islamic and Human Sciences. It features seventeen departments including Psychology, Education, Political Science, Sociology, Islamic Studies, Mysticism, Law, Ethics, and Quranic Exegesis and Sciences. While drawing on state support and recognition, the Institute insists on "its identity as a member of the traditional Shia seminaries:" "all fields offered at the Institute are also ratified by the Supreme Council of the Hawzah as official fields of study acknowledged by the Hawzah establishment, and thus degrees are recognized within the traditional seminary establishment as well."[94]

The state support for institutions such as the Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute is meant for the production of Islamic human sciences to either counter or to "nativize" (*boomi-sazi*) Western forms of knowledge in accordance with the teachings of the Islamic tradition. It is also meant to cultivate Islamic administrators who can be recruited from the seminaries and placed in a position of authority in the Iranian academy, the ministries of Education, Islamic Culture and Guidance, and a whole host of bureaucratic and administrative

[94] Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute website: www.iki.ac.ir/en

positions which in the context of a modern Islamic state, not only require a highly specialized technical knowledge, but the Islamic version of such forms of knowledge. Supported by the state, the post-revolutionary seminaries and seminarians embody a certain level of confidence in the capacity to simultaneously engage and evaluate modern European social discourses as well as those of the Islamic tradition, and to produce forms of knowledge that are fit for Islamic Iran. My interlocutors in an Islamic research center studying issues concerning women and the family in Qom, for example, believe that they can engage otherwise misguided Western feminism by drawing on the Islamic tradition. They study Euro-American feminist discourses in order to show their weaknesses, and elaborate forms of thought and conduct that is apt for families and women in the Islamic Republic and is not, for example, attached to principles such as equality between sexes or the instability of categories of gender and sexuality that are in their view, opposed to the teachings of Islam. Others, in the Islamic Center for Human Rights, tell me that they've never encountered a tension moving between Islamic discourses and Western discourse of human rights. Seminarian trained scholars of "Islamic International Relations" tell me that they see themselves at the cusp of a revolutionary project, elaborating hitherto unelaborated norms of state conduct that is both Islamic and modern.

Porsesh, along with a number of other centers of teaching and learning in Tehran and other major cities of the country, have emerged in this intellectual and political landscape. Outside the purview of the High Council of Cultural Revolution and the Supreme Council of the Seminaries which oversee the Iranian academy and the Shi'i seminaries, they are granted institutional license from the Ministry of Islamic Culture. They justify and defend their activities by appealing to the state's commitment to science and its confidence in responding to adversarial intellectual discourses. Although on rare occasions, usually corresponding with domestic political developments, institutes such as Porsesh are temporarily closed or have to cave in to pressure to exclude particular thinkers from their programming, they are often heard by the state (often the agents of the Ministry of Intelligence, or the Intelligence Officers of the Revolutionary Guards) on their appeal to science and rigor. Recounting his interaction with an agent of the Ministry of Intelligence, the head of a left-leaning private education center in the capital that is similar to Porsesh told me, not without irony, that "to understand that Marxism is a fallacy, as our guide Ali Shariati famously has declared, and in order to achieve our own Islamic economic and social justice, we need to be able to read Marx, and to identify the weaknesses of his materialist discourse. There is thus no problem with reading Marx objectively in this country."

Despite their appeal to objectivity, the space of these institutes echo the politicization that has brought them to prominence. Their rise to prominence is largely indebted to absorbing intellectuals pushed to the margins of the post-revolutionary public, and by offering them and those invested in their work a space of teaching and learning. Those who attend Porsesh implicitly or explicitly recognize their work as a participation in a highly politicized space of knowledge production and even as political activism. They include, in addition to those interpolated into the project of Cultural Revolution, leftist intellectuals and translators who, like many leftist activists of the Revolution, are indifferent to the entanglement of religion and politics. For example, Morad Farhadpour, the leading Persian translator of critical theory, and the members of his translation circle have been conducting seminars at Porsesh for over a decade. As part of the long history of leftist *rushanfekri* in Iran (Chapter Two), Farhadpoor's work is indifferent to the Islamic revolutionary politics and the state. He, who has translated and teaches Marshall Berman's text *All that is Solid Melts into the Air*, draws on Berman to emphasize how in the context of the homogenous and empty time of modernity, the virtues of

Shi'i Islam like all other traditions dissolve into the air. Drawing on Walter Benjamin and his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," which he has translated and written about, he argues that capitalist reproduction shrinks the possibility of difference and leaves no space for scholastic cultivation or religious experience. Weaving together his own thinking with his translations, Farhadpour argues that thinking and translating are but one. Since modernity leaves no space for difference, he argues that it does not make sense to pose the question of tradition and of commensuration of thought across different traditions. In this context, he argues, the task of critical thought, similar to translations of critical thought, is drawing on the imaginative possibility of thinking –the capacities that Immanuel Kant ascribed to aesthetic judgement– and reckoning with the shrinking of life and politics in the self-same space and time of modernity.

For many post-revolutionary Iranians who've experienced Islam in the Islamic state Farhadpour's translations/thinking of the Islamic tradition makes sense. They read Farhadpours' work and attend his workshops and seminars on critical theory as a way of relating to Islamic politics outside the Iranian historiography of religion and politics and outside the official spaces of knowledge production in the country. In his seminars Farhadpour often teaches what he, himself, is working through and translating. He brings together former leftist revolutionaries re-reading Marx and post-Marxist discourses, activists who draw on theory in their political practice, as well as university students who feel they do not receive adequate training in European social theory in the state-controlled Islamic universities.

Institutes such as Porsesh have become a central public space for the translation, interpretation, and elaboration of European social thought and a relational understanding of Iran's historical situation outside the Iranian academy and seminaries. I propose to understand them in a long history on modern Iran within which classical discourses of knowledge have not only dissipated, but in which this loss has been politicized in anti-Western discourses of the Cultural Revolution. The attendees of institutes such as Porsesh, both teachers and students, can be described as exiles of the seminaries and the Islamicized academy. These institutions have not only lost their appeal –as they had before with the generation of Al-e Ahamd prior to the Revolution (Chapter Two)– but more over, in the context of anti-Western Islamic politics after the Revolution, have become inhospitable to them. They turn to Porsesh and to European discourses in search of a knowledge which they cannot find elsewhere. While there is no guarantee that they can find what they seek within the space of institutes such as Porsesh, it is nonetheless a search for a grounding discourse that motivates their studies.

"Philosophy of Right" at The Porsesh Institute

An 18 year-old woman who is a first year student of philosophy at Tehran University; a pharmacist in his late sixties with a history of Marxist-Leninist activism around the Revolution –J; a young seminarian in his early twenties from Qom; a fashionable couple who are both architects and in their late thirties; a soldier of the Iran-Iraq war who held a somewhat important government position in the early 1990s and is presently a businessman; a young musician whose career was cut short after he was injured in the summer of 2009 post-election protests; a young man of thirty three who lost his father in the late 1980s in the state elimination of the left-activists from the political scene; a pious-looking woman who teaches religious studies at an all-women's college in the capital; a journalist whose writing appears in the *andisheh* ("thought") pages of a popular daily; two political science graduate students, one Azeri from the province of

Zanjan who is writing a dissertation on theories of decline in Iran, and the second, from the Caspian city of Babol writing a masters' thesis on Iranian civil society drawing on the theories of Jürgen Habermas: these are among the roughly 100 people who showed up every Wednesday afternoon over the course of 2013 and 2014 to the Porsesh Institute of Political and Economic Research to hear Javad Tabatabai's over-a-year long weekly seminar on *falsafe-ye haq,* "Philosophy of Right."

The course started with Tabatabai's exegesis of Aristotle's *Ethics*. Over a course of a few months, Tabatabai took this diverse group of students and listeners through the translation and the development of Aristotelian ethics in the movements of European thought culminating in reformulations of religion and politics in European modernity. The course devoted modules to the development of Christian Philosophy and Theology in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, to the uptake and renovations of Aristotelian Thomist thought in the jurisprudential discourse of the theologians of the School of Salamanca, and to the religious and philosophical debates of reformation and counter-reformation. It elaborated the key shifts and divisions within Christian political and legal thought that background the emergence of modern discourses of law and international relations, and political concepts such as just war and sovereignty. In this process, his audience would come to learn about the work and significance of the Renaissance Catholic Roman philosopher Francisco de Vitoria. They would learn, for example, about the significance of Christian scholasticism in negotiation of the power and violence of the Spanish colonization of the Americas and the humanity of the Amerindians. They would learn about Hugo Grotius in the genesis of modern discourses of humanism, just war, and internal law in relation to Christianity in the early European modernity. They would be told that the modern and contemporary Euro-American debates on law and politics and on secularization and modernity are meaningful only in relation to this historical background.

While elaborating the history of law and politics in Europe, Tabatabai would provide a reading of the development of philosophy and law in Iran through comparative asides. The starting point of his comparison was the translation of Greek philosophy by Islamic and Iranian philosophers through the Translation Movement based in *bayt al-hikama* ("the House of Wisdom") in Baghdad during the Abbasid period from the ninth to thirteenth centuries. [95] Tabatabi's comparisons would provide an analysis of the possibilities and limitations of the development of political and legal philosophy within the Islamic tradition and in Iran, in the constitution of Islamic scholastic tradition, in the emergence of ethical and political treaties and advice literature within the Iranian court. It would culminate in the analysis of the entanglement of Islam with politics in the modern period by considering the jurisprudential debates of the Shi'i scholars on the nature of modern law in the context of a rising constitutionalist movement at the dawn of the twentieth century. Considering the political-theological work of Francisco de Vitoria in the context of the Spanish conquest of the America, for example, Tabatabai provided an aside to consider how Fazlollah Nouri, Mohammad-Kazem Khorasani, and Mohammad Hussein

[95] On the translation movement see, for example, Gutas, D. 1998. *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: Greeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbasid Society*. New York: Routledge. – 2001. Greek Philosophers in the Arabic Tradition. London: Aashgate Variorum. See also: Fakhry, M. 2004. *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Naini– the three senior Shi'i jurists of the time–, considered the politics of a modern state from the point of view of Islamic jurisprudence. He elaborated how, in contrast to the present and violent conflation of shari'a and state law in "the Islamic Republic," some of these earlier rulings carve out a space for the legal and institutional framework of the state outside the revealed law of the tradition.

Tabatabai's teaching over the course of the year-long seminar drew on his work during the last four decades. Despite bring purged from the Iranian academy and various state-imposed limitations on his work and life –some of which have had him to leave Iran for a period of time– Tabatabai has conducted what can be elaborated as extensive and original comparative research on the historical and political development of Iran and Europe. His political history of European modernity has been published in three volumes. The first volume attends to the relation between tradition and modernity as it unfolds between the European Renaissance to the French Revolution, in negotiation of religious and political authority, in the debates of the Reformation and Counter-Reformations, and in the emergence of new theories of republicanism.[96] Volumes Two and Three explore modern European political thought before and after the French Revolution (1500-1789, 1789-1914, from Kant to Marx). Tabatabai considers these writings as a prelude to his work on the intellectual and political developments of Iran and the Islamic tradition. He has published his political historiography of Iran in a number of volumes spanning from the Mongol conquest of Persia to the Perso-Russian wars of the nineteenth century and to the Constitutional Revolution of 1906.[97]

The overarching theme of his historiography of what he describes as Iran's *doran-e miyaneh* ("Middle Period") is that of *enhetat* ("decline" or "decadence"). "Decline," in his view, concerns the loss of cultural transmission wherein traditions that once sustained the formulation of knowledge degenerated and discontinued. The modern period of Iran breaks with *enhetat* in part because of the generative effects of the Perso-Russian wars. Iran's devastating defeats engendered an awareness of a crisis of historical proportions and in turn, a consciousness of renewal (*tajadod-khahi*). Finding themselves in need of new ways of making sense of their historical circumstance[98] –militarily, but also economically, politically and religiously– Iranian thinkers became interested in the development of modern Europe and European knowledge. There emerged, by way of translation and transposition of European discourses, a new form of knowledge called *rushanfekri* (Chapter Two). Himself situated in this tradition of thought as well as its underlying historical exigencies, Tabatabai, however, is critical of *rushanfekri* for he

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[96] Tabatabai, J. 2010. *Tarikhe andishe-ye siasi-ye jaded dar oropa. Bakhsh-e aval. Jedal-e ghadim va jaded* [History of Modern European Political Thought. Volume I. The Quarrels of the Ancients and the Moderns]. Tehran: Sales

[97] Tabatabaei, J. 2001. *A Prolegomenon to the Theory of Political Decline in Iran.* Tehran: Kavir
- 2013. *Theory of the Rule of Law in Iran, I: Tabriz School and the Foundations of Renewal.* Tehran: Minooye Kherad
- 2013 *Theory of the Rule of Law in Iran, II: Theoretical Foundations of Constitutionalism.* Tehran: Minooye Kherad

[98] Tabatabai does not ignore the triumphant globalization of European historiography in what we describe, within the frame of European historiography, as "the modern" period. But his historical narrative of Iran is not written within the linguistic and conceptual frames of European historiography and its periodization. He explores the internal dynamics that made possible what we recognize as the global the domination and/or the hegemony European thought in Iran.

argues that those who interpret Iranian history within the frames of European historiography are unable to consider the condition of possibility of knowledge and politics in Iran. They produce a form of knowledge, that however effective, lacks a historical foundation and as such fails to cohere as a historical tradition. He writes, "the awareness of the need for a modern science of history, without the ability to consider the foundation of such a science, is no science at all... An awareness produced through imitation is an imitated awareness and not an awareness of imitation" (Tabatabai *forthcoming: 16).* [99]

Tabatabai argues that in the present condition of knowledge in Iran, European historiography is at once necessary and threatening to the development of historiography of Iran. It is necessary for it provides Iranian with however inadequate frames to conceive, narrate, and act upon their history. It is threatening, however, for it also obfuscates the concrete historical developments of Iran and particularly the loss of traditions of knowledge that have rendered European knowledge an intermediate anchor. Tabatabai argues that modern Iranian historiography can only proceed after gaining a capacity to authoritatively interpret and elaborate the history of Europe, and comparatively, in translation, refine its methods and concepts to interpret Iranian history and traditions. This is not simply an argument, but a practice that his writing and teaching exemplifies. Tabatabai draws on the vocabularies of the Shi'i jurisprudence to elaborate this mode of engagement as *ijtehad* ("learned judgement," "renewal"). He argues such an *ijtehad* is necessary to develop the capacity to understand and intervene in Iranian history and politics, to be its subjects, or to be subjects at all. He describes his engagement with European philosophy as an attempt to develop concepts and methods to consider the history and politics of Iran as a prelude to a discourse of modern politics. His ongoing work as a scholar and a public intellectual since the 1979 Revolution demonstrates a commitment to this task and its requirements.

Within the tumultuous politics of Iran's recent past Tabatabai's thinking has a popular resonance. For the generation that found itself moved to revolt, or live with its unfulfilled promises –and in its cycles of uprising and suppression–, his theoretical formulations make intuitive sense. Most of his readers and listeners cannot engage his arguments but for them, his dense books and his patient and comparative exegeses of the long history of the West and Iran provides a space of working through the intertwinement of their "personal" and "political" lives.[100] Most of those who read him and attend his seminars do not have the theoretical or historical training to engage his arguments or respond to him. They hear him and his teaching of social theory and of history as authoritative interpretations of otherwise unelaborated yet lived closures of religious and political belonging. Tabatabai is aware of the fact that his audience cannot enter a dialogue with him. He considers this as a symptom of the conditions of knowledge production in the country which has politicized and indeed weaponized the universities and the seminaries such that they no longer produce sciences, Islamic or otherwise, but ungrounded utterances that more than anything, express the ideology of the Islamic state.

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[99] Tabatabai, J. Forthcoming [Revised Edition]. *Ta'amoli darbareye Iran. Jeld-e Nokhost. Dibacheh-e bar nazari-ye enhetat-e Iran.* [A Reflection on Iran. Volume One. An Introduction to the Theory of Decline of Iran]. Tehran: Minooye Kherad.

[100] Freud, S. 1914. "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II)" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XII (1911-1913): The Case of Schreber, Papers on Technique and Other Works,* pp. 145-156

Between Devastation and Regeneration: Translation

In *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation,* Johnathan Lear draws on the anthropological record of the Crow people whose nomadic and warrior form of life was devastated once they were subjected to settlement and life in a reservation. [101] He describes cultural devastation as the condition where concepts and practices to enact a form of life come to lose their efficacy. Such a loss is devastating because concepts are integral to the creation of the normative ground of enunciation. They orient aiming, intending, desiring, acting, and wondering. They are part of the cultivation of perception and motivation, the formation of moral psychology and of practical reason. When they are lost the condition of possibility of meaning is lost and a form of life comes to an end, and if it survives, it survives only biologically, and within what Lear describes as a minimum temporality.

Cultural devastation, Lear argues, constitutes a peculiar vulnerability for no culture is able to conceive its own total exhaustion. Forms of life cohere and regenerate through time through conceptual and practical norms of thought and conduct, and by drawing on the plasticity of concepts to confront changes in conditions of action. Insofar as this production is what a culture is, cultures lack the conceptual and practical capacity to apprehend and confront their own extinction. Cultures are vulnerable to devastation for they lack the conceptual/practical ability to act upon it. Lear associates the activation of cultural devastation with the hardening of political positions and intolerance on the one hand, and with the reparative work of the imagination and cultural poesies –with dreaming and with poetry–, on the other. A poet would take up the past, push against nostalgia and melancholia and project the past form of life into yet-unknown future ways of living and being (Lear 2006: 51). The possibility of such a poet is the possibility of what Lear describes as radical hope. In his study, Lear finds the last great chief of the Crow hopeful for he, while having no vision of what the future of the Crow would entail, acknowledged the impossibility of Crow meaning and encouraged the Crow youth to preserve a living memory of a once thriving life by grounding themselves in the cultural methods and means of the white man – in writing and in printing.

Lear's narrative of devastation and hope has significant political limitations. He easily separates the destructive dimensions of imagination and of cultural poesis (the problem of evil) from their reparative capacities. He backgrounds politics by framing it as "intolerance" and as a result, is too hopeful for the possibility of poetry as mourning and cultural regeneration.[102]

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[101] Lear, J. 2006. *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

[102] Drawing on her research in Morocco, Stefania Pandolfo describes the post-colonial conditions similarly to Lear and in terms of "the aftermath of culture." Like Lear, Pandolfo is psychoanalytically attuned to the disablement of the work of culture on the one hand, and to the reparative possibilities of imagination on the other. While Lear keeps separate the destructive dimensions of imagination (the problem of evil) from its reparative capacities, and aligns ethics with mourning and hope. Pandolfo explores madness and folly, understood both within terms of psychoanalysis and Islamic cures of the soul, as the site of their entanglement. The psychoanalytical ethics that she explores, following Lacan's ethics of psychoanalysis, bears

Despite its limitations, his insights provide a valuable framework to consider my study of the Iranian turn to translation of European thought. I read Lear to describe a condition where a culture and a history have not only lost the capacity to articulate themselves discursively, but do not offer resources to diagnose this very loss. In this condition, translation –broadly defined– acquires the important quality of providing an *outside* anchor for orientation of thought and action and illumination of cultural devastation. In Lear's story, this outside has at least two expressions. It is the outside of dreaming that is internal to the Crow's culture, as well as the outside of the white man's knowledge.[103] The two are connected for Lear tells us how the young Plenty Coup's dream, as it was interpreted by the Crow elders, became the necessary means to confront the devastation of the Crow, and with confidence and without defiance or shame, face the fact that the Crow's past could only be preserved through the knowledge of the white man. Note that the recourse to the white man's cultural forms is not to produce these forms as "Crow" forms as if the Crow was possible. Acquiring the knowledge of the white man was part of Plenty Coup's reckoning with the singular impossibility of Crow as well as his hope for Crow's future regeneration.

Giving Words has argued that the Iranian turn to translation of European thought reveals both the disruption of cultural transmission as well as an attempt of cultural regeneration –of what Lear calls devastation and hope. It has also shown, however, that the translation of European thought exacerbates cultural discontinuity, reproduces devastation, and indeed creates a politics built upon crises of cultural discontinuity (Chapters Two, Three, and Four). Although of different generations, Jalal Al-e Ahmad who transformed and popularized Fardid's term "Westoxification," and Javad Tabatabai both were part of Ahmad Fardid's seminars at Tehran University prior to the Islamic Revolution. At the time, Al-e-Ahmad was a well-known literary and political figure and Tabatabai, a young student who had arrived to Tehran from Tabriz and who was about to embark on his studies in Paris. Today, over five tumultuous decades later, Fardid's declaration that Iranian history cannot be rendered a footnote to the history of Europe still resonates with Tabatabai and his students. Yet, their ethos is critical of the defiant anti-Western discourses of the Islamic Revolution, which is how they read Al-e Ahmad. In

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witness not only to the impossibility of the good but also the difficulty of the discernment of the symptom from the cure, melancholia from mourning, and what Lear discerns as "nostalgia or ersatz mimesis" from what he describes as "poetry." Pandolfo, S. 2018. *Knot of the Soul: Madness, Psychoanalysis, Islam.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. See particularly Part I: "Psychiatric Fragments in the Aftermath of Culture."

[103] Lear argument about historical capacities of dream interpretation is made with Freud, and beyond Freud with the Crow tradition of dream interpretation and its non-human centered cosmology. It suggests that in the conditions of cultural devastation, dreams and their interpretation have the capacity to reactivate the otherwise disabled practical reason, and to anchor the reformulation of the psychological structure as to refine and redefine cultural norms and enable facing up to radically new circumstances and unknown futures. In other words, dreams and their interpretations have the capacity to produce new ego ideals and a psychological world where old and new ego ideals cohabit. Lear describes the capacity of dreams to offer conception of the good that transcends tradition goodness with Kierkegaard's phrase "teleological suspension of the ethical. Kierkegaard used the phrase in relation to God's demand from Abraham to sacrifice his son. A dream, like the divine call, can produce an ethical commitment that requires a suspension of ethics hitherto understood (Lear 2006: 66, 82-100).

conclusion, I would like to suggest that the encounter with the intellectual and political closures of the post-revolutionary period, which Tabatabei and his students have witnessed as violence, have lead these post-revolutionary thinkers to interpret Fardid's declaration as a question. Tabatabai, who sat in some of Fardid's classes as a young student, has helped reinterpret Fardid against himself to ask: within the global condition of European supremacy, what other concepts and rationalities, if not European ones, can Iranians use to think their history such that they do not merely become a footnote to the history of Europe? Moreover, and in the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution, in the context of a self-proclaimed "Islamic Republic" and a campaign for the "Islamiciziation" of education and the public sphere, their efforts bear witness to the transformation of this question to one of translation: in what relations with their own cultural traditions on the one hand, and with European ones on the other, can they render legible and enact their history?

What characterizes the work of Tabatabai and his students, in contrast to their contemporaries who translate European thought as to produce "nativized" and "Islamicized" sciences, is their capacity to remain faithful to the specificity of Iran's historical conjuncture in their recourse to European thought. The Iranian conjuncture, like the Crow life for Plenty Coup, is not given but requires elaboration. Iran's history and Islam as one of its cultural traditions are also not given, but hoped for. In the space of translation, Tabatabai and his students seek to register the loss of classical traditions of knowledge as well as the lack of discourses of knowledge that could engender a viable sociality and politics. In reading, translating, and interpreting European social thought, they seek to develop the capacity to comprehend the intellectual and political precarities that are internal to Iran. In their work, the post-revolutionary translation of European thought emerges as a new historiography of Islam and politics that confronts the selective replication of European categories in native garb described in the earlier chapters. Their post-revolutionary historiographic effort is one of welcoming the alterity of Iranian history and cultural traditions, transforming European concepts in order to re-encounter Iran's lived history, to narrate it, and to conceive political and religious belonging anew.

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