Contents

Intellectual Trends in the Post-Revolutionary Iran, A Critical Analysis of Three Decades of Public Debates on Society, Governance, Religion and the Role of Intellectuals

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Abstract

In this article, the author is attempting to inquire intellectual trends in the post-revolutionary context of Iran. He has gone through the works of Soroush, Malekyan and Kadivar in relation to questions such as religion, society, governance, state and religion. His main idea could be summed up as the break-away of religious intellectuals from conceptualizing religion in terms of jurisprudential frame of reference and this itself has created new ways of understanding religion and its locus within modern society of Iran in the 21st century.

Keywords: Soroush; Kadivar; Malekyan; Post-Revolutionary Iran; Religion.

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1. Introduction

The most challenging taxonomy of intellectuals in Iran is post-Revolutionary intellectuals' classification on the basis of religion according to which, they are divided into two camps i.e. religious intellectuals and secular intellectuals (Ghudarzi, 2007: 82). Having assayed the process of intellectualism in the post- Revolutionary Iran during 80s, 90s and the first decade of the 21st century, this essay seeks to give an account of the ideas of Abdolkarim Soroush, Mohsen Kadivar and Mustafa Malekyan as the respective representatives of these decades.

2. Aufklärung: A Conceptual Makeover

Jean Paul Sartre believes "an intellectual is the one who becomes aware of the polarity that does exist between the quest for practical truth (with all the measures it has) and the prevailing ideology (with its traditional system) both in himself and the society. This self-awareness of intellectual secures its concreteness through engaging in own professional activities and duties and it is indeed consisted of laying bare the essential inconsistencies lied in the expression of the truth that he needs to succeed in his affairs through myths, values and traditions.

In other words, an intellectual seeks to retain and secure his own hegemony by attempting to involve other classes in the aforementioned discourses" (Sartre, 2001: 66). But according to Max Weber, intellectuals in their search for a meaning of the world particularly where the process of disenchantment is already completed, have sought to relocate the world in their rational pattern and make a sense of this world's pains and agonies (Sadri, 2007: 99). Edward

Said does also believe that the intellectual is an individual who possesses the liability to demonstrate, embody, and clearly vocalize a message, a point of view, an intellectual bent, a philosophy or an opinion for or on the behalf of a group of people; this is a hard role for the intellectual to play and he could not fit himself into it unless by coming to grip with the fact that his task is obviously raising critical questions by challenging traditionalism and dogmatism (Said, 2009: 30). According to various definitions that have been proposed by intellectualism and intellectual some of the noticeable features of an intellectual in a nutshell are as follows: rationality, scrutiny, critique, criticism, power of discernment, inquisitiveness, promoting fraternity and equality, law, disenchantment, enlightenment, commitment and rebellion against dogmatism.

3. Intellectual Tradition in Iran

Intellectualism (intellectual tradition or being a public intellectual) like other modern products for such Muslim countries as Iran appeared as an "other". Iranian intellectuals, in tune with the rest of intellectuals throughout the world, have always devoted themselves to the study of relevance of their own culture and intellectual and social identity with modernity and tradition/modernity duality is their central issue. Intellectualism in Iran is perceived as a political concept and this is the very reason that Iranian modernity, instead of having been founded upon philosophy and culture, is grounded on such political concepts as democracy, socialism, parliamentarism and so on and so forth.

Iranian intellectual has delimited his own cultural and social role according to political relations, and instead of seeking for

cultural developments in the society, he has always appeared as a social persona by focusing on politics and critique of power. The birth and death of every epoch of history of the Iranian intellectual tradition have been accompanied by political developments and this is why any categorization proposed by researchers of the history of Iranian intellectual tradition has been drawn – whether consciously or unconsciously – according to significant political events.

3-1. Religious Intellectualism

Those intellectuals who have their roots in the conflict of religious culture of Iran and modernity and seek to fill the gap between their own traditional-religious background and the achievements of modern world are religious intellectuals. What distinguish them from secular intellectuals are their religious concerns and the application of religion's language in the expression of modern ideas. Religious intellectuals have grounded their thoughts in the revival and reformation of religion and in their view the task of religious reform is not reforming the foundation of religion but it is the revival of forgotten edicts of Islam and purifying them from distortions and superstitions and finally upholding the sovereignty of Islam and bringing back the glorious life to Muslims (Yusefi Eshkawari, 1997: 16-17).

Religious intellectuals in the politico-social domain have also been heavily under the influence of "mainstream paradigm" of intellectual trend of every age. Thus religious intellectuals have actually played the same role as other intellectuals in encountering colossal changes and transformations which occur in the world (Kazemi, 2008: 101). Religious intellectualism, in contemporary Iran,

became the most challenging rival of the clergy in the interpretation of religion. The overthrow of the clerical monopoly of interpretation of religion by religious intellectualism was the first challenge through which traditional discretion-based religious judgment (Ijtihad) was replaced by modern hermeneutic methods (Kazemi, 2008: 121). For religious intellectuals, the first step toward reformism was shifting from blind imitation of traditional interpretation to a modern and much liberal approach (Sharabi, 1988: 31). This group of intellectuals beside their acquaintance with traditional references was benefited from an *Ijtihad* free from traditionalist myopic approaches. Moreover the critical role of religious intellectuals in Iran is simultaneously concerned with modernity and the West, religion and tradition, and even with the stream of Aufklärung itself. But in practical domain, these intellectuals pursue a "local" operational strategy in the Iranian society (Kazemi, 2008: 71-72).

4. Intellectual Movement in 80s

With the outburst of the Islamic Revolution, a new epoch emerged in the history of Iran, the region and some even argued in the world (Esposito, 1990). If the previous epoch was the age of a secular and semi-modern totalitarian regime that sought to modernize the country based on the models of development proposed by the international capitalist pressure groups, after the Revolution, a nativist political regime based on a political interpretation of Islam came to dominate the Iranian society. The marriage of religion and political power created new situations in the domain of ideas and culture in Iran which were indeed natural outcomes of the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The official ideology of Iran's

revolutionary state in 80s was not in favor of intellectual activities. Religious radicalism or the so-called revolutionary fervor of this period also curbed the atmosphere for intellectuals and forced many in favor of liberalism (and later on those who supported socialist discourses) to leave the country. The Cultural Revolution and the dismissal of intellectuals and secular professors from academic institutions accelerated the migration of Iranian elites or forced them to reevaluate their intellectual strategies in a fundamental fashion. Thus the post-Revolutionary intellectuals must be divided into two groups of domestic and émigré intellectuals. Meanwhile, domestic intellectuals tried to adapt themselves with the censorship that was dominant in Iran's intellectual atmosphere and with the imposed restrictions by the revolutionary state. Thus, one can regard 1980s as the declining decade of intellectual discourse in Iran. The arch-debate of this period was intellectuals' own quarrel over the significance of historicism and positivism that had their origin in the translation of Karl Raymond Popper's works and the reliance of some of intellectuals like Abdolkarim Soroush upon them that was severely criticized by Ahmad Fardid and his followers particularly Reza Davari Ardakani (Borojerdi, 1998: 241-270). This squabble despite the tumult that it raised among intellectuals did not have enough philosophical depth and was often gone along with trivial debates and verbal tussles. During this decade, some intellectuals like Ahmad Fardid and Reza Davari Ardakani pointed their critiques toward liberalism and some others like Abdulkarim Soroush preferred to target Marxism, Socialism and its Soviet versions of Leninism and Stalinism. This decade hosted various

intellectual circles whose activities were devoted to the idea of civil society. The "Kyan Circle" was regarded the most renowned research center of post-Revolutionary reformists whose runners sought to publicize intellectual debates by focusing on Soroush's ideas through the publication of "Keyhani Farhangi" between the years 1988-1990.

Upon their strategy of occidental studies they have come to this conclusion that the assimilation of positive experiences of dominant civilization of humanity (western) and their internalization through local and indigenous values is the best solution. In tune with this strategy they insisted on overcoming three assumed gaps which may exist between the Iranian identity, the Islamic paradigm and the Western model (Mashayekhi, 2003: 8) and with the slogan of political development and joining the global community they gradually moved toward western and liberal ideology and paradigms. This journal triggered a commotion on such issues as science and religion, liberty and social justice, Islam and West, and religious and political establishments that its editorial board had to resign due to pressures leveled by the government's conservative wings-which later on came to be known as "pressure groups". This journal was suspended in 1990 and by the following year it resumed its work with a new editorial body in concordance with the government's cultural policy (Jahanbakhsh, 2004: 221).

Furthermore Iran's developments by the end of 1980s prepared the ground for religious values either to lose their colors or be reinterpreted in line with novel understandings in Iran. Some argued that new generations' grievance of political Islam gave rise to an atmosphere of despair and

indifference toward religion. In other words, this persuaded religious intellectuals such as Mehdi Bazargan to criticize the idea of political and ideological Islam as the sole possible reading of Religion. His approach was heavily relied upon the modern intellectual tradition which sought to propose a non-ideological interpretation of religion by describing it as the main reason of Islamophobia. He argued that if we did not blend religion to poke its nose into social and political affairs many problems and dilemmas broached by new generations of Islam would become pointless and the religion could revive itself again in an acceptable fashion (Bazargan, 2007: 72).

To cut the long story short; one could state that during the first decade of the Revolution there is no sign of strong intellectual streams due to various socio-political and religious issues such as the war and steady consolidation of clerical rule in the political map of Iran. It was only from 1988 onward that religious intellectual community began to prove itself as a "religious circle which takes modernity seriously" thanks to such factors as the transition from the revolutionary experience as the first form of governance, war termination, charismatic leader's departure, and the publication of some papers by Soroush in Kyhan Journal.

5. Intellectual Movement in 1990s

With relative opening of cultural atmosphere of the country, religious intellectuals in 1990s tried to change the "univocal society" into a "multi-vocal" and pluralistic society through the propagation of books, articles and lectures (Kazemi, 1383: 11). Along with this group of intellectuals, a new generation of secular intellectuals emerged in Iran who more and

more devoted themselves to social and political criticism and diverted their efforts toward the reproduction of liberalist, feminist, postmodernist and neo-Marxist doctrines. The principal concern of Iranian intellectuals of the 1990s was modernity and the obstacles before modernization in the country. This concern is still regarded as the main issue of Iranian intellectual discourse. Besides the intellectuals within the country, however, a dynamic and diverse Iranian intellectualism took a critical shape abroad. Thanks to the translation and publication of works by intellectuals in the domains of human sciences and modern philosophy, during this decade the path was tiled for the emergence of new debates. Such intellectuals as Dariush Shayegan, Aramesh Doostdar, Mehrdad Mashayekhi, Abbas Milani, and dozens of other renowned intellectuals across Europe and US having criticized the ruling regime of Iran by mobilizing extensive critiques against the intellectual trends itself which has played an indispensable role in the promotion of Iranian intellectualism. What distinguishes the domestic intellectuals from the émigré is most of all the tone of their speeches and writings.

Those Iranian intellectuals who live in Europe and the US, thanks to their unrestrained freedom of expression articulate their views on politics, religion and social situation in Iran in an expressive, transparent fashion and sometimes in sharp and critical terms, while the domestic intellectuals are widely stricken by an extensive self-censorship in the expression of their ideas and views and have always refrained from sharp-tempered intellectual criticisms that are prevalent among Iranian émigré intellectuals. In other words, the Iranian intellectuals who work in Iran tend

to express their ideas in a very conservative manner. Religious intellectuals in the 1990s more than any other time insisted on the fulfillment of the idea of civil society. This idea is indeed equivalent to all global values of freedom, democracy, individual rights and the like that had been debated by other intellectuals for a century. During this period, the social and political action of religious intellectuals was reformist in contrast to pre-Revolutionary decades. By introducing their local ideas, they engage themselves in the reconstruction of a global civil society so as to clear more space for religion in the rearrangement of global community through the modification of modern ideas (ibid: 106). This group of intellectuals sought to lay the ground for the development of modern and liberalistic ideas through "the minimization of religion" and "the tenderization of jurisprudence". Abdolkarim Soroush and Mujtahid Shabestari are among the most important representatives of this trend who assayed to broach the idea of civil society and social and political categories by non-jurisprudential interpretations of religion. Here we can indicate such names as Ramin Jahanbagloo and Ali Mirsepasi as secular intellectuals in this domain. Moreover, in this decade a reformist trend took form among religious intellectuals which was consisted of various distinct groups. Some of them had emerged from leftist religious intellectual trends; some were new generations of Nehzat Azadi Iran or Freedom Movement of Iran, and some others the culturalist intellectuals who pursued the project of religious reformism in a democratic and liberalistic spirit. This trend gradually changed into a "religious secularism current" which holds a positive view of modernity and its achievements.

This movement which took form within the discourse of the Islamic Revolution and against the official religious paradigm that was dominant in Islamic Seminaries of Theology and ruling political regime in Iran, sought to propose an alternative paradigm within the boundaries of existing Islamic state. This trend which began to grow from the second decade of the Islamic Revolution was to come up with a new reading of religion through the application of some modern epistemological and hermeneutical attitudes and by resorting to it to propose a paradigm of religious modernity based on modern liberal teachings. The main target of secular trend was to break the monopoly of official clerical interpretation of religion which was intended to provide the required theoretical basis for ruling political regime. This initiative of religious intellectuals was concurrent with some modern theological debates that passed into the field of Islamic theology from Christian theology and challenged the official reading of religion as a political legitimacy machine. These debates ranged from possible and new methods for dynamic jurisprudential argumentation (Ijtihad), human expectations from religion, epochality of religious understanding, the scope and role of religion in human life to believers' need to political, social, economic and in a nutshell all extra-religious patterns that are the results of human experiences outside the religious domains.

A remarkable point of secularist religious outlook is the effort that this generation of religious intellectuals has made to offer a reading of religion that is in total harmony with all dominant liberal values in the modern world; a religion which its political ideal is democracy, its social ideal is liberty and human rights, and its

economic ideal is utilitarian individualism and has been reduced to a spiritual factor in human life. Iran's political developments of 1990sleft a radical impact on secular trends among the camps of religious intellectuals. The construction period (President Rafsanjani's Administrations) and Iranian politicians' strong appeal to free economy and the presence of technocrats and bureaucrats in the government resulted in the marginalization of ideological forces and got the social context ready for modern readings of religion. The epochal victory of reformists in the presidential election of 1997 that in turn had its origin in the religious attitudes of the so-called minimalist religious intellectuals uncovers the reciprocal relationships of this trend and social conditions of the 1990s. The secularist trend of religious intellectualism found numerous advocates among students and the newly emerged middle-class due to the political situation of 1990s and the had a remarkable influence on religious thought insofar as all traditional religious scholars and eminent figures of Islamic Seminaries of Theology devoted themselves to the criticism of its ideas and interpretations of religion since the religion's ability to answer the needs of Iranian society in this period had been seriously challenged and the path been tiled for criticism of religion, religious culture, and dominant religious tradition in the Iranian society. The most eminent figure in secularist trend of religious intellectualism is Abdolkarim Soroush that here we turn to his main ideas:

6. Abdolkarim Soroush

Soroush is one of the most outstanding religious intellectuals who is heavily under the influence of empiricism as a philosophical perspective. Having relied

heavily on the works of liberal thinkers like Popper in England from 1969 until the Revolution, Soroush took advantages of these ideas in the criticism of Marxism which was dominant intellectual trend in 1970s. His scholarship in the history of Islamic theology particularly about Asharite theologians like Abu Hamed Al-Ghazali and in the methodology of modern sciences allowed him to lay the grounds for a modernist reading of Islamic theology in Iran. Soroush pursues Islamic studies in a Kantian spirit (Razaghi, 1997: 87). By proposing his theory of epochality of understanding and insisting on the revision and criticism of religion Soroush stood face to face with dominant traditional perspectives. Soroush's reliance on rationality and scientific method and his efforts to create a secular view of religion through deliberate application of analytic philosophy and in particular by resorting to a post-positivistic approach and insistence on pluralism and liberal democracy, puts him in the camp of modernist system-builders (Pedram, 2003: 115). Now we continue our debate with the articulation of his prominent views and theories:

6-1. Hermeneutical Theory of Expansion and Contraction of Religious Knowledge

Hermeneutical theory of expansion and contraction of religious knowledge is the building block of Soroush's theories that seek to distinguish between the essence of religion and the religious knowledge although the latter is grounded on the former but it should not be taken synonymous with the essence of religion (Soroush, Kyan, 1991: 7). Religion is perfect as such, he adds, and the Lord has sent whatever he considered it necessary for the man but human knowledge and

understanding of it is defected and ever-changing (Soroush, 1994: 164). From this ever-changing essence of human knowledge he concludes that the principal factor in the development of religious knowledge is its interrelation with other human episteme and every change in religious knowledge happens as a result of a development in human extra-religious knowledge (Nasri, 2002: 128-139). According to Soroush, the religion itself along with all its components is true but in religious knowledge the true and the false have been intermixed and the ideas of religious scholars are full of inconsistency and discrepancy (Soroush, 2000: 440-441). Soroush opines that religious knowledge is a human knowledge and like other epistemic branches is in constant development, evolution, expansion and contraction and this expansion and contraction is the immediate result of an expansion and contraction that occurs in other fields of human inquiries. The understanding of religion, thus, is an ever-changing and hierarchical form of cognition (Soroush, Kyan, 2002: 8). In his view as philosophy and empirical sciences are not whole and constantly seek after perfection, jurisprudence, exegetics, ethics, and theology are also far from being ideally perfect. The final outcome of his perspective could be that the understanding of Shariah needs constant revival and reconstruction and the constituents of religious knowledge should always be rearranged so as to keep its harmony with the ever-renewing components of extra-religious knowledge (ibid: 249). Soroush is of the belief that the epoch must become religious, i.e. that people's mores and goals should take the form of religion, on one hand, and the religion must be epochal, i.e. that the epoch's epistemic treasures should be

applied in deciphering Shariah, on the other hand (ibid: 314). In his words the real intellectual is the one who is aware of the necessity of epochalization of religion and takes serious steps in this direction; the task of religious intellectuals is to teach the believers to content themselves with minimum certainties of minimal religion and in practice cling to what is solid and decisive and pass the allegorical dimensions to the Lord (Soroush, Kyan, 1994: 9).

6-2. The Clergy

Relying on his hermeneutical theory of expansion and contraction, Soroush concluded that no understanding of religion is sacred and unconditional and no particular group could have any claim of exegetical monopoly. He defines the clergy in terms of the source of livelihood and believes that everyone who keeps his pot boiling through religion is indeed a member of the clergy caste (Soroush, Kyan, no 245, 2). On the contrary, the non-cleric scholar in Soroush's view is an individual who while devoting himself to religious knowledge or religious praxis but has an independent source of income. In his view neither knowledge nor moral integrity or even jurisprudential skills are the measures according to which one can decide whether someone is a cleric or not but the criteria is only the form of livelihood (ibid: 3). Accordingly, a religion that is knitted to material and political interests and changes into an ideology will miss the chance for development and evolution and this is why the level of religious understanding is becoming so unsophisticated (Soroush, Kyan, 1999 no 46, 25). Thus, Soroush refuses to entrust the religious affairs to the clergy, for in his view by earning his livelihood through religion the clergy will

change into an institution whose function will be sustaining this institution itself (ibid: 26). The political consequence of this debate was resisting the vocational monopoly of the clergy and Soroush's quarrel with jurists and the supporters of the rule of jurisprudence (Soroush, Kyan, 1999, no 46, 232).

6-3. Religious Government or Religious Democratic Government

Following the project of religious secularism, Soroush proposes the idea of a democratic religious government. In his view the difference of religious government lies not in their forms but in their ends. The religious government deliberately builds its peoples' world so that they build their own hereafter; this is the end of religious government. However, both governments – religious and unreligious – can follow the same building strategy (Soroush, 1997: 375). According to Soroush, religious government is a government that has its roots in the believers' unreligious rights and governmental duties of religious people. This government is primarily obligated to afford its people's needs (through rational and empirical methods) so that they could have enough welfare and thanks to this they may have the opportunity to devote themselves to sublime values and more tender spiritual needs including freedom of choosing their own faith (ibid: 380).

In Soroush's view, the primary assumption in making democracy requires religious criteria which are consistent with democracy and in those societies whose religious criteria are not in the proper pitch with democracy no democracy shall occur there (Mirsepasi, 2002: 76). Soroush believes that religious governments could be either democratic or undemocratic and this depends on: 1) their share of common sense,

2) how much they care for human rights (Soroush, 1993: 279). By answering such questions as "whose is the government?", "whether we have any right to govern at all or not?" Soroush seeks to build a bridge between democracy and religious government and to move from religious government to democratic religious government. Soroush regards such values as freedom, justice, rationality and human rights extra-religious rights and believes that every religion that is not willing to respect human natural rights jeopardizes its legitimacy (ibid: 281). But his insistence on the pivotal role of the reason does not imply that Soroush is in favor of liberalism. Rather he emphasizes that in a religious society whose people receive the religion with open arms, freely and without any coercion, the authority of any unreligious form of government will involuntarily lead to undemocratic model of government (Jahanbakhsh, 2994: 248). In the course of secularization of religion, Soroush proposes the idea of minimal religion and believes that we cannot heap much load upon religion. Thus those who behold religion from outside need to take this point into earnest consideration that the maximal religion is at odds with religion itself. Those who provoke unintelligible expectations of religion (in the domains of ethics, praxis, economy, hygiene, programming, governance and the like) and urge the religion to carry a heavy load gradually destabilize its grounds of legitimacy (Soroush, (a) 1999: 110). According to Soroush, religion cannot help us to choose the better form of governance, because the planning for and the management of various aspects of social life should be handled by the administrative institutions in a rational manner. Religion is not obliged to offer a

particular method or program of governance. Jurisprudence is neither an administrative science nor a governmental policy and what religion has to teach the believers in this regard is minimal in scope (Soroush, (b) 1999: 17).

6-4. Religious Pluralism

Religious pluralism in Soroush's view is grounded on two foundations: one is our various interpretations of religious texts and the other is our varied interpretations of religious experiences (Soroush, 1998: 2). Religious pluralism in Soroushian sense does not imply that all religions are equally legitimate, but it is an account of the diversity that exists in the world, whether this diversity is a diversity of truths, or a diversity that simultaneously hosts both truth and untruth (ibid: 92). In fact, Soroush regards religions a combination of true and untrue propositions and believes that the religious diversity that is dominant in the world demonstrates that the legitimacy and supremacy of a religion cannot be proven through reason and argument. According to a theory of this kind the supremacy of a religion over other religion is not fathomable because of their incomparability, but the believer's insistence on their belief throughout the history despite many disputes and argumentations shows that the secret of the diversity of religions is much more complicated to overcome through theological debates (Soroush, 2001: 38).

7. Intellectualism Movement in 21st Century

The project of secularization of religion came to its end in the early years of the 21st century by opening a new chapter in the Iranian religious intellectualism that was immediately followed by the students and middle-class's leaning toward nonreligious intellectuals. It can be said that throughout the first decade of the 21st century – and might even earlier–although Iranian intellectual community became larger but the intellectuals lost their prophetic role. This development had its roots in the changes that the Iranian society underwent through particularly the expansion of technological progresses, the rise of modern Medias, the promotion of higher education and the wider access of Iranians to original intellectual and scientific sources. These developments had some intellectual consequences the most significant of which was Iranian society's deliverance from such dualisms as eastern/western; though another dualism has recently emerged, i.e. religious/secular dualism. During this decade Iranian society is more and more thinking of its social life's scientific and pragmatic problems such as coexistence, tolerance, urbanism, and the youth and these dilemmas could not be overcome exclusively by intellectuals alone. After this event we shall witness the advancement of specialism and the reign of expertism. During early years of the 21st century we have witnessed the emergence of diversity within the religious intellectual trend. One of the reasons of this occasion is Soroush's absence from Iran that led other representatives of religious intellectual trend to seek other sources of inspiration and thus to break the Soroushian monopoly within the religious intellectual movement. The most important occasion in this regard was the advancement of social and political freedoms during the reformist government which gave rise to a variety of new intellectual trends indeed (Farasatkhah, Shargh, no 1012, 5).

Thus not only the religious intellectuals released themselves from the bugbears of 90s but it tilled the path for new intellectuals to emerge. This in turn opened the door of dialogue between the intellectuals. The addressee of 2000s' intellectualism was a generation who bloomed during the age of development, privatization and Medias and devoted itself more than anything else to the supreme role of the self or the individual. This generation, suffering from the setbacks before reforms and reform movement, reflects more and more upon the existing intellectual values within the culture, discourses and the prevailing norms in the institutions (government and political parties). The intellectual atmosphere of the first decade of the 21st century is no longer confined within the Iranian national borders and has found a global audience. During this decade the past and new intellectuals do not have their previous central status anymore. Politics does also get itself involved in the public sphere. Generally speaking, Iranian society in the first decade of the 21st century experienced a more open atmosphere. During the Khatami administration by the final years of 90s and the opening years of 2000s, the cultural institutions and reformist newspapers were active and democratic concepts were noticed and discussed. This group has had the most fruitful output among religious intellectuals and was regarded as the most significant inheritor of religious intellectual tradition. Yet this intellectual fraction does not perceive itself in an exclusively religious fashion. Without being restricted to the classic problematiques of religious intellectualism, this group examined pragmatist ideas in dealing with the problems of Iranian society. At the first glance, it might seem that the most

intellectual development in this decade was the emergence and the advancement of liberal trend, while during the first years of the 21st century – and particularly during the consolidation of ultraconservative government–we witness the formation of a conservative trend among Iranian intellectuals. Part of these intellectuals belongs to the religious intellectual trend and the rest are members of the left or so called secular tradition. The implementation of economic policies during the past decades is one of the sources of emergence of conservative intellectuals. Some observers believe that the most part of economic policies of Rafsanjani administration – the policies that were more or less pursued by the Khatami administration –followed the advices of the IMF; the advices that had the color of conservative policies (Farasatkhah, ibid: 10). Of course, this perspective needs to be assessed in a critical fashion as economic policies of conservative ruling class has by now demonstrated the partial accuracy of the previous governments economic policies- which were surely not conservative by nature. Among the eminent figures of the first decade of the 21stcentury are Mohsen Kadivar and Mustafa Malekyan that we shall devote the rest of this essay to their ideas.

8. Mohsen Kadivar

Mohsen Kadivar was born in 1959 in Fasa city near Shiraz. After finishing his studies in electronic engineering during the opening years of the Islamic Revolution due to his profound interest in Islamic Studies and human sciences he moved to Shiraz Seminary of Theology and thereafter in 1981 he joined Qom Seminary of Theology. After 1983 he began to teach some theological courses and in 1988 he obtained the degree of Ijtihad in jurisprudence. Along with

studying and teaching in Qom Seminary of Theology, in 1999 he got his Ph.D. in Islamic philosophy and theology (transcendent theosophy) from Tarbiat Modares University and taught at the universities of Imam Sadegh, Shahid Beheshti, Sheykh Mofid, and Tarbiat Modares. Since 1991 he was in charge of the office of Islamic Thought of the Institute for Strategic Researches. He has published many articles on Illuminative Philosophy and books on Islamic studies, philosophy, jurisprudence and politics such as A State of a Spiritual Leadership (1998), State in Shiite Jurisprudence (2000) and The Book of Reason (1998) (Roodi, 2000: 19-22).

8-1. The Necessity of Critique and Revision of Religious Thought

Kadivar views the critique a necessary step in the scientific life of societies. He believes that critique sustains scientific life as a process of theoretical refutations and verifications. Scientific critique leads to the epiphany of truth and the revision and edification of reality (Kadivar, The Book of Reason, 1998: 196). Moreover, Kadivar insists on the necessity of revision of religious thought and invites religious scholars to devote themselves to the edification of Islam in its primordial form. In Kadivar's view religious thought including Islamic thought gradually becomes tainted with superstitions, irrational beliefs and customs and the brilliant face of Shariah is sometimes dimmed by the rusts of ignorance and prejudice and sometime by taking a part for the whole (ibid: 165). He does not regard any of Islamic sciences such as jurisprudence, theology, philosophy, mysticism and the like as a substitute for Islam but they are merely paths through

which the wayfarers can reach their Beloved One. The absolute dominance of each one of these sciences within religious thought, according to Kadivar, not only does bring an irremediable havoc upon other sciences and slows down their growth, but it also perverts the dominant science and gives an abnormal picture of religion (ibid: 166). In his view religiosity regains its integration only within the sacred triangle of intellection, devotion and edification.

8-2. Reformation of Religion and Religious Thought

Along with the necessity of expurgation of religion and seeing it as a whole, Kadivar debates on the issue of reformation of religious thought in Islam and Iran. Religious thought must be revised according to temporal and spatial conditions, Kadivar claims, and religious precepts should be purified from various historical and spatial-temporal necessities, including particular circumstances of the revelational epoch (Kadivar, 2002: 405). To implement such a reformation, he adds, we need to transform our perspective of Islam by shifting it from a historical point of view to a teleological outlook. The spiritual and teleological Islam that has delivered itself from historical and geographical necessities of the age of revelation understands the religiosity in terms of the knowledge of the spirit of religion and Islamic ideals. According to this attitude, thus, religiosity is not measured in terms of the attachment to exoteric meanings driven from the historical and geographical circumstances of the age of revelation (ibid: 405-406).In his study of the process of shifting from historical Islam to a spiritual Islam, Kadivar speaks of three models and historical phases in Iran:

First, the invariable/variable model which has been grounded in the division of Islamic precepts into variable and invariable according to which invariable precepts constitutes the beating heart of the Shariah and variable precepts are temporal and dependent upon transitory interests.

Second, the governmental model of jurisprudence which is an initiative of Imam Khomeini and an outcome of practical engagement of religion with social problems in modern age that implies some noteworthy points in Kadivar's view as follows: I) Taking historical and spatial-temporal circumstances into account in all religious precepts is necessary for an efficient Ijtihad related to jurisprudential enterprise. II) Jurisprudence is a theory of management of human and social affairs from the cradle to the grave and one can expect to find the answers of all political, economic, social, cultural and even military problems of human societies. III) Islamic state is the practical philosophy of jurisprudence for human society and its security is necessary. IV) The unconditioned authority of jurisprudent allows him to freely make justice-based decisions in a wide range of social issues so as to ensure people's interests. V) Revealed prescripts are desired by accident and Islamic state for the promotion of justice is desired by itself. This attitude leads to the formation of an *etatist* religion that is a serious challenger of religious faith, spirituality and religious conscience. Third, the model of "spiritual and teleological Islam" which seeks to ground itself upon the positive points of the previous models. This model can be outlined in a concise manner in this way: 1) The measure of credibility of religious prescripts is always their relationship with justice and rationality. 2) The religious

prescripts in the age of revelation have surely been just, rational and normal. Every religious prescript that does not have these later qualities must be excluded from the circle of invariable canonical precepts and taken as an extension of variable and temporal prescripts. 3) The legislator is God and his messenger and the non-immaculate cannot take on the religious legislation. 4) This model seeks to deepen religious understanding by restricting the domain of influence of jurisprudence and the canonical discourse. Thus Islam as a religion for all times and places which is dependent upon the intelligent, just and rational values and precepts must be equipped enough to answer the modern expectations. This is apparently the soundest way to defend religion in modern times, Kadivar argues (Kadivar, 2010: 408-431).

8-3. Civil Society and Religious Society (The Role of Rationality and Human Experience in Social Management)

Kadivar suggests three sociological readings of civil society. In the first reading, civil society is understood in terms of culture. This conception emerged after renaissance in the West and sought to define the civil society in terms of secularism, anti-religionism and instrumental reason which are totally in conflict with religion and religiosity. In the second reading, civil society is seen as an ideology and its narrators seek to draw some principles from the first experience of civil society in the West and cleanse it from its indigenous qualities and make of it a framework to manage their world and people.

These sociologists view the realization of the ideology of civil society as the condition of happiness and prosperity in this world. In the third reading, civil society is being

regarded as a method and a science by which one can run the society and this method may be used by other cultures, ideologies and religions, save the autocratic systems, to reach social happiness. Kadivar embraces the idea of civil society as a method and believes that this conception like the rest of social and political notions has gone through fundamental transformations. After a close examination of quadruple phases of conceptual evolution of the idea of civil society including Classical Greek, Liberal, Marxist, and the contemporary readings of civil society, Kadivar chooses the contemporary reading as he finds it less problematic. The contemporary conception of civil society, Kadivar argues, is essentially Hegelian and has emerged successfully out of the critiques which have been leveled at. According to this reading, civil society has its roots in a middle domain located between the individuals, the society and the state. This domain is beyond individual interests and is not controlled by the official power. Thus conceived, civil society is an arena within which people appear who have two objectives in sight: firstly, the relocation of their wills; secondly, the exchange of their wills with the state so as to direct it. A society of this kind has the rule of law and diversity as its cornerstones and one can find in it a variety of political and social ideas and different voices that are recognized by the law (Kadivar, 2000: 234-236). Civil society as a method, according to Kadivar, emerges as the bridge between the people and the society. Everyone who is to embrace the civil society should take this basic quality into earnest consideration (ibid: 236). On the necessity of civil society, he opines that the denial of civil society as a method results in a sort of totalitarianism

that gradually penetrates into every domain of the society that Kadivar calls it the dictatorship of the majority of masses. The qualities of a civil society in this sense consist of free organizations, cooperation, pluralism, competition and the recognition of people's rights. But a religious society in his view has two major features that whenever one of them disappears the religious society falls; firstly, the entire or majority of the population must be religious, and secondly, the religion should be the main concern of the society (ibid: 237).

8-4. Religion/Politics Relationship

On the marriage of religion and politics, power and state, Kadivar insists on the avoidance from excess and negligence and views their independence from each other and religion's supervision of politics the most ideal kind of such a relationship. Before the revolution, according to Kadivar, some of the clerics had been removed from the political scene as if religion is merely concerned with individual morality and the hereafter. After the revolution we confront another excess that has trivialized the religion by entrapping it in the everydayness and this led to the politicization of religion while the objective was the other way round. Kadivar regards the merger of two institutions of religion and politics one of the most significant problems of the third decade of the revolution. Politics should be handled by the government while religion needs to be managed by religious authorities, Kadivar claims (Roodi, 2000: 167).

To ensure the sanity of religion and politics these two institutions must be independent from each other. Religion should not be a matter of the state since we cannot have a society where believers would

play political tricks within the boundaries of religion. By tying religion to politics we expose the religion to all everyday political problems. By doing so religion loses its sacrosanct state and is reduced to mundane games of politics. Thus religion must be preserved for the days that the politicians have lost their appeals and the public is looking to go beyond mundane politics (ibid: 168). Of course, the nature of preservation itself is an important issue which needs to be discussed thoroughly. Because if that is taken to mean a passive mode of social inaction then this is a repetition of modernist readings of religion in the public square which is deeply question-begging. On this, we need to turn to other public intellectuals such as Shariati and Allama Jafari.

8-5. Religious Government
Kadivar draws two diametrically different portrayals of a-religious government. A religious government, according to the first depiction, is identified by the role that religion plays in social and individual affairs as the absolute authority (Kadivar, Which Government? Which Freedom? 1999: 207). Religious management in this sense originates in religion itself and particularly in jurisprudence and religious law.

Kadivar's second illustration of government relegates the management of people's affairs to common sense because religion has nothing to do with particular situations and the social and political management of the society is a rational matter. When the society is managed in a rational manner, the religiosity is also ensured by religion's supervision (ibid: 209). In the first type of religious government the management of society is assigned to the clergy while in the second type the society is

steered by professionals who are Muslims. But religious authorities supervise this steerage to guarantee the implementation of Shariah laws (ibid: 211). In this government no one takes the other one's place as everyone has his own predetermined place in the system. A council of clerics elected by Muslim citizens is in charge of ensuring the observance of revealed prescripts. The religiosity of citizens does indeed guarantee the cleric supervision of laws and general policies (ibid: 212).

8-6. Jurisprudence and Politics
Kadivar seeks to draw a clear line between jurisprudence and politics in the Islamic society which enables him to argue that Islamic society's need for jurisprudence is beyond any sensible doubt. However the question in this context is how to specify the position of jurisprudence in context of society where Islam has the supreme role. The major role of jurisprudence is legislation, he argues, for the civil, penal and commercial statutes need to be jurisprudentially examined lest they have any conflict with revealed prescripts. Thus Kadivar assigns a collateral task to jurisprudents, i.e. general deductions from Qur'an, tradition, reason and consensus of Islamic community (Kadivar, Aftab, 2003. 35: 4). Although jurisprudence is one of the most significant and noblest Islamic sciences that have many tasks to do on its own, Kadivar states, but we cannot have an irrational expectation from it and try to replace it with such sciences as economics and politics. A jurist is obliged to debate on general precepts and it is up to believers themselves to apply them on real life situations. Most of political issues are context-bounded and the jurist is not professionally eligible to deal with them.

The leadership of an Islamic society, Kadivar claims, should have the qualities of ingenuousness, trust ability, religious and moral competence. He believes that the idea of authority of qualified jurisprudent (Welayat-i Faqih) more than having religious grounds is based on Platonic theory of philosopher-king. But what has the utmost compatibility with politics is Socratic Method of spiritual edification of human beings that finally leads to the moral integrity of the society. The society must be managed through a just, scientific and democratic manner and though jurisprudence is one of the professions that are necessary for running the Islamic society but there is no revealed reason for jurisprudents' direct involvement in politics (ibid: 4-5).

8-7. Authority of Jurist or Counsel of Jurist

After long debates upon the issue of jurist's authority, Kadivar concludes that "the rule is that no one has any jurisdiction over others. Every individual is responsible for his own affairs within the framework of reason and Shariah law and no one is allowed to meddle in her/his personal affairs and destiny" (Kadivar, Rahi Now, 1998, no 7: 16). The statesmen are the advocates of their people in public affairs and do not have any authority over their personal affairs (Kadivar, Rahi Now, 1998, no 12: 16).

9. Mustafa Malekyan

Mustafa Malekyan was born in 1957 in Shahreza near Isfahan. By 1973, he began his undergraduate studies in mechanics at the University of Tehran and then turned to philosophy. After receiving his MS in mechanics he moved to Qom Seminary of Theology. Malekyan's intellectual life has

two respective phases of traditionalism and modernism. In the second phase of his intellectual life he proposed a new paradigm in religious studies. He called this paradigm the project of rationality and spirituality and devoted his A Path to Liberation to this project. Hereunder we discuss some of his ideas:

9-1. Theory of Rational Spirituality

The project of "rationalized spirituality or religion" is Malkyan's key idea that seeks to demonstrate the impossibility of traditional religiosity in modern times. According to Malekyan, the modern man cannot any longer approach religion in a traditional spirit and s/he has only two options: either "to give up the religion" or "to accept the religion in a modern form". Malkyan calls this new form and modality spirituality. Thus conceived, spirituality is the flipside of traditional understanding of religion that is no longer defendable. To state the matter otherwise, spirituality is supposed to take the place of religion for modern humanity (Hashami, 2006: 268-272). This is a kind of diversity-oriented unitarianism that has a minimalistic view of spiritual issues and has grounded itself on modern rationality. Rationalized religion is necessary because "traditional religiosity in modern times even if it would be desirable is no longer possible, while spirituality is both possible and desirable", Malekyan argues. For two reasons Malekyan does not apply the idiom of "religion" for this new understanding of religion and the quintessence of religions; one is that religion has had negative emotional repercussions along with its positive reverberations throughout the history and the other reason is that spirituality has basic differences with religion that it can be taken at last as the

archetype of religions (Malekyan (b), 2002: 310). Malekyan aspires to lead people to an ideal life that has three qualities of: 1. Joyfulness; "people should enjoy all possible pleasures and endure the least of what they see as pain and grievance." 2. Goodness; a human being should live in a way that could lighten the burdens and sooth the pains of other people. 3. Valuableness; the value of life is determined by knowing if life is worth to be lived. In fact different religions and schools of thought have given different answers to the question of ideal life: one proposes the fundamentalist religion and the other prefers a modernist religion while someone may choose the traditional religion. But according to the project of rationality and spirituality one should realize that humanity can achieve an ideal life through rationality and spirituality. Malekyan articulates three forms of rationality (theoretical rationality, practical rationality and verbal rationality) and three forms of spirituality (ontological, epistemological and psychological) and believes that if these six come together then an ideal life would become realized. By the rise of the modern world, Malekyan argues, the religious subject finds her/himself in the crossroad of modernity and the ideal life.

The project of rationality and spirituality seeks to tackle this aporetic situation by reconciling the rationality with religion and for this reconciliation it proposes a new interpretation of rationality and religion so as the people have a joyful, good and valuable life. Malekyan invites the intellectuals to devote themselves to the pursuit of truth and relieving their fellowmen from their pain and grief. The modern world is managed by "sovereign reason" and spirituality represents the "rationalized religion", according to

Malekyan. Contrary to historical religion, the rationalized religion enjoys the following qualities: minimal devotion, lesser dependency upon historical events, insistence on religious experiences, egalitarianism, desacralization of figures and putting religion at the disposal of humanity and thus there is no confliction whatsoever between rationality and spirituality (Hashemi, 2006: 270). Having announced the possibility of unification of rationality and spirituality and the impossibility of union of rationality and historical religion, Malekyan seeks to demonstrate the feasibility of complete individualization of belief because his intended spirituality is no longer grounded in a historical text. Malekyan divides happiness into two types of worldly and spiritual and believes that worldly happiness should be pursued in the light of human experience and reason and religious consultation is not pivotal in this realm. Although the pursuit of spiritual happiness needs the light of religion but this does not imply that there is no substantial role for human reason and experience anymore (Malekyan (a), 2002: 306).

Malekyan has debated on religious actions under two categories of moral actions and ritual actions and concluded that the rationality of such moral actions as justice and honesty is less challenged and ritual actions can be rational only if they are declared symbolic (ibid: 272). He denies any agreement and consistency between rationality and devotion and states that we cannot say that A is B since S supposes it to be so (ibid: 277). The major function of religious prescripts and teachings, Malekyan states, is to prepare human existence for spiritual evolutions. Malekyan regards these spiritual evolutions the kernel that is shrouded within the hull of religious

prescripts (ibid: 299). The major reason of the indispensability of spirituality is the inability of traditional interpretation of religion in soothing the pain and grief. Malekyan believes that it has always been on the top of human expectations from religion to demonstrate her/him the source of pains and sorrows and how to relieve her/himself from them (Malekyan (b), 2002: 313). Historical religion, Malekyan claims, was appealing for the people of the past since it implied a metaphysics that was intelligible in their eyes but this metaphysics gradually lost its credibility. He believes that parts of religion's convoluted metaphysics are not rationally acceptable today. This is why traditional understanding of religion has not been successful in detecting and soothing human pains and sorrows. Having said these, Malekyan concludes that today we need to propose an alternative understanding of religion (ibid: 314).

Resorting to a functionalistic view of religion, he expressly describes spirituality as an alternative for religion and believes that spirituality is neither identical with nor similar to religion but it is basically a different method that is applied by individuals in their life (ibid: 355). Malekyan draws a line between faith and devotion and believes that a spiritual subject does not behave like a devoted person and never says that A is B since X says it to be so and adds that this is the process of de-serialization that spirituality seeks to have it done (ibid: 395).

9-2. Religious Pluralism

Malekyan has worked on aspects of religious pluralism. His stance on this issue is inspired by the notion of spirituality which is indebted to Buddhism. According to Malekyan's reading of Buddhist doctrine, all religions including the monotheistic and non-monotheistic, revealed and non-revealed, religions seek to reduce human pains and sorrows and have nothing to do with guidance, salvation and eternal bliss.

In Malekyan's view, among contemporary religions, Buddhism is the best religious doctrine that has the most compatibility with modern subject's needs and aspirations as it does not have a heavy metaphysics or any metaphysics at all. Every religion is appealing for a psychological reason. This is why some people are interested in Judaism and some others in Christianity and again some others in Islam, Confucianism, Buddhism and so on and so forth. But for the modern subject a religion is appealing that is less jurisprudential, dogmatic and devotional; since it is only such a religion would be interesting for contemporary human being who is this-worldly, humanist, libertarian, anti-devotionalist, and egalitarian (Malekyan (a), 2002: 239-240).

9-3. Religion and Science Conflict

By insisting on religion and science conflict, Malekyan enmeshes the modern subject in a gigantic challenge. Resorting to her/his own cognitive faculties and findings the wo/man has created some theoretical, practical and artistic schools in different sciences, on the one hand, and there is a host of people throughout the history that claim to have been chosen by the heaven to communicate the Lord's revealed words to people, on the other hand. The problem is that these two types of findings are inconsistent with each other, Malekyan argues. Now what should we do with this inconsistency? (Malekyan (a), 1381, 37) He thinks that human sense of limitation is the source of religion and if there was no such an experience of

dispossession and limitedness in human person no religion would ever emerge on the earth. Moreover, this is not a sense shared by all human generations and individuals throughout human history (ibid: 235). Malekyan believes that today we need to read the Qur'an in a manner that makes it a source of inspiration for rationality and spirituality because the reconciliation of rationality and spirituality is the most serious issue of all before contemporary humanity (ibid: 491). We can judge a religion according to the role that it can play in reducing human pains and sorrows through the removal and justification of limitations (ibid: 239). Religion has been revealed to make our souls paradisiacal so as to remain a good person even in a corrupted and hellish society like a beautiful lotus that grows within a smelly and muddy swamp (ibid: 250).

9-6. Necessity of Modernization and Reformation of Religion

Having noted that all religions have once faced the hard question whether to remain unchanged and go or to change and remain, Malekyan states that no intelligent believer would sacrifice her/his goal for some contemptible means. In his view, religion, in the past epochs, has not answered human questions which may arise in every epoch. Thus human being in every epoch and in any particular society needs to continuously turn to religion by critically appraising this "silent narrator" (Malekyan (a), 2002, 305).

9-5. The Clergy

The clergy is responsible to reconcile the cultural values of their time with religious traditions. They must communicate the message of the scripture to their time in

zeitgeist's language (Malekyan (a), 2002, 396).

9-6. Religious Government

Malekyan's account of the inefficiency of historical religions due to their heavy metaphysics and literalism is a good reason to consider him as an ardent proponent of secularism who believes in the separation of religious and civil affairs but the truth of the matter is that he takes a very equivocal stance in this regard. He shows much sympathy with secularism and believes that if religious beliefs were objectively verifiable there would be no escape from a religious government. But religious beliefs are not surely objectively verifiable, Malekyan states.

The religious, metaphysical, moral, and anthropologic propositions are not objectively verifiable like logical, mathematical, experimental and intuitive propositions (Malekyan (b), 2002, 255). If a type of mushroom is proven to be poisonous, Malekyan argues, the government shuts its production without referring to public opinions but the immorality of such affairs as adultery and bribery must be decided according to public opinions. Even the belief in God's existence which is the building-block of religion has not been demonstrated in a way that no one could cast doubts on it, argues Malekyan (ibid: 256). Having said these, he concludes that religious government does not have any feasible justification and it is not indeed intelligible to make serious decisions according to objectively unverifiable affairs without referring to public opinion (ibid: 257). There is "only one occasion where a religious government could be compatible with secularism and that is when the

majority of people in a particular society are adamant in their decision to have a religious government by arguing that in despite of unverifiable nature of the religious beliefs we insist on establishing our state on religion … and also institutionalize them in our society" (ibid: 258).

9-7. Modernity

Malekyan says that we are willy-nilly a modern subject. The modern person can no longer accept religion like the traditional human person. This modern subject has two options; either to give up religion or to accept it on new terms. He calls this new understanding of religion, spirituality and states that "I personally believe in this new understanding of religion because the traditional understanding of religion neither realistically nor pragmatically is defendable (Malekyan (b), 2002, 269). According to Malekyan, the modern subject differs on various epistemological, emotional, theoretical and practical grounds from the traditional subject. He divides the components of modernity into two groups of avoidable and unavoidable. Of the unavoidable components of modernity, Malekyan states: 1) we should accept the good and the true because it is irrelevant to stand against them, 2) and we should question reasonably the bad and the false.

Malekyan seeks to replace the traditional religion with spirituality and believes that any individual finds her/himself in need of spirituality when s/he discerns an inconsistency between religion in its traditional and historical form and the avoidable and unavoidable elements of modernity. In tackling this inconsistency, Malekyan states, we need to resort to a novel understanding of the new religion, i.e. Spirituality which is not incompatible with

two aforementioned characteristics (ibid, 273). After noting that if traditional religion is in conflict with the unavoidable elements of modernity it should be given up and replaced with spirituality, Malekyan enumerates many unavoidable components of modernity that have no consistency with the traditional religion. Thus he issues the needed warrant for conversion into spirituality. The unavoidable components of modernity that are allegedly in conflict with traditional religion are as follows:

9-7-1. The major characteristic of modernity is rationality which is precisely in contrast with the devotionalism of traditional religion. Thus Malekyan invites people to autonomy or self-ruling in contrast to other-ruling by arguing that religion must be stripped off its devotional elements as much as possible (ibid: 275).

9-7-2. There is a kind of suspicion towards history in modernity. The modern subject knows that history is a science of probability and not one of certainty. This uncertainty is in contrast with religion's dependency upon the acceptance of some historical events (ibid: 276). Malekyan suggests that this inconsistency can be overcome by replacing religion with spirituality which is less dependent on historical events (ibid: 278).

9-7-3.Theworldliness is one of the components that Malekyan praises it. The religions' otherworldliness is not consistent with modern subjectivity because the modern subject is looking for interests rather than values (ibid: 279). It is not intelligible to believe in the otherworldly rewards of praying and fasting. Religion must give solace, joy, hope and satisfaction to human beings in this world. According to Malekyan, people should experience everything in this world and spirituality is a

type of experiment within the parameters of religious experience.

9-7-4- He praises the decline of classical metaphysics in the realm of spirituality by arguing the erosive role of religions' heavy metaphysical systems.

9-7-5. He speaks of desacralization and believes that all people must be seen in the same light (ibid: 283). What people talk about must be judged according to the reasons they provide (ibid: 284).

9-7-6. Historical religions involve temporal doctrines while spirituality seeks to overthrow these temporal doctrines.

Religion must serve human interests as it is for humanity and not the other way around (ibid: 286) and nothing should be superior to human being (ibid: 287).There is not much room within the parameters of spirituality for many elements which are inalienable components of historical religion, he adds (ibid: 287). Since Malekyan believes that the quintessence of religion is devotionalism and in addition he seems to understand the essence of modernity in terms of rationality thus he finds them totally inconsistent. According to Malekyan, we have neither devotionalism nor rationalism in their absolute sense. Such notions as devotionalism, rationality, modernity, religiosity and the likes are ideal-types. In other words, being religious and modern are also gradational and some grades of these are prone to be synthesized. These notions are only irreconcilable in their absolute sense but one can be partially religious in traditional sense and partially modern. This is almost the case with all of us, Malekyan states. In Malekyan's view the question of religiosity and modernity are more serious and problematic than thought. In contrast to his predecessors, Malekyan considers the relation between religiosity

(where its fundamental essence is devotion) and rationality (where its elemental core is reasoning) as the foremost theological problem of our epoch and seems to believe that religious beliefs are not rational for most of modern people (Hashemi, 2006: 67). The most cherished characteristic of modernity, according to Malekyan, is free-thinking; one's crave in looking for reason and refusal to bow before anything in the absence of sufficient reason (Malekyan (b), 2002: 378). Two characteristics of rationality, i.e. the respect for reason and liberty, i.e. the reverence for autonomy make the modernity and modern worldview respectable despite its deficiencies and imperfections (ibid: 379).

10. Conclusion

The question of public intellectuals changed into an enigmatic and paradoxical issue after the rise of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The religious intellectuals were treated and perceived differently by the state and societal strata thanks to their respective critical or partisan approaches towards power. An intellectual like Hassan Rahimpour Azghadi (b. 1964) who advanced remorseless criticisms of such issues as colonialism, imperialism, modernism, Occidentalism, and western social sciences and did not take any official critical position vis-à-vis the government was received warmly by the authorities, his works were published with utmost convenience, and he held numerous lectures in Iran's universities and his speeches were broadcasted even on the state television. However, it should be noted that he has not been successful in attracting the public attention. But those intellectuals who pointed their criticisms toward the state by critiquing various aspects of power in Iran,

whether those who sought to propose an alternative model of governance or those who thought their criticisms could be helpful in the reformation and fortification of ruling regime, all were reproved by the authorities and removed from the public square (e.g. Seyed Hashem Aghajeri who was even sentenced to death for his critical assessment of the institute of imitation). The three religious intellectuals discussed in this work belong to the latter group of intellectuals who consecutively emerged on Iran's intellectual scene during three respective decades of post-Revolutionary Iran's history. In other words, the state's pressures, news boycott and their dismissal from intellectual scenes did not reduce their popularity in the wider society. Our study of these three religious intellectuals' views revealed many of their shared opinions that we mention them as follows:

I) All three intellectuals are well-versed in religious discourses and traditional sources.

II) All three intellectuals insist on breaking the clerical monopoly of interpretation of religion, desacralization of the clerical caste, jurists and figures and have defied the dominant traditional trend.

III) All three intellectuals are interested in modernity.

IV) All three intellectuals seek to restrict the domain of influence of religion and believe in a minimalist religion and instead embolden the role of rationality in the public square.

V) All three intellectuals believe in the criticism, reconstruction, revival and reformation of religion and religious thought and speak of "epochal religion".

VI) All three intellectuals are somehow in favor of religious pluralism.

VII) All three intellectuals believe in the separation and autonomy of religion from both politics and state.

VIII) All three intellectuals have critiqued the model of Islamic Republicanism which is represented by the state in Iran today- by arguing that the impact of republicity has decreased immensely since the establishment of the post-monarchical state while the role of totalitarian reading of religion in the running of state affairs has increased day by day. Regarding the reactions that have been made in response to the critical views of these three intellectuals and the restrictions that have been imposed on their personal and scientific lives one can easily conclude that critique in its scientific sense has not still succeeded to clear a room for itself in Iran. Of course, this is not to deny the seasonal, so to speak, appearance of relaxation of rules in Iran vis-à-vis critical discourses (e.g. during the Reformist Era in late 90s and early years of the 21st century or at the second round of the ultra-Conservative Era of President Ahmadinejad's office which we can witness harsh critiques of all aspects of his legacy by certain public figures).

IX) All three intellectuals seek to reconcile religion and modernity with each other without thinking critically about modernity and about the very possibility of reconciliation of this twain. This is why an inherent paralysis is traceable in their debates that thwart intellectual efforts, in general, and religious intellectualism, in particular, in Iran. Of course, this is not to deny the political impact of these discourses but the cultural impacts of these discourses have not been profound enough. This may explain why conservatives have been more successful with the masses through the traditional channels of communication such

as Mosque, Hosseiniye and Maddahie-centers.

X) And the last point is that the political Islam does not tolerate any alternative view as the 'other' is treated in a suspicious fashion within the parameters of ultra-conservative Islamism. Although to treat the other in a suspicious fashion may be unavoidable in geopolitical contexts, but extending this view to public sphere could always lead to suppression, oppressive policies and intellectual stagnation.

These intellectuals have also some points of difference as follows:

I) Soroush and Kadivar show more interest than Malekyan to the formation of civil society.

II) Malekyan proposes to replace religion with spirituality and insists on the synthesization of rationalized religion and spirituality. He denies any consistency between rationality and devotionalism and believes that traditional religiosity is impossible in modern times.

To make the long story short, the intellectual claims of breaking the clerical monopoly of interpretation of religion and religious affairs belong to the second decade after Revolution when such figures as Soroush, Malekyan and Kadivar emerged on Iran's intellectual scene. After the Revolution these religious intellectuals began to revise the fundamentals of theoretical basis of Islamic State by replace it with a democratic state. They devoted themselves to such issues as reconciling reason and faith through insisting on the dynamicity of human understanding of religious texts, resisting religious state (based on jurisprudential authority) and the ecclesial authority, seeking social development through promotion of rationality in the public square, introducing a new path to tranquility and critique and revision of the relationship of modernity and tradition. In sum, their slogans during this period of the Iranian history have been "rationality", "civil society", "human rights" and "democracy".

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روندهای فکری در ایران پس از انقلاب:
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دربارهٔ جامعه، حکومت، دین و نقش روشنفکران

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چکیده

در این مقاله، نویسنده در تلاش است تا از روندهای فکری در بستر ایران پس از انقلاب تحقیـق کنـد. نگارنـده در رابطـه بـا سؤالاتی از قبیل دین، جامعه، حکومت ، دولت و حکومت دینی، آثار سروش، ملکیان و کدیور را مورد بازنگری انتقادی قرار داده است. ایده اصلی نگارنده را می‌توان به این صورت خلاصه کرد که روشنفکران دینی دچار گسستی معرفتی شده‌اند و دین را ذیل چارچوب‌های نظام فکری فقاهتی مفهومینه نمی‌کنند و این خود موجب رویـش روش‌هـای جدیـد بـرای فهـم دیـن و جایگاه آن در جامعه مدرن ایران در قرن بیست و یکم ایجاد کرده است.

واژه‌های کلیدی: سروش، کدیور، ملکیان، ایرانِ پسا-انقلابی، دین.

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