# Intellectual Trends in Twentieth-Century Iran: A Critical Survey

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# The Ambivalent Modernity of Iranian Intellectuals

Mehrzad Boroujerdi

In 1922, at the unripe age of twenty-seven, a brilliant Iranian writer named Hasan Moqaddam (1895–1925) published a play titled *Ja'far Khan az farang amadeh* (Ja'far Khan is back from Europe). The play, mocking a *dépaysé* Westernized Iranian named Ja'far Khan, remains popular in Iran to this day. Having returned to his homeland after seeing what gadgetry and material amenities Europe has to offer, Ja'far Khan has become rather contemptuous of his indigenous traditional culture with its stultifying rituals and primordial values. Meanwhile, he considers Europe as the embodiment of prestige, progress, possibility, and privilege. Ja'far Khan both resembles and radically differs from the character Bazarov depicted by Ivan Turgenev in *Fathers and Sons* some sixty years before. Both are members of an up-and-coming generation that is severely judgmental and horridly arrogant. They have poor opinions of their compatriots, oppose adulation of native values, admire the West for its scientific and technological precocity, and disapprove of the ignorance or obdurate hostility of their predecessors toward the West.

However, Ja'far Khan is nothing like the autodidact, iconoclastic, and self-assured Bazarov. Instead, he comes across as a superficial idiot savant skilled in the slavish imitation of Westerners but defective in his knowledge of the West. While the reader can easily identify with the nihilist yet genuine Bazarov, one is hard-pressed to develop any sympathy for the musings of Ja'far Khan. So what accounts for the unfailing popularity of *Ja'far Khan az farang amadeh,* even among intellectuals, some eighty years after it was first published?

Perhaps the attraction of this play can be attributed to the author's mystifying personality, a Swiss-educated literator who died at the tender age of thirty. Another explanation may be that Iranians take delight in mocking their own deficiencies and deceitfulness. One can even say that by humorously reprobating Ja'far Khan's lack of empathy for the local

culture, Moqaddam echoed the acerbic and cynical view of a contemporaneous Ottoman statesman who, speaking of students dispatched to Europe, once remarked that they came back "syphilized, not civilized."[1] However, I contend that this play still resonates with educated Iranians for two main reasons: first, because it addresses through art the questions of "identity" and "uprootedness," themes that have consistently preoccupied and engaged Iranian intellectuals; and second, it deftly portrays the dominant feeling of ambivalence that Iranians have exhibited toward "modernity"[2] and "modernism."[3]

The latter point constitutes the principal contention of this essay. By briefly chronicling the history of Westernization in Iran, I will argue that for over a century the Iranian intelligentsia have embraced modernity while at the same time keeping a critical distance from it.[4] This is largely because the view of modernity subscribed to by most Iranian intellectuals has closely conformed to the country's political standing at the time. Considering the tumultuous nature of Iran's domestic and foreign policy over the last century, the intellectuals have mainly opted for a guarded, qualified, and utilitarian embrace of Western modernity. Hence, they have shared a widespread proclivity to advocate selective assessment, modified adaptation, and discreet assimilation of Western philosophical and techno-scientific culture. By and large, the Iranian intelligentsia viewed their procurement of Western modernity as an adulterous affair or a Faustian bargain, which they could neither openly brag about nor necessarily be proud of. How can we make sense of this disposition?

## Chronicle of an Ambivalent Modernity

Iran's ties with modern Europe can be traced back to the time of Shah ʿAbbas in the sixteenth century, when Persia entered the community of nations. Yet Europe's intellectual revolution between 1600 and 1800—as exemplified in the works of Bacon, Descartes, Galileo, Hobbes, Hume, Kant, Montesquieu, Newton, Pascal, Rousseau, and Voltaire—hardly affected Iran's lettered strata. The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century educated Persians viewed the West less as a philosophical threat and more as an exotic cultural edifice worthy of a voyeuristic gaze. Hence, unlike their Turkish counterparts, Iranian intellectuals shied away from openly embracing Anglo-Saxon scientific pragmatism or positivism.

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, various military defeats at the hands of rival states (especially Russia) coupled with formidable Western exploits, interference, and permeations managed to change the West's image in the minds of many Iranians. The century of humiliation that was to follow transformed Iran's image of the West from a nebulous entity into a real and concrete political adversary, a cultural opponent, and an ideological threat.[5] Magnanimity toward foreigners soon gave way to a wounded sense of national pride that showed traces of haughtiness, megalomania, and xenophobia.[6] Exhibitions of Anglophobia and Russophobia became a national pastime as well as a favorite way to ignore the social ills besetting the country.



A glance at the historical lineage of Westernization during this period quickly reveals that even as Iranian intellectuals tried to embrace modernity and adopt its extensive vocabulary, they did not cease paying tribute to tradition. The curbing of the pioneering fetters of modern thought was part of the defensive arsenal of a traditional society uneasy with modernity. This point has not escaped the attention of the perceptive historian Mangol Bayat, who reminds us that, while convinced that the "secret" of European power and prosperity was rooted in constitutional government and scientific knowledge, nineteenth-century, reform-minded intellectuals and statesmen such as Mirza Fath ʿAli Akhundzadeh (1812–1878), Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir (1807–1852), Mirza Malkam Khan (1833–1908), Mirza Hoseyn Khan Sepahsalar (1826–1881), and even Mirza ʿAbd al-Rahim Talebof (1834–1910) were not willing to give up the full panoply of traditional thinking and culture. Bayat writes,

> The so-called modernist thought of the turn of the century, despite its loud call for Westernization, was in spirit and form, if not in content, deeply rooted in tradition, bearing as much the mark of the Irano-Islamic heritage outwardly rejected by some of its spokesmen, as of the European systems it strongly wished to emulate.

She continues:

> In their attempt to define the new society, despite their conscious or unconscious desire to emulate some of the sociopolitical practices of Western Europe, nineteenth-century reformers projected the neo-Platonic view of the heavenly city on earth, the classical "Virtuous City" of the medieval philosophers, where the Perfect Man, the philosopher-king, rules over the masses, rather than the concept of a pluralist society where the sovereignty of the people is recognized and where a representative government implements the will of the majority.[7]

In other words, while a good number of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century intellectuals believed in fighting superstitious beliefs by promoting modern values, they also attached various amendments and conditions as to how the original European code of modernity—humanism, man's dynamic role in the universe, conquest of nature, history as progress, and reason as a critical tribunal—could be adopted. The existing rancor between science and religion did not necessarily convince intellectuals to forgo the religious inheritance of their society or to engage in a vigorous critique of Islamic jurisprudence or mysticism.[8] The "sacral" intellectual strata held on to the desideratum that Islam was a once-great-but-now-fallen religion that could be restored to its pristine vigor and virtue only if we were to understand it correctly and cleanse it of its false and fatigued accretions.[9] The insights of the sociologist Edward Shils help us understand why these intellectuals were willing to sacrifice "actual history" in order to protect a "revelation betrayed." Shils maintains that in underdeveloped countries that "possessed conspicuous evidence of great indigenous achievements in the past" and now felt enfeebled and degraded, the development of political life is often accompanied by an "impassioned effort of religious and moral self-renewal."[10]

Nonetheless, one can still brand this early generation as modernist, not so much because of its answers but on account of its questions. More importantly, this generation's significance as architects of political life cannot be easily dismissed. As Shils points out, "[T]he gestation, birth, and continuing life of the new states of Asia and Africa, through all their vicissitudes, are in large measure the work of intellectuals."[11] In other words, it is impossible to analyze the trajectory of modernization, nation building, and secularization in lesser-developed countries such as Iran without discussing the social significance of the intelligentsia. As the carriers of such concepts as culture, historical consciousness, modernism, and nationalism, the intelligentsia tried to bridge the rift created by the process of Westernization and mitigate the alienation that naturally accompanied it.[12] As instigators of ideas and executants of power, these "liaison officers" were expected to negotiate with a potent modernity while simultaneously keeping the West politically at bay.[13]

Finally, as secular ministers, they were expected to celebrate, concoct, and revive national myths while emblematizing national identity.[14] This tendency was fully on display in Iran from the 1920s to the 1950s, a period that Eric Hobsbawm has accurately called "the heyday of nationalism" around the world. Again, Edward Shils helps us understand this inclination:



> The first generation of constitutional politicians in most underdeveloped countries were relatively highly "Westernized." The usual antagonism toward the older generation made the next, younger generation more antagonistic toward Western culture, and encouraged their rudimentary attachment to the indigenous traditional culture to come forward a little more in their minds. This provided a matrix for the idea of a deeper national culture and, therewith, of the nation which had only to be aroused to self-awareness.[15]

As the twentieth century got further under way, the cumulative impact of a host of events made many of Iran's intellectuals skeptical about the fervent Enlightenment discourse of internationalism and encouraged them to develop greater affinity for nationalism and traditional culture. Those of the interwar generation, in particular, experienced the full brunt of Western civilization as they witnessed such tragic events as World War I, the Great Depression, the Gulag, Fascism, the Holocaust, World War II, the explosion of the atomic bomb, the 1941 Allied invasion of Iran, and the sacking of Reza Shah.[16] The 1953 coup toppling Premier Mohammad Mosaddeq delivered yet another psychological blow by startling the post–World War II generation.[17] The American-orchestrated coup and the subservient behavior of the Tudeh Party toward the Soviet Union disillusioned many intellectuals as to the altruism of the great powers and further solidified nationalistic sentiments.

The 1960s and 1970s further prolonged the ambivalence of Iranian intellectuals toward the West. The prefabricated and montage-style modernization pursued by the shah, the cleft between new education and old religion as well as between technology and tradition, the rise of anticolonial movements in the third world, and the philosophical self-doubts expressed by Western thinkers cast a shadow of doubt over Western modernity's aura of prestige.[18] The cumulative impact of the aforementioned factors is no doubt partly to blame for the unwillingness of Iranian intellectuals to face their own ineptitude, myopia, and obscurantism.[19]

## Two Types of Alienation

In *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual,* the Moroccan scholar Abdallah Laroui argues that the West created not only an intellectual crisis but a crisis of the intellectuals as well. Laroui emphasizes that what is essential in understanding how Arab intellectuals have responded to the West is the issue of "historical or cultural retardation."

> The intellectual is molded by a culture; the latter is born of a consciousness and a politics. Now there are two types of alienation: the one is visible and openly criticized, the other all the more insidious as it is denied on principle. Westernization indeed signifies an alienation, a way of becoming other, an avenue to self-division (though one's estimation of this transformation may be positive or negative, according to one's ideology). But there exists another form of alienation in modern Arab society, one that is prevalent but veiled: this is the exaggerated medievalization obtained through quasi-magical identification with the great period of classical Arabian culture.[20]

The two types of alienation singled out by Laroui are also discernable in the encounter of Iranian intellectuals with the West. If the uprooted Ja'far Khan represented the literary alienation of Westernized intellectuals, the conservative intellectual-statesman Mehdi Qoli Hedayat (Mokhber al-Saltaneh), whose life span covered half of the nineteenth century and half of the twentieth century (1863–1955), represented the second type of alienation. A resolute critic of Western modernity and civilization, Mokhber al-Saltaneh lamented such developments as the abolition of private property, the formation of big cities, the modern spatial organization of the household, the rise of the urban proletariat, revolutionary movements, and women's suffrage. The conservative views of this German-educated man of letters and politics, who served for a while as Iran's prime minister under the "modernizing" monarch Reza Shah, bore striking resemblance to the "antimodernist" camp in Germany.[21] Comparing the present invidiously with the past, he decried modernity's complexities, ethical decay, fragmentation, impersonality, irreverence, materialism, and self-interested individualism. He prescribed moral remedies such as generosity, inner policing, and restraint for solving abstruse social problems.[22] One should bear in mind that Mokhber al-Saltaneh advocated a nostalgic return to a serene, yet noble and resplendent past, while Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno were formulating a critique of instrumental reason—reason defined by the adequacy of means for the realization of predetermined ends—in the pages of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.[23]

The vast majority of the Iranian intelligentsia were not willing to object to the moralistic and pedantic intellectualism of the likes of Mokhber al-Saltaneh, who was engaged in the audacious denunciation of Western modernity.[24] Fewer still were convinced of the utter futility of such a pursuit. The well-worn dichotomies between a spiritual Orient and a materialistic Occident, Anglo-Saxon scientific pragmatism and Asiatic romantic



aestheticism, or the genuinely local and the appropriating global never lost their sway. Having an inadequate knowledge of Western history and a tenuous grasp of Western philosophy meant that Mokhber al-Saltaneh and most members of his generation could hardly comprehend the organic complexities, the multilateral character, or the runaway quality of Western modernity.[25] Hence, alas, they vacillated between admiring and disparaging, craving and abhorring, and finally emulating and rebuffing the West.

## Everlasting Incertitude?

So far I have maintained that when we examine the actual versus the fictional history of Westernization in Iran, we are struck by how very few real Ja'far Khans indeed existed. In the annals of Iranian history, one can find very few intellectuals who were so enamored of Western culture as to advocate a forgoing of Iran's cultural heritage in order to surmount the country's economic, social, and scientific retardation.[26] This proclivity was widespread despite the fact that the modern intelligentsia had a keen awareness of the gradual diminution of Iran's civilizational grandeur. It is therefore appropriate to ask what has been gained from adopting an ambivalent attitude toward the regime of modernity.

In my view, the most important lesson has been the realization that the whimsical imitation of the West is a charade, and submissive pandering to the past is futile. Today, the absence of unanimity and monological discourse regarding a host of issues indicates that the Iranian intellectual world is more heterogeneous and reflexive than it has ever been in the past. Gone are the days when the preponderance of one ideological viewpoint bestowed a uniform yet feeble quality on Iran's intellectual life. As far as acceptance of Western modernity is concerned, there are promising signs of change. Copious and vindictive diatribes and eulogies for a cul-de-sac modernity are becoming trite or are falling by the wayside. Iranian intellectuals are coming to terms with the fact that the omnipotence of modernity's worldview and the omnipresence of its regalia can now be felt the world over.[27] The utopian strivings of more and more of Iran's intellectuals are now impregnated with modernist sensibilities and theoretical givens, such as the legitimacy of the separation of religion and state, the individual nature of faith, and the essentiality of political pluralism. While condemnation of Western governments for their historical and neocolonial arrogance, belittlements, denigrations, domination, plunders, and slights continues unabated, the discourse of "anti-Westernization" is un-

dergoing a serious interrogation. This may be partly attributed to the fact that an increasing number of Iran's educated classes now recognize that "the West" is an inextricable constituent of their inchoate identity and an internalized part of their swelling self-consciousness.

This group can more and more identify with the following sentiment expressed by the Palestinian historian Hisham Sharabi:

> Today, I am inclined to see the West mostly as a collective singular, a figure of speech, an entity in constant flux, a different thing at different times—Christianity, Modern Europe, Industrial Society, Imperialism, Technology, Violence—without center or inner unity. The West is centered unity only from the outside, from the standpoint of the non-West, that of the societies/cultures (India, China, Islam) that have been the target of Western violence and domination.[28]

Abandoning this "unity-centered" view of the West is not going to be an easy task for Iran's lettered classes. They recognize that modernity, both as a phenomenon and as a spirit, has brought along monumental revolutions as witnessed by the transition from "man" to "individual" and from "status" to "contract." Yet, in societies such as Iran where modernity was acquired mostly as a technique, the indispensable cultural and social rudiments for the above typed transitions have either been missing or meager. Hence, unsurprisingly, the acquisition of material and imagined modernity could not be devoid of debilitating fear, keen skepticism, or mordant cynicism. In a cultural setting saturated with metaphysical beliefs and deference to ancient traditions, many remain fearful that modernity will diminish the sense of inwardness and the distinctiveness of the individual and erect a world where contempt for religion and an impersonal, routinized, and uniformed logic will rule supreme. Even for some of those thinkers who are persuaded that articulating an alternative account of modernity is unattainable, the idea of domesticating modernity or staging symbolic resistance to it remains enduringly appealing. This disposition may be partly attributed to the fact that most Iranians could not easily pardon past and present Western violence and will to dominate.

Nonetheless, cataloguing the theoretical shortcomings of Iran's intellectuals should not prevent us from recognizing the ills and harms of modernity. After all, modernity was not merely about self-assertion and individual liberty. It was also about bureaucratization, commercialization, violence, and social engineering. Modernity enabled the modern state to spread its tentacles as never before and create newer types of violence. Large-scale inspection, systematic surveillance, technologies of



torture and total war, use of gratuitous violence, and well-organized exterminations testify to modernity's penchant for discipline and punishment while ecological disasters and overpopulation testify to some of its other evils.[29] In other words, one has to acknowledge that modernity has camouflaged, redeployed, and sanitized violence without necessarily diminishing it.

We also need to concede that modernity's claim to provide complete, final, and universal answers and solutions to problems besetting humankind was, in retrospect, naive, arrogant, and pernicious. As Aziz al-Azmeh has reminded us, such nineteenth-century utopias as historical inevitability and unilinear progress have been dealt a coup de grace.[30] Furthermore, modernity may have been disseminated worldwide, but it was still developed locally. Marx was correct in considering the railroad as India's passport to modernity, but he did not live to see that in India—as well as in most other parts of the developing world—modernity did not manage to render impotent local repertoires nor did it bring the same remunerations as in the West.[31] Moreover, modernity surely had Europe as its cradle, but its present caretakers are dispersed all throughout the globe. Hence, modernity has come to denote different things to different people.

Certainly, Iranian intellectuals can benefit from as well as contribute to the ongoing debate concerning a reassessment of the status and values of modernity. As the contours of the Iranian intellectual life further mutate in the direction of celebrating an eclectic consciousness, the intelligentsia will be further reassured that this plural identity is the best cultural safeguard for democratic practice because pluralism can inhibit the cruelty of a single belief, the vanity of one standard of value, and the banality of one code of conduct, be it traditional or modern.

## Notes

1. Quoted in Roderic H. Davison, "Westernized Education in Ottoman Turkey," *Middle East Journal,* vol. 15 (summer 1961), p. 299.

2. Anthony Giddens defines modernity as a historical condition of difference and associates it with "(1) a certain set of attitudes toward the world, the idea of the world as open to transformation by human intervention; (2) a complex of economic institutions, especially industrial production and a market economy; (3) a certain range of political institutions, including the nation-state and mass democracy." See Anthony Giddens and Christopher Pierson, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making Sense of Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 94.

3. I have relied on the definition of modernism proposed by Marshall Berman

in *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988). Berman maintains that "modernism" is "any attempt by modern men and women to become subjects as well as objects of modernization, to get a grip on the modern world and make themselves at home in it" (p. 5). He continues: "To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world—and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are" (p. 15). "Modernization" consists of the "social processes that brings this maelstrom into being" (p. 16).

4. By "Westernization" I mean a mode of thinking and praxis that corresponds to Western (i.e., mainly European) rather than native ways.

5. This type of reaction was not peculiar to Iran. As Adnan Adivar explained, next door in the Ottoman Empire, the "official pressure against the penetration of Western thought was such that toward the end of Abdul Hamid II's reign, just before the revolution of 1908, the very word *hikmet* (philosophy) was taken out of the dictionaries by order of the government." Abdulhak Adnan Adivar, "Islamic and Western Thought in Turkey," *Middle East Journal,* vol. 1 (July 1947), p. 275.

6. This attitude may partly be seen in the following quotation attributed to Naser al-Din Shah, the Qajar king who ruled Iran for almost the entire second half of the nineteenth century (1848–1896): "I wish that never a European had set foot on my country's soil; for then we would have been spared all these tribulations. But since the foreigners have unfortunately penetrated into our country, we shall at least make the best possible use of them." Quoted in William S. Haas, *Iran* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), p. 35.

7. Mangol Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1982), pp. 173–4.

8. While such literary figures as Mehdi Akhavan-Sales (1928–1990), Zabih Behruz (1890–1971), and Sadeq Hedayat (1903–1951) criticized Arabs and Islam through humor or poetry, one should perhaps single out Ahmad Kasravi (1890–1946) and ʿAli Dashti (1895–1982) as the two notable figures who undertook somewhat scholarly critiques of Islam.

9. On "sacral" intellectuals see Edward Shils, "The Intellectuals and the Powers: Some Perspectives for Comparative Analysis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* vol. 1 (1958–59), pp. 5–22.

10. Edward Shils, "The Intellectuals in the Political Development of the New States," in *Political Change in Underdeveloped Countries: Nationalism and Communism,* ed. John Kautsky (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1963), p. 223.

11. Ibid., p. 195.

12. It is fair to say that in addition to helping the formation of new classes (i.e., the urban proletariat, the middle class), Westernization also changed the overall structure of the educational, political, economic, literary, and family structure in Iran as well as elsewhere.

13. Arnold J. Toynbee describes the intelligentsia as "a class of liaison officers who have learnt the tricks of the intrusive civilization's trade so far as may be necessary to enable their community, through their agency, just to hold its own in a social environment in which life is ceasing to be lived in accordance with the local tradition and is coming more and more to be lived in the style imposed by the intrusive civilization upon the aliens who fall under its dominion." Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History,* vol. 1 (abridged ed., New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1971), p. 451.



14. It is interesting to note that in Iran and many other lesser-developed countries, the "Westernized" intellectuals have also been the most ardent advocates of "nationalist" causes.

15. Shils, "Intellectuals in Political Development," p. 209.

16. Nonetheless, the ideas of Western thinkers heavily influenced the deliberations of Iranian intellectuals during this period, among them, Auguste Comte (1798–1857), Denis Diderot (1713–1784), Alexandre Dumas (1802–1870), Anatole France (1844–1924), Victor Hugo (1802–1885), Jean de La Fontaine (1621–1695), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869), Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931), Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924), John Locke (1632–1704), Karl Marx (1818–1883), Molière (1622–1673), Charles-Louis de Secondat Montesquieu (1689–1755), Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), and Émile Zola (1840–1892).

17. The coup may have shocked the intelligentsia, but it did not necessarily diminish their social significance. Writing around that time, T. Cuyler Young Jr., a professor of Persian language and history at Princeton University, who had acquired an intimate knowledge of Iran by working there, first as a missionary and later as cultural and political attaché at the American Embassy, spoke of the importance of Iranian intellectuals in the following fashion:

> Probably the most important group furnishing present support and future promise is that of the intellectuals. The spread of modern education has greatly increased their numbers to proportions of relative importance. For all the predominance of the emotional and aesthetic in Iranian personality, Iranian culture has been characterized by an unusually distinguished and persistent intellectual tradition. The cultivation of the mind has always been encouraged and honored in Iran, where the mind has ever been remarked for its native intelligence and curiosity, flexibility, and speculative bent. Professional intellectuals have been rooted in and supported by large sections of the masses who, illiterate but not untutored, have enjoyed the literary and artistic accomplishments of their leaders. T. Cuyler Young Jr., "The Social Support of Current Iranian Policy," *Middle East Journal* 6, no. 2 (spring 1952), p. 129.

18. During this period, Iranian intellectuals were most captivated by the ideas of such thinkers as Che Guevara (1928–1967), Henry Corbin (1903–1978), Frantz Fanon (1925–1961), Erich Fromm (1900–1980), Réné Guénon (1886–1951), Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), Vladimir Lenin, Herbert Marcuse (1898–

1979), Tibor Mende (1915–1984), Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), and Oswald Spengler (1880–1936).

19. Some of these issues have been addressed in Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1996).

20. Abdallah Laroui, *Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 155–6.

21. For views of the antimodernists in Germany, see Kevin Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890–1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

22. See Mehdi Qoli Hedayat (Mokhber al-Saltaneh), *Tohfeh-e mokhberi ya kar-e bikari* (The gift of reporting or a leisurely profession) (Tehran: Chapkhaneh-e Majles, 1954).

23. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, translated by John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1986). It is important to remember that Mokhber al-Saltaneh's view of modernity differed from that of Rousseau, who was equally convinced of the corrupt nature of urban society and believed that humans should rescue themselves from the plight of modernity. Mokhber al-Saltaneh did not share the latter's negative view of private property as a cause of avarice and inequality, nor did he embrace the French philosopher's advocacy of a general will or a social contract. To this day, while in the West the attack on Enlightenment thought is increasingly coming out of leftist circles, in Iran it is still the Right that objects to the rational universalism and secular humanism of Enlightenment.

24. After all, Mokhber al-Saltaneh was by no means the only one in his generation who was critical of Iran's Westernization. Other men of letters such as Mohammad 'Ali Forughi (1876–1942), Qasem Ghani (1893–1952), Seyyed Vali Allah Nasr (1876–1946), 'Allameh Mohammad Qazvini (1877–1949), Gholamreza Rashid Yasami (1896–1951), Seyyed Fakhr al-Din Shadman (1907–1967), and 'Ali Shayegan (1902–1981), while supportive of state modernization, used to castigate the Westernization and Europeanization of Iran.

25. See Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 16.

26. Mirza Fath 'Ali Akhundzadeh (1812–1878), Mirza Malkam Khan (1833–1908), and Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh (1878–1970) are often offered as such examples. However, we should bear in mind that even though Taqizadeh advocated a wholesale imitation of the West in the early 1920s, he retracted this argument by the early 1960s. See Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh, *Khatabeh-ye Aqa-ye Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh dar akhz-e tamaddon-e khareji* (Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh's address on the adoption of Western civilization) (Tehran: Entesharat-e Bashgah-e Mehregan, 1960–61), p. 7.

27. In this regard, it helps to remember the argument of Anthony Giddens regarding the separation of space and place under modernity. Giddens writes:



"The advent of modernity increasingly tears space away from place [the physical settings of social activity] by fostering relations between "absent" others, locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction. In conditions of modernity, place becomes increasingly *phantasmagoric:* that is to say, locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them. What structures the locale is not simply that which is present on the scene; the 'visible form' of the locale conceals the distanciated relations which determine its nature." Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 18–9.

28. Hisham Sharabi, "Modernity and Islamic Revival: The Critical Task of Arab Intellectuals," *Contention: Debates in Society, Culture, and Science* 2, no. 1 (fall 1992), p. 129.

29. For two works on violence, see Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); and John Keane, *Reflections on Violence* (London: Verso, 1996).

30. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 20.

31. As the Indian thinker Nirad Chaudhuri put it, "The West conferred subjecthood on us but withheld citizenship."