Conceptualisations of Freedom in Iran from 1953 to 1979

in Conversation with Fanon and Foucault

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Abstract

This thesis examines the concept of freedom in Iranian intellectual discourse between two pivotal historical events: the 1953 coup and the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Existing studies on the intellectual discourse around the 1979 Iranian Revolution have largely overlooked the concepts of freedom during this significant period in Iranian history, including its various interpretations, meanings, and influences. This research places the idea of freedom within the broader context of the global anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements of the mid-twentieth century, arguing that freedom, understood as self-determination, extends beyond national sovereignty and independence to encompass a de-colonial, self-transformative practice.

Furthermore, the thesis argues that pre-revolutionary understandings of freedom resonate with certain fundamental principles found in the republican concept of freedom as non-domination. It also highlights a marked contrast between the pre-revolutionary notions of freedom and the post-revolutionary Iranian Constitution. The research contends that the initial draft of the Constitution more accurately reflects pre-revolutionary ideals of freedom, as opposed to the substantially altered final version ratified as the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature: -

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Note on Transliteration

The approach to transliterating Persian and Arabic terms in this work adheres to the conventions established by the *Iranian Studies* guidelines. For Persian works bearing Arabic titles, transliteration follows Persian pronunciation rules. In contrast, for Arabic theological terms, transliteration aligns with the style of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, particularly in the consistent use of "ī" over "i" for vowels. This transliteration rule is applied exclusively to Arabic theological terms. For terms that are direct borrowings from Arabic and commonly used in Persian, the Iranian Studies guideline is followed. For well-known contemporary figures and places, transliteration is not employed; instead, their names are presented as commonly recognised in media and scholarly publications. Familiar terms, such as "gharbzadegi", are rendered in their most recurrent form in relevant literature. This approach ensures both familiarity and consistency for the reader.

<u>Consonants</u>

ب	b	ج	j	د	d	س	s	ع	ʻ	ل	l
پ	p	چ	ch	ذ	z	ش	sh	غ	gh	م	m
ت	t	ح	h	ر	r	ص	s	ف	f	ن	n
ث	s	خ	kh	ز	z	ض	z	ق	q	و	v
ژ	zh	ط	t	ک	k	ه	h				
ظ	z	گ	g	ی	y						
ء	ʼ										

<u>Vowels and diphthongs</u>

a (dast) دست	ā (kār) کار	ay (hay) حَی	āy (āy) آی
e (gereft) گرفت	i (did) دید	ey (pey) پِی	ow (rowshan) روشن
o (shod) شد	u (bud) بود	uy (guy) گوی	oy (khoy) خوی

Abbreviations[1]

Frantz Fanon

BSWM	(1952/2008) *Black Skin, White Masks*
WE	(1961/2004) *The Wretched of the Earth, 1961*
TAR	(1964/1967) *Toward the African revolution*
AF	(2015/2018) *Alienation and freedom*

Jean-Paul Sartre

BN	(1943/1956) *Being and Nothingness*
ASJ	(1946/1976) *Anti-Semite and Jew*
EH	(1946/2007) *Existentialism Is a Humanism*

Simone de Beauvoir

PhW	(1938–1947/2004) *Philosophical Writings*
SS	(1949/2011) *The Second Sex*

Jalal Al-e Ahmad

OC	(1962/1983) *Occidentosis*
SA	(1964) *Something of an Autobiography*
SDI1	(1964/1979) *On the Services and Disservices of the Intellectuals*, Vol.1
SDI2	(1968/1979) *On the Services and Disservices of the Intellectuals,* Vol.2

Michel Foucault

EW1-EST	(1997/2020) *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth: The Essential works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, Vol.1

[1] Where multiple dates are listed, the first set of dates refers to the original publication dates of the works.

EW3-P	(2000/2020) *Power: The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, Vol.3
FS	(2001) *Fearless Speech*
GSO1	(2010) *The Government of the Self and Others*: lectures at the College de France, 1982–1983
GSO2	(2011) *The courage of the truth (the Government of Self and Others II)*: lectures at the College de France, 1983–1984
HS	(2001/2005) *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*: lectures at the College de France, 1981–1982
PS	(2020) *Political Spirituality as the Will for Alterity: An Interview with the Nouvel Observateur*
DE	(1994) *Dits et écrits* 1954–1988, Vol. III, 1976–1979

Ali Shariati[2]

CW1	(1998) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.1: *To Familiar Audiences*
CW2	(1977/2013) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.2: *Revolutionary Self-formation*
CW3	(1972/1991) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.3: *Abuzar*[3]
CW4	(1971/2005) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.4: *Return*[4]
CW7	(1972/1983) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.7: *Shi'ism*
CW9	(1971/1998) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.9: *Alavid and Safavid Shi'ism*
CW12	(1968–1971/1991) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.12: *History of Civilisation, Vol.2*
CW13	(1968/1988) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.13: *Fall in the Desert*
CW17	(1971/2012) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.17: *Islamology, Vol.2*
CW18	(1972/2012) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.18: *Islamology, Vol.3*
CW19	(1970–1977/2017) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.19: *Hussein, the Heir of Adam*
CW20	(1969–1973/1999) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.20: *What is to Be Done?*
CW22	(1998) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.22: *Religion versus Religion*

[2] The first set of dates mentioned for each work corresponds to its original publication date. Where available, the second set of dates refers to the copyright years. In cases where copyright dates are not available or the volume includes pieces with varying original publication dates, the second set of dates indicates the edition of the work that has been utilised in this thesis.

[3] Book One in this volume, *Abuzar Ghaffari*, was originally published in 1955.

[4] The chapter entitled *Fanon's Will* in this volume, which is the Persian translation of the 'Conclusion' chapter from *The Wretched of the Earth*, was first published in 1963.

CW24 (2013) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.24: *Humanity*

CW25 (2002) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.25: *Alienated Human*

CW26 (2007) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.26: *Ali*

CW29 (1994) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.29: *Rendezvous with Abraham*

CW31 (1988) Collected Works of Shariati, Vol.31: *The Characteristics of Modern Centuries*

WTS (1972) *Where To Start?*

MI (1969) *Man and Islam*

IH (1978) *Islamic Humanism*

RVR (1971) *Religion Versus Religion*

IEF (1977) *Irfān, Equality, Freedom*

SI (1979*) On the Sociology of Islam: Lectures by Ali Shariati* (H. Algar, Trans.)

MOWF (1980) *Marxism and Other Western fallacies: An Islamic Critique* (H. Algar, Trans.)

Other References

FIR (2005) *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson

ODI (2003) *Oxford Dictionary of Islam,* John L. Esposito

MB (1960) *Mystery of Being* , Gabriel Marcel

Introduction

> This morning when I got out of the house, I felt free for the first time in my life, after I don't know how many years of thinking and wishing for freedom, they have sprouted in me… For the first time I felt that the ominous, secreted, but perpetual heaviness of tyranny is no more on my shoulders…
>
> Shahrokh Meskoob, *Sur le Chemins des Jours*, 12 February 1979

> What it was and what it turned into... Everyone is frustrated and disappointed; I am the worst of all… because dictatorship is coming… Fear is approaching like a phantom from the darkness; it darkens everywhere as it comes like haze and smoke in the air, making breathing hard…
>
> Shahrokh Meskoob, *Sur le Chemins des Jours*, 14 March 1979

The quotations above were authored by an individual with a diverse background as a lawyer, writer, and revolutionary. The first quotation was composed the morning following the government's seizure by the revolutionaries, capturing the immediate aftermath and sentiments of that pivotal moment. The second quotation, written exactly one month later, reflects evolving perspectives and realities as the new political landscape began to take shape post-Revolution. This progression in thought and observation provides a unique insight into the transitional phase of a society undergoing significant political and social change.

Observing and writing from within the 1979 Revolution, Meskoob interprets the main slogan of the Revolution—Independence, Freedom, Islamic Republic—as connoting 'freedom and independence of the nation against foreign forces'. He views the Revolution as culturally "a

return to self": freedom from Western culture and seeking an authentic 'national culture' as a counterattack against 'imperialism's offensives'. Meskoob characterises the revolutionary movement as a revolt against oppression and corruption', a significant 'transformation in values', and a 'moral revolution'. He also points out that the 'overall characteristics' of the Revolution were Islamic: 'because its anti-imperialist cultural-economic features were organised by the force of Islam' (Meskoob 2001: 77).[5] What Meskoob implies is that the revolutionaries pursued freedom from, and a rupture with, a dependent dictatorship, rather than the establishment of an Islamic state that would not only be a continuation of the *ancien régime* but also curtail their individual freedoms.

The two decades leading up to the 1979 Revolution were marked by a strong anti-imperialist and leftist sentiment among Iranian intellectuals and political activists, who were in tune with global anti-colonial movements and contributed to its discourse. The revolutionaries, as echoed in their slogan "Freedom, Independence, Islamic Republic", aimed to dismantle the monarchy, which they saw as a puppet of foreign imperialism. This anti-Western stance intensified after the 1953 British-American backed coup d'état against Iran's democratically elected government, which had challenged Western influence by nationalising the British-Iranian oil industry. As a result, there emerged various opposition groups advocating for self-determination and independence from Western imperial interests.

Significantly, this period saw Iranian intellectuals striving to free the nation from the "dependent dictatorship" of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who was aggressively implementing Westernisation.[6] Unlike the intellectual figures of the 1906 Constitutional

[5] Notes written on 13 March 1979, in response to Khomeini's speech on 9 March 1979 on the Islamic essence of the Revolution. See Speech (March 9, 1979), Sahifeh 6: 314-319.

[6] It is important to note that Westernisation is a rather complex and loaded term within the context of contemporary Iranian history. While the problematisations and critiques of Westernisation constitute a major theme in this research, a brief clarification at the outset seems useful. Westernisation is closely intertwined with and often synonymous with modernisation, as it aimed to modernise traditional Iranian society and its old institutions according to Western (European) models (Ansari 2019; Katouzian 2009; Abrahamian 2008; Cronin 2003; Tavakoli-Targhi 2001). Initiated in the nineteenth century, this phenomenon, which Cronin refers to as the 'Westernising modernisation campaign', accelerated during the Pahlavi reign but also backfired due to its selective and paradoxical nature in many respects (Cronin 2003: 88). That is, as we will see throughout this study, while many aspects of the state were modernised, what is generally referred to as "civil society" was repressed. This paradoxical situation, where modernisation efforts coexisted with the suppression of certain societal spheres, is a crucial aspect to consider when examining the Westernisation process in Iran.
For a concise and informative analysis of this situation, see Mirsepassi, A. (2000). Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press. pp. 189-190.

Revolution who were primarily inspired by the French Revolution, authors in the latter half of the twentieth century re-evaluated Iran's political, cultural, and economic ties with the West in the context of the global anti-colonial and de-colonial movements. This global dimension introduced additional complexity to various concepts, including freedom, and facilitated a nuanced interaction with other revolutionary ideals. These interactions, while influenced by Western philosophy, were neither straightforward nor without complications.

This historical context sets the stage for my exploration of the concept of freedom in the works of Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati, two influential Iranian thinkers instrumental in shaping revolutionary discourse. Al-e Ahmad is known for his *Westoxication* discourse, while Shariati has been dubbed 'the teacher of the Revolution'. The first three chapters aim to show how Iranian interpretations of freedom both draw upon and extend beyond mid-twentieth-century Fanonian anti-colonial existentialist discourse within a unique Francophone-Iranian cross-cultural framework.

In the final two chapters of this thesis, I critically examine Foucault's notion of "political spirituality" as presented in his writings about the Islamic Revolution and within the larger framework of his philosophical discussions of freedom. Foucault documented his observations and analysis of the Islamic Revolution in his "ideas reports" [*reportages d'idées*] for the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*. By engaging Foucault in dialogue with Shariati, I argue that the concept of "political spirituality" as a means of exercising freedom can be most effectively understood through Shariati's political reinterpretation of religious thought. This approach also serves as a tool to delve deeper into Iranian pre-revolutionary ideas of freedom, extending beyond Fanon's anti-colonial and de-colonial perspectives. I propose that in the context of the Iranian Revolution, freedom is more practically manifested in forms of resistance rather than as abstract theoretical ideas. That is, self-determination is conceived as de-colonial self-transformative practice essential for achieving national sovereignty and independence. Moreover, the thesis posits that pre-revolutionary conceptions of freedom align with key principles of the republican notion of freedom as non-domination. A detailed

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See also Keddie, N. R., & Richard, Y. (2006). Modern Iran roots and results of revolution (Updated edition.). Yale University Press. pp. 132-135.

examination of this concept highlights the significant differences between pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary understandings of freedom.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

As a concept with a complex, if not labyrinthine history, freedom eludes definition in the Nietzschean sense. In *A Genealogy of Morals* (1897) Nietzsche argues that meaning is the 'fluid element' of a concept with a history behind it, concluding that 'all ideas, in which a whole process is promiscuously comprehended, elude definition: it is only that which has no history, which can be defined' (Nietzsche and Kaufmann 1989: 79-80). Freedom of expression, religious freedom, freedom of commerce, individual freedoms, civil liberties, political freedom, psychological freedom: the concept of freedom, whatever it is, might come to light through the history of these various forms of liberty.

Theorising about freedom has a history, too. In the West, from the epoch of Athenian democracy through to our own times, freedom as a social construction has been a central question in philosophical thinking. In a democracy where slaves and women did not have the right to vote, theorising about freedom embarked on its journey in relation to slavery; an ever-present notion in both its literal and figurative senses. Hence, from Plato to contemporary modern philosophers specialising in the philosophy and concept of freedom such as Philip Pettit and Quentin Skinner, Jean-Paul Sartre and Frantz Fanon, this journey has been embodied in various traditions of conceiving liberty: the Anglophone tradition with figures such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and John Stuart Mill; the German tradition with Kant, Hegel, and Marx; the Revolutionary French thinkers such as Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau through to Sartre, Beauvoir, and Merleau-Ponty; and the post-moderns such as Foucault and Derrida.

According to Skinner and Pettit, freedom has been examined through two major approaches in the mid-twentieth and twenty-first centuries: non-intāerence and non-domination. Isaiah Berlin's approach contends that freedom can be perceived in terms of the two concepts of "negative liberty" and "positive liberty". The problem with this approach, according to the theorists of republican freedom, was that it was incapable of explaining certain situations. So,

freedom as non-domination has been defined as freedom from interference on an arbitrary basis (Pettit 1997: 51; Skinner 1998: 84-85).

Parallel to these republican categories, sometimes overlapping with them and sometimes describing its own particular concepts and relations, is the French existentialist concept of liberty, particularly Frantz Fanon's theorisation of freedom. It is this existentialist notion of freedom which is most directly relevant to the Iranian context, and on which this thesis will primarily draw. Through bringing Fanon into conversation with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, Fanon's specific views on freedom within the colonial and post-colonial conditions will be examined and brought into conversation with the idea of freedom in the Iranian context.[7]

Fanon's writings were—and continue to be—considered a source of insight and inspiration for anti-colonial and anti-imperialist revolutionaries of the Third World or the so-called *global south*, establishing him as a central figure in post-colonial and cultural studies. Iranian intellectuals, too, recognised themselves in Fanon's account of the concept of the Third World and received Fanon not only in line with their anti-imperialist cause but also referred to him as a role model for theorising an authentic emancipatory revolution.

Fanon's theorisation of imperialism and liberation started with the problematic of Blackness, situated in the colonial context. His work explores the complexes and anomalies caused by this environment and draws on his existentialist account of human being. All of these elements provide both resonances and dissonances with the context of his Iranian readers. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon challenges common conceptualisations of non-white people through analysing the phenomena of racial prejudice, systemic social discrimination, and the experience of being Black. Over the course of a decade, Fanon's lived experience as a Black person in various milieus—including the Antilles, France, Algeria, and Ghana—develops into a theoretical and empirical analysis of liberation from colonial and imperial rule, and freedom from personal complexes caused by this system. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), he broadens his horizons to offer his thoughts on anti-colonialist movements and their

[7] Among the anti-colonial thinkers translated into Persian and introduced in Iran, Fanon and Césaire are frequently quoted, as will be discussed in the first three chapters. While the dialogue between Francophone existentialists (Fanon and Sartre) and Iranian intellectuals could be expanded to include Césaire, this thesis focuses primarily on Fanon.

aftermaths in former colonies, establishing himself as an authority among the intellectuals of the countries battling against colonialism and imperialism. Freedom stands as a primary theme, perhaps even the central theme in his work, though it is by no means a simple or stable concept for him.

Fanon's reflections on the issues colonisation and Blackness, as well as his revolutionary struggles and writings on the Algerian war of independence, do not translate directly to the Iranian context. Meanwhile, Iranian intellectuals, especially those who fall within the timeframe of this study, allude to Fanon directly. Although Iran has never been colonised, the fact that it has been subject to imperial interests makes the Fanonian concept of freedom a particularly apposite conceptual framework to study the notion of freedom discussed by Iranian intellectuals of the pre-revolutionary decades. While highlighting the differences between the two contexts is part of this project, this research studies the impact of circumstances on the meanings that the word freedom bears within an anti-imperial intellectual setting.

Analytical Techniques, Methods

Freedom is a concept at home in philosophy, while studying the historical transformations of the notion falls within the realm of the history of ideas. Thus, this research combines two approaches to understanding the concept of freedom in the texts of prominent Iranian intellectuals within its designated timeframe: a historical approach and a philosophical approach.

The Historical Approach

Studying the concept of freedom through textual analysis requires an understanding of the historical situation in which the texts and statements were uttered. Through the methods applied to historiography of ideas or thought, the historical approach tries to reconstruct the historical situation within which an idea is formed, developed, and modified, in order to understand the context.

Quentin Skinner is a prominent figure in developing and using this methodology of intellectual history. Defending his historical approach, Skinner argues that to be able to better understand concepts of political freedom, 'maybe the only way' is to revive the texts written at a certain point in history at which 'this way of thinking was first articulated and developed' (Skinner 1998: 110). In an attempt to contextualise the concept of freedom, he revisits canonical texts in order to understand possible meanings it might connote. To develop a method to scrutinise these texts, he explores the theory of meaning in his *Visions of Politics* (2002) and develops his argument on meaning and language as means to understand utterances and texts. Emphasising the distinction between two separate dimensions of language, that of meaning and that of linguistic action, Skinner alludes to Austin and Wittgenstein and their stress on words as acts. According to Wittgenstein, it is the function and use of a word rather than its meaning that serves the purpose of communication (Skinner 2002: 4). Austin (1962) introduced the notion of a speech act which asserts that we do something when we use language and say something. Clarifying his approach to interpretation, Skinner argues that the concept of speech act in communication is relevant to the work of an intellectual historian. Understanding the writer's intentions in terms of the action and deed she or he intended by writing is the key to understanding the meaning she or he had in mind when expressing a concept or utterance.

Skinner applies this method to re-examining the meaning of freedom in the form of a genealogy of liberty. He calls for the reconsideration of dominant premises regarding freedom, and introduces an alternative to the negative concept of freedom and consequently 'different forms of life' (Skinner 2002: 125). [8] That is to say, if we accept that concepts rule over our social systems and the laws by which we regulate our affairs, alternative concepts will accordingly result in different social orders (Skinner 2002: 118). In this vein, the writings of Frantz Fanon contribute to our understanding of the historical situation of Iran between the coup d'état of 1953 and the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in two ways: 1) their reception by the Iranian intellectuals reveals the anti-imperial animus of the decades in question, and 2)

[8] This research employs aspects of Skinner's methodology as articulated in his works, including *Visions of Politics* (2002), though it does not adopt it in its entirety. That is to say, Skinner's historical method informs this study in terms of uncovering meanings of freedom that transcend the traditional dichotomy of positive and negative liberty, thereby illuminating alternative conceptualisations of freedom. Therefore, rather than establishing a division between historical and philosophical approaches, Skinner's method integrates the two, demonstrating how historical analysis can enrich philosophical understandings of freedom.

they help us better decipher Iranian intellectuals' account of fundamental concepts such as human being, freedom, democratic and moral self-determination, and independence.

The Philosophical Approach

The concept of freedom is classically approached in the Anglophone world in terms of one of three broad theoretical frameworks: 1) Isaiah Berlin's negative and positive freedom; 2) the Neo-roman or Republican concept of freedom, advocated mainly by Philip Pettit and Quentin Skinner; and 3) Gerald MacCallum's single concept of freedom defined as a triadic relation (Schmidtz and Pavel 2018).

These three paradigms provide a series of stable road-markers for navigating the less systematised Francophone landscape of liberty, in which figures such as Rousseau, Hegel, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Marx loom large and inform Fanon's and Foucault's ideas (in the latter case to the extent that Foucault almost entirely rejects this tradition of thinking freedom). In this thesis, the Anglophone concepts will provide a bridge between the "Western" and Iranian thinkers, furnishing a discourse of liberty that does not originate in either existentialist/structuralist or Iranian contexts, and as such will be one means of helping the thesis to resist pre-empting its findings by reading one socio-cultural context naively through the lens of the other.

Scrutinising the historical context and significant social and political events affecting the line of thought of influential intellectuals and writers, this project draws on all three Anglophone taxonomies but pays particular attention to MacCallum's triadic understanding of freedom in terms of relations between agent, obstacle, and action to investigate political ideas of the time and bring to light the aspects of freedom which these writers accentuated or left relatively unnoticed.

Berlin's Two Concepts of Liberty

Isaiah Berlin identified two ways of theorising freedom within the field of political philosophy: negative and positive liberty (or freedom—used interchangeably throughout this thesis) (Berlin 2002: 169). The negative concept, primarily understood as the absence of constraints,

interference, or coercion, is often framed as 'freedom from' external interference. The positive concept, on the other hand, is seen as 'freedom to' do something or to engage in certain actions, emphasising control over one's choices and self- or collective governance. While these are distinct approaches to conceptualising freedom, Berlin suggests they are interconnected and may overlap in their meanings (Berlin 2002: 169).

To clarify more, Berlin distinguishes between the questions posed by negative and positive concepts of freedom. Negative freedom centres on the question: 'What is the area within which the subject—a person or group of persons—is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be without interference by other persons?' (Berlin 2002: 169) This means that negative theories of freedom are more concerned with the areas where an individual or a group of individuals should not be interfered with and should be left to choose from the options that are available to them. Thus, the broader the sphere of non-interference, the greater the freedom. However, conceptualising freedom in this way has not been without its challenges. Philosophers like Hobbes, Bentham, Locke, and Mill, commonly associated with the negative concept of freedom, faced the task of delineating these areas of non-interference and addressing the complex questions that emerged in their respective societies (Berlin 2014: 181). Yet, despite their varied perspectives, they collectively define freedom as the absence of interference.

The concept of positive freedom centres mostly on self-mastery and the extent of control an individual has over her choices. According to Berlin, it involves questions like 'What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or to be, this rather than that?', 'By whom am I ruled?', or 'Who determines what I am, and what I am not, free to be or do?' (Berlin 2002: 177). Essentially, it is concerned with identifying the source of control or interference in one's life.

Positive freedom is often summarised as 'freedom to', emphasising the ability or opportunity to act on one's free will. In this framework, the focus is on the agent of freedom—the individual or a group of individuals—and their level of control over their decisions. It is not solely about the absence of interference but also about the presence of capabilities or conditions that empower a person to realise her true wishes (Taylor 2006: 148). In political philosophy, this approach extends to broader questions of governance and societal structure. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a key figure customarily associated with and known as an extreme

example of this concept of freedom, proposed the notion of a collective or general will that governs individual wills. This concept implies that individuals might surrender specific personal freedoms for the collective good, leading to a superior form of freedom for society at large. According to Rousseau, the collective will of society should take precedence over individual, self-focused pursuits (Rousseau 2002: 166).

These two concepts of freedom have significantly informed different political theories and systems. The negative concept of freedom, which is centred around the absence of constraints or interference, is traditionally linked with liberalism. This political theory advocates for limited government involvement in individual affairs, valuing personal autonomy and minimal restrictions to allow people the liberty to act as they choose, provided they do not violate others' rights and freedoms.

In contrast, the positive concept of freedom emphasises the ability to achieve one's potential, often necessitating conditions created or influenced by the state. This approach is commonly associated with more authoritarian political systems that justify reducing individual freedoms for the alleged greater good of the community or society. According to Berlin, this positive idea of liberty, focused on living a life according to certain standards or goals, has often served as a façade for oppressive tyranny. Advocates of negative liberty frequently perceive the positive view as a misleading rationale for curtailing individual freedoms under the guise of achieving collective good or adhering to a prescribed way of life (Berlin 2002: 209). Yet, as Berlin observes, the relationship between these concepts of freedom and democratic government is more intricate than it initially appears. In other words, the presence of extensive individual liberty does not automatically translate into a democratic political system.

MacCallum's Triadic Relationship

Gerald MacCallum criticises the distinction between negative and positive freedom as 'two fundamentally different kinds of freedom', contending that a free person is someone who enjoys negative and positive freedoms simultaneously. He argues against the utility of this distinction for scrutinising different conceptualisations of freedom and their indications for social and political questions since it is often challenging to neatly or fully classify a given

conception into either category (MacCallum 2006: 101). Moreover, MacCallum suggests that this dichotomy leads to fruitless disputes and confusion about what freedom is, thus eclipsing essential perspectives on the subject.

Instead, MacCallum proposes a unified approach, viewing freedom as one single triadic relation between three things: an agent, an impediment or certain barriers, and a goal—something to do (or not do) or to become (or not become).[9] In this sense, a person is said to be free or unfree when she or he is free or unfree from a constraint or impediment to do, not do, become, or not become something. From this perspective, in which only one overarching concept of freedom operates, different conceptions of freedom should be seen as variations within the ranges of the three fundamental variables. This approach takes into account the conditions under which any notion of freedom is intelligible and thus mitigates confusions and misunderstandings that arise from distinguishing between kinds or concepts of freedom.[10]

MacCallum's definition proves beneficial in the context of the current research that engages Eastern and Western thinkers in dialogue in that it serves as a fitting tool for interpretation and comparison. As a meta-theory of freedom rather than a specific theory that might be associated with a particular philosophical tradition (Hashemi 2019: 14), it helps us avoid protracted debates over essentialist distinctions between Western and Eastern traditions of contemplating freedom, allowing us to frame the elements under consideration in any utterance on freedom as variables with varying ranges. MacCallum suggests four questions that can be used as guides for analysing any given discussion of freedom:

(a) What is to count as an interference with the freedom of persons?

[9] MacCallum formulates this relation as 'x is (is not) free from y to do (not do, become, not become) z,' x ranges over agents, y ranges over such 'preventing conditions' as constraints, restrictions, interferences, and barriers, and z ranges over actions or conditions of character or circumstance (MacCallum 2006: 102).

[10] MacCallum writes: 'The principal claim made here has been that insistence upon this single 'concept' of freedom puts us in a position to see the interesting and important ranges of issues separating the philosophers who write about freedom in such different ways, and the ideologies that treat freedom so differently' (MacCallum 2006: 121).

(b) What is to count as an action that persons might reasonably be said to be either free or not free to perform?

(c) What is to count as a legitimate interference with the freedom of persons?

(d) What actions are persons best left free to do? (1991: 121)

MacCallum's meta-theory goes beyond framing freedom in negative or positive terms, encompassing considerations related to both the absence of interference and the presence, as well as the source, of control. In contrast, republican or neo-Roman conceptualisations of freedom take a normative approach, focusing on two essential notions—domination and arbitrariness—to define freedom.

Republican Freedom

Berlin's schema of two concepts of liberty is also challenged by the neo-Roman or republican concept of freedom. As pioneers of theorising the republican idea of freedom, Philip Pettit and Quentin Skinner contend that Berlin's negative freedom as non-interference and positive freedom as self-mastery do not provide a complete taxonomy of liberties. They suggest freedom as non-domination—non-domination as the opposite of slavery, in the broadest sense of the term—which is defined as freedom from interference on an arbitrary basis. While Pettit and Skinner share similarities in their writings on this conceptualisation of freedom, their perspectives have minor differences. This study will primarily engage with Pettit's account of republicanism due to its offering a distinctive republican political theory, which, as we will see, finds a particular resonance with specific themes in the thought of Shariati and Al-e Ahmad, especially in their understanding of freedom. These themes revolve around contemplating questions of domestic political domination, foreign colonial domination, and social justice. Accordingly, this study suggests that revisiting Shariati's and Al-e Ahmad's writings from this perspective brings to light these less-explored aspects of their thoughts that inform their conceptualisations of freedom.

Pettit extensively develops his elaboration of republican freedom across various books and articles, defining it at its core as non-domination. According to his formulation, this conception is negative as it necessitates the absence of domination by others and positive in

requiring protection against arbitrary interference. Pettit emphasises the importance of this conception in political theory due to its dual requirements (Pettit 1997: 51). Subsequently, he refines the notion of non-domination by expressing it as 'the absence of alien or alienating control' (Pettit 1997: 102). This articulation shifts the focus from interference or control to whether such interference or control is alien or alienating, concurrently safeguarding all subjects or citizens within a polity from external control over their choices, and ensuring their independence (Pettit 1997: 104).[11]

Pettit illuminates the notion of alien control by means of three axioms: 'the reality of personal choice; the possibility of alien control; and the positionality of alien control' (Pettit 1997: 104). He defines control as alien or alienating when the deliberative assumption of personal choice is undermined by reducing, removing, and replacing a person's choice (Pettit 1997: 107). Building on these axioms, Pettit proposes four theorems that investigate various scenarios regarding the connection between interference and control: Alien control can manifest with or without interference, and similarly, non-alien control can occur with or without interference. Through exploring the implications of these theorems concerning domination rather than mere interference, Pettit formulates republican freedom as the absence of alien control. This perspective emphasises that in republican political theory, the primary concern lies in the freedom of the person, not just the freedom of choice (Pettit 2008: 104).

Similar to MacCallum's singular concept of freedom, which employs four questions to uncover a thinker's notion of freedom, Pettit's formulation of republican freedom serves as a valuable tool for assessing issues within political systems. Crucially, it addresses fundamental and universal concerns that apply to every polity, regardless of cultural intricacies that may complicate the theoretical framework of studies focused on human societies. Unlike positive and negative conceptions of freedom, which necessitate a nuanced consideration of context-sensitive questions tied to cultural conceptualisations of self-mastery and non-interference, Pettit's formulation exclusively focuses on intuitively recognisable alien control, rendering it a universally intelligible concept. Furthermore, the republican idea of liberty encompasses

[11] By independence, Pettit means freedom from 'a distinctively inimical kind of dependence. This is the dependence that puts you in the power of others, enabling them to decide on whether or not to interfere in your choices, on the basis of their attitude toward you or your kind, and without having your permission or license to treat you in that way' (JF: 52).

various notions closely associated with freedom, including justice, democratic self-determination, and sovereignty. In essence, Pettit's approach provides a versatile and comprehensive framework that transcends cultural and historical particularities to address fundamental issues within the realm of political theory.

As previously mentioned, this research will incorporate all three understandings of freedom. However, the analysis will be structured around MacCallum's guiding questions to comprehend Iranian conceptualisations of freedom from 1953 to 1979. Subsequently, these conceptualisations will be examined through the perspective of republican freedom. This perspective provides a lens to explore deeper layers of Al-e Ahmad's and Shariati's thoughts, enabling us to engage with their texts that, though not overtly presenting as theories of freedom, fundamentally underscore their understanding of freedom.

Review of Relevant Research and Theory

Research on the concept of freedom in Iran has customarily been integrated into broader intellectual histories, rather than being singularly focused within intellectuals' discourse. Nonetheless, these intellectual histories provide the necessary context for scrutinising and understanding how certain thinkers conceptualised freedom. Acknowledging this, the current literature review will include these broader studies as well.

Generally, the existing literature on Iranian intellectual history and the historiography of freedom falls into three distinct categories. The first group consists of studies focusing on these themes during the Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911). The second group explores the intellectual history surrounding the 1979 Revolution, which is the specific timeframe addressed in this thesis. The third group comprises research examining the post-revolutionary intellectual landscape and conceptualisations of freedom, particularly in the present Islamic context.

Following this general chronological categorisation, I will initially provide a brief review of the relevant literature on the historiography of freedom during the Constitutional Revolution. Subsequently, I will focus on the period from 1953 to 1979, which aligns with the scope of this thesis. Additionally, I will offer a concise summary of the existing literature on the diverse

aspects of Shariati's and Al-e Ahmad's thoughts during these years, as their perspectives will be further explored in this research.

Several significant works have explored the meanings and conceptions of freedom during the 1906 Constitutional Revolution in Iran. These include Homa Katouzian's *Liberty and Licence in the Constitutional Revolution of Iran* (1998), Youssef Aliabadi's *The Idea of Civil Liberties and the Problem of Institutional Government in Iran* (2000),[12] Massie's and Afary's *Iran's 1907 constitution and its sources: a critical comparison* (2018), Janet Afary's *Civil Liberties and the Making of Iran's First Constitution* (2005), [13] Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi's *Vernacular Modernity and the Rethinking of History* (2016), [14] Arshin Adib-Moghaddam's *Islamic Secularism and the Question of Freedom in Iran* (2016), [15] and Ahmad Hashemi's *Rival Conceptions of Freedom* (2019).[16] Although each of these works contributes valuable insights

[12] Aliabadi's article is similar to Adib-Moghaddam's, but provides more details. He starts with the European Enlightenment and the meaning of freedom in European philosophy, then studies the case of Iran from the Constitutional Revolution onward.

[13] Afary's article studies Iran's first constitution, compares it to the Belgian and Bulgarian constitutions, and explores a number of fundamental laws written by the first parliament. Afary does not take her research deeper into the socio-cultural context of the era usually referred to as "the awakening of Iranians", but Katouzian fills this gap and investigates various aspect of intellectual, political, and economic aspects of the years in question. Katouzian's articles illustrate the differences between Iranian concepts of freedom and the European concepts in the texts of the Constitutional Revolution.

[14] Tavakoli-Targhi's work, *Vernacular Modernity and the Rethinking of History* does not specifically focus on the conceptions of freedom, but offers valuable insights into this critical phase of Iranian intellectual history. Tavakoli-Targhi investigates Iranians' contemplations on Western lifestyles and beliefs, and analyses their writings to argue that they gradually incorporated Western ideas, mainly those ideas related to the French Revolution of 1789 such as freedom, equality, and revolution itself. He discusses that the political arguments published in the newspapers and essays of the era reflect semantic challenges over key terms such as nation, state, liberty, equality, law, constitutionalism, and religious legitimacy. This terminology is maintained in the political literature of the next fifty years, but several factors including westernisation and the crisis of national identity resulted in accentuating other elements such as anti-Westernism and Shi'a Islam.

[15] Adib Moghaddam's article is a brief study of the meaning of freedom from the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 to current religious modernism with the main focus on secularism. His study examines how influential Iranian intellectuals with Islamic leanings have adopted 'liberal' ideas, particularly in their conceptualization of 'freedom'. The research also introduces the idea of 'Islamic secularism', emphasising its role in the democratic aspirations of Iran. It argues that these Iranian thinkers, rooted in a modernistic interpretation of Islam (or Islamism), have faced challenges in developing a theory that goes beyond the revolution's limits, addressing the demands for pluralism and liberty evident in various Iranian protests and the 2011 Arab revolts.

[16] Among studies originally written in Persian, Adamiyat (1962), Noor Mohammad Khan (1975), Faramarzian (1999), and Mazhabi (2014) study the notion of freedom in the writings of prominent figures of the Constitutional Revolution era. Adamiyat's essay is considered a first of its kind in Persian, exploring the formation of the idea of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. It is usually a primary source for studies of the Constitutional Revolution. Noor Mohammad Khan's PhD thesis examines the meaning of freedom in the writings of famous Constitutionalists. Faramarzian's PhD thesis focuses on the Islamic notions of freedom and

into the intellectual and political discourse of the era, Hashemi's comprehensive study is particularly notable for its methodological approach and theoretical framework within the field of historiography of freedom.

Hashemi uses MacCallum's triadic concept of freedom to go beyond Berlin's positive and negative conceptions of liberty and examines key texts from late nineteenth and early twentieth century Iran that are commonly referred to as the Constitutional Literature (320-323).[17] His study distinguishes itself from existing literature on the meanings of freedom during the Constitutional Revolution by broadening the scope to include not just the aims of freedom but also its agents and restraints. This approach enables a more comprehensive and structured examination of intellectual history, particularly concerning the concept of freedom that is intertwined with historical events. Hashemi's methodology also addresses the complexity of studying this topic, given the cultural specificities involved, presenting a more thorough understanding than previous works that focused primarily on the objectives of freedom.

Hashemi argues that the conceptualisation of freedom during the Constitutional movement primarily responded to the country's decline that was attributed to various factors including widespread arbitrary rule. Furthermore, he re-examines the crucial and extensively analysed topic of how reformist clergy attempted to reconcile Islamic principles with the concept of freedom. In this vein, he explores their theoretical efforts to develop an Islamic narrative of freedom, underscoring their resistance to arbitrary rule as antithetical to Islamic doctrines.[18]

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studies the works of three prominent religious figures of the decades leading to the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Khomeini, Tabatabaei, and Motahhari. Mazhabi's PhD research compares the ideas of two key figures of the Constitutional Revolution: Nā'ini and Skeikh Fazollah Nuri. While both are clergymen, Nā'ini tries to present a new interpretation of Islamic texts to show the compatibility of modern forms of government with Islam, while Nouri opposes the idea of the Constitutional movement and the discourse of freedom. These two figures represent two distinct and ongoing discourses of Islam and Iranian modernity. Understanding any utterance on political freedom by the next generation of Iranian Shi'a Islamic thinkers requires an understanding of these two discourses. Present-day Islamic scholars such as Abdolkarim Soroush and Mohsen Kadivar, renowned advocates of the democratic narrative of Islam, allude to Nā'ini and his ground-breaking treatise.

[17] *Dāneshnāmeh-ye Zabān va Adabiyāt-e Farsi* [Encyclopaedia of Persian Language and Literature], Vol 1 2005: 320-323.

[18] Among the most insightful studies on this specific topic is Feirahi's *Āstāneh-ye Tajaddod: dar sharh-e tanbīh al-umma wa-tanzīh al-milla* [The Threshold of Modernity in the Description of The Admonition and Refinement of the People] (2015). Feirahi provides a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of Nā'ini's *tanbīh al-umma wa-tanzīh al-milla [The Admonition and Refinement of the People] (1909)*, one of the most constructive, if not the most constructive, treatise within the Constitutional Literature on constitutionalism from the perspective

This dimension of Hashemi's work sheds valuable light on the interplay between religious principles and conceptualisations of freedom in reformist discourse.

As mentioned earlier, while extensive research exists on the conceptualisations of freedom during the Constitutional Revolution, the historiography of freedom spanning from 1906 to 1979 has not been independently studied. Instead, it is typically integrated into broader studies that focus on the thoughts of pre-revolutionary intellectuals in the decades leading up to the 1979 Revolution. Consequently, in the field of Iranian intellectual history, although the theme of freedom is frequently discussed, there remains a notable deficiency in research specifically dedicated to examining intellectuals exclusively through the lens of freedom.

In the existing literature examining intellectual trends between the two Iranian revolutions, a discernible pattern emerges. Studies conducted shortly after the revolution and within its first two decades formed a tradition that predominantly aimed to comprehend the emergence of the Islamic Republic. This focus, however, often led to a lack of nuanced analysis of various thinkers, culminating in reductionist narratives about prominent intellectuals, particularly Shariati and Al-e Ahmad. In this tradition of studying pre-revolutionary intellectual history, Shariati's thought is narrowed down to his Islamic framework, while Al-e Ahmad's work is often oversimplified to his antagonism towards the West. Such an approach that usually tries to understand the 1979 Revolution from the perspective of modernity and Iran's encounter with modernity has often led to reductionist and, at times, distorted interpretations. Studies like Boroujerdi's *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism*

of Shi'a jurisprudence. Feirahi's work provides insights into the interpretations of freedom during the Constitutional Revolution, offering a brief comparative analysis of the relationship between independence and freedom in the context of 1906 and 1979 revolutions.

(1996)[19], Vahdat's *God and Juggernaut: Iran's Intellectual Encounter with Modernity* (2002)[20], *Mapping the Role of Intellectuals in Iranian Modern and Contemporary*, edited by Jahanbegloo (2020), and Mirsepassi's Iran's *Quiet Revolution: the Downfall of the Pahlavi State* (2019) and *Iran's Troubled Modernity: Debating Ahmad Fardid's Legacy* (2019), while offering several valuable insights, fall short in providing a nuanced portrayal of prominent intellectuals such as Al-e Ahmad and Shariati. These studies, despite their contributions, often overlook the complexity and multifaceted nature of these prominent intellectuals' thoughts.

There are also significant studies such as Hamid Algar's *Roots of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (2001), Farhang Rajaee's *Islamism and Modernism: The Changing Discourse in Iran* (2007), and Samiee's *The Battle of Power in Iran: Why and How Did the Clergy Win?* (2018) that aim to present a phenomenology of the 1979 Revolution through drawing contrast between modernity and Islam. Algar's work, for instance, is grounded on the presumption that the Revolution, unlike the Russian, Chinese, and any other revolutions is not a negation of the past, but the continuation of Iran's Islamic (Shi'a) heritage. However, while Algar dedicates most of his study to reading Khomeini's and Ali Shariati's lectures and writings, he does not acknowledge the fundamental divergence between the two. Thus, these works, despite their numerous contributions to this field of study, tend to reduce the Revolution to one of its

[19] Boroujedi's book, published in 1996, is originally his doctoral dissertation titled 'Orientalism in reverse: Iranian intellectuals and the West, 1960-1990' submitted in 1990. Boroujerdi scrutinises the issue of identity and identity formation as well as the ontological and epistemological premises underlying the intellectuals' thoughts. For example, Boroujerdi argues that the idea of revolting against domestic 'political servitude' was accompanied by rejecting the dominance of the West and Westernisation in the decades leading to the Islamic Revolution of 1979. He draws on the Foucauldian concept of othering to examine the reception of Western ideas by Iranian intellectuals, maintaining that writers, scholars, philosophers, and journalists recognised themselves through recognising their *other* through a network of interrelated sentiments that called for resistance against the invasion of the West. He shows that a discourse of nativism was gradually developed by both the critics of the state and its supporters, while for the opposition groups, both the state and the West became *the other,* and the East, Orient, was referred to as *self* which needed to reclaim its sovereignty.

[20] Vahdat studies modernity and Iran's intellectual trends between the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and the Islamic Revolution of 1979 through an approach that can be criticised but is worth noting. He argues that the 'belated appearance' of modernity in Iran is similar to that of Germany, in comparison with England and France. Besides, this belated appearance has made the German critical thought insightful and more mature. His dialectical approach, along with his Kantian and Hegelian theoretical framework has yielded a novel approach to analysing the history of political thought in contemporary Iran. Using a theoretical framework based on Kant's and Hegel's notions of subjectivity and universality, Vahdat links modernity to emancipation, or subjectivity, and searches for the elements of 'universalized subjectivity' in the Iranian context. This peculiar look at Persian political texts through the lens of a concept, subjectivity, provides Vahdat's research with a rich glossary of the terms utilised by intellectuals in their arguments. However, Vahdat's reading of intellectuals such as Shariati and Al-e Ahmad are quite limited and narrow.

constituent elements, notably Islam. Such perspectives often compel the pre-revolutionary ideas of freedom to be interpreted within a predominantly Islamic framework, which itself is not thoroughly explored in its diverse manifestations. Again, while these studies do provide insights into how certain intellectuals conceptualised freedom, albeit in a limited way, they do not primarily focus on the historiography of liberty itself.

Among studies that delve more deeply into the question of freedom, the works of Delkhasteh (2007) and Gheissari and Nasr (2006) stand out for their more nuanced engagement and analysis. Delkhasteh's dissertation, *Islamic Discourses of Power and Freedom in the Iranian Revolution, 1979-81* (2007), offers a narrative of historical events and socio-economic transformations in Iranian society, alongside an analysis of the ideological underpinnings of conflicting Islamic discourses—contrasting Islam as a discourse of freedom with Islam as a discourse of power. It focuses on the immediate post-revolutionary struggle between democratic and totalitarian fronts, with the totalitarian front represented by Khomeini and the Khomeinists, and the democratic front represented by Mehdi Bazargan and Abolhassan Banisadr. Delkhasteh demonstrates how the struggle between these two fronts resulted in the victory of totalitarian forces, making four main points: first, totalitarian power and religious fundamentalism in the 1980s were not inevitable but resulted from specific political and cultural processes. Secondly, revolutionary leaders were not homogenous and developed competing Islamic discourses. Thirdly, the study highlights the significant role of human agency in the revolutionary process. Fourthly, the version of political Islam developed by the democratic camp remains a valuable reference for democratisation in Iran and the Islamic world.

Gheissari and Nasr's book *Democracy in Iran: History and the Quest for Liberty* (2006) explores the concept of democracy and political freedom in Iran in search of providing an explanation for the failure of the Revolution to establish and consolidate a democratic rule. The authors contend that the idea of freedom as democracy is not a thoroughly Western import and has a complex history in Iranian thought, while noticeably absent from the intellectual debates of the formative decades of the 1960s and 1970s.

Among the more recent studies exploring questions of democracy and freedom in twentieth-century Iran, many focus on the thoughts of prominent intellectuals like Al-e Ahmad, Shariati, and Khomeini, who represented key revolutionary intellectual trends. In *Democracy in Iran*

(2016), Misagh Parsa provides a historical overview of Iran's pursuit of democratic self-determination. Parsa examines the political landscape of opposition groups before 1979, aiming to contrast the discourse of freedom before the revolution with the post-revolutionary theocratic governance. However, while Parsa's work is instrumental in understanding Iran's contemporary situation, it does not delve deeply into the notion of freedom, particularly in the context of these notable revolutionary figures. His analysis primarily addresses Iran's current state, with less emphasis on the detailed exploration of the concept of freedom as articulated by these influential intellectuals.

In *The Iranian Political Language* (2015), Shahibzadeh offers a distinct approach by decentralising traditional historiography to examine the language of popular movements in Iran. He argues that this language was shaped around a democratic core, which remains evident in Iran's contemporary political struggles. Shahibzadeh's focus diverges from the conventional emphasis on the thoughts of influential figures. Instead, he explores the interplay between political language and political struggles, analysing how they influence each other and contribute to the formation of democratic concepts like citizenship, popular sovereignty, and freedom of speech. This perspective provides a unique lens to understand the evolution of democratic ideas in Iran, particularly in the context of grassroots movements and public discourse.

Recent years have seen a notable increase in studies dedicated to examining specific elements of the thoughts of key intellectuals in Iranian history. These studies aim to provide a more detailed and nuanced portrait of these influential figures, enhancing our understanding of their intellectual contributions and impact. As I will engage more with these researches throughout this study, I limit this review to three major recent scholarly works that inform the way I approach the thoughts of Shariati and Al-e Ahmad: Arash Davari's *Paradox as Decolonization: Ali Shariati's Islamic Lawgiver* (2021)[21], Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi's

[21] Davari's article examines one of Shariati's most controversial lectures, *Ummat va Imāmat* (1969), through the lens of Rousseau's concept of the Legislator, as discussed in *The Social Contract,* along with taking into account the complications of postcolonial contexts. This approach, when juxtaposed with Vahdat's analysis in his chapter entitled *Iranian Islamic Thinkers and Modernity* in *Mapping the Role of Intellectuals in Iranian Modern and Contemporary* (2020), highlights a stark contrast between two fundamentally different interpretations of Shariati. Vahdat tends to conflate Shariati with Khomeini, often aligning him with those who opposed his unorthodox Islamic reinterpretations. In contrast, Davari interprets Shariati from an anti-colonial perspective, while also emphasising the crucial differences between Shariati's and Khomeini's versions of

Shariati, Anti-Capitalism, and the Promise of the "Third World" (2022), and Siavash Saffari's *Rethinking the Islam/Modernity Binary: Ali Shariati and Religiously Mediated Discourse of Sociopolitical Development* (2015). Additionally, *Ali Shariati and the Future of Social Theory: Religion, Revolution, and the Role of the Intellectual* (2018), edited by Dustin J. Byrd and Seyed Javad Miri, is a significant contribution to this field that departs from the tradition discussed earlier. A key aspect that distinguished these more recent scholarly works from the earlier ones is their nuanced analysis of ideas and concepts, crucial for the historiography of ideas. While these studies do not specifically concentrate on Al-e Ahmad's and Shariati's conceptualisations of freedom, they offer essential insights that are vital for examining the idea of freedom in their thoughts, as will be demonstrated throughout this thesis.

In addition to these studies, there are studies that investigate post-1979 articulations of freedom as they are reflected in the country new Constitution. Apart from Asghar Schirazi's comprehensive work that presents an in-depth analysis of the post-revolutionary Constitution and its contradictions, Vahid NikPay's *Republican Islam* (2016) and his critical review of constitutional rights and liberties in the Islamic Republic (2017) analyse individual rights and liberties within the theocratic system, particularly focusing on the Iranian Constitution and its ideological inconsistencies. These works highlight the lack of clear normative frameworks for ensuring basic rights and freedoms in Iran, pointing to conceptual flaws in the constitution of the Islamic Republic and the systematic violation of basic principles of rights and liberties.

Comparable to NickPay's work, in his 2007 article, Khalili examines the conceptualisation of freedom within the context of the Islamic Republic's Constitution. Khalili argues that the post-revolutionary ideas of freedom, as reflected in the constitutional debates, have led to vague and contradictory conceptions of freedom. These inconsistencies, he suggests, are the consequences of an amalgamation of republicanism with a specific strand of Islamic doctrine. These diverse studies collectively illuminate the multifaceted nature of the discourse on freedom in Iran, from its intellectual roots to its constitutional expressions. They underscore the ongoing struggle to reconcile traditional Islamic views with modern democratic ideals, a

Islam. This divergence in understanding Shariati's Islamic theories, as we will see in Chapter Five, forms a central argument of this thesis.

challenge central to Iran's political and intellectual history, especially in the context of the 1979 Revolution and its aftermath.

Outline of the Chapters

With regard to the theoretical framework of the research, in Chapter One, I examine the specificities of Fanon's existentialist notion of freedom from his anti-colonial point of view. Fanon's works delve into the complexities and contradictions arising from the colonial context, drawing on his existentialist understanding of humanity. In his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), he analyses racial prejudice and systemic social discrimination through a psychoanalytic interpretation of lived Black experience. This psychological analysis of the colonial situation then evolves into a theoretical and empirical analysis of freedom from colonial and imperial domination, and freedom from individual and collective psychological problems engendered by the colonial system. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon expands his focus to encompass anti-colonial movements and their consequences in former colonies, establishing himself as an influential figure among intellectuals in the struggle against colonialism and imperialism. Fanon frequently employs the language of freedom throughout his work, although his understanding of this concept is neither unitary nor static.

Some aspects in Fanon's thought resonate with and present intriguing contrasts for Iranian readers. This chapter thus considers the reception of Fanon in Iran and the influence of his theory and narrative on the shaping of Iranian ideas of self-determination, liberation, and revolution. By analysing Persian translations of Fanon's works, I argue that Fanon's transnational anti-colonial ideas, as exemplified in *The Wretched of the Earth*, were received by an important Iranian readership as a reference and a theory of revolutionary self-determination. This approach also suggests investigating the Iranian Revolution in tandem with the global context of the 1906s and 1970s.

Chapter Two reads Jalal Al-e Ahmad's *Westoxication* discourse in conjunction with Fanon's phenomenology of the colonial situation. This chapter highlights the prevailing sentiment within Iran's post-1953 coup anti-colonial environment, wherein the concept of freedom was predominantly understood and prioritised in terms of national sovereignty and freedom from dependent dictatorship. This chapter presents two arguments, situating the *Westoxication*

discourse within the transnational anti-colonial milieu of the 1960s and 1970s. First, it argues that problematising the *Westoxication* discourse in terms of cultural confrontations suggested by some studies needs to be revisited and replaced with a Fanonian anti-colonial framework. Secondly, it contends that this framework yields a better understanding of the nuances of freedom as self-determination and its twofold meaning. We also see conceptualisations of freedom in this period that align with global social democratic movements. We see that freedom is not formulated in negative terms as freedom from interference, but mostly in positive terms and in terms of non-domination in its insistence on providing certain necessary and basic needs of the citizens, and the rule of law, so that they are independent.

Chapter Three offers an overview of Shariati's extensive scope of thought and his synthetic critical theory, examining his existentialist approach to the question of freedom. Shariati is, above all, an *intellectuel engagé* and his intellectual efforts to formulate a critical theoretical framework need to be investigated in line with his emphasis on practical engagement with social and political life. Having been a prolific writer and an ardent speaker labelled as 'the teacher of the Revolution', Shariati played a major role in (re)formulating Shi'a Islam in terms of modern political concepts by accentuating Islam's progressive and revolutionary elements. He shares with Al-e Ahmad the anti-colonial critique of *Westoxication*, but unlike Al-e Ahmad, who only gestured towards the idea of using the potentials offered by Islam, Shariati, for his part, managed to present a full-orbed reformed version of Islamic theology. As a synthetic critical theorist, Shariati frequently drew on early and mid-twentieth century Marxist, existentialist, and anti-colonial theories and presented his own narrative of (Shi'a) Islam through a critique of these theories. Shariati's arguments on freedom are predicated on radically rejecting any deterministic philosophical framework, either religious or non-religious, that denies human autonomy and self-determination.

Delving into Shariati's engagement with the anti-colonial thought of Fanon and French existentialism, Chapter Three explores the convergence and divergence between his conceptualisations of freedom and those of Sartre and Fanon. As we shall see, Shariati's nuanced understanding of freedom is influenced by Sartre, Fanon, and (Shi'a) Islam, but resists being reduced to any of these elements. Accordingly, I first argue that Shariati did not formulate an Islamic existentialism but rather an existentialist Islam, akin to Fanonian

existentialism. Within this framework, he conceptualised freedom not in terms of non-inference, but as non-domination. Moreover, I will illustrate how Shariati's existentialist Islam translates the spiritual into the political in terms of resistance and responsibility. By doing so, this chapter lays the foundation for Chapter Four which approaches Foucault's notion of "political spirituality" from a cross-cultural perspective and, hence, presents the two thinkers' conversation on the question of freedom.

Chapter Four addresses the complexities of navigating through Foucault's and Shariati's greatly nuanced terminologies and multi-layered notions to argue for a Shariatian reading of Foucault's notion of "political spirituality" that construes freedom as a self-transformative practice. This argument draws on two key assumptions. First, Shariati insists that the spiritual realm inherently involves the continuous struggle against different forms of domination, exploitation, and subjugation. This perspective emphasises the political responsibility of individuals to challenge oppressive systems. Secondly, Foucault insists on rejecting preconceived theories of the subject and instead examines the historical relationship between the subject and truth and the subject and freedom.

The chapter scrutinises Foucault's narrative of the 1979 Revolution, discussing political spirituality in relation to power dynamics, governmentality, and the subject's governing itself. Foucault views freedom as a practice within power relations, suggesting that resistance to domination and exploitation is a form of creative opposition. Accordingly, Foucault's ideas of "technologies of the self", particularly "care of the self" and *parrhēsia* (speaking truth), are examined as methods of resistance and exercising freedom. This perspective is then compared with Shariati's interpretation of Islamic doctrines and the Persian-Islamic concept of freedom, *āzādegi*. The chapter also relates notions of parrhēsia and *āzādegi* to concepts of truth, obligation, and freedom in Shariati's depiction of key figures in Shi'i Islam in terms of fearless speech and political spirituality. The chapter argues that understanding Foucault's political spirituality in the context of the Iranian Revolution is enriched by Shariati's links between *āzādegi*, spirituality, and the struggle for freedom, as well as his interpretation of freedom in terms of social and political justice.

Chapter Five delves into the varied opinions explored by revolutionaries regarding the role of Islam in governance. It seeks to shed light on their views about an Islamic government and its congruence with the idea of an Islamic state. This analysis involves extending critiques of

Foucault's concept of political spirituality to a comparison between two distinct Islamic political theories. Additionally, the chapter explores the stark contrast between the non-normative religiosity represented by Shariati and others, and the normative religiosity in Khomeini's theory of the Guardianship of the Jurist. The primary goal of this chapter is to determine whether these revolutionaries shared a unified vision of political Islam or held divergent perspectives, and to assess whether the freedoms they pursued were realised in the 1979 Revolution. The chapter posits that, from 1953 to 1979, the notion of freedom was understood as liberation from both external domination (such as colonialism and imperialism) and internal domination (authoritarian rule). While prior to the Revolution, self-determination was seen as encompassing national and popular sovereignty, post-Revolution Islamic statism reinterpreted this concept within an Islamic framework, ironically continuing the very forms of domination that many revolutionaries had resisted.

Furthermore, the chapter conducts a comparative analysis of the initial and final versions of the Iranian Constitution to evaluate whether the final document aligns with the revolutionaries' asserted goals. It suggests that the initial draft more closely mirrors pre-revolutionary ideals of freedom, characterised by republicanism and popular sovereignty, in contrast to the post-revolution Islamic statism. This analysis builds upon previous discussions of the ideas of Shariati, Al-e Ahmad, Fanon, and Foucault to better understand their conceptualisation of freedom vis-à-vis Islam.

Chapter One

Existentialist Freedom: Fanon, Sartre, and Beauvoir

Introduction

To explore the nuances of the concept of freedom in the Iranian context, this chapter engages with Frantz Fanon's transnational anti-colonial reflections on liberation and freedom. By initiating a dialogue between Fanon and thinkers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, the chapter sharpens our understanding of Fanon's unique perspectives on freedom in colonial and post-colonial scenarios. This exploration aids in deepening our rasp of two key issues: first, Fanon's influence on Iranian intellectuals—many of whom were francophone, educated in France, or based in France—who utilised his narratives and theories to shape their own conceptions of national freedom, liberation, and revolution; and secondly, the interpretation of freedom within the Iranian milieu from 1953 to 1979.

Fanon's work, beginning with the issue of Blackness in a colonial context, examines the complexities and anomalies of this setting, incorporating his existentialist account of humanity. His insights resonate and differ in intriguing ways from his Iranian readers' context. Fanon critically addresses the perceptions of non-white individuals by analysing racial prejudice, systemic discrimination, and the experience of being Black.[22] Over a decade, his

[22] A note on the term "Black" and its usage in this thesis is necessary at the outset, although it will be explored in greater detail in Chapter One. While the term "Black" is used throughout the chapter when discussing Fanon's works, it is a nuanced term as addressed by Fanon himself. In his article "West Indians and Africans", published in Esprit in 1955 and now included in *Toward the African Revolution* (1967) Fanon clarifies his stance. He explains that his concern in Black Skin, White Masks was 'the problem of the colored man in the white world' (TAR: 17). In the February 1955 article, however, he critiques both the notion of "Negro people"

personal experiences as a Black individual evolved into a theoretical and empirical study of liberation from colonial and imperial domination, and freedom from the personal complexes engendered by such systems. Expanding his scope, Fanon later offers insights into anti-colonial movements and their aftermaths, becoming a pivotal figure among intellectuals in countries fighting colonialism and imperialism. His work, consistently interwoven with themes of freedom, presents a complex and dynamic understanding of the concept.

A chronological examination of Fanon's Persian translations significantly enhances our comprehension of the evolution of revolutionary thought in Iran. With *Les Damnés de la terre* (first appearing in Persian in 1967) as the initial translation and *Peau noire, masques blancs* the last (translated and published in 1974), this study posits that Fanon's transnational anti-colonial thought, particularly reflected in the former book, is critical to grasping the formation of freedom concepts in pre-revolutionary Iran, with religious influences being secondary. The discussion will highlight how leftist and national-religious opposition groups united against domestic tyranny and foreign subjugation. It also examines how some intellectuals, including Jalal Al-Ahmad, Ali Shariati, Mehdi Bazargan (Iran's first post-revolution Prime Minister and Foucault's interpreter during his interview with prominent religious figure Ayatollah Shariatmadari), and Abolhassan Banisadr (the first president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, elected in 1980), perceived Islam as a potential source for fostering an authentic national identity and a revolutionary ideology.

Frantz Omar Fanon is part of the post-World War II generation of anti-colonial philosophers and activists who ardently championed the liberation of colonised nations worldwide. Born in Martinique in 1925, then a French colony and now a *département* in the Caribbean, Fanon served in the Free French army during the Second World War. Afterward, he pursued education at the University of Lyon in France in the late 1940s, successfully presenting his medical dissertation in 1951. From 1953 to 1956, Fanon worked as a psychiatrist in Algeria. He joined the Algerian National Liberation Front (Front de Libération Nationale) and wrote as an anti-colonial revolutionary in Algeria. Upon gaining Algerian citizenship, Fanon took on the

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as an "entity" and the "Negritude" movement. To delineate his argument, Fanon uses the terms "Black" and 'Negro" differently. He uses "Black" to refer to the Antillean before World War II, who is unaware of his racialisation within the white world. Conversely, he uses "Negro" to describe both the racialised status of people of colour and the Antillean who, after World War II, becomes conscious of her racialised status–that she is 'a systematized Negro'– and embraces the Negritude movement advocated by Aimé Césaire (TAR: 24). This distinction and its relevance to the Iranian context will be discussed later in this chapter.

role of the Provisional Algerian Government's ambassador to Ghana. Tragically, he succumbed to Leukaemia in Maryland, United States, in 1961 and was laid to rest in Algeria.

Fanon's enduring legacy stands as a powerful voice for decolonisation and liberation. He authored three impactful books: *Peau noire, masques blancs* (*Black Skin, White Masks*), 1952; *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* (*A Dying Colonialism*), 1959; *Les Damnés de la Terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*), 1961. In 1964, a collection of his essays penned between 1952 and 1961 was published under the title *Pour la Revolution Africaine* (*Toward the African Revolution*). His Nachlass, *Écrits sur l'aliénation et la liberté* (*Alienation and Freedom*) was published in 2018, containing numerous psychiatric and political articles, notes, letters, and plays, as well as annotations to his extensive array of philosophical and psychological books that offer insights into his profound engagement with these disciplines. Having far outgrown their original context, Fanon's writings are considered a source of insight and inspiration for anti-colonial and anti-imperialist revolutionaries in the global South, establishing him as a central figure in post-colonial and cultural studies (Huggan 2013; Schwarz and Sangeeta 2008; Miller 2006).

Fanon's Existentialist Freedom

According to Robert Bernasconi, 'wars of liberation fought by colonized people' is one of the factors which contributed to the development of Sartrean existentialism (Bernasconi 2012: 342).[23] Fanon is customarily classed as an existentialist (Bernasconi 2020: 328), and it is argued that his analysis of racialisation in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), presents 'a profoundly existentialist conception of human being' (Webber 2018: 131). This inevitably brings his ideas of freedom into conversation with those of Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, an important conversation to stage lest the distinctive contours of Fanonian freedom become lost in a vague and general notion of "existentialist" liberty.

[23] See *Racism is a system: how existentialism became dialectical in Fanon and Sartre*, in Crowell, S. G. (2012). The Cambridge companion to existentialism. Cambridge University Press.

Fanon shares with Sartre a radical idea of negative freedom.[24] Like Sartre, he fundamentally rejects the notion of human essence, or nature. Sartre's phenomenology of Being results in his radical account of freedom: '[freedom] is not a quality added on or a property of my nature. It is very exactly the stuff of my being […] freedom is identical with my existence' (BN: 439, 444). In Fanon's case the discussion of freedom takes the form not of Sartre's reflections on an unspecified individual—who, as Beauvoir points out, is tacitly male and white—but on the collective freedom of Black people in *Black Skin, White Masks*, scrutinizing 'the colo[u]r problem' in Black peoples' lived experience, or more precisely, their 'being through others' (BSWM: 1, 82). This gives Fanon's reflections on freedom a very different trajectory from those of the Sartre of *Being and Nothingness*.

In this respect, Fanon's account of freedom in relation to Black peoples resonates perhaps more closely with the Beauvoir of *The Second Sex* who, similarly, considers the freedom not primarily of the generic individual but of a social group: women. She analogises the situation of woman with that of the Jew and the Black, and holds the existence of the human being in general, and woman in particular, to be 'an autonomous freedom'. She writes: 'there are deep similarities between the situation of woman and that of the Negro. Both are being emancipated today from a like paternalism, and the former master class wishes to "keep them in their place"—that is, the place chosen for them' (SS: 22). There remains, however, a significant difference between Beauvoir's treatment of women and Fanon's writing on Black freedom. Beauvoir's concern is for a group within a society, the oppression of whom comes from within that society in a way that is not geographically differentiated: women and men dwell in the same country. Fanon, by contrast, contemplates a situation in which whole societies are occupied by powers geographically and almost always ethnically distinct from the local populations. Being Black in France and being Black in occupied Martinique are not the same experience, and the possibilities for revolution and the expulsion of the occupying force are very different. Nevertheless, there are important similarities. Comparable to

[24] While Sartre's or Fanon's idea of negative freedom is not exactly identical with Isaiah Berlin's notion of negative liberty, here the term connotes freedom from interference or constraint. As mentioned in the Introduction, negative freedom, according to Berlin, connotes freedom from interference by other human beings to do something. This conception of liberty deals with the question: 'What is the area within which the subject—a person or group of persons—is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?' Positive liberty tends to answer this question: 'What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?' (Berlin 2002: 169).

Beauvoir's study of the process of 'becoming a woman', Fanon scrutinises 'the drive toward socialization' of the Black person to show that it 'does not stem from the same motivation' as that of a white person (BSWM: 116).

Fanon is in constant conversation with Sartre in his writings; whether he agrees with Sartre on the foundations of existentialism and its perspectives, or disagrees with him on certain issues regarding the 'Black problem'. He fundamentally rejects attributing an essence to human being through displaying the situation of a Black person in various ethno-geographic contexts to argue how the Black human being is 'the eternal victim', regarded as being essentially inferior and of 'an appearance for which he is not responsible' (BSWM: 22). Where Fanon emphasises 'endlessly creating' oneself (BSWM: 179), he seems to agree with Sartre that '[m]an is nothing else but that which he makes of himself' (EH: 22). That is to say, he attributes no pre-existing conception to human being. According to his phenomenological ontology, *Being and Nothingness* (first published in 1943), man [*sic*] is nothing at first; he is a project that is able to become; he can transcend from nothingness to being, and freedom is the 'being of man' (BN: 441). Once more, however, whereas Sartre explores these notions primarily through the experience of the individual—in the sections on 'The Look' (*le regard*) or the waiter in *Being and Nothingness* for example—Fanon's primary concern is with how the endless creation of identity compounds the inequalities and oppression of colonialism.

Fanon, too, speaks the language of existentialism and uses Sartrean expressions to elucidate his arguments on the nuances of being Black in various milieus. In chapter seven of *Black Skin, White Masks*, he employs existentialist discourse to discuss the fundamental problem of recognition and its implications for the Black person, articulating his argumentation using the Hegelian dialectic of the *In-itself* (*en-soi*) and *For-itself* (*pour-soi*), originally taken from Hegel's notions of *an-sich* and *für-sich.* Sartre also founds his phenomenology of being on these two categories of being. He explains that being is *In-itself*; it is 'what it is'; 'infinite'. By contrast, 'the being of *For-itself* is defined, on the contrary, as being what it is not and not being what it is' (BN: lxv). The *For-itself* is conscious, as opposed to the non-conscious *In-itself*, and Sartre describes consciousness as 'a being such that in its being, its being is in question in so far as this being implies a being other than itself' (BN: 47). Thus, consciousness is the name Sartre gives to human being as a being which is not just an object receiving its meaning from outside itself; it is capable of becoming what it is not. Becoming requires consciousness of the choices

it constantly needs to make. This perpetual act of choosing involves a conscious distancing from the *For-itself*'s essence; that is to say, negating what it is. This perpetual negation is nothingness; the being put into question by being, or as Sartre explains: 'The being of consciousness qua consciousness is to exist at a distance from itself as a presence to itself, and this empty distance which being carries in its being is nothingness' (BN: 78). Fanon, too, takes consciousness as 'simple being-for-itself' (BSWM: 169) to elucidate his account of being Black, central to his arguments in *Black Skin, White Masks*: 'Unable ever to be sure whether the white man considers him consciousness in-itself-for-itself, he is going to be constantly concerned with detecting resistance, opposition, challenge' (BSWM: 173).[25]

The phenomenological ontology of both Sartre and Fanon requires human beings to be free and responsible. In the terminology of Sartrean existentialism, it is the transcendence of consciousness which constitutes the foundation of human responsibility. Transcendence is consciousness surpassing itself 'to the being which it is not' (BN: 87). Surpassing itself entails surpassing facticity. Facticity is the history of a consciousness; its appearance, experience, and what it is in an environment. It is 'the set of facts' true of a person 'at a given time' (Webber 2009: 19). Hence, consciousness, the unfixed structure of being, the *For-itself*, 'is thrown into a world and abandoned in a situation' (BN: 79), thus responsible for himself and the relations he has with others.[26] According to Fanon, having the experience of being Black in a racist society or having a past as a slave constitutes one's facticity. Although Fanon seems to agree with Sartre that one needs to transcend facticity and 'stand up to the world', he nevertheless highlights the difference that a Black person's body makes (BSWM: 57). He argues that 'the phenomenal world of the white man' is not identical to that of a Black man [*sic*] (BSWM: 124) and accuses Sartre of being negligent of this fact: 'Jean-Paul Sartre had forgotten that the

[25] Translation modified. In Fanon's original words in French: 'Pour le Noir français, la situation est intolérable. N'étant jamais sûr que le Blanc le considère comme conscience en-soi pour-soi, sans cesse il va se préoccuper de déceler la résistance, l'opposition, la contestation' (1952).

[26] Sartre explains: 'Human reality is its own surpassing toward what it lacks; it surpasses itself toward the particular being which it would be if it were what it is. Human reality is not something which exists first in order afterwards to lack this or that; it exists first as lack and in immediate, synthetic connection with what it lacks. Thus the pure event by which human reality rises as a presence in the world is apprehended by itself as *its* own lack. In its coming into existence human reality grasps itself as an incomplete being. It apprehends itself as being in so far as it is not, in the presence of the particular totality which it lacks and which it is in the form of not being it and which is what it is. Human reality is a perpetual surpassing toward a coincidence with itself which is never given' (BN: 89).

Negro suffers in his body quite differently from the white man' (BSWM: 106). Fanon seeks to embrace the past, 'recapture' the past, 'validate it, or condemn it' through his 'successive choices' in order to transcend it (BSWM: 177).[27] He stresses the necessity of transcending in order to exist: 'I am a part of Being to the degree that I go beyond it'; and he concludes: 'I am not a prisoner of history. I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny', Fanon concludes (BSWM: 179). In other words, yielding to a Black essence, a Black nature, or a Black past is being imprisoned by facticity and, thus, is acting in 'bad faith'.

'Bad faith', as Sartre explains and Fanon affirms, though not using the exact expression, is the result of evading the responsibility that freedom brings, and maintaining a belief in human fixed nature being responsible for the behaviour and destiny of man [*sic*] and his relations to others. Bad faith is 'hiding the truth' from oneself, where 'the deceiver and deceived' are one and the same (BN: 49). As Webber puts it, 'Bad faith is the view that one's actions in a given situation are determined by one's facticity' (Webber 2009: 22). Fanon's emphasis on the necessity of avoiding any action or mindset imposed in a predetermined manner by the past is in fact an emphasis on eluding bad faith. He writes: 'I do not have the right to allow myself to be mired in what the past has determined. I am not the slave of the Slavery that dehumanized my ancestors' (BSWM: 179). Bad faith is a project, a choice, which can be replaced by an alternative project: that of authenticity.

Authenticity is a key concept for both Sartre and Fanon. According to Sartre, authenticity is 'self-recovery' (BN: 70), a radical escape from the bad faith of attributing a fixed nature to human being; it is 'the acceptance of the true structure of our characters, as accepting that we are what we are not and are not what we are' (Webber 2009: 46). Based on defining man [*sic*] as 'a being having freedom within the limits of a situation', Sartre explains that the authenticity of 'the exercise of this freedom' can be assessed 'according to the choices made in the situation' (ASJ: 64-65). Fanon takes authenticity as freedom from 'unconscious conflicts' of the psyche, in a setting marked by the presence of racial prejudice and an inferiority complex (BSWM: 28). Although Fanon's use of the term can be understood to be in conformity with its Sartrean sense (AF: 12n), he uses it several times in *Black Skin, White*

[27] Fanon writes: 'Sartre has shown that, in the line of an unauthentic position, the past "takes" in quantity, and, when solidly constructed, informs the individual. He is the past in a changed value. But, too, I can recapture my past, validate it, or condemn it through my successive choices' (BSWM: 177).

Masks to address the pathology of relationships within a racialised context.[28] Nevertheless, Fanon cites Sartre and clarifies his account of an unauthentic attitude: 'Sartre has shown that, in the line of an unauthentic position, the past "takes" in quantity, and, when solidly constructed, *informs* the individual. He is the past in a changed value. But, too, I can recapture my past, validate it, or condemn it through my successive choices' (BSWM: 177).

Authenticity entails responsibility. To hold the authentic view of seeing the *For-itself* as a consciousness which is capable of transcending facticity through an absolutely free act of choosing among various projects drives Sartre to maintain that human existence equals freedom and 'to be free is to be condemned to be free' (BN: 129). This radical existential understanding of freedom focuses on human responsibility: responsibility as 'consciousness (of) being the incontestable author of an event or of an object' (BN: 553). And by being condemned to be free, man [*sic*] 'carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being' (BN: 553). Sartre affirms that this responsibility of the *For-itself* is 'overwhelming' since he [*sic*] is the one who makes himself and the world be: the world is created by him; he makes the world happen. He writes:

> Whatever may be the situation in which he finds himself, the *For-itself* must wholly assume this situation with its peculiar coefficient of adversity, even though it be insupportable. He must assume the situation with the proud consciousness of being the author of it, for the very worst disadvantages or the worst threats which can endanger my person have meaning only in and through my project; and it is on the ground of the engagement which I am at that they appear. It is therefore senseless to think of complaining since nothing foreign has decided what we feel, what we live, or what we are' (BN: 554).

Sartre's radical concept of freedom leads to the impossibility of evading one's responsibility—under any circumstances, even in prison or under the occupation of a foreign power. This is the proper context for Sartre's famous contention that 'Never were we freer than under the

[28] Fanon uses the term cultural authenticity in *The Wretched of the Earth* in the chapter titled On National Culture. In the context of this book, he discusses cultural authenticity in relation to the Western civilisation and national heritage and the role of intellectuals in shaping it.

German occupation' because it was a condition of 'total responsibility in total solitude'.[29] The situation forced every single person to make a choice, regardless of whether the choice was right or wrong. To Sartre, 'it is freedom which is the foundation of all essences since man reveals intra-mundane essences by surpassing the world toward his own possibilities' and 'the act is the expression of freedom' (BN: 438). He explains:

> I am indeed an existent who learns his freedom through his acts, but I am also an existent whose individual and unique existence temporalizes itself as freedom. As such I am necessarily a consciousness (of) freedom since nothing exists in consciousness except as the non-thetic consciousness of existing. Thus my freedom is perpetually in question in my being; it is not a quality added on or a property of my nature. It is very exactly the stuff of my being (BN: 439).

Fanon's understanding of responsibility compares to that of Sartre in two ways: acting as an individual, and acting as an individual who is also a member of humanity as a whole. Freedom is choice, at the individual level, or as he puts it, 'the first milestone on the way to responsibility' (AF: 332). Freedom is taking the responsibility as the subject of any act. When Fanon writes that '[t]he body of history does not determine a single one of my actions. I am my own foundation' (BSWM: 180), he tries to free the Black human being from the dialectic of their past: 'it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate the cycle of my freedom'. To Fanon, no other value but freedom is intrinsic; it is 'what is most human in man' (BSWM: 173). In the same way, he stresses human agency and the 'choices' which one needs to make in order to attain freedom: '[I have] one duty alone: That of not renouncing my freedom through my choices' (BSWM: 179). In the existentialist perspective of Fanon and Sartre, human being is 'not free to cease being free'.[30]

[29] Paris Alive, The Republic of Silence, in The Atlantic Monthly, Volume 174, December 1944

[30] Sartre further explains: 'I am condemned to be free. This means that no limits to my freedom can be found except freedom itself or, if you prefer, that we are not free to cease being free. To the extent that the *For-itself* wishes to hide its own nothingness from itself and to incorporate the *In-itself* as its true mode of being, it is trying also to hide its freedom from itself' (BN: 439-44).

On the other hand, freedom is synonymous with 'responsibility of human being' (AF: 270);[31] that is to say, one's responsibility toward one's acts and what one chooses to make both of oneself and other human beings. In the context of a racially segregated society affected by colonial racism or anti-Semitic racism, Fanon regards responsibility as 'the explicit human reality' and writes: 'I cannot dissociate myself from the future that is proposed for my brother. Every one of my acts commits me as a man' (BSWM: 66), and he further explains that responsibility in this sense means that 'the least' of one's actions 'involves all mankind. Every action is an answer or a question. Perhaps both. When I express a specific manner in which my being can rise above itself, I am affirming the worth of my action for others' (BSWM: 66n).[32] Based on such an account of 'humanity's responsibility', Fanon sees no difference, in the broad sense of the word, between colonial racism and any other kind of racism, such as anti-Semitism; since they are both 'applied against the same "object": man', and they all deprive man [*sic*] of the 'possibility of being a man' (BSWM: 65). Fanon agrees with Sartre and quotes him that 'there is not one of us who is not totally guilty and even criminal; the Jewish blood that the Nazis shed falls on all our hands' (ASJ: 136, quoted in BSWM: 140).

Sartre's Jew, Beauvoir's Woman, and Fanon's Negro

Fanon does not consider the oppression of Black populations to be utterly incommensurable with other denials of freedom. In *Black Skin, White Masks* he compares the phenomenon of 'Negrophobia' to that of anti-Semitism to discuss the lived experience of the Black person within a racialised and colonial situation. He draws on Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew* to study

[31] Responsibility of human being as in responsibility towards humanity. This is also comparable to the way De Beauvoir clarifies the relation between human being and humanity: 'With each man humanity makes a fresh start. And that's why the young man who seeks his place in the world does not initially find it and feels forsaken, useless, without justification. Whether he studies science, writes poetry, or builds motors, he transcends himself; he transcends the given situation, but he does not transcend himself for humanity. Humanity transcends itself through him' (PhW: 110).

[32] Fanon quotes Jaspers on the 'concept of metaphysical guilt' and the obligation one senses towards other fellow human being and notes that contrary to Jaspers, he does not believe that this responsibility and obligation stems from God: 'It is easy to see that God has no business here. Unless one chooses not to state the obligation as the explicit human reality of feeling oneself responsible for one's fellow man' (BSWM: 66n).

their similarities and differences, mainly because, as he puts it, 'the real source of the conflict' is the racist 'social structure' (BSWM: 75). This is the reason why both problems call for one solution: 'restructuring the world' (BSWM: 60).[33] Similarly, regarding racism and anti-Semitism, Sartre holds that 'the perspective of choice', the system, needs to be changed so that 'freedom decides on other bases, and in terms of other structures' (ASJ: 107). He later defines the colonial situation as a 'system', for he considers it as a 'reality' and a concrete mechanism which 'exists' and is 'embodied' in generations of colonists of all ages 'who have been shaped by colonialism and who think, speak and act according to the very principles of the colonial system' (CS: 138). Shifting from the individual to the society, both Sartre and Fanon shift from the notion of situation to that of structure, or 'structural situation' (Stawarska 2020: 97), to scrutinise the freedom of human being (Bernasconi 2012: 349).

A similar movement can be seen in Beauvoir. One is free 'in situation', she highlights (PhW: 124), but 'not every situation is equal'.[34] Although she always maintains the Sartrean account of freedom as transcendence, her position brings her closer to Fanon, rather than to the Sartre of *Being and Nothingness* (Kruks 1987; Bernasconi 2010; Webber 2018).[35] Beauvoir shares with Sartre the existentialist ethics on which she founds *The Second Sex*; her major work 'on the absence of freedom for woman' (Collins 2017: 325).[36] Through elucidating the phenomenon of social discrimination and oppression exerted against both women and minority groups, she investigates the relation of situation to freedom. Comparing the situation with that of the Jew and the Black, she tries to answer the question of being a woman within a context in which 'the masculine' is regarded as 'the absolute human type',

[33] Fanon is aware of the potential criticisms which this comparison might cause. He explains: 'Seeing only one type of Negro, assimilating anti-Semitism to Negrophobia, these seem to be the errors of analysis being committed here' (BSWM: 141).

[34] Beauvoir, S. de, & Howard, Richard. (1975). *Force of circumstance*. Penguin. Quoted in Kruks 1987: 111

[35] In *La Force de l'âge*, Beauvoir writes explicitly on her position towards the relation of freedom to situation: 'I maintained that from the angle of freedom as Sartre defined it- that is, an active transcendence of some given context rather than mere stoic resignation – not every situation was equally valid: what sort of transcendence could a woman shut up in a harem achieve? Sartre replied that even such a cloistered existence could be lived in several quite different ways. I stuck to my point for a long time, and in the end made only a token submission. Basically I was right. But to defend my attitude I should have had to abandon the plane of individual, and therefore idealistic, morality on which we had set ourselves' (The Prime of Life: 434).

[36] In *A Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*, edited by Laura Hengehold, and Nancy Bauer, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2017.

‘both the positive and the neutral’: the ‘normal’. The feminine is consequently defined ‘by limiting criteria, without reciprocity’, regarded as a ‘peculiarity’ which exemplifies a ‘natural defectiveness’ (SS: 15). Beauvoir’s contrast between the normal and the defective resonates with Fanon’s illustration of the Black and white world where ‘[s]in is Negro as virtue is white’ (BSWM: 106). Committed to the concept of existentialist freedom, both Beauvoir and Fanon begin by clarifying the situation in order to call for a change in structures.

Like Fanon, Beauvoir argues that there exists a situation of inferiority which it is imperative to acknowledge and address. Woman, the ‘Negro’, and the Jew—to some extent[37]—are similar, according to Beauvoir, in the methods applied to them to prove their inferiority and justify the discrimination exercised upon them, since one group of individuals attaining subjectivity would indicate the loss of sovereignty of the other; that is to say, the patriarch in the woman’s case, and the white racist in the Black person’s case. Beauvoir explains that regardless of race, caste, class, or sex, this similarity is ‘in no way by chance’ (SS: 22). The emancipation of the inferior ‘from a like paternalism’ is faced by fierce resistance of the ‘former master class’ which finds its benefits in preserving the ‘state of affairs’ and keeping the oppressed and the inferiorized in ‘the place chosen for them’, a state of dependency on the will of the superior (SS: 22).

Through analysing the stages of early childhood and adolescence through to being an adult woman, Beauvoir discusses the dynamics of identity formation and the process which leads to the affirmation that the woman is the inferior and inessential, in contrast to the essential subject: man. Beauvoir argues that this regard results in defining woman ‘not in herself’ and ‘as an autonomous being’ but as ‘the relative being’, ‘the Other’, which is, again, embodied in the Jew and the Black as ‘different’ and ‘inferior’ for the anti-Semite and ‘the American racist’, respectively (SS: 15-16). Meanwhile, there exists a fundamental difference: woman is the Other ‘at the heart of a whole whose two components are necessary to each other’ (SS: 34). Beauvoir mentions that the subjugation of the Jews or the American Blacks has occurred at a point in history, where the weaker minority was dominated by the stronger majority, while

[37] By ‘to some extent’ Beauvoir tries to acknowledge the differences among these three groups. She maintains that the Jew is not considered inferior, like the woman or the Black, but an enemy. She writes: ‘The Jewish problem on the whole is very different from the two others: for the anti-Semite, the Jew is more an enemy than an inferior, and no place on this earth is recognized as his own; it would be preferable to see him annihilated’ (SS: 38).

the subjugation of women has not happened following a historical event or as a consequence of being a minority group; it is a historical development (SS: 32).

Beauvoir's account of the socially constructed inferiority of the woman is rooted in her argument that 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'. She writes:

> No biological, psychic, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine. Only the mediation of another can constitute an individual as an *Other.* (SS: 340).

She argues that a child exists in itself and for itself without being self-aware of his or her sexual differentiation. It is through a process originating in the early stages of childhood that a girl or a boy is indoctrinated with the roles she or he would undertake in future and the person she or he will be. That is the 'intervention of others' which shapes an individual toward being a woman or a man (SS: 340), and in a woman's case, being dependent, an appendix, and man's (inferior) *Other*: 'She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—She is the *Other*' (SS: 31). This is comparable to Fanon's position on social conditioning where he applies Alfred Adler's psychological theories to the Antillean individual to argue that the *Other* for the Black Antillean is rooted in the feeling of inferiority 'he feels historically', being associated with 'the social structure' (BSWM: 165). He makes an example of a little song sung to children by childminders, 'a sort of conditioning through absurdity', which contains themes of negritude and 'rejection', later developing into anxiety and inferiority complex: 'Sleep, sleep, my negro, take your good time, because afterwards it's not funny' (AF: 526).[38] So, the Black, too, is not defined with reference to him or her; he or she is differentiated with reference to the white; he or she is 'made inferior' (BSWM: 115). He writes:

> Everything that an Antillean does is done for The Other. Not because The Other is the ultimate objective of his action in the sense of communication between people that

[38] He also writes in *Black Skin, White Masks*: 'A man, at the beginning of his life, is always congested, is drowned in contingency. The tragedy of the man is that he was once a child' (BSWM: 180, translation modified).

> Adler describes, but, more primitively, because it is The Other who corroborates him in his search for self-validation (BSWM: 165).

Beauvoir's theory of social conditioning agreed with the fundamental principles of Sartrean existentialism, but focused on situation as a factor that limits choice. So, although Beauvoir does not disregard the responsibility of the *For-itself* to transcend and surpass reality, her application of existentialist concepts to the issue of gender identity is comparable to Fanon's addressing the formation of racial identity. Hence, according to the Sartre of *Being and Nothingness*, being in a state of inferiority is the project of the *For-itself*; regardless of the situation, the consciousness—the *For-itself*—has a choice (BN: 290, 452). While Beauvoir argues that modified by the 'demands of situation' which being a female dictate, a girl 'cannot become a "grown-up" without accepting her femininity'; while 'she already knew her sex condemned her to a mutilated and frozen existence' (SS: 398).[39] Nevertheless, similar to Sartre, she maintains that existence entails continuous transcendence, and submission to facticity degrades being. Freedom, thus, is making choices as the author of one's life, and accepting the responsibility of the *For-itself* to transcend oneself. She explains:

> Every subject posits itself as a transcendence concretely, through projects; it accomplishes its freedom only by perpetual surpassing toward other freedoms; there is no other justification for present existence than its expansion toward an indefinitely open future. Every time transcendence lapses into immanence, there is degradation of existence into "in-itself," of freedom into facticity; this fall is a moral fault if the subject consents to it; if this fall is inflicted on the subject, it takes the form of frustration and oppression; in both cases it is an absolute evil. Every individual concerned with justifying his existence experiences his existence as an indefinite need to transcend himself (SS: 43).

The situation of Beauvoir's woman, thus, compares to that of Fanon's Black man: the male Black human being; which is to say that the 'norm' of oppression, for Fanon, is the Black male

[39] Just as Fanon confronts the fact of inferiorization of Black people to lay the foundation to discuss liberation, Beauvoir emphasises the validity of transcendence from this facticity and explains: 'When an individual (or a group of individuals) is kept in a situation of inferiority, the fact is that he is inferior. But the significance of the verb to be must be rightly understood here; it is in bad faith to give it a static value when it really has the dynamic Hegelian sense of 'to have become'' (SS: 23).

whose question of subjectivity is studied with regard to the white man. Black women are not even present as oppressed, reduced to what Jacques Rancière in a later time would call "the part that has no part" (Rancière 2004: 305). Fanon, it seems, has no awareness of the peculiar oppressions arising from the intersection of being both Black and a woman (Bergner 1995: 75).

The problem of Blackness in particular, and of race in general, however, is the genesis of Fanon's writings on the issues of the human condition where '[t]he white man is sealed in his whiteness' and '[t]he black man in his blackness' (BSWM: 3). Being chained to the definitiveness brought about by histories of slavery, exploitation, and inferiority is being imprisoned in 'the Tower of the Past', as Fanon notes (BSWM: 176). Black or white, man or woman, Jew or non-Jew, human beings can only free themselves through transcending the facticity of the past and present. Fanon emphasises that issues relating freedom are not a matter of skin colour or race; they involve two parties: the self and the other, the oppressor and the oppressed, in a reciprocal way.

From an existentialist point of view, freedom is essentially defined in relation to *the Other*. The *Other* plays a fundamental role in an individual's freedom. Sartre's Jew, Beauvoir's woman, and Fanon's Negro face the image *the Other* presents of them, and to them. Fanon writes in *Black Skin, White Masks*:

> Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognized by him. As long as he has not been effectively recognized by the other, that other will remain the theme of his actions. It is on that other being, on recognition by that other being, that his own human worth and reality depend. It is that other being in whom the meaning of his life is condensed (BSWM: 168-169).

This appeal to the politics of recognition resonates with Beauvoir's emphasis that the Other is as significant as consciousness itself, and traces its roots to the famous master/slave (or lord/bondsman) passage of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: 'Following Hegel, a fundamental hostility to any other consciousness is found in consciousness it-self; the subject posits it-self only in opposition—it asserts itself as the essential, and sets up the other as inessential, as the object' (SS: 32). Sartre similarly argues that the moment man [*sic*] discovers himself, he

discovers the others, without whom no characteristics can be ascribed to him: they are 'the condition of his own existence' and one is incapable of acquiring any knowledge of oneself without the indispensable existence of the *other* (EH: 41).[40]

In this line of argument, the concept of the Other gives rise to the concept of alienation. Freedom in the existentialist tradition is necessarily defined through alienation and its implications. Sartre argues that the recognition of one person by another, necessary though it is, is also the act of objectification: being apprehended by the Other as 'the Other-as-object' (BN: 525). He contends that the very fact of the Other's existence puts one in a situation 'which has an outside' and thus has 'a dimension of alienation' which cannot be removed (BN: 525). Sartre calls this the 'exteriority of the situation', which gives the concept of alienation the sense of the 'being-outside-for-others'; that is to say, 'the feeling of a lack of control over the nature that is ascribed to one' (Webber 2009: 124).[41]

So, given that the presence of the Other is alienating, what does freedom mean in the presence of the Other? Sartre explains that 'When we include the Other's existence in our considerations, […] my freedom on this new level finds its limits also in the existence of the Other's freedom. Thus on whatever level we place ourselves, the only limits which a freedom can encounter are found in freedom' (BN: 525). Given that a situation is one's engagement in the world and the way one chooses to encounter it, Sartre explains the relation of alienation to one's freedom through the concept of situation:

> the very meaning of our free choice is to cause a situation to arise which expresses this choice, a situation the essential characteristic of which is to be alienated; that is, to exist as a form in itself for the Other. We cannot escape this alienation since it would be absurd even to think of existing otherwise than in situation (BN: 526).

[40] Beauvoir notes that 'The category of the Other is as original as consciousness itself' and 'alterity is a fundamental category of human thought' (SS: 31).

[41] Sartre singles out four reactions to the Other's look: 'fear (the feeling of being in danger before the Other's freedom), pride, or shame (the feeling of being finally what I am but elsewhere, over there for the Other), the recognition of my slavery (the feeling of the alienation of all my possibilities)' (BN: 268).

Freedom as Dis-alienation

Alienation is a pivotal concept in Fanon's articulation of the colonial situation, as well as to the racially segregated world of racism and colonialism. For Fanon, alienation can occur on the intellectual level, through being stripped of one's culture and traditions, or by the act of exploitation of one race by another. The phenomenon of intellectual alienation is the outcome of 'depersonalisation', a state of mind which can be identified even within one's own milieu; that is to say, one's 'own country' caused originally by colonialism;[42] it is a 'systematized de-humanization' which is 'rationally pursued' (TAR: 64).[43]

Although Fanon recognises deep similarities between the situation of the Black and that of the Jew in *Anti-Semite and Jew* and employs Sartre's notion of 'the objectifying gaze' in explaining his account of the aliened Black, he accentuates a key difference. Critically reading Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, Fanon holds that what Sartre has said about 'the other' cannot be true for the Black man, since Sartre 'had forgotten that the Negro suffers in his body quite differently from the white man' (BSWM: 106). He explains in *Black Skin, White Masks*:

> Though Sartre's speculations on the existence of The Other may be correct (to the extent, we must remember, to which *Being and Nothingness* describes an alienated consciousness), their application to a black consciousness proves fallacious. That is because the white man is not only The Other but also the master, whether real or imaginary (BSWM: 106).

Fanon translates the 'feeling of inferiority' perceived by the Black man into 'a feeling of nonexistence' and this is the reason why he contends that the alienated consciousness discussed by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* cannot be applied to the Black consciousness.

There are, nevertheless, similarities. In an analogy to Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Fanon quotes Sartre: 'The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew: that is the simple truth from which we must start. . . . It is the anti-Semite who makes the Jew', to conclude that '[it] is the

[42] Here, Fanon is drawing on his medical practice and observations in Algeria.

[43] Fanon uses the term 'systematic racism' practiced by 'French troops in Algeria' (1967: 64).

racist who creates his inferior' (BSWM: 69). The feeling of inferiority, hence, constitutes Fanon's main theme in addressing the situation of the inferior: the Black man, the colonised man. In his speech titled *Racism and Culture*, he explains that alienation takes place when the colonialist imposes new conceptualisations of the world on the colonised and destroys the native's 'systems of reference' and 'cultural patterns' (TAR: 38). The colonialist, who is 'the oppressor', possesses the power and 'authority' to make the native inhabit an inferior position and impose on him 'a pejorative judgement with respect to his [the native's] original forms of existing' (TAR: 38). Consequently, to further explain the alienation of the Black, or the colonised man, Fanon articulates his problematic and theory in terms of key phenomena and concepts of *enslavement* and *dehumanisation*.

Fanon asserts that '[n]o attempt must be made to encase man, for it is his destiny to be set free' (BSWM: 180) and freedom is 'what is most human in man' (BSWM: 173). Although the notion of encasing man might indicate being enslaved by one's emotions or complexes,[44] Fanon's use of it is pointing to the historical phenomenon of slavery and enslavement of Black people in Africa. A 'Negro' today, throughout his arguments, is 'a former slave' (BSWM: 44). Accordingly, the colonial condition is to Fanon a 'status', which is translated as 'the organized enslavement of an entire people' in *The Wretched of the Earth* (WE: 48). The 'colonized people' are 'the slaves of modern times' (WE: 34), 'subjects' who must be 'utterly devoted' to their masters, the colonists (WE: 45). He describes European colonialism and imperialism in the 'underdeveloped world' as 'criminal' acts of 'massacres, forced labo[u]r, and slavery' (WE: 57).[45]

Dehumanisation, according to Fanon, is the colonised being 'reduced to the state of an animal' (WE: 7); it is, as he mentions in *Toward the African Revolution*, transforming the native

[44] Fanon writes in *Black Skin, White Masks*: 'The Negro [is] enslaved by his inferiority, the white man [is] enslaved by his superiority' (BSWM: 42).

[45] Fanon's chosen master-slave pattern has differences with that of Hegel and brings to attention the question of the recognition of 'the Negro' in *Black Skin, White Masks*: Is the liberation which is granted to the former slaves essentially the same as the liberation of a white man? Fanon argues that the Hegelian slave is not the same as the 'Negro' slave. The white slave turns away from his master to the object, while the Black slave turns away from the object and to his master. The freedom, and consequently the recognition of the Black man by the white man, is not earned by the former slave.

into an 'object'[46] through 'subjugating' them by applying a 'poly-dimensional method'; that is to say, '[e]xploitation, tortures, raids, racism, collective liquidations, rational oppression' (TAR: 35). This violent suite of acts of enslavement has existential implications for the 'enslaved', the 'colonized', the 'man of colour'; it will result in the complexes Fanon writes about in *Black Skin, White Masks* as the enslaving force of the Black, in the figurative sense of the word. The 'dehumanized' man [*sic*] is now an 'object man' who:

> … without means of existing, without a raison d'être, is broken in the very depth of his substance. The desire to live, to continue, becomes more and more indecisive, more and more phantom-like. It is at this stage that the well-known guilt complex appears (TAR: 35).

This phenomenon which is in fact articulated by the colonialist as the 'assimilation' of the colonised people occurs in forms of 'guilt and inferiority complexes' (TAR: 38), resulting in the individual's being enslaved, as opposed to being free. 'There are times when the black man is locked into his body', Fanon writes; in line with what Sartre contends about the Jew: 'His life is nothing but a long flight from others and from himself. He has been alienated even from his own body (AJ: 97).[47] Fanon emphasises that '[a] Negro is at the same time a slave of a spontaneous and cosmic Negro myth', 'their archetype' (BSWM: 22), a 'slave not of the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance' (BSWM: 87). '[T]he man of colour' is 'a former slave' who needs to know and face his 'conception of the world' in order to become 'a free being' (BSWM: 44).

Fanon's account of 'a free being' here resembles that of Beauvoir and Sartre, in the sense that it is the recognition by others which brings a being into existence. Fanon explains that he seeks to 'help the black man to free himself of the arsenal of complexes that has been developed by the colonial environment' (BSWM: 19). These 'complexes' constitute Fanon's problematic at both the individual and social levels of his analysis of the 'colonial environment' in his essays and books. The psychoanalyses of several cases in his professional

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[46] Aimé Césaire has used the term *chosification* to address this phenomenon. Cited in *Fanon* by David Caute, 1970.

[47] Here Fanon continues his argument to include 'the white man': 'I have ceaselessly striven… to show the white man that he is at once the perpetrator and the victim of a delusion' (BSWN: 175).

practice as psychiatrist follow Fanon's political audits of the post-colonial situation in the form of a dedicated chapter in *The Wretched of the Earth*.[48]

Fanon poses a question in the introduction of *Black Skin, White Masks*: 'How do we extricate ourselves?' (BSWM: 3). Drawing on Freudian psychoanalysis, Fanon, the psychiatrist, argues that in addition to considering the individual factor, 'the black man's alienation' has a social component which cannot be neglected because the inferiority complex of the Black person is the result of his environment which is marked by colonialism and the economic and mental calamities it imposes on the existence of the colonised (BSWM: 4). He writes: 'We cannot go resolutely forward unless we first realize our alienation' (WE: 163). In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon focuses mainly on the 'psychological elements' which alienate human beings (BSWM: 58).[49] He studies the language which the colonised people speak, love and the relationships which they might have with their partners of the same or different colour, and their literature, all of which reveal various aspects of living life as a person of colour. In a key article entitled 'Racism and Culture' he scrutinises the relation between the native and the native culture in the colonised context (TAR: 29-44). In a conspicuously straightforward language, in *The Wretched of the Earth* he draws on numerous examples to bring to light different aspects of alienation which he affirms as crucial for nations struggling for liberation and autonomy.

The various contexts within which Fanon was born and raised, fought, studied, practiced psychiatry, and acted as a revolutionary figure shaped his perspectives and contributed to the development of his theoretical framework. Seen through his writings, these contexts are the key to understanding a 'necessarily historical and political process' which constituted Fanon's

[48] Note that although the early and later writings of Fanon are read as a whole here, the distinction between the Fanon of Black Skin, White Masks and The Wretched of the Earth in terms of his French identity should not be overlooked. In Black Skin, White Masks, Fanon conducts his psychopathological analysis of Blackness as a French intellectual. The early Fanon, in a sense, writes about the Martinican experience from the perspective of someone who is both Martinican and French. Over the course of a decade, as Fanon becomes deeply involved in the anti-colonial wars of Algeria, he moves beyond the question of colour and addresses the broader question of the postcolonial solidarities. For a thorough analysis of Fanon's multiple identities, see Alessandrini, Anthony C. "Fanon Now: Singularity and Solidarity." The Journal of Pan African Studies, vol. 4, no. 7, 2011, pp. 52–74.

[49] It should be noted that Fanon repeatedly emphasises that what concerns him is the alienation of both the Black and the white.

‘essential aim’: ‘to think and construct freedom as dis-alienation’ (AF: 5). To clarify what he means by dis-alienation, he writes in *Black Skin, White Masks*:

> The analysis that I am undertaking is psychological. In spite of this it is apparent to me that the effective disalienation of the black man entails an immediate recognition of social and economic realities. If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process:
> - primarily, economic;
> - subsequently, the internalization- or, better, the epi-dermalization—of this inferiority (BSWM: 4).

Black Skin, White Masks is written, as explicitly stated by Fanon, ‘to discern the Negro on the road to disalienation’ (BSWM: 142). This dis-alienation can have different dimensions, depending on the situation. He writes:

> It is obvious—and I will never weary of repeating this—that the quest for disalienation by a doctor of medicine born in Guadeloupe can be understood only by recognizing motivations basically different from those of the Negro laborer building the port facilities in Abidjan. In the first case, the alienation is of an almost intellectual character. Insofar as he conceives of European culture as a means of stripping himself of his race, he becomes alienated. In the second case, it is a question of a victim of a system based on the exploitation of a given race by another, on the contempt in which a given branch of humanity is held by a form of civilization that pretends to superiority (BSWM: 174).

Written as his first book which he intended to present as his thesis, it tries to explicate the problem which is going to be addressed comprehensively in *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in 1962, in the wake of Algeria’s struggle for independence. While dis-alienation means refusing ‘to accept the present as definitive’ in the concluding lines of the former (BSWM: 176), Fanon’s theoretical contemplations and practical suggestions towards dis-alienating the colonised peoples are consolidated in the latter.

Black Skin, White Masks tries to explicate the problem which is going to be addressed comprehensively in *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in 1961, in the wake of Algeria’s struggle for independence. While dis-alienation means refusing ‘to accept the present as

definitive' in the concluding lines of the former (BSWM: 176), Fanon's theoretical contemplations and practical suggestions towards dis-alienating the colonised peoples are consolidated in the latter. *The Wretched of the Earth* is a detailed and thoroughly documented study of the anti-colonial movements and the post-colonial situation of the former colonies. Adding his Algerian experience to a body of knowledge on African revolutions, Fanon goes beyond theory to immerse himself deep in the phenomena which emerge during the struggle for liberation.

An authentic dis-alienation occurs when 'things, in the most materialistic meaning of the word, will have been restored to their proper places', Fanon writes (BSWM: 5). His radical solution to dis-alienate peoples kept in a position of oppression is counter-violence against the colonial violence, or as Sartre puts in his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, the colonial violence 'on the rebound' (WE: lii). This is where Fanon strikingly theorises the use of violence and violent revolutionary acts as the only tool of the colonised to gain their freedom, since, he argues, colonisation began and continued with violence. It is through the very process of liberation that the "thing" colonised becomes a human being; decolonisation 'fundamentally alters being' (WE: 2). The opening paragraph of *The Wretched of the Earth* reads:

> National liberation, national reawakening, restoration of the nation to the people or Commonwealth, whatever the name used, whatever the latest expression, decolonization is always a violent event. At whatever level we study it—individual encounters, a change of name for a sports club, the guest list at a cocktail party, members of a police force or the board of directors of a state or private bank—decolonization is quite simply the substitution of one "species" of mankind by another. The substitution is unconditional, absolute, total, and seamless (WE: 1).

Sartre's strong words in the Preface are addressed to the European coloniser, and intend to make sense of this dis-alienating violence. In support of Fanon's argument about the inevitability of violence in the process of liberation, Sartre, too, maintains that the colonised 'draws every moment of his humanity from it' and defines the coloniser as an entity which has gained the status of a human being in relation to its Other. He writes: 'We were men at his expense, he becomes a man at ours. Another man: a man of higher quality' (WE: lvii). Sartre does not fail to mention moral implications of anti-colonial violence, but does not

suggest a less violent alternative. He writes: '[t]he first reaction by these oppressed people is to repress this shameful anger that is morally condemned by them and us, but that is the only refuge they have left for their humanity. Read Fanon: you will see that in a time of helplessness, murderous rampage is the collective unconscious of the colonized' (WE: lii). The colonised person needs to 'reconstruct' herself, in Sartre's words, but 'the truth' is that 'no indulgence can erase the marks of violence: violence alone can eliminate them' (WE: lv):

> Get this into your head: if violence were only a thing of the future, if exploitation and oppression never existed on earth, perhaps displays of nonviolence might relieve the conflict. But if the entire regime, even your nonviolent thoughts, is governed by a thousand-year-old oppression, your passiveness serves no other purpose but to put you on the side of the oppressors (WE: lviii).

In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir discusses the impact of 'lessons of violence' which constitute a turning point in the process of the social conditioning of men. She argues that through quarrelling with his friends or family—through engaging 'in effective violence'—an adolescent boy 'affirms' himself as subject. She writes: 'when a boy settles a fight with punches, he feels he can rely on himself in his own interest' (SS: 837). While with his 'fist' a boy 'imposes' himself on the world and 'goes beyond it', it is forbidden for an adolescent girl to affirm and impose herself (SS: 430). Thus, Beauvoir contends that the woman who has never learnt lessons of violence will be filled with a feeling of weakness, inferiority, and timidity toward the world (SS: 407). She explains:

> The male has recourse to his fists and fighting when he encounters any affront or attempt to reduce him to an object: he does not let himself be transcended by others; he finds himself again in the heart of his subjectivity. Violence is the authentic test of every person's attachment to himself, his passions, and his own will; to radically reject it is to reject all objective truth, it is to isolate one's self in an abstract subjectivity; an anger or a revolt that does not exert itself in muscles remains imaginary. It is a terrible frustration not to be able to imprint the movements of one's heart on the face of the earth (SS: 404).

Beauvoir then compares the situation of the woman to that of Black people in southern parts of the United States:

> In the South of the United States, it is strictly impossible for a black person to use violence against whites… the way the black experiences himself in the white world, his behavior in adjusting to it, the compensations he seeks, his whole way of feeling and acting, are explained on the basis of the passivity to which he is condemned (SS: 405).

This compares to what Fanon mentions in *Black Skin White Masks*, quoting Sartre and emphasising that the state in which the black person cannot conceive of himself as a subject is a state of 'nonexistence'. He quotes from Sartre's *The Respectful Prostitute*:

> THE NEGRO: I can't, ma'am.
>
> LIZZIE: Why not?
>
> THE NEGRO: I can't shoot white folks.
>
> LIZZIE: Really! That would bother them, wouldn't it?
>
> THE NEGRO: They're white folks, ma'am.
>
> LIZZIE: So what? Maybe they got a right to bleed you like a pig just because they're white?
>
> THE NEGRO: But they're white folks…
>
> That's how it goes, ma'am. That's how it always goes with white folks.
>
> LIZZIE: You too? You feel guilty?
>
> THE NEGRO: Yes, ma'am.[50]

Although Beauvoir analogises the situation encountered by women to that faced by African people in French society, she does not prescribe violence as a cure for overcoming inferiority in the case of woman (SS: 823). She problematises the woman's 'situation' in order to present liberation 'as a moral and political imperative' (Stawarska 2020: 98). Yet, she insists that a woman is a human being, free and responsible for transcending her *For-itself* and 'to conquer herself'; since 'the future remains wide open' (SS: 840). These words are echoed in the concluding sentences of *Black Skin, White Masks*: 'I want the world to recognize, with me, the open door of every consciousness', for 'the real *leap* consists in introducing invention into existence' (BSWM: 181, 179). Beauvoir believes that the woman needs to be 'left to take her own chances' (SS: 840), just as Fanon seems to be 'demanding human behavior from the other' (BSWM: 179). On the other hand, similar to Sartre, Beauvoir endorses Fanon's theory

[50] BSWM: 106- 107.

on the role of violence in the colonial context (Stawarska 2020: 95).[51] The Fanon of *Black Skin, White Masks* seems to focus more on transcending oneself through not letting the past be determinative for the Black person, whereas the Fanon of *The Wretched of the Earth* seeks liberation in counter-violence. Beauvoir describes her and Sartre's encounter with the book in her autobiography:

> Fanon had asked Sartre to write a preface for *Les Damnés de la Terre* […]. While in Cuba, Sartre had realized the truth of what Fanon was saying: it is only in violence that the oppressed can attain their human status. He was in agreement with Fanon's book—an extreme, total, incendiary, but at the same time complex and subtle manifesto of the "Rest of the World" (Force of Circumstance: 313).[52]

However, there is a fundamental distinction between the liberation of women and the struggle of colonised peoples for national independence from the perspective of violence. This distinction lies in two different levels of analysis that Fanon explores in his first and his last books. Additionally, this difference is echoed in Simone de Beauvoir's analysis in *The Second Sex*, where she highlights that the issue of women's liberation is not geographical but concerns half of the human population. In this context, Fanon's examination of the Black psyche in *Black Skin, White Masks* can be compared to Beauvoir's analysis of the female psyche, especially in terms of the means available for asserting and establishing oneself.

In contrast, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon shifts the focus to the colonised psyche and the transformative impact of anti-colonial revolution through the lens of the 'interconnection between identity and history' (Kohn and McBride, 2011: 69). According to Kohn and McBride, Fanon perceives revolution as the collective act of radical confrontation that transforms 'an indistinguishable mass' into a collective of distinguishable individuals; that is, decolonisation as 'restructuring of subjects of history into agents of history' (Kohn and McBride 2011: 69).

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[51] Stawarska maintains that Beauvoir carefully read and deeply reflected on Fanon's arguments on emancipatory violence (Stawarska 2020: 95).

[52] The "Rest of the World" is the English translation for "Tiers Monde" in the original French version of the book *Force des choses*. See Beauvoir, S. de. (n.d.). Force des choses, p 220.

In the upcoming section and subsequent chapters, we will observe that in the Iranian revolutionary context, the collective act of revolt is intricately linked with the individuals who constitute the collective action. This means that, from the perspective of Al-e Ahmad and Shariati, revolutionary self-determination encompasses two interrelated dimensions: first, the revolutionary transformation of the individual into an agent of history, and secondly, the transformation of the collective entity that establishes and sustains this agency, culminating in the formation of a sovereign nation.

Transcending Space and Time: Expanding lived Experience

Fanon's essays on the issues of race, exploitation, colonialism, anti-colonial revolution, and independence draw upon, as he puts it, *l'expérience vécu* (the lived experience) of his own life and times, correspondingly developing an existentialist political philosophy which can transcend certain spatial and temporal specificities (Bernasconi 2012: 338). In the introductory pages of *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon acknowledges that his lived experience is limited to his birthplace, the Antilles, but eventually, he situates the Antillean in the larger context of race and finds himself 'compelled to see that the Antillean is first of all a Negro' (BSWM: 133). Although the question of skin colour remains central in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon contextualises it in the colonial system, asserting that through the lens of 'the Negro of the Antilles' he intends to describe the situation of 'every colonised man' (BSWM: 9)—to be addressed later from the transnational perspective of *The Wretched of the Earth*. This movement 1) from the specific to the general 2) from the psychological to the social and the political, and 3) from the Antillean context to all 'subjugated' peoples and states, is a key move in Fanon's thought, and one that is crucial for the argument of this thesis.

The expansion of Fanon's field of concern from the issue of anti-Black racism to a wider perspective including any racial prejudice and colonial domination in his later articles and books, is ever-present and exemplified in his deep psychological and political analyses of the colonial system and anti-colonial movements of Africa and North African Arab countries, particularly Algeria. Indeed, his existential political theory was appealing to intellectuals and

activists in countries that identified themselves as being colonised or affected by colonialism, such as Iran. Considering physical dissimilarities of Iranians with Fanon's Black of *Black Skin, White Masks*, and given that Iran never officially lost its sovereignty to colonial rule, an adoption Fanon's anti-colonial framework by Iranian intellectuals might be perceived as metaphorical. Hence, having thought in line with global Third-Wordlist anti-colonialism, Iranian activists found Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* to echo their own voice, regardless of their differences, including race and skin colour. Accordingly, I will argue in the following sections that 1) Fanon's anti-colonial framework and understanding of freedom can be applied to the Iranian context and 2) Fanon's analysis was received in the Iranian context not as a metaphor, but as a theoretical and analytical framework, contributing to our understanding of key pre-revolutionary texts, and 3) the concept of freedom gained a determining anti-colonial connotation in the intellectual discourse of the years between 1953 and 1979.

Although Iran had never been colonised, Iranian intellectuals branded their situation as colonial, semi-colonial, or indirectly-colonial; all connoting falling under the control of imperial powers and losing national sovereignty (Al-e Ahmad, SDI1: 47-9; SDI2: 148, 276; Baraheni 1979: 77, 89).[53] Yet, the term semi-colonisation can be scrutinised from three different (but interconnected) angles:

> 1) The international relations perspective from which the term semi-colonised mostly refers to the status of countries which were not officially colonised but affected by 'extraterritoriality' of Western countries. In *Legal Imperialism: Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and China* (2010) Kayaoğlu explains that extraterritoriality indicates a Western-imposed system in the countries which 'were not formal colonies of the West' but where 'Western states used extraterritorial courts to extend their authority, making these countries, in Mao's term, semi-colonies'

[53] Many scholars use the term semi-colonised for distinguishing between Iran's relation to colonialism and the rest of the countries that were formally colonised. For example, see Schayegh, C. (2007). The Social Relevance of Knowledge: Science and the Formation of Modern Iran, 1910s—40s. *Middle Eastern Studies*, *43*(6), 941–960. p. 942; Rahnema, Ali. (2014). Behind the 1953 Coup in Iran (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 289; Azimi, F. (2008). *The quest for democracy in Iran : a century of struggle against authoritarian rule*. Harvard University Press. pp. 66-7, 274; Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, Eskandar. (2021). *Gharbzadegi, colonial capitalism and the racial state in Iran. Postcolonial Studies*, 24(2), 173–194.

(Kayaoğlu 2010: 1). It is probable that the term has entered the Iranian political lexicon through Maoist or Marxist literature. Moreover, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels elaborate the history of colonialism in the East in a series of essays focusing on India, China, and 'Persia', implying the colonial—and not semi-colonial—situation of Iran in the nineteenth century. Marx, for instance, depicts the Anglo-Persian war of 1853 in terms of colonial violence against 'independent sovereigns' in pursuit of 'political and commercial resources' and writes:

> The declaration of war against Persia, by England or rather by the East India Company, is the reproduction of one of those cunning and reckless tricks of Anglo-Asiatic diplomacy, by virtue of which England has extended her possessions on that continent. So soon as the Company casts a greedy look on any of the independent sovereigns, or on any region whose political and commercial resources or whose gold and jewels are valued, the victim is accused of having violated this or that ideal or actual convention, transgressed an imaginary promise or restriction, committed some nebulous outrage, and then war is declared, and the eternity of wrong, the perennial force of the fable of the wolf and the lamb, is again incarnadined in national history (On colonialism: 91).

2) The Iranian perspective, which started to develop following a series of conflicts with Russia (the northern neighbouring country) and the West, as well as a history of extraterritoriality or "capitulations"[54] which also had racial implications and resulted in the Iranians' vast use of anti-colonial concepts and lexicon. However, to acknowledge their differences (and similarities) with the colonised nations, Iranian authors (such as Khalil Maleki, Jalal Al-Ahmad, and Ali Shariati) alternatively used the phrases "semi-colonised" and "indirectly colonised", where they perceived certain international relations as being essentially colonial. Additionally, the southern parts of Iran, especially with the arrival of Western oil exploitation plants in the twentieth

[54] Capitulation in Iran was abolished in 1927 but controversially enacted in 1964 through extending the 1961 Vienna Convention to include American military advisors. It granted immunity to American nationals working in Iran. In his well-known speech of 1964, Khomeini proclaimed that the ratification of the bill which extended political immunity to the American military advisors has in fact 'acknowledged that Iran is a colony' (quoted in Mottahedeh 1980: 28).

century, experienced 'direct confrontation with colonialism', giving rise to several Persian writers who tried to depict the lived experiences of people affected by the racial and colonial situation of the south (Mirabedini 2001: 400). The Iranian account is close to Fanon's point of view.

3) The Fanonian account, which refers to the situation of currently independent (former) colonies. Fanon uses the term 'semi-colonial' in *The Wretched of the Earth* for 'the State which has prevailed since independence' in Latin America where 'the national bourgeoisie sells itself increasingly openly to the major foreign companies' and where 'foreigners grab concessions through kickbacks' (WE: 117). Fanon also uses the terms 'underdeveloped' or 'developing' countries for such former colonies (and semi-colonies), customarily referring to them as the Third World. Similarly, Che Guevara, in his speech of 9 April 1961, defines semi-colonialism in relation to 'imperialist economic domination', asserting that 'we, politely referred to as "underdeveloped," in truth are colonial, semi-colonial or dependent countries', identifying these countries as those 'whose economies have been distorted by imperialism, which has abnormally developed those branches of industry or agriculture needed to complement its complex economy' (Guevara 2003: 135).

Nevertheless, Third World is Fanon's umbrella term for 'territories under domination', a term which Sartre also uses in his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* to point to the influence of Fanon in countries rising against imperial powers: 'the Third World discovers itself and speaks to itself through this voice' (WE: xlvi). Iranian intellectuals, with no seeming reluctance to refer to their nation as Third World or colonised,[55] recognised themselves in Fanon's account of Third-Worldism and colonial relations (Zahiri 2021; Dabashi, 2021; Farahzad 2017; Davari 2014). Hence, the notions of imperialism and colonialism which were customarily woven into the question of national identity, became two persistent keywords in the discourse of various Iranian political opposition groups. The three major oppositional ideological traditions—Islamism, anti-colonial nationalism, and Marxism-Leninism—which sought 'fundamental change' through revolution drew on anti-imperial sentiments and anti-colonial movements

[55] See Khalil Maleki's essays in *Nabard e Zendegi* [Battle of Life] (1955–1958) and *Elm va Zendegi* [Knowledge and Life] (1959–1960), Al-e Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi* (1962:14), and Shariati's *Islamology* (1972).

of the time (Bayat 2013: 277). The Fanonian anti-colonial call was echoed by a generation of influential Iranian revolutionary ideologues and 'cultural revivalists'[56]—such as Mehdi Bazargan (1907–1995), Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923–1969), and Ali Shariati (1933–1977)[57]—and Fanon was welcomed as the exemplary subversive who advocated concepts of 'anti-imperialism, decolonisation, racism, alienation, the Third World, resistance, and revolution' (Farahzad 2017: 129). Through a brief review of consequential historical events of the second half of the twentieth century, I will discuss in the following two sections the historical roots of the Iranian phenomenology of colonialism to contextualise Fanon's reception in Iran and its implications concerning the concept of freedom.

'A Matter of Necessity': Fanon's Persian Translations and Translators

Fanon was introduced to a Persian-speaking readership mostly through Iranian students who were studying in France in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s who found Fanon's radical Third-Worldist ideas relevant to their perception of Iran's situation.[58] Having been drawn on several international instances, Fanon's comprehensive arguments about colonialism and anti-colonial struggle travelled easily beyond nationalities and borders, and provided the Iranian intelligentsia with both a theoretical and practical guideline for a revolutionary change. This is the reason why Fanon's Persian translators—Manouchehr Hezarkhani, Mohammad Amin Kardan, Khosrow Golsorkhi, Nour-Ali Tabandeh, Ali Shariati, and Abolhassan Banisadr—all belonged to associations and groups active against the Iranian establishment of the time:

[56] See Milani, Mohsen M. (1994). *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution* (2nd ed.). Taylor & Francis Group. p 78.

[57] Bazargan co-founded the Liberation Movement of Iran (نهضت آزادی ایران) in 1961; Al-e Ahmad scrutinised Iran's situation and Western colonialism in his book *Gharbzadegi*; and Shariati theorised Shi'a Islamic revolutionary ideology which promoted the idea of returning to one's cultural roots.

[58] Except for Khosrow Golsorkhi (and probably Mohammad Amin Kardan). Golsorkhi (1944–1974) was a Marxist poet, journalist, sympathetic to the Organisation of the Iranian Peoples' Guerrilla Freedom Fighters (سازمان چریک‌های فدایی خلق ایران) who was put on trial and condemned to death in 1974 for plotting to harm the royal family.

Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's rule.[59] Representing different ideologies and worldviews, each of these translators chose for translation what they found most contributed towards their own cause: Khosrow Golsorkhi (1944–1974) was a Marxist poet, journalist, sympathetic to the Organisation of the Iranian Peoples' Guerrilla Freedom Fighters (سازمان چریک‌های فدایی خلق ایران). He was put on trial, condemned and executed in 1974 for plotting to harm the royal family.[60] Ali Shariati (1933–1977) has been credited as 'the real ideologue'[61] and 'the Fanon of the Islamic Revolution' (Abrahamian 2008: xxiv; Abrahamian 1982a: 466), popularising Fanon through his fervent revolutionary speeches and writings. Abolhassan Banisadr (1933–2021) was elected the first president of post-revolutionary Iran.

In *Translating Frantz Fanon Across Continents and Languages* (2017), Farzaneh Farahzad's chapter explores translations of Fanon in the Persian context to scrutinise the reasons why Fanon was chosen to be translated and, to some extent, explore how he was adapted and read in Persian. According to Farahzad, interest in Fanon arose from the intellectuals' determination to promote the 'discourse of resistance' against what they perceived as a colonial situation (Farahzad 2017: 130). Nevertheless, she suggests that the word and concept of 'colonisation' acted as a 'metaphor for the injustice' the Iranian intellectuals sought to defy, for Iran had never been colonised (ibid: 130). While Farahzad admits that ventriloquizing a foreign intellectual such as Fanon was a common tactic for avoiding persecution, she fails to acknowledge a constellation of original Persian anti-colonial essays in which 'colonisation' did not act as a 'metaphor'. The authors during (and after) the Second World War who drew on their lived experiences of Iran's invasion by the Allied forces and their prolonged presence, as well as the dispute over oil and the 1953 coup d'état—which was generally believed to be an American and British plot—developed a phenomenological approach to the Iranian colonial situation. That is to say, translating Fanon into Persian seems to indicate 'a matter of

[59] Kardan (b. 1931), who had translated Alexandre Dumas' *La Tulipe noire* in 1956, distanced from literary translation and translated Fanon's *Pour la révolution africaine*, *L'An V de la révolution algérienne*, and *Peau noire masques blancs*.

[60] For more discussion on Golsorkhi, see Chapter Four.

[61] That Shariati was the real ideologue of the Islamic Revolution is contestable if what is meant by the Islamic Revolution is the post-revolutionary Khomeinist governmentality. I have addressed this question in Chapters Three and Five.

necessity'[62] which called for radical action against colonialism rather than providing a hyperbolic metaphor for domestic or international challenges faced by a country which, as I noted above, had never been—directly—colonised.

Fanon's writings appeared in Persian as the revolutionary movement was gaining momentum in the decade leading to the 1979 Revolution. Growing interest in Fanon's approach towards the anti-colonial struggle in the late 1960s and 1970s is also an indicator of the Iranian opposition's turn to more radical and more violent means of struggle. Although *Pour la révolution africaine* is usually considered to be the first of Fanon's books to be published in Persian in 1970 (for example, Farahzad 2017; Zahiri 2021), this hypothesis does not seem credible for two main reasons: 1) Fanon's Persian translation of *The Wretched of the Earth* published in 1967 is cited in Jalal Al-e Ahmad's book *On the Services and Disservices of the Intellectuals (1964–1968)*—to be discussed in Al-e Ahmad's respective section, and 2) *The Wretched of the Earth* is mentioned in a report issued by the Iranian National Security and Information Organisation, SAVAK (سازمان اطلاعات و امنیت کشور), dated 14 October 1967 from France, in which the book's translation is discussed, along with its circle of translators and distributors. Here, SAVAK names 'Mosaddeq Publishing Organisation' as being linked to the 'Third National Front', a faction of the National Front established in 1965 and comprising the Liberation Movement, the National Party, and the Socialist Society which was active among the Iranian students in France and North America.[63] Although Ali Shariati has been believed for decades to be the translator of *The Wretched of the Earth* (Amanat 2017: 696; Farahzad 2017: 129; Davari 2014: 91n.22), this report refers to Abolhassan Banisadr as (at least the major) translator and confirms Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi's recent investigation regarding the translator of the book, in which Sadeghi-Boroujerdi interviews Banisadr and introduces him as the real figure behind the Persian translation, with Ali Shariati as the translator of Sartre's preface to the book and the person who recommended the book to Banisadr (Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2020). The report reads:

[62] As proclaimed in the publisher's note in the Persian translation (1967) of Fanon's essay *L'Algérie se dévoile* (Algeria Unveiled).

[63] For more details on the Third National Front, see: Abrahamian 1982a: 461

> […] Translating and preparing books and managing the organisation are undertaken by Hassan Banisafar [sadr] and his friends. Most probably, translation is done by him and [Hassan] Habibi.[64] Recently a book named 'Duzakhian-e Ruy-e Zamin' written by Frantz Fanon, the Black Antillean who later became an Algerian citizen and who passed away some time ago, was published by Mosaddeq Publishing Organisation—the original name of the book is 'the damned'. [The book] is being sold by the aforementioned persons including [Nasser] Takmil Homayoun, Rahsepar, Harati…. The book is published with a one-page foreword by the Third National Front and a few pages of Sartre's preface which was published in Tehran in Sokhan magazine. The remaining thirty pages [of the book] are written by the author of the book (Frantz Fanon), which is distributed … in every city of Europe and America (by Ghotbzadeh […] Some time ago (about three weeks) … a large number of the books were handed to Ehsan Naraghi … to be handed over to someone he knew to be sold by that person in university and other centres.[65]

It is clearly indicated in this report that only an extract of *The Wretched of the Earth* was prepared for publication. This extract is presumably a 'White-cover' or 'Jeld Sefid' [جلد سفید] of the books first chapter, *On Violence*. White-covers were pre-revolutionary books and manuscripts published anonymously as a way of escaping persecution (Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2020; Farahzad 2017; Amanat 1989; Rajaee 2010). Having been printed clandestinely by opposition groups, these underground books usually bore neither the name of the translator nor the date. There exist several copies of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and *L'An V de la Revolution algérienne*—as well as the first chapter of the latter—in the National Library and

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[64] Ehsan Naraghi According to SAVAK Documents, 2000: 182. Hassan Habibi is one of the authors of the first draft of the post-revolutionary Constitution. See Chapter Five.

[65] [تاریخ سند: 22 مهر 1346، [موضوع:] سازمان انتشارات مصدق، از: فرانسه تاریخ:22 /7 /1346 به: 315 شماره: / 315، متن سند:

این سازمان تشکیل شده از افرادی که در کادر رهبری جبهه ملی سوم مبارزه می‌کنند و به طوری که معلوم می‌شود کار ترجمه و تنظیم کتاب و اداره سازمان به دست حسن بنی‌صفر[صدر] و دوستانش می‌باشد و به احتمال زیاد ترجمه هم به وسیله او و حبیبی انجام گرفته و اخیراً کتابی به نام «دوزخیان روی زمین» نوشته فرانتس فانون سیاهپوست انتیلی که بعدها تبعه الجزایر شده و چندی درگذشته و نام اصلی کتاب به فرانسه « نفرین‌شدگان» می‌باشد توسط سازمان انتشارات مصدق منتشر شده که وسیله افراد فوق به اضافه تکمیل همایون . رهسپار . هراتی به فروش می‌رفت و از قرار معلوم روابط بنی‌صدر . حبیبی . هراتی . تکمیل همایون صمیمانه‌تر می‌باشد. کتاب مزبور با مقدمه یک صفحه‌ای از سازمان جبهه ملی سوم و چند صفحه مقدمه سارتر که در تهران[در]مجله سخن چاپ شده و بقیه در حدود 30 صفحه به قلم نویسنده کتاب (فرانتس فانون) می‌باشد و توسط افراد سازمان و یا افرادی که با آنها ارتباط دارند در تمام شهرهای اروپا و آمریکا (به وسیله قطب‌زاده) توزیع شده است ولی آنچه تاکنون مسلم شده سازمان مصدق توسط بنی‌صدر و حبیبی در پاریس اداره می‌شود. نکته دیگر اینکه چندی قبل (حدود سه هفته) احسان نراقی رئیس مرکز تحقیقاتی و اجتماعی که به تهران می‌آمد تعداد زیادی از کتاب‌ها را به او تحویل دادند که در تهران به دست کسی که می‌شناسد برساند و در دانشگاه و مراکز دیگر به وسیله آن فرد به فروش رود. بایگانی شود. نجم‌آبادی. کتاب احسان نراقی به روایت اسناد ساواک صفحه 182]

Archives of Iran which support the assumption that these books were introduced to the Persian reader prior to their official dates of publication. Considering these earlier editions and recent findings, the Persian translations of Fanon's four books are as follows in the order of their first Persian publication.[66] Later pre-revolutionary translations of the same book by other translators are also listed under each title.

Les Damnés de la terre (1961)

- *Duzakhian-e Ruy-e Zamin* [The Hellish Ones on the Earth]. Translated by Abolhassan Banisadr. Sartre's preface translated by Ali Shariati. Publisher unknown, 1967.

Pour la Révolution africaine (1964)

- *Enqelāb-e Āfriqā* [The Revolution of Africa]. Translated by Mohammad Amin Kardan. Tehran: Kharazmi Publishing House, 1970.

L'An V de la révolution algérienne (1959)

- *Vāpasin Dam-e Este'mār* [The Last Moment/Breath of Colonialism]. Translated by 'Katouzian'. Tehran: Toos Publishing House, 1973.[67]
- *Este'mār-e Mirā* [Mortal/ Dying Colonialism], translated by Mohammad Amin Kardan. Tehran: Kharazmi Publishing House, 1974.
- *Sāl-e Panjom-e Enqelāb-e Aljazāyer, Barresi-ye Jāme'eshenāsi-e Yek Enqelāb* [The Fifth Year of the Algerian Revolution, Examining the Sociology of a Revolution]. Translated by Dr Tabandeh. Nashr-e Farhang-e Eslami Publication, 1978.

[66] This list is a modified version from Farahzad's chapter in *Translating Frantz Fanon Across Continents and Languages* (2017).

[67] Katouzian was Khosrow Golsorkhi's pseudonym. In 1980, the book was republished under the same title but with the name of Khosrow Golsorkhi as the translator.

Peau noire, masques blancs (1952)

- *Pust-e Siāh, Suratak-hā-ye Sefid* [Black Skin, White Masks]. Translated by Mohammad Amin Kardan. Tehran: Kharazmi Publishing House, 1974.

Extracts

- *Aljazāyer va Mas'ale-ye Hejāb* [Algeria and the Problem of the Hijab]. From *L'An V de la révolution algérienne*, *L'Algérie se dévoile* [Algeria Unveiled]. Translated by Nour Ali Tabandeh. Publishing Place unknown: Misagh 1967.[68]
- *Nezhād-parasti va Farhang* [Racism and Culture], in Nezhād-parasti va Farhang [Racism and Culture]. Four essays by Alioune Diop, Jacques Rabemananjara, Aimé Césaire, and Frantz Fanon. Selected and translated by Manouchehr Hezarkhani. Ebnesina, Tabriz: 1969.
- *Darbāreh-ye Elal-e Ziādi-ye Jarāyem va Meyl be Khoshunat, Fasli az Ketāb-e Nefrin-shodegān-e Zamin* [On the Origins of High Crime Rate and Violence, A Chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*]. Translated by Nour Ali Tabandeh, in Jahan-e no [New World], Numbers 1-2, Spring 1970.
- *Vasiat-nāmeh-ye Fanon* [Fanon's Will], the 'Conclusion' chapter from *The Wretched of the Earth*, first published in 1963.[69] Also published in Andisheh, the Journal of the Iranian National Front in the US, Numbers 5–6, 1971.
- *Ehtezār-e Este'mār* [Dying of Colonialism]. From *A Dying Colonialism, Algeria Unveiled*. Translated by Khosrow Golsorkhi and Manouchehr Sarempour, in Jong-e Falak-ol-Aflak, 1973.

Ali Shariati describes *The Wretched of the Earth* in his introduction as 'the outcome of the greatest victorious revolutionary experience of our time', 'a rejection of Western bourgeois values and culture', and 'the scientific translation of a revolutionary experiment', holding that

[68] This is the first chapter of the book *L'an V de la Révolution algérienne* (1959) and its second edition which was published in 1966 with the title *Sociologie d'une révolution (L'an V de la Révolution algérienne)*

[69] This is according to Abdolkarimi in his *Neveshtehā-ye Asāsi-ye Shariati* [The Essential Writings of Shariati] (2014: 610).

‘it is the Algerian revolution which acts as a touchstone for assessing theories [of revolutions]’ (Duzakhian 1982: 29). Shariati mentions ‘the necessity for a cultural revolution’, for ‘culture is the guardian of revolutionary traits’, drawing the conclusion that ‘the colonised bourgeoisie and their intellectual apologetics need to be defied, for their hearts and minds, goals, and desired ideals are dedicated to being imbued with the West and becoming westernised to the bone’; because ‘How is it possible to fight against the domineering while their traits, behaviours and deeds, customs and traditions, and modes of consumption are aped?’ (ibid: 30). He continues:

> The reader is reading this book at a time when other solutions are incapable of solving the problem of human freedom. […] The decolonisation path, the path of de-domination, is a path reaching human triumph. Fanon calls humanity to this path (ibid: 31).[70]

Shariati then moves from ‘humanity’ to the ‘dominant’ coloniser and the ‘dominated’ colonised, weaving Fanonian themes together with the events of 1953 coup d’état, and speaking of ‘struggle’ and ‘overthrowing the system’ (ibid: 31). He presents *The Wretched of the Earth* as an ‘opportunity for matching [Fanon’s] descriptions and elaborations with current circumstances’; a book that must be read multiple times with great attention (ibid: 32). Shariati’s tone and vocabulary signal an ‘emancipatory revolution’, as I will discuss in detail in the respective section (ibid: 39). He introduces *Black Skin, White Masks* as an attempt to ‘discover human being’; a book in which Fanon is ‘neither Black nor white, [he is] colourless’ (ibid: 35). He writes:

> After *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon is not a Negro. He is a human. But an incomplete one. Although he has settled upon the white-adoring Black and the Black-praising Black, he is not even with the coloniser yet. To be completely free, he needs to accomplish that, too (ibid: 36).[71]

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[70] این کتاب را خواننده هنگامی مطالعه می‌کند که راه‌حل‌های دیگر از حل مسئله آزادی انسان ناکام مانده‌اند... راه استعمارزدایی، راه سلطه‌زدایی، راهی است که به پیروزی انسان می‌انجامد. فانون انسانیت را بدین راه می‌خواند.

[71] پس از «پوست سیاه نقاب‌های سفید» فانون دیگر یک زنگی نیست، او انسان است. اما انسان نیمه‌تمام. گرچه او حسابش را با سیاه سفیدپرست و سیاه سیاه‌ستا واکنده است اما هنوز با استعمارگر حساب صاف نکرده است. برای آنکه کاملاً آزاد شود، باید این حساب را هم تسویه کند.

Through Fanon's brief biography, Shariati presents *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* and summarises its first chapter which scrutinises the relation between culture and anti-colonial struggle, focusing on *Chador*, women's veil in Algeria. Shariati explicates Fanon's idea of the revolutionary culture and which 'shows how an objective process creates new approaches in theory and practice through enforcing new attitudes on the colonised people' (ibid: 39). Finally, speaking of 'rising for the revolutionary duty' and 'struggle for the homeland', Shariati presents *The Wretched of the Earth* to its Persian readership as a "light": 'what needs to be done is to look at the homeland and its struggle in this light' (ibid: 39).

Fanon's *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* was originally published in 1959, but Nour-Ali Tabandeh's[72] translation seems to have been translated from the re-edited version of the book, published in 1966, under the name *Sociologie d'une révolution* (*L'An V de la révolution algérienne*), since his chosen title for the translation matches with this edition of the book.[73] Tabandeh's introduction to the first official print of the book (in 1978) suggests two reasons which drew him into translating *L'An V de la révolution algérienne*: first, his Islamic viewpoint and Sufism reflected in his collaboration with Henry Corbin; and second, his anti-colonial and anti-imperial preoccupations as a witness to the 1953 coup d'état and its aftermath. Although Farahzad maintains that Tabandeh's translation 'conforms to the original French', her idea that it 'foregrounds the concept of revolution rather than colonialism' can be challenged (Farahzad 2017: 132).[74] Tabandeh's introduction points to 'the colonial situation' and creates a sense of urgency for an 'anti-colonial revolution'. According to him, the significance of the book lies in the fact that it has been 'written at the height of the [Algerian] revolution and sees everything through a revolutionary's eyes' (Jame'e shenasi-e yek enghelab 2005: 3). He writes:

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[72] Having finished his degree in Judicial Law at the University of Tehran, Tabandeh went to Paris for further studies, receiving his PhD from La Sorbonne in 1957. In Paris, he met with Henry Corbin and collaborated with him on a research project on Sufism which never materialised. Tabandeh was a jurist, working for the Ministry of Justice who retired two years before the 1979 Revolution.

[73] جامعه‌شناسی یک انقلاب، سال پنجم انقلاب الجزایر

[74] As mentioned earlier, Farahzad takes Tabandeh's translation of *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* to be the third translation of the book, first published after the 1979 Revolution, in 1982. I discussed that this is most probably false, since Tabandeh's introduction was written for the 1978 edition of the book.

> This book is the best written work to define a genuine anti-colonial—cultural, economic, and political colonialism—revolution and to characterise it comprehensively. It provides us with the opportunity to probably identify our weak points which are used by the enemy, so that we can see the windows through which indirect colonialism seizes the opportunity to influence and replace direct colonialism (ibid: 8).

The Persian translation of the first chapter of *L'An V de la révolution algérienne*, 'L'Algérie se dévoile' [Algeria Unveiled]] was published separately as a booklet entitled 'Algeria and the Problem of Hijab' [الجزایر و مســئله حجاب] in 1967 in tens of thousands of copies by several underground publishing houses. In this chapter Fanon offered an argument which seemed highly relevant to the Iranian context, weaving together the themes of women, the veil, and colonialism. He explains how the 'colonial administration' defines its 'precise political doctrine' based primarily on women. He writes:

> If we [the colonial administration] want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves and in the houses where the men keep them out of sight (A Dying Colonialism: 37-38).

Fanon stretches his theory of anti-colonial revolution to the body of women in line with his pathological analyses of the Algerian patriarchal society and its colonial culture to conclude that '[e]very rejected veil disclosed to the eyes of the colonialists' horizons until then forbidden, and revealed to them, piece by piece, the flesh of Algeria laid bare (A Dying Colonialism: 42). Having lived through the experience of Reza Shah Pahlavi's policy of forced unveiling of women in late 1930s, the Iranian reader adapted Fanon's colonial narrative of the veil and located it at the intersection of Islamic culture and anti-colonial struggle. In a short note on the first page of this booklet the publisher announces that 'As a matter of necessity, we publish a part of the *Fifth Year of the Algerian Revolution*, titled *Algeria and the problem of Hijab*. Therefore, we thank Dr. Tabandeh, the translator of this book' (1967: 3).[75] The "necessity" to print ten thousand copies and several reprints can be traced back to two

[75] به حکم ضرورت، دست به چاپ قسمتی از کتاب سال پنجم انقلاب الجزایر تحت عنوان حجاب و مسئله الجزایر زدیم. لذا از مترجم این کتاب جناب دکتر تابنده سپاس گزاری میکنیم. ناشر

interwoven factors: 1) submission to Pahlavi's forced unveiling of women and the agenda to promote a Western lifestyle in Iran was regarded as surrendering oneself to the imperial power, and 2) Muslim women's traditional clothing and the veil (or hijab) were considered an authentic act of resistance against Western and Eastern (Soviet) colonial interests. The cover of the booklet depicted a veiled woman, in black and white, holding a gun, contrasted with a red splash of blood as the background.

The question of confronting the colonial culture is also reflected in a small book comprising four lectures delivered by Alioune Diop, Jacques Rabemananjara, Frantz Fanon, and Aimé Césaire in the first Congress of Black Writers and Artists held in Paris in 1956. Manouchehr Hezarkhani[76]—who had previously translated Césaire's *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1966) and *Une saison au Congo* (1966)—selected and translated into Persian in 1969 the opening address of the Congress by Diop, Rabemananjara's *L'Europe et nous*, Fanon's *Racisme et culture*, and Césaire's *Culture et colonisation*. With all the essays focusing on colonisation and its relation to the colonised nation's culture and identity, the translator named the book after Fanon's title, *Racism et culture,* to probably accentuate the question of race in the Persian anti-colonial literature.

To familiarise the reader with the 'cultural aspects' of colonialism and the dynamics of the 'cultural metamorphosis' which occurs in colonised societies, Hezarkhani begins by posing a question: 'In the anti-colonial struggle, does there exist a cultural question?' He answers:

> In the first congress of Black writers, poets, and men of culture which was held in Paris in 1956, while discussing cultural issues specific to Black people, this general question which has overtaken the whole colonised world was scrutinised. This draft is the translation of these reports and analyses (Hezarkhani 1969: 5).[77]

[76] Manouchehr Hezarkhani (b. 1934) was in France from 1952 to 1976. He was a medical doctor and political activist and had a reputation for being the translator of Aimé Césaire in Iran. He translated La Tragédie du roi Christophe (1978), as well as works of Antonio Gramsci and Georgi Plekhanov for Arash magazine, a leftist literary quarterly dedicated to publishing 'littérature engagée' (Arash Quarterly 1968: 4).

[77] آیا در مبارزه ضداستعماری، مسأله‌ای به‌نام مسأله فرهنگی وجود دارد؟ نخستین کنگره جهانی ادبا، نویسندگان، شعرا و مردان فرهنگی سیاه‌پوست که به سال ۱۹۵۶ در پاریس برگزار شد، ضمن بحث درباره مسائل فرهنگی ویژه سیاهپوستان، این مسأله کلی و مبتلابه تمام دنیای مستعمره را نیز مورد بررسی قرار داد و ترجمه این گزارش‌ها و تحلیل‌هاست که در این جزوه از نظر خواننده می‌گذرد.

Hezarkhani is wary of the differences between the Black and the Iranian subject but argues that the cultural question applies to all colonised peoples regardless of their specificities. Furthermore, his tone and prose imply that Iran is part of the 'colonised world', right in the middle of a struggle against colonialism, and Iranians are required to educate themselves about cultural aspects of this struggle. In a Marxist lexicon, he argues that since 'colonialism is a social system' having 'an economic structure and political-ideological superstructure', 'colonial culture is the representation of the ideological dominance of colonialism in the colonised societies' (ibid: 5). Suffering the attacks of the 'civilised' world, such societies develop a 'ludicrous pseudo-culture' which 'inevitably carries the colonial ideology' (ibid: 10). Similar to Sartre's account of the Black Orpheus, Hezarkhani perceives the anti-colonial struggle as being 'literally a class struggle on a global level' which requires a 'cultural-ideological contest against capitalist colonialism' (ibid: 11). So, according to him, the importance of the first Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Paris lies in the fact that it challenged the colonial culture in its 'birthplace and trench' by 'a race that colonialism does not consider capable of thinking' and the significance of Fanon and Césaire is that they are 'anatomical experts' who have examined 'the philosophy of Western supremacy' and 'exposed to the world its decay and stench' (ibid: 12). In the concluding sentences of his introduction, he writes:

> Today, the forerunners of the global anti-colonial movement are mocking the technological superiority of the greatest powers of the capitalist world next to the walls of Huế, and taking the B52- Napalm "civilisation" down a peg in the middle of the Khe Sanh valley.
>
> Yesterday, Western missionaries sat down with compliant Eastern children to read them the verses of civilisation and breathe on them. Today, those children's descendants sing the song of the East's victory:
>
> The Eastern wind will gain victory over the Western wind![78]

[78] امروز پیش آهنگان جنبش ضداستعماری جهان، توفق تکنولوژی بزرگترین قدرتهای سرمایه داری جهان را در پای دیوارهای هوئه مسخره میکنند و پوزه «تمدن» ب ۵۲- ناپالم را در وسط دره خه سان به خاک می مالند. دیروز مبلغین روحانی غرب، کودکان سر به راه شرق را چارزانو می نشاندند تا آیات تمدن بخوانند و به آنها فوت کنند. امروز نوادگان آن کودکان، سرود پیروزی شرق را می خوانند: باد شرق بر باد غرب پیروز خواهد شد!

Hezarkhani globalises the anti-colonial movement in a similar way to how Fanon, in the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans-nationalises the issue and writes:

> Colonized peoples are not alone. […] The great victory of the Vietnamese people at Dien Bien Phu is no longer strictly speaking a Vietnamese victory. From July 1954 onward the colonial peoples have been asking themselves: "What must we do to achieve a Dien Bien Phu? How should we go about it?" A Dien Bien Phu was now within reach of every colonized subject (WE: 30-31).

Hezarkhani's fervent introduction to this selection, Tabandeh's foreword to *L'An V de la révolution algérienne*, Shariati's foreword to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, and the editor's note to the special issue on Aimé Césaire,[79] all exemplify what Farahzad mentions as possible reasons for choosing which of Fanon's works to translate in Iran in that particular era: to introduce, amplify, and promote ideas in an indirect way through other like-minded people to serve a purpose: in this case, that of the anti-imperial struggle (Farahzad 2017: 129). Iranian intellectuals' Third-Wordlist perspective echoed in Fanon's supranational identity through his involvement in and theorisations of the Algerian revolution. In the context of a world divided by the Iron Curtain of the Cold War, the Algerian War of Independence coincided with the 1953 coup d'état in Iran, customarily believed to be a turning point in shaping post-World War II Iranian political thought (Gasiorowski 1987; Katouzian 2009; Abrahamian 1982a; Keddie 2003/2006). As anti-Western and nationalistic sentiments were mounting in Iran, Algerian anti-colonial forces were preparing to embark on their struggle for freedom from French rule. The Algerian 'Front de Libération Nationale' (FLN) declared war on France on 31 October 1954, with the objective of regaining 'national Independence' through 'the restoration of an Algerian sovereign, democratic, and social state within Islamic principles and with respect to all fundamental liberties regardless of race and faith.'[80] With an eye on the Algerian case, the Iranian intelligentsia found the question of national sovereignty consistent with the colonial narrative of the political history of oil, foreign invasion, and

[79] Ketab-e Zaman (Time Books), first issue, date unknown

[80] 'La restauration de l'état algérien souverain, démocratique et social dans le cadre des principes islamiques Le respect de toutes les libertés fondamentales sans distinction de races et de confessions.' 1er novembre 1954 : le texte intégral de la déclaration du Secrétariat général du FLN, 31 octobre 2014, Jeune Afrique.

domestic dictatorship.[81] Hence, in the following sections I will review relevant historical circumstances to contextualise certain Iranian intellectuals and bring them into conversation with Fanon to present a phenomenology of Iranian anti-colonial discourse. I will then investigate the nuances this discourse gave to the meaning of freedom in the years leading to the 1979 Revolution.

[81] The war was covered in great detail in the press and interest in its leading figures and their ideas, including Fanon, grew as events unfolded. Perhaps, Ali Shariati is the best-known figure among the Iranian students in France who supported the Algerian independence movement and theorised it as a role model for Iran's struggle against imperialism. Algeria's charm, however, was not limited to the realm of thought; the time had come for turning to armed struggle, guerrilla wars, and violence against the imperial power and Algeria was the classroom. Shariati, Mostafa Chamran , and Ebrahim Yazdi were among those who arranged for guerrilla war training in Algeria and Egypt for their secret organisation, delivered by 'notable commanders of the Algerian Revolution' (Yazdi, 2004: 39). Mostafa Chamran (1932–1981) held a PhD in Physics from University of California, Berkley. He was a co-founder of Freedom Movement (Abroad). In post-revolution Iran, he served as deputy prime minister (29 April 1979 – 30 September 1979) and later, Islamic Republic of Iran's first Minister of Defence (30 September 1979 – 10 September 1980), and Member of Parliament (1980–1981). Ebrahim Yazdi (1931–2017) doctor of Pharmacology, was a co-founder of Freedom Movement (Abroad). He served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs (12 April 1979 – 12 November 1979), Deputy Prime Minister for Revolutionary Affairs (13 February 1979 – 12 April 1979), and Member of the Parliament (1980–1984).

Chapter Two

Toward a Fanonian Reading of Jalal Al-e Ahmad

This chapter is composed of two related parts. The first part delves deeper into the historical context that informs this study, examining pivotal events of the 1950s and 1960s that shaped the intellectual landscape and laid the foundation for the 1970s discourse on freedom. This part provides the necessary historical context for the second part, which focuses on Al-e Ahmad and his influential discourse of Westoxication or *gharbzadegi*.

I will present the historical context through the means of a review of key themes and events that significantly shaped Iran's twentieth century history. These include a brief historical background of the circumstances that contributed to perceiving Iran's situation as semi-colonised: the struggles for nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry, the 1953 coup d'état against Iran's prime minister, the Shah's White Revolution, and the 1963 uprising. The aim of this part of the current chapter is twofold. First, it is to highlight the significance of Iran's encounters with colonialism in shaping notions of freedom in the 1970s. Secondly, it is to provide the necessary context for bringing Al-e Ahmad into conversation with Fanon, and to make sense of Westoxication primarily through a Fanonian lens.

This part provides a general overview of the active political parties in the 1950s and the formation of Iran's Liberation Movement, one of the key players in the history of the 1979 Revolution. I will subsequently explore the discourse and core beliefs of Iran's Liberation Movement as it emerged as a response to the prevailing political circumstances and was

founded by individuals who later became prominent leaders in the revolutionary movement of the 1970s.

Following this historical contextualisation, the chapter will delve into Al-e Ahmad's thought, juxtaposing it with Fanon's writings in *The Wretched of the Earth* to draw parallels and contrasts. This comparative analysis is designed to reinforce the thesis that Al-e Ahmad's discourse on Westoxication is most comprehensively understood through the lens of Fanon's theoretical framework. In the concluding section, attention will shift to the journals to which Al-e Ahmad was a regular contributor, and which was published by Khalil Maleki, Al-e Ahmad's mentor. These journals offer profound theoretical insights into the questions that Al-e Ahmad's contemporaries were preoccupied with, especially the theorisations of freedom and critiques of contemporary political theories.

Oil and the Coup d'état

As discussed in the previous chapter, unlike many Asian and African countries, Iran never officially lost its national sovereignty to colonialism. However, dealing with the European colonialists remained a persistent challenge for the Iranian state. Regardless of the heads of state or the political system, the Iranian government had to face the economic and geopolitical interests of foreign powers—mainly Russia, Britain, and later, America—as there is a long history of national sovereignty being compromised through granting various concessions to the colonialist West. On the one hand, the Iranian heads of state were perceived as figureheads who served the interests of the imperialists (Katouzian 2009; Azimi 2008; Abrahamian 1982a; Mottahedeh 1980). On the other hand, the challenge of contending with European colonial powers contributed to the shaping of Iranian intellectuals' anti-colonial stance well before the 1953 coup.

Limiting the timespan to the twentieth century, Iran's strategic geopolitical position made it a focal point of interest for both the Russian and British empires (Chehabi 2009: 168). In 1907, these powers realigned 'their semi-colonial policy' in Iran, leading to the signing of the Anglo-Russian Entente (Katouzian 2009: 185). This agreement effectively partitioned Iran into three

zones: the southeast under British control, the northern and central regions, including Tehran, under Russian dominance, and a neutral zone, which notably encompassed the oil-rich fields (Keddie and Richard 2006: 69-70). The division was facilitated by France, in anticipation of the Triple Entente among these nations prior to World War I. Notably, Iran was left out of the negotiation process, with no consultation or information regarding the terms of the agreement (Keddie and Richard 2006: 69-70).

Dating back to 1901, a concession was granted to William Knox D'Arcy by the Qajar king, Muzaffar al-Din Shah (1896–1906) to explore and exploit oil in southern Iran for sixty years. In 1908, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company—later renamed as the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company—was founded and the D'Arcy Concession grew into the British monopoly of the Iranian oil industry. Reza Shah Pahlavi (1926–1941) tried to limit foreign influence by a number of measures, such as dismissing Belgians from the customs administration and transferring 'the right to print money from the British-owned Imperial Bank to his recently established National Bank of Iran (Bank-i Melli Iran)' (Abrahamian 1982a: 143). In 1932, Reza Shah cancelled the D'Arcy concession, but in 1933, he was compelled to sign 'an equally unfavourable agreement in order to prevent a confiscation of Iran's foreign assets' which extended the concession for an additional thirty-two years, from 1961 to 1993 (Abrahamian 1982a: 144).[82]

The addition of thirty years to the concession made the 1933 Agreement a symbol of Western dominance, with the Agreement being characterised in Iranian public sentiment by resentment towards British imperialism, and Reza Shah being regarded as a 'tool of British imperialism' by opposition groups.[83] In Katouzian's words, 'many Iranians (Mosaddeq included) believed, and still believe, that the 1933 Oil Agreement was the product of a carefully designed British plot which was executed by Reza Shah with unrivalled cynicism' (Katouzian 2009: 35). A World Bank report dating 19 February 1952 provides a comprehensive

[82] According to the 1933 agreement, as Abrahamian (1982a) has summarised, 'the oil company was to give up 400,000 square miles of land (much of it unwanted land), train Iranians for responsible administrative positions, and increase Iran's share of the annual profits from 16 percent to a modest 20 percent. In return, Iran (Abrahamian 1982a: 144).

[83] British Minister to the Foreign Office, "Student Protests in Europe," F.O. 371/ Persia 1931/34- 15352, quoted in Abrahamian 1982a: 154.

analysis of the agreements and disputes between the British and Iranian governments over the oil industry.[84] On this issue it reads:

> Eighteen years later, this event stood out prominently in the minds of Iranians. No one can persuade them that the 1933 agreement was valid. The Iranians consider the 1933 agreement void ab initio, the company having engineered the cancellation of the D'Arcy Concession and having secured the signature of the 1933 agreement under duress of the military and political power of the British Government. Comparison of the terms of the two agreements and the obvious manipulation by the Company of its 1931 financial statement conclusively prove that the alleged 1933 agreement was economically unsound and to the disadvantage of Iran.[85]

Iran faced complex challenges as the Second World War also left its colonial mark on lived experiences of the Iranians and their times. In 1941, following Germany's attack on the Soviet Union, the Allies invaded Iran, a situation that lasted until 1946. This invasion had wide-ranging impacts on Iran's economy, society, and politics. Reza Shah was forced to abdicate and was exiled because of his connections with Germany and the crown prince Mohammad Reza Pahlavi ascended to the throne. Additionally, Iran was strategically utilised as a passageway for safely transporting supplies to the Soviet Union, and its oil fields continued to be under British control and exploitation. The Soviets took control of the north of the country and the British the south, ushering a period of famine, socio-economic problems, and instability. As the economy was being disrupted, the United States' presence and influence started to increase.[86] In the wake of the pivotal role that access to oil played in benefiting the Allied forces, American interest in the oil industry significantly increased (Kinzer 2004: 86). In Nikki Keddie's words, 'While the British and Russians concentrated on their own spheres, the Americans had advisers to several key government departments and the military. Thus, all

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[84] Report number 75976. Disclosure date: 13 March 2013.

[85] *Iran - Nationalization of the Iranian oil industry : an outline of its origin and issues (English).* Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/740191468044072105/Iran-Nationalization-of-the-Iranian-oil-industry-an-outline-of-its-origin-and-issues. p. 14.

[86] American financial missionary to Iran, A. C. Millspaugh writes: 'I was informed… that the United States after the war was to play a large role in that region with respect to oil, commerce, and air transport, and that a big program was under way.' Quoted in Nikki R. Keddie and Yann Richard, Modern Iran, 2006: 106.

the Allies tried to influence Iranian politics to their own advantage' (Keddie and Richard 2006: 109-110).

Oil remained colonialism's partner in crime. Growing American and Soviet interest in oil in the post-War era—with Britain continuing to be the principal oil concessionary during the War—finally clashed with Iranians' growing concern over foreign domination. The Nationalisation of Oil Movement[87] in the 1950s is regarded as an exemplary case reflecting Iran's struggles for national sovereignty that shaped of the Iranian anti-colonial preoccupations over the course of half a century. A number of Iranian politicians, represented by Mohammad Mosaddeq, had started campaigning for the nationalisation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Mosaddeq was a member of the National Front that had prepared a bill for nationalisation of the oil industry. On 20 March 1951, the parliament ratified the bill. In May 1951 Mosaddeq was elected Prime Minister, after having made his formal assumption of office conditional on the prior passage of the Repossession Bill (Katouzian 2009: 94). This started the oil dispute between Iran and Britain which eventually led to the coup d'état of 1953 against Mosaddeq's government.[88]

Orchestrated by Britain and the United States, the coup was supported by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the religious establishment, and the conservative politicians (Katouzian 2003: 119). The tumultuous oil dispute culminated in the establishment of a consortium, involving British Petroleum (previously the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company) and eight other European and American oil firms, agreeing to share oil profits with Iran (Abrahamian 1982: 419). Al-e Ahmad, whose writings vividly capture the oil-infused anti-colonial sentiments of the 1960s, wryly branded this consortium as 'the internationalisation of the oil industry'. This sarcasm was echoed by Fanon, who in *The Wretched of the Earth* observed that Mosaddeq was 'liquidated' to ensure that oil trusts could safeguard 'their "legitimate interests" using economic agreements' (WE: 27). The coup, in Abrahamian's words, represented 'a classic case of nationalism confronting imperialism in the Third World' (Abrahamian, 2001: 182).

[87] جنبش ملی شدن صنعت نفت

[88] For a chronology of the 1953 coup d'état, see Rahnema, Ali. (2014). Behind the 1953 Coup in Iran (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press.

The coup's impact extended far beyond its economic consequences, with other effects being equally significant. While the country was enjoying some political freedoms and freedom of expression, the coup affected democratic practice and jeopardised such liberties (Katouzian 2009b; Azimi 2008; Keddie and Rachard 2006; Saei 2007). Mosaddeq had been elected Prime Minister by a 'competitively elected' parliament following a period of 'reduced repression of opposition forces and an opener political environment' (Saei 2007: 144). In the wake of the coup, pro-Mosaddeq demonstrations were suppressed and newspapers which advocated Mosaddeq and the Tudeh Party (People's Party)—the largest leftist party supporting Mosaddeq—were banned.[89] Mosaddeq was tried before a military court and sentenced to three years in solitary confinement, followed by indefinite house arrest. Hossein Fatemi (1979–1954), another key figure of the oil nationalisation movement and Mosaddeq's Minister for Foreign Affairs was tried and sentenced to death. Having received technical assistance from Western intelligence services, Mohammad Reza Shah established in 1957 Iran's National Security and Information Organization intelligence agency—Sazman-e Ettelaat va Amniyat-e Keshvar—known under its acronym, SAVAK, to control and suppress opposition groups, including the National Front.

In *Mosaddeq and the Struggle for Power in Iran* (2009), Katouzian reaffirms a popular belief that 'as long as foreign concessionaires were operating on Iranian soil, many efforts to establish democracy, freedom and the rule of law, eradicate political and financial corruption, and achieve social and economic progress would be thwarted', arguing that finding a balance between concessionaires actually meant that 'the country did not enjoy real independence' (Katouzian 2009: 138). In other words, the status of a country with a head of state acting in favour of foreign powers rather than in the national interest and suppressing political freedoms of his own people would translate into a colonial situation, weaving expressions of Iran's national sovereignty and independence into the concept of freedom.

[89] For a study of Tudeh Party in the context of the coup see Behrooz, Maziar (2015). *The 1953 Coup in Iran and the Legacy of the Tudeh*. In Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran (pp. 102–125). Syracuse University Press.

1960s: Liberation Movement of Iran, the White Revolution, and June 1963 Uprising

Between 1960 and 1963, opposition in Iran experienced a resurgence, leading to the re-establishment of three key political parties: the Iran Party, the National Party, and the Socialist Society. Additionally, the National Front was revitalised as the Second National Front by Khalil Maleki and his associates. This period also saw the emergence of a new generation of intellectuals who influenced the resolute character of the revolution that ultimately dismantled the monarchy (Abrahamian 1982a: 450-451).

In this climate of political reawakening, the Liberation Movement of Iran, also known as the Freedom Movement of Iran, was founded in 1961 by Mehdi Bazargan (1907–1995), Mahmud Taleqani (1911–1979), and Yadollah Sahabi (1906–2002) (Chehabi 1990: 140-158; Abrahamian 1982a: 460-461). These founders were instrumental both in the events leading up to the 1979 Revolution and in its immediate aftermath, although they quickly found themselves overshadowed by Khomeini's growing power and were later positioned as opposition to the Islamic regime. Bazargan, who was later appointed prime minister of Iran's provisional government following the Revolution, defined the organisation in its inaugural declaration as embodying the principles of being 'Muslim, Iranian, adhered to the Constitution, and Mosaddeqist' (Chehabi 1990: 158). This declaration, alongside the official statutes of the Liberation Movement, provided concise definitions for fundamental tenets that shaped a vision and theoretical framework aimed at navigating the paradox of establishing a postcolonial state. This framework aimed to confront colonialism and imperialism while consciously distancing itself from Marxist-Leninist and communist ideologies. Instead of these two poles, it anchored itself in an indigenous reference point deeply rooted in Iranian Shi'ism. Proclaiming constitutionalism provided a historical context for Iranians' struggle against despotism and for the establishment of the rule of law. Moreover, it redefined Iranian nationalism, not in terms of Aryan ancient identity and race, but through the legacy of Mosaddeq, confining it to what Mosaddeq symbolised. For these reasons, it is worth quoting parts of these critical tenets at length:

1. We are Muslims, but not in the sense of considering prayers and fasting our only duties. Rather, our entry into politics and social activism was prompted by our national

duty and religious obligations. We do not consider religion and politics as separate, and regard serving the people… an act of worship. We recognize freedom as a primary divine gift and its achievement and keeping are for us an Islamic tradition and a hallmark of Shi'ism. We are Muslims in the sense that we believe in the principles of justice, equality, sincerity, and other social and humane duties before the French Revolution and the Charter of the United Nations proclaimed them.

2. We are Iranians but do not claim that Iranians are superior to other peoples. Our love for Iran and our nationalism imply no racial fanaticism, and are on the contrary based on an acceptance of our own shortcomings and honouring of others' virtues and rights. We insist on our country's standing and independence but are not opposed to contacts with other nations, [as we live] in an [increasingly interdependent] world.

3. We respect the Iranian Constitution as an integral whole, and will not accept that its basic principles, namely the freedom of thought, press, and assembly,[90] the independence of judges, the separation of powers, and finally honest elections be forgotten and sacrificed, whereas minor details and misinterpreted legal formalities occupy the major role, resulting in the abrogation of national sovereignty and the rule of law.

4. We are Mosaddeqists and regard Mosaddeq as one of the great servants of Iran and the East, but not such as he has been accused of out of stupidity and hindsight, where his school is presented as synonymous with lawlessness, the strengthening of communism, xenophobia, and the separation of Iran from the rest of the world. We honour Mosaddeq as the only head of government in Iran's history who was truly chosen and loved by the majority of the people, who acted in a direction desired by the people, enabling him to establish bonds between the rulers and the ruled and

[90] Translation modified.

> explain the true meaning of government and thus achieve the greatest success in Iran's recent history, namely the victory over colonialism.[91]

The significance of the Liberation Movement's defining traits for understanding pre-revolutionary conceptions of freedom lies in its engagement with Islam. This particular narrative of Islam is a crucial differentiator among various approaches to political Islam. In the upcoming chapters, we will explore how this liberal-democratic interpretation of Islam shapes a form of spirituality that starkly contrasts with Ayatollah Khomeini's understanding of Islam and, consequently, his perspective on freedom. In addition to this, Bazargan's declaration clearly singles out the concerns which preoccupied intellectuals and political activists of the 1960s. Bazargan, representing a school of thought that gradually developed into what is known today as religious intellectualism or religious reformism, tries to refashion a home-grown framework to meet modern needs such as freedom and the rule of law. He is a prominent figure in the league of lay religious thinkers who believed, and still believe, that Shi'ism is an Iranian-Islamic worldview which can provide both an ideology of resistance and a political theory compatible with modern concepts.

Bazargan's reference to the rights and freedoms laid out in the Iranian Constitution was a deliberate effort to spotlight the jeopardy facing national sovereignty within the framework of law. He and his contemporaries, who shared similar concerns, were convinced that Iran was grappling with the effects of Western imperialism, embodied in the coup against Mosaddeq. This belief is a key reason why Mosaddeq was (and is) celebrated as a national hero, revered for his resistance against the colonial interests of the West.[92] Moreover, Bazargan's mentioning the stark contrast between Mosaddeq's image as portrayed by the regime's official narrative and his true image held by the public signalled the deepening chasm between the government and the people. In this context, identifying as a Mosaddeqist signified participation in the anti-colonial struggle, which encompassed resistance against

[91] English translation by H. E. Chehabi in *Iranian politics and religious modernism : the liberation movement of Iran under the Shah and Khomeini* (1990: 158).

[92] See Mottahedeh, R. P. (1985). *The mantle of the Prophet : religion and politics in Iran*. Simon and Schuster. p. 115-116.

both Western powers and their perceived agent, the 'foreign-imposed' Shah (Gasiorowski 1987: 262).

The White Revolution

As stated in the introduction of this chapter, my primary focus is to frame Westoxication within an anti-colonial context, rather than viewing it as a stance of religiously-inflected opposition to the West or from a broad civilizational perspective that overlooks the anti-colonial viewpoint. To achieve this, it is essential to briefly examine the White Revolution, highlighting specific elements that sparked a backlash, and to consider its consequences. This approach aims to provide a nuanced understanding of Westoxication, situating it firmly within the context of Iran's historical and political struggle against colonial influences.

In 1963, the Shah launched the White Revolution, a series of economic, social, and political reforms aimed at rapidly modernising Iran. Officially dubbed "the Revolution of the Shah and the People", this top-down revolution focused on dismantling the feudal land ownership system as its main goal. It also sought to improve the educational system, established extensive Literacy Corps and Health Corps programs, initiated the privatisation of state-owned enterprises, and encouraged employee stock ownership. Another notable advancement was the extension of voting rights to women, along with their eligibility for elected office and judicial positions, representing a major shift in Iran's traditional societal fabric (Abrahamian, 2008: 131).[93] The Shah's approach to these reforms was significantly shaped by his perception of the industrialised West and his ambition to secure dynastic legitimacy and institutionalise his monarchy, as Ansari notes (Ansari 2001: 2). However, despite its intentions, the White Revolution is recognised as a critical turning point, contributing to the events leading to the 1979 Revolution and the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini (Amana, 2017; Katouzian 2009; Keddie and Richard 2006).

The White Revolution, with its profound impact on Iran's contemporary history, presents certain contradictions that are crucial for understanding the development of the

[93] The Family Protection Law of 1967 further advanced women's rights by raising the legal marriage age, restricting unilateral divorce rights for men, and improving women's rights in child custody cases.

Westoxication discourse in that it co-opted concepts such as revolution itself, anti-colonial struggle, the labour movement, national sovereignty, and, most saliently for our purposes, freedom. In this narrative, the Shah was portrayed as the architect of the revolution, its 'leader' and 'imperial commander-in-chief', nurturing the idea in his mind and laying the foundation for its dissemination throughout the country (Andishehā-ye Rastākhiz 6: 8). These elements of the White Revolution, particularly its appropriation of revolutionary and anti-colonial rhetoric, played a significant role in shaping the discourse of Westoxication in Iran. To better comprehend this at the risk of over-simplification, let us view the sequence of events from the perspective of the opposition. Initially, a democratically elected prime minister, championing national interests is ousted through Western intervention. This is followed by a consolidation of power by the Shah, again with Western support. The Shah then introduces the White Revolution, co-opting the language of the leftist opposition and positioning himself as its leader. Concurrently, the revolution's policies focus on Westernising Iran during a period when the Western presence is strongly associated with colonialism and imperialism.

From the simplified perspective outlined above, one aspect or contradiction of the White Revolution was its pronounced nationalist and egalitarian undertone, with its lexicon deeply influenced by Marxist ideologies (Matin-asgari 2009: 220). Adopting a lexicon which was very similar to that of a wide range of Leftist ideologies, the Shah's revolution intended to avert the possibility of a communist or Red revolution (Fiuzat 1996; Ansari 2001; Abrahamian 2008).[94] Given the suppression of the anti-colonial nationalist and leftist opposition groups after the 1953 coup, this co-option of the expressions that to a great extent belonged to the supporters of Mosaddeq engendered a negative reaction.

[94] The presence and domination of state power and in socio-economic affairs of the country and its effects on the socio-political forces have been studied comprehensively. For instance, in Government in the Pahlavi Era (1996), Fiuzat writes: 'In rural areas, the state dominated to a great extent and became involved in all social conflicts, leading the rural population and other disadvantaged social classes to be against the state. The state became the entrepreneur in all social areas, leading to chronic political, economic, and social crises. These crises were characterized by inflation, unemployment, black market, intermediary services, and non-productive parasite jobs, accompanied with bribery and bureaucratic corruption. These crises put the ideological instrument of the state in impasse, providing more ground for the transformation of social groupings' (Fiuzat 1996: 162).

Another aspect of the White Revolution was its pro-Western attitude and westernising policies while the country was under the domination of the West, now clearer than ever after the coup. This aspect is more complex. Although it transformed Iranian society in various ways and left long-lasting marks in many progressive ways, its Western orientation and its close ties with the neo-colonial economic strategies of the United States after World War II rendered it contentious (Fiuzat 1996: 161). This aspect of the revolution heightened tensions and contributed to its complex legacy in Iranian history. In summary, while the White Revolution aimed at modernising Iran and preventing a communist uprising, its Western-centric approach and top-down implementation ironically set the stage for a popular revolution.

The June 1963 uprising

The June 1963 uprising, led by Khomeini, marked a significant shift in the political landscape of Iran. This uprising occurred following a call from clerics who traditionally were either supportive of the Shah or refrained from openly confronting the monarchy (Abrahamian 1982a; Chehabi 1990; Mohsen Milani 1994). Khomeini, who opposed women's suffrage and land reform, became known for his direct criticisms of the Shah himself (M Milani 1994: 50). His speeches and calls to boycott the referendum led to a series of violent confrontations between government forces and anti-government protesters, culminating in Khomeini's arrest. His firm opposition to the regime earned him a reputation as a resolute dissident, eventually leading to his exile to Iraq.

In the timeline leading up to the 1979 Revolution, the events of 1963 are often seen as a pivotal moment. The June uprising, along with Khomeini's notable anti-colonial speech on October 26, 1964, regarding political immunity for American advisers, elevated Khomeini to a position of significant opposition leadership.[95] These events also enhanced the clergy's

[95] Khomeini delivered this speech in response to the bill passed by the Shah's regime, which granted American military personnel and their families diplomatic immunity in Iran. Khomeini strongly opposed this bill and criticised the government's pro-Western policies for compromising Iran's sovereignty and allowing foreign powers, especially the United States, to exercise undue influence and control. He argued that this bill made Iranians second-class citizens in their own country and placed American personnel above the laws of Iran. See Abrahamian, E. (1982). *Iran between two revolutions*. Princeton University Press. p: 456.

overall role in opposition, aligning them with other (Islamic) opposition groups like the Liberation Movement. The Liberation Movement was notably active in France (and across Europe) as well as in North America, where it established robust ties with the Confederation of Iranian Students in Europe. Members of this student group, who were also part of the Liberation Movement, advocated for broadening the coalition to include Khomeini and other politically active clerics. This push for inclusion signified a strategic move to strengthen the movement's influence and unify various opposition factions against the Shah's regime. More non-religious intellectuals, including Jalal Al-e Ahmad, recognising the emerging political activism of the clergy, particularly Khomeini, saw an opportunity to bridge the longstanding gap between these two groups (Abrahamian 1982a: 461). This alignment of intellectuals with the newly politicised clergy, especially with Khomeini as a central figure, marked a significant turning point in the lead-up to the 1979 Revolution. From this juncture, the once-distinct lines between these two influential groups became increasingly blurred, setting the stage for a more unified opposition movement against the existing political order.

As mentioned in Chapter One, Frantz Fanon's first Persian translation of *The Wretched of the Earth* was prepared (in around 1967) by the Iranian students affiliating with the Third National Front, the Liberation Movement in Paris. Providing an apt theoretical framework, Fanon's determined language and detailed analysis of both the colonised and postcolonial situation resonated heavily with Iran's own Jalal Al-e Ahmad and his *gharbzadegi* or Westoxication: a phenomenology of being 'plagued by colonisation' which tied the colonised subject's freedom—in its broadest meaning—to the concept of freedom understood as national independence. As we saw in Chapter One, the reception of Fanon's writings shed light on how the Iranian opposition, joining the global Third-Worldist anti-colonial trend, felt the need to shift from theory to practice following the events of the 1960s and used Fanon's writing as a handbook for rising against the semi-colonial state of Pahlavi's Iran in the 1970s.

Al-e Ahmad quotes the transcript of this historical speech as an appendix to his book *On the Services and disservices of the Intellectuals* (1979).

Jalal Al-e Ahmad: the 'Existentialist Muslim'[96]

Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923–1969) and his major work, *Gharbzadehi* or *Westoxication* (1962), created a discourse which nurtured a rethinking of the Iranian subjectivity in a post-War polarised world of the Western and Eastern blocs. To Al-e Ahmad, Iran identified with neither of the First or Second tiers, but was a 'semi-colonised' Third World country whose first encounters with the West were through colonisation.[97] The sharp and expressive prose in his novels and essays made him one of the central figures of the Iranian intelligentsia from the 1960s onward. There is almost no study of the 1979 Revolution that fails to mention him and his seminal book, *Gharbzadegi* (1962), which portrayed 'anti-colonial preoccupations' of his time and left a discursive legacy for decades, provoking intellectual debates to this day (Mirsepassi 2019b: 18). As Dabashi holds in his recent study of Al-e Ahmad, *The Last Muslim Intellectual* (2021), Al-e Ahmad is Iran's Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Edward Said 'all in one' (Dabashi 2021: 31, 27). Although Al-e Ahmad's reflections on the domination of the West are comparable to those of his post-colonial contemporaries in Africa and Asia, he is not customarily studied within the established post-colonial literature. Instead, he is primarily recognised as a key figure in contributing to the anti-Western Islamic discourse of the 1979 Revolution. Nevertheless, Eskandar Sadeghi argues that his anti-colonial thoughts connect him to the bigger context of race and racialisation (Eskandar Sadeghi 2021: 173). Al-e Ahmad's 'dominant colonial terms' and his role in articulating the Iranian situation call for reading and understanding all his writings, including *Gharbzadegi*, in line with anti-colonial influential texts of Fanon and Césaire (Dabashi 2021: 27; Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2021: 16, 23). In this section, I scrutinise Al-e Ahmad's Francophone existentialist thought and re-examine his writings through a Fanonian anti-colonial lens.[98] With Fanon being regarded as the epitome of the non-white, non-European source of inspiration who has eloquently enunciated the

[96] 'Existentialist Muslim' is Hamid Dabashi's phrase in *The Last Muslim Intellectual* (2021: 226)

[97] *On the Services and Disservices of the Intellectuals* (1979, Vol I: 43, 87)

[98] Dabashi argues that while Al-e Ahmad 'grew increasingly drawn to existentialism, as a literary and philosophical school', he was not simply at the 'receiving end' of Sartre, Césaire or Fanon (Dabashi 2021: 262, 64).

situation of colonised peoples, Al-e Ahmad's account of freedom thus seems to be better comprehended in light of a Fanonian understanding of freedom.

Al-e Ahmad borrowed the term *gharbzadegi* from Ahmad Fardid who, having had similar concerns, had in fact coined the term. However, it should be noted that what Fardid originally meant by *gharbzadegi* was different from Al-e Ahmad's account of the term. Fardid is held to be one of the pioneers who introduced Western philosophical concepts to the Iranian intellectual sphere (Abdolkarimi 2010: 120); yet, he invented the term precisely to critique the dominance of Western philosophy in the East.[99] Although Fardid was examining the possibility of an Eastern philosophy, Boroujerdi (1996) believes that he was in fact giving 'the Orient/Occident dichotomy a philosophical twist' (Boroujerdi 1996: 63). Nevertheless, this dichotomy was accentuated in Al-e Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi* and served as a popular idiom in which to address issues surrounding colonialism, imperialism, and the consequences of the West's presence in Iran (Boroujerdi 1996; Mirsepassi 2019b).[100]

Jalal Al-e Ahmad was born and raised in a Shi'a Muslim clerical family. When he finished high school in 1943 and attended the Teachers' Training college, he was, as he writes, 'a young boy… from a religious milieu, now being brought to the confusion of World War II' (SA: 48).[101] Interested in religious reformism and critical readings of Islam, he distanced himself from his family and Shi'a heritage and joined the communist Tudeh Party (People's Party).[102] In 1948,

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[99] Abdolkarimi argues that Fardid, who was educated in France, first introduced Henry Bergson (to whom he was initially inclined philosophically) and then, Heidegger (through French sources) for the first time to the Iranian audience. He also argues that the way Fardid encountered Heidegger changed his intellectual path and has had an enormous influence on Iranians' theoretical discourse. Fardid, who admired Existentialism and Sartre, later denounced Western philosophy, and influenced the discourse of authenticity and nativism (Abdolkarimi, *Knowledge*, No.62/1, 2010: 124).

[100] Part of *Gharbzadegi* was first published in Kayhan Monthly (Kayhān-e māh) which belonged to Kayhan company – one of the Iranian largest publishing houses. Kayhan Monthly was forced to retract Al-e Ahmad's essay and eventually shut down after only publishing two issues. Al-e Ahmad's following visits to Europe, Saudi Arabia - for Hajj, the Soviet Union, the United States, and Israel, as well as his travelogues compensate, as he puts, for the 'forced silence' imposed by censorship (SA: 53). Although these travelogues and his later writings were usually subject to censorship, Al-e Ahmad found a way to get them published; either by telling the story of the present in the past, such as *Nun wa al-Qalam* (By the Pen), or by publishing them secretly, in the case of *Gharbzadegi*.

[101] This autobiography is published in the book titled *One Dug Well and Two Pits and Something of an Autobiography* (1964) [Yek Chāh va Do Chāleh va Masalan Sharh-e Ahvāl].

[102] As he writes in his short autobiography, he read Ahmad Kasravi's critical essays on Shi'ism in high school and wrote a number of such essays himself which were never published. In 1943, he translated and published a short essay titled *Illegal Mourning* from Arabic written by Seyyed Mohsen Amin Jabal Amili (1967–1952), a

he parted ways with the Tudeh Party along with Khalil Maleki, co-founder of the 'Third Force'—indicating that it was neither liberal capitalist nor communist, adopting a socialist anti-colonial agenda—and started translating Gide, Sartre, Camus, and Dostoevsky. In 1950, he married Simin Daneshvar (1921–2012), a prominent Iranian scholar and post-colonial novelist.[103] They extensively wrote, translated, and published in several literary and political journals. The nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry and the coup d'état of 1953 which followed had an immense impact on Al-e Ahmad's thought. He translated Gide's *Retour de l'USSR* (1936) [*Return from the USSR*] and Sartre's *Les Mains sales* (1948) [*Dirty Hands*] 'both for obvious reasons' relating to his experiences with the Tudeh Party, as he writes in his autobiography (SA: 51). Being a Francophone, Al-e Ahmad's translations indicate his intellectual ties with French existentialism, especially Sartre.[104] Dabashi writes:

> All these translations from the late 1940s to the mid- 1960s, mark Al-e Ahmad's decisive turn towards philosophical and literary existentialism, the typical turn of his generation of intellectuals disappointed with the Tudeh Party and in fact all other forms of organised and disciplined politics. In existentialism they found a personal solace, a literary abode, a philosophical justification for their political disillusions (Dabashi 2021: 266).

Sargozasht-e Kanduhā [*The Story of Beehives*], written and published in 1954, is, in Ale-Ahmad's words, a 'metaphor for the National Front's defeat and the victory of oil companies' (SA: 51). Struggling to discern the reasons behind that defeat, he travelled around Iran 'to scrutinise one's own surroundings': *Tāt-Neshin-hā-ye Blok-e Zahrā* [*The Tati Residence of Blok-e Zahrā*] and *The School Principal* are published in 1958, and *Dorr-e Yatim-e Khalij* [*The*

Shi'a cleric and reformist. He later comes to know that all copies of the essay were bought by religious bazaaris (merchants) and burnt.

[103] For an overview of Daneshvar's works and a succinct summary of the existing literature about Daneshvar, see Rahimimieh, N. (2020). Simin Daneshvar: The Forging of an Intellectual. In Jahanbegloo, R. (Ed.), *Mapping the role of intellectuals in Iranian modern and contemporary history* (pp. 163–172). Lexington Books.

[104] Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Gambler* [Qomārbāz, 1948], Albert Camus's *L'Étranger* [Bigāneh (with Ali Asghar Khobrehzadeh, 1949], Albert Camus's *Le Malentendu* [Su'e-tafāhom, 1950], Jean-Paul Sartre's *Les Mains sales* [Dast-hā-ye Aludeh, 1952], André Gide's *Retour de l'U.R.S.S.* [Bāzgasht az Shoravi ,1954], André Gide's *Les Nourritures terrestres* [Ma'edeh-hā-ye Zamini, with Parviz Daryoush, 1955], Eugène Ionesco's *Rhinocéros* [Kargadan, 1966], Eugène Ionesco's *La Soif et la faim* [Teshnegi va Goshnegi, with Manouchehr Hezarkhani, 1966]. Extracted from Dabashi, H. (2021). *The last Muslim intellectual : the life and legacy of Jalal Al-e Ahmad*. p. 266.

Kharg Island: The Big Pearl of the Gulf] (1960).[105] He considers them 'a reassessment of the indigenous milieu, according to native criteria' which reflect his strong anti-colonial concerns (SA: 52). He summarises all these circumstances to show how the idea behind one of his major works—and also the best-known one—took shape:

> And thus it was that that a young little religious boy running away from his family and surviving the chaos of the war and of those turgid political games, eventually came to figure out the real contradictions at the roots of Iranian society against what is called 'progress' and 'development' but in fact is following Europe and the US in political and economic matters, pushing the country toward colonisation and turning it into a mere consumer of corporate products, and all of that so unconsciously, and all of these were the impetus behind the writing of *Gharbzadegi* [*Westoxication*] in 1962 (SA: 52).[106]

As previously noted, Al-e Ahmad was initially a member of the Tudeh Party, which was Iran's principal communist party. However, he eventually distanced himself from this group, aligning instead with the Third Force. In this new role, he concentrated on developing a social-democratic, anti-colonial framework as a solution for Iran's challenges. Nevertheless, Al-e Ahmad never lost his Marxist views. His contemplations and observations matured in *Gharbzadegi*, a critique of 'colonial modernity' which Iran experienced, as Dabashi puts it (Dabashi 2021: 21); the 'antithesis to the mindless pseudo-modernism' and 'Westernism' of Iranians, in Katouzian's words (Katouzian 1981: 107). Westoxication is Al-e Ahmad's phenomenology of being 'plagued by the West'; [107] a phenomenology of being colonised or 'plagued by colonisation', as he himself pens excitedly in one of his travelogues (in Paris in 1962) after having obtained Albert Memmi's *Portrait d'un Juif* and *Portrait du colonisé*, where he writes: 'I should have seen these two [books] before [writing] that essay [*Gharbzadegi*]', for in that case, I would have named it *este'mārzadegi*';

[105] Transliterations and translations of the titles are extracted from Dabashi, H. (2021). *The last Muslim intellectual : the life and legacy of Jalal Al-e Ahmad.* Edinburgh University Press. p. 42.

[106] Translation extracted from Dabashi, H. (2021). *The last Muslim intellectual : the life and legacy of Jalal Al-e Ahmad.* Edinburgh University Press. p. 49.

[107] The expression *gharbzadegi* or *Westoxication* has also been translated into English as "Plagued by the West", "Occidentosis" or "Occidentitis", "West-struckness", and "Xenomania".

'Colonisationosis' (Safar-e Farang: 66).[108] In Al-e Ahmad's eye, the West is the imperialist power nourished on the blood of the Global South, or 'the East'.[109] In the opening paragraphs of *Westoxication*, he tries to elucidate what he means by *gharbzadegi* through conceptualising it as an 'illness' similar to 'how wheat rots from within'. He writes:

> I am speaking of a disease: an accident from without, spreading in an environment rendered susceptible to it. Let us seek a diagnosis for this complaint and its causes- and, if possible, its cure (OC: 27).

Accordingly, the phenomenon or disease of *gharbzadegi* involves two parties; the West and the East which is 'afflicted by the West'. Meanwhile, Al-e Ahmad argues that the West and the East are not geographical but 'economic' concepts. He explains:

> [By West] I mean all of Europe, Soviet Russia, and North America, the developed and industrialized nations that can use machines to turn raw materials into more complex forms that can be marketed as goods. These raw materials are not only iron ore and oil, or gut, cotton, and gum tragacanth; they are also myths, dogmas, music, and the higher worlds (OC: 27).

In contrast to the West, from Al-e Ahmad's perspective, 'Asia and Africa, or the backward, developing or nonindustrial nations that have been made into consumers of Western goods' comprise the East. These nations provide the raw materials; nonetheless, 'everything in the developing nations comes from somewhere else' (OC: 27). The West identifies with 'a liberal inheritance from the French revolution', while the East has 'an inheritance going back to the very beginnings of colonialism' (OC: 28). In view of that and in such an economically segregated world, Iran has more points in common with Latin American, Asian, and African countries than points of difference, requiring its problems to be scrutinised through a colonial lens, albeit new forms of colonialism and corporate colonialism. Al-e Ahmad writes:

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[108] Al-e Ahmad has written about *Portrait du colonisé, précédé du portrait du colonisateur* (1957) in the original Persian text of *The Europe Journey* [*Safar-e Farang*].

[109] Based on the definition which Al-e Ahmad's provides, 'the East' is interestingly synonymous with the term 'Global South'. For instance, Homi K. Bhabha, in his foreword to the 2004 edition of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, writes: 'With a few exceptions, the cartography of the global south follows the contours of the Third World' (2004: xxvii).

> Thus our age, besides being no longer the age of class conflicts within borders or of national revolutions, is no longer the age of clashing "isms" and ideologies. One must see what would-be corporate colonists and what supportive governments are secretly plotting under cover of every riot, coup d'état, or uprising in Zanzibar, Syria, or Uruguay; one can no longer see in the regional wars of our time even the ostensible contests of various beliefs (OC: 29).

Remarkably, this paragraph finds a parallel in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, where Fanon draws comparisons across contextually diverse nations. He specifically juxtaposes the 1953 coup d'état in Iran with the situations in countries like Cuba and Guinea, offering a broader perspective on anti-colonial struggles and political upheavals across different geopolitical landscapes. Identifying a consistent pattern in these political upheavals, he points to emerging forms of colonialism and writes:

> What the metropolitan financiers and industrialists expect is not the devastation of the colonial population but the protection of their "legitimate interests" using economic agreements. [...] Currently, the issue is not whether an African region is under French or Belgian sovereignty but whether the economic zones are safeguarded. Artillery shelling and scorched earth policy have been replaced by an economic dependency. The crackdown against a rebel sultan is a thing of the past. Matters have become more subtle, less bloody; plans are quietly made to eliminate the Castro regime. Guinea is held in a stranglehold, Mosaddeq is liquidated (WE: 27).[110]

Fanon's transnationalism in *the Wretched of the Earth* echoes Al-e Ahmad's rather striking analogies regarding the colonial phenomena. Paralleling two Iranian (British-controlled southern) cities with the African colonised territories, for instance, indicates Al-e Ahmad's congruous transnational outlook:

> The Bandar Abbas of the Belgians was the Congo, and the Qishm Island of the French was Algeria, or Djibouti and Madagascar. For the Italians, there were Somalia and

[110] Spelling modified. Originally Mossadegh.

> Libya, and for the Portuguese, Angola and Mozambique. For the Dutch, there were South Africa and Indonesia (OC: 126).

Colonial capitalism is at the centre of attention in both Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and Al-e Ahmad's *Westoxication*. The colonised territories are not only considered resources of raw materials, but also consumer markets which accordingly constitute a global class. Al-e Ahmad argues that Marx' class conflicts have gone far beyond employers and workers and developed into a new international struggle between two categories of nations. He explains:

> In our world, poor confront rich, and the vast earth is the arena. Our age is one of two worlds: one producing and exporting machines, the other importing and consuming them and wearing them out. The stage for this conflict is the global market (OC: 30)

Fanon also points to the capitalist market shifts, maintaining that the colonies are no longer regarded merely as resources of raw materials but as profitable consumer markets as well.

> After a phase of capital accumulation, capitalism has now modified its notion of profitability. The colonies have become a market. The colonial population is a consumer market (WE: 26).

Being a consumer market for Western capitalism would mean losing national economic and political sovereignty. According to Al-e Ahmad, the oil dispute and the 1953 coup d'état are thus 'the supreme manifestations of Westoxication' of his times as they exemplify how colonialism 'plunders', 'rules', and 'holds' its subject's 'destiny' (OC: 62-63), liquidating any 'steadfast or principled' leader such as Mosaddeq who has their 'feet planted on the ground of this land' (OC: 93). He writes:

> Once you have given economic and political control of your country to foreign concerns, they know what to sell you, or at least what not to sell you. Because they naturally seek to sell you their manufactures in perpetuity, it is best that you remain forever in need of them, and God save the oil reserves. They take away the oil and give you whatever you want in return-from soup to nuts, even grain (OC: 62-63).

Al-e Ahmad contends that such an 'enforced trade' would definitely include Western culture and cultural products, ultimately making the 'westoxicated' or *gharb'zadeh*: the one who is alienated from her or his 'own history and ethical traditions' (Mirsepassi 2021: 87). He writes:

> We are like strangers to ourselves, in our food and dress, our homes, our manners, our publications, and, most dangerously, our culture. We try to educate ourselves in the European style and strive to solve every problem as the Europeans would (OC: 57).[111]

Alienation in this context means losing one's agency. According to Al-e Ahmad, colonial relations between two parties start to develop when mutual agency and reciprocity in intellectual, religious, or economic 'exchanges' fade. He argues that such exchanges are 'natural for a people who want every day to live better, know more, and die more at peace than the day before… [and] seek to widen one's humanity in other existential molds', provided that they are based on reciprocity (OC: 42). A relation becomes "colonial" when one party loses its agency, and consequently, the essential reciprocity and 'competitiveness' of the two dealing 'rivals'—'if not two friends'—is replaced by 'rueful, worshipful longing' of one party towards the other (OC: 43). To him, even motivations driven by 'hatred, jealousy, and rivalry' are justified, since both sides would be winners and neither loses a thing (OC: 43). In his critique of the Iranian passive Westernisation, Al-e Ahmad delineates the phenomenon of *gharbzadegi* and writes:

> We have forgotten the spirit of competition and come to feel in its place the spirit of helplessness, the spirit of worshipfulness. We no longer feel ourselves to be in the right and deserving. (They take the oil, because it is their right and because we cannot stop them; they manage our politics, because our hands are tied; they take away our freedom, because we're unworthy of it.) If we seek to evaluate some aspect of our lives, we do so by their criteria, as prescribed by their advisors and consultants… We pretend to be free just like them. We sort the world into good and bad along the lines they lay out (OC: 43-44).

These lines resonate heavily with Fanon's phenomenology of alienation in the colonial context where indigenous culture is perceived by the coloniser as an indication of the

[111] To explain more and to highlight the contradiction, Al-e Ahmad makes further examples and writes: 'Go flip through our half-dozen so-called heavy literary publications. What news do you see of our part of the world? Of the east in the broadest terms? Of India, Japan, China? All you see is news of the Nobel Prize, of the new pope, of Francoise Sagan, the Cannes Film Festival, the latest Broadway play, the latest Hollywood film… If we aren't to call this occidentosis, what are we to call it?' (OC: 62-63).

‘indigence and innate depravity’ of the colonised, thus requiring to be eradicated (WE: 7). Fanon compares Christianity—the coloniser’s way of life—with a disinfectant substance which ‘destroys parasites, carriers of disease’ (WE: 7). As the ‘evils’ of indigenous traditions are rooted out by the white Christian colonisers, racial Manicheanism and racial domination result in the alienation of the colonised, for, Fanon explains:

> The Church in the colonies is a white man’s Church, a foreigners’ Church. It does not call the colonized to the ways of God, but to the ways of the white man, to the ways of the master, the ways of the oppressor. And as we know, in this story many are called but few are chosen (WE: 7).

Al-e Ahmad, too, holds ‘European civilization’ to be synonymous with Christianity and ‘the Christian missionary’ to be ‘the vanguard of colonialism’, which indicates the reason why the colonists ‘built a church beside every trade mission around the world, and by every sort of chicanery they drew the indigenous people into that church’, for ‘civilising’ the African meant ‘opening of new markets to the West’s industries’ (OC: 32-33). Drawing on the correlation between alienation and colonial domination, Al-e Ahmad contends that Africa instantiates the theory according to which lacking a ‘unifying faith’ would render a nation more susceptible to alienation and a land more prone to colonisation. He writes:

> The interesting thing is that of all the places that were settled under the boots of colonial masters, Africa was the most receptive and most promising. Do you know why? Because in addition to the natural resources, which it had in abundance—gold, diamonds, copper, ivory, and many other natural resources—its natives never had a tradition of urban settlement, nor did they have a widespread unifying faith. Each tribe had its own god, chief, customs, and language. And how diffuse! And, as a result, how receptive to domination (*Westoxication*, as cited in Moaddel and Talattof 2002: 347).

As we delve deeper, we observe Al-e Ahmad beginning to re-evaluate the role of indigenous religion as a potential foundation for mobilising a broad and popular movement against colonialism. This shift marks a critical juncture where Al-e Ahmad’s strategic turn towards religion, particularly his support for Khomeini as a dissenting cleric, risks being misinterpreted. It is crucial to understand that his stance, often associated with the concept of Westoxication, is not rooted in animosity towards the West or

modernism per se. Instead, it is a response to colonialism and imperialism. This distinction is key to comprehending Al-e Ahmad's ideological evolution and the broader anti-colonial context in which these ideas developed. Al-e Ahmad is 'constantly searching for a consistent intellectual ground for local anti-colonial resistances', in his own words, and as he writes in one of his travelogues these consistent grounds can be found in 'Islam, in Buddha, and in the petite bourgeoisie of the Bazar' (Safar-e Farang: 62). As contradictory as it may seem, such a position reveals his strong anti-colonial preoccupations rather than his promotion of any form of theocracy. Al-e Ahmad seeks a form of unifying faith, aimed at rallying dominated nations against Christian colonialism, which he perceives as utilising Christianity for colonial agendas.

Drawing upon a neo-Marxist framework, Al-e Ahmad presents his account of the relations between alienation, faith or religion, and freedom. He briefly reviews the history of Iran's commercial interactions with the West via, for instance, the Silk Road, to focus on the superstructure resulting from the region's geostrategic advantage and analyse its transformations through time. Discussing how the emergence of alternative sea routes eliminated this advantage and thus impacted the superstructure of such old transit itineraries,[112] Al-e Ahmad argues that the resulting economic, cultural, religious, and urban transformations correlated with Iranians' seeking refuge in 'Sufism and a government of national unity on the basis of Shi'ism' (OC: 47). His critique of 'sectarian policies'—particularly Iranian Shi'a policy since the Safavid dynasty and the support it received from the conservative Shi'a clergy—inculpates the East's religious sectarianism—as a potential force against the Christian colonialist—as much as it incriminates the West's interest in colonialism. Al-e Ahmad later refers to it as the era when 'religion and national government, the clergy and state power, put on the same cloak, each reaching a hand out of one sleeve' (OC: 77).

Although Al-e Ahmad's narrative and analysis of historical events have been criticised as being 'naïve' and 'analytically simplistic' by many scholars of Iran's history (Katouzian

[112] He writes: 'When the ends of the world gained access to each other by means that dispensed with the need of the hospitality of our caravanserais, we became just a neutral region near India, an area obliged to remain calm and unobtrusive, whose only duty was to abstain from creating trouble for India or becoming a seedbed for threats to the East India Company. This went on until oil reared its ugly head in Khuzistan, when we again took center stage and became a bone of contention for East and West, America and England' (OC: 48).

1981; Adamiyat 1981; Amanat 2012), his phenomenology of the Iranian colonial experience, as he understood it, provided in itself a consistent explanation of Iran's failures against Western domination and domestic repression, contracted in this key question of his: '[A]re we Iranians not today a subjected province of the West?' (OC: 52).[113] He writes:

> Europeans have been in effect the principal mentors of our governors and leaders over these past three hundred years… and since fifty or sixty years ago that oil reared its head we have been destined to see our politics, economy, and culture fall into the hands of the companies and the European states that protected them (OC: 54, 56).[114]

Thus far, our analysis has aimed to identify the essential elements of Al-e Ahmad's concept of Westoxication, interpreting them alongside Fanon's key ideas on (de-)colonisation. This comparative reading allows us to understand Al-e Ahmad's expressions of freedom from an existentialist, anti-colonial perspective. Building on this dialogue with Fanon, the next section will concentrate on examining those aspects of Al-e Ahmad's writings that shed light on his understanding of freedom.

Freedom in Al-e Ahmad's Thought

Al-e Ahmad sought what Kohn and McBride (2011) rightly call 'anti-imperialist subjectivity' (Kohn and McBride 2011: 36). As Dabashi (2021) notes, Al-e Ahmad's conceptualisation of *gharbzadegi* can be regarded as an attempt towards 'decolonising consciousness and agency […] thus seeking to liberate the postcolonial subject, entrapped as it was inside a self-loathing, self-alienated persona' (Dabashi 2021: 247). The westoxicated (or occidentotic) intellectual, is critically metaphorized by Al-e Ahmad as 'a particle of dust suspended in the void, or a shaving floating on the water' who thus is 'standing on air', embodying the alienating process

[113] See, for example, *The political economy of modern Iran: despotism and pseudo-modernism, 1926–1979*. Macmillan. P. 107.

[114] Translation modified.

of severing 'ties with the depths of society, culture, and tradition'. Note that according to Al-e Ahmad, intellectuals are considered leaders of a society in the broadest sense of both intellectual and leader (SDI1: 38). He writes:

> [The westoxicated intellectual] is no link between antiquity and modernity, nor even a dividing line between old and new. He is a thing with no ties to the past and no perception of the future. He is not a point on a line, he is rather a hypothetical point on a plane or even in space, just like that suspended particle (OC: 92).

Al-e Ahmad's westoxicated is reminiscent of Fanon's alienated colonised. Comparable to Fanon's depiction of the (Black) colonised, Al-e Ahmad's westoxicated is an alienated being who has 'no character' and 'no authenticity', constantly hanging on 'the words and handouts of the West' (OC: 95, 97); or as Fanon puts, those who wish to 'be assimilated to the colonizer's world' (WE: 22). Such a cultural estrangement, according to Al-e Ahmad, would lead to the westoxicated's developing of 'feelings of inferiority' towards the Western culture and its manifestations (OC: 121).[115] This brings Al-e Ahmad into conversation with Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* that 'the death and burial' of a people's 'local cultural originality' would generate an 'inferiority complex' in the colonised (BSWM: 9). The Iranian westoxicated thus feels the need to wear what Fanon calls the *White Mask* to free herself/himself from such a feeling of inferiority.

Having this specific depiction of the westoxicated intellectual in mind, Al-e Ahmad criticises the 1906 Constitutional Revolution's line of thought through his dominant anti-colonial lens. He contests the Constitutional Revolution's narrative of modernisation which drew heavily on the French Revolution. His critique, however, is not about starkly dividing the West from the rest of the world. Instead, he contends that while ideals from movements like the French Revolution should serve as sources of inspiration for both personal and communal self-transformation, they should not be blindly imitated. This is the reason why he labels the Constitutionalist essayists of that era as 'home-grown Montesquieus' who, through their

[115] Al-e Ahmad continues: 'The youth may be compensating for the feelings of inferiority he or she has felt in comparing Iran with Europe or America, feelings that embrace almost everything in the two milieus. Thus marriage to a European or American is one of the most acute symptoms of occidentosis' (OC: 121). This can also be compared to Fanon's pathology of the inter-racial marriages which he discusses in *Black Skin, White Masks*.

slogan of "adoption of European civilization without Iranian adaptation" 'paved the way' for Westoxication (OC: 58).[116] Al-e Ahmad shares with Fanon the idea that alienating one's 'own thought' and grounding one's 'consciousness in typically foreign notions' is a futile act in the postcolonial context (WE: 122). Hence, Al-e Ahmad's radical critique of the Constitutionalist approach indicates neither a hostility towards Western ideas nor an espousal of solid religious doctrines; he rather argues for taking into account the elements of human subjectivity, authenticity, and character.

Al-e Ahmad's emphasis on maintaining a critical perspective towards ideas, irrespective of where they originate, represents his approach to decolonisation. In other words, Al-e Ahmad's concepts of authenticity and subjectivity refer to the exercise of decolonising one's mind through adopting a critical approach. This stance aligns with the arguments of Kohn and McBride, who contend that in the anti-colonial or postcolonial context, self-determination assumes a dual meaning: liberation from intellectual domination and the right to political participation (Kohn and McBride 2011: 58). Both aspects necessitate a direct confrontation with colonialism and imperial domination. Al-e Ahmad contends that in this setting, the absence of moral self-determination renders any form of democratic self-determination superficial. He suggests that when a country's leadership is dominated by intellectuals who are disconnected from the public or alienated, the result would be a 'pseudo-democracy', a form of governance that essentially mimics Western democratic models but, ironically, becomes yet another expression of westoxication (OC: 110). He explains the reason:

> We know nothing of Western democracy or of its preconditions and implications: freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of access to the media, which here are monopolized by the state, freedom of publication of views contrary to those of the government of the time. None of these exist; yet our governments feign

[116] The translator of *Westoxication* has chosen the word 'adaptation' which is the English equivalent for تصرف . The original Persian which Al-e Ahmad quotes reads: "اخذ تمدن فرنگی بدون تصوف ایرانی": 'adoption of European civilization without Iranian Sufism' (Gharbzadegi: 64). Al-e Ahmad notes that it is the verbatim phrase written by Mirza Malkom Khan, published in his *Collected works*, edited by Muhit Tabataba'i, Tehran, 1327/1948. However, due to the similar spelling of the two Persian terms تصرف (adaptation) and تصوف (Sufism), it is plausible that تصوف (Sufism) in Al-e Ahmad's text is a typographical error.

> democracy, if only to shut the mouth of this or that foreign power which is due to give them a loan (OC: 108-110).[117]

These lines offer a stringent critique of the Iranian political landscape in the 1960s. Al-e Ahmad's conception of freedom revolves around liberation from the domination of a state which is itself dominated by the imperialist Western powers. His critique is best understood when read in tandem with his account of the modernising policies of the Pahlavi regime, particularly in relation to the emancipation of women. This area exemplifies what he deems as the granting of superficial or pretentious freedoms, reflecting his concerns about the authenticity and depth of such reforms. So, he asks:

> Do women and men now have equal rights in all matters? We have contented ourselves with tearing the veil from their faces and opening a number of schools to them. But then what? (OC: 69)

'Nothing', he answers, for in fact the society 'believe[s] women cannot be judges, cannot serve as witnesses, and as for voting or serving in the Majlis, the whole idea is idiotic, since even men have no such right, really-no one has the right to vote' (OC: 69). This is the reason why the top-down emancipation of women is perceived by Al-e Ahmad as one of 'the necessary conditions for occidentosis' or 'one of its necessary consequences' because 'we really have given women only the right to parade themselves in public. What of work, duty, social responsibility, and character?' (OC: 69) Accordingly, what might constitute and consolidate women's freedom is 'equality' in all aspects of life. He explains:

> Unless the work of men and women and their services to society are equally valued and paid, unless, alongside men, women assume responsibility for administering a sector of society (other than the home, a private function shared between men and women), unless material and spiritual equality is established between the sexes, we will have succeeded only in swelling an army of consumers of powder and lipstick-the products of the West's industries—another form of occidentosis (OC: 69-70).

Al-e Ahmad contends that, akin to the issue of women's emancipation, democratic self-determination should not be reduced to merely being 'a display of Western democracy' (OC:

[117] Translation modified.

110). Considering the (semi-)colonial nature of the situation, Al-e Ahmad asserts that since 'most of the coups d'états and rapid governmental changes in this part of the East' are orchestrated to advance 'foreigners' policies', it is not feasible to claim the existence of Western-style democracy in Iran, a country where fundamental rights like 'freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and freedom of access to the media' are absent (OC: 109-110). Note that this does not mean that he is theorising something like an Islamic state as proposed by Khomeini in his *Governance of the Jurist* or *velāyat-e faqīh*. It is about authentic self-transformation and self-determination as it is intuitively understood. He thus emphasises that democracy, understood as the expression of 'the will of the people', requires the fulfilment of certain necessary preconditions:

1. The great local powers, the landlords, and the surviving tribal chieftains are denied free rein and influence to interfere with voting.
2. The media and propaganda organs are not monopolized by the governments of the time but are made available to their opposition.
3. Parties have appeared in their real form, not in the form of contemptible political factions, and have taken on a far broader scope.
4. The security forces, SAVAK in particular, have been severely restrained from intervention in the affairs of the nation (OC: 110).

Al-e Ahmad's consistent anti-colonial perspective attributes a colonial correlation between suppression of political freedoms and the Iranian state which acts in favour of the foreigners' interests. The state monopoly of 'the media and propaganda organs'—number 2—promotes such a colonised government's agendas while the opposition is persecuted by the state's intelligence and security agencies—number 4—and deprived of the right to voice its ideas. Likewise, the problem with political factions which Al-e Ahmad mentions in number 3 is that they are not genuine political parties but the very forces of the foreign policy which seeks to 'provide regional and national underpinnings' for its activities which, in turn, happen to be in accord with the pursuit of colonial interests (OC: 110). Democracy, he explains, needs to 'penetrate the depths of society through a sustained effort at education' and 'a party system approach' so that people comprehend its 'true and precise meaning', otherwise it is just a 'show we make of Western democracy' (OC: 111, 108). This statement indicates that Al-e

Ahmad distinguishes Western ideas from the phenomenon of *gharbzadegi*, which is, as Shahibzadeh puts in his recent book *Public Intellectuals and Their Discontents: from Europe to Iran* (2021), understood as referring to those who are 'consumers of Western cultural and intellectual products without being able to reflect on the cultural and intellectual foundations of the system that is producing such products' (Shahibzadeh 2021: 162). Practicing a Western style political party system is thus not considered by him problematic per se, provided that such a cultural interchange or inspiration does not originate from a feeling of inferiority or colonial (or racial) alienation. Since colonialism and cultural alienation affect the colonised in a dialectical way, the latter also facilitating the former, freedom would mean freedom from any form of colonial rule—or sovereignty—and freedom from any form of cultural alienation.

Moreover, as discussed earlier, the West in Al-e Ahmad's vocabulary includes the Soviet Union, as being only geographically an Eastern polity. The term *gharbzadegi* thus denotes also a certain "Eastoxication"; that is to say, sympathising with the Soviet camp—embodied in the Tudeh Party, of which he was formerly a member. As an advocate of the intellectual trend which aimed at decolonising consciousness and modern concepts such as freedom and democracy in line with the global trend of Third-Worldism, Al-e Ahmad regards both the communist East and the capitalist West as colonial powers. Against these two 'contingencies', according to Al-e Ahmad and his mentor and founder of the Third Force political party, Khalil Maleki (1901–1969), the Third World had a 'third option' of choosing democratic socialism as 'the guardian of human dignity and freedom' (Elm va Zendegi 1960: 56, 23). I shall come back to this subject in the concluding section of the chapter, where I suggest reading Al-e Ahmad and Maleki through the lens of republican freedom.

Nevertheless, the search for the right theory of freedom and government fit for post-colonial or semi-colonial contexts preoccupied many of the political thinkers and leaders of the Third World, including Fanon (Kohn & McBride, 2011: 55). Fanon, too, holds that the basic confrontation of 'colonialism versus anticolonialism' is 'indeed capitalism versus socialism', proposing his third option for the Third World (WE: 55). Emphasising that 'the underdeveloped countries must endeavour to focus on their very own values as well as methods and styles specific to them', he writes:

> The basic issue with which we are faced is not the unequivocal choice between socialism and capitalism such as they have been defined by men from different

> continents and different periods of time. […] [T]he choice of a socialist regime, of a regime entirely devoted to the people, based on the principle that man is the most precious asset, will allow us to progress faster in greater harmony, consequently ruling out the possibility of a caricature of society where a privileged few hold the reins of political and economic power without a thought for the nation as a whole (WE: 55-56).

Al-e Ahmad's persistent critique of what Fanon calls above 'a caricature of society' reflects his Fanonian-Marxist point of view, as Bogle also notes (Bolge 1998: 124). Adding the neo-Marxist element of class to one of Fanon's central arguments in the phenomenology of the colonised world—violence—Al-e Ahmad scrutinises the Iranian situation in detail and in a similar way to Fanon's analysis of postcolonial society. He quotes Fanon directly from the Persian translation of *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in 1967, where he (Al-e Ahmad) evaluates the role of the military forces and the clergy in preserving the colonial order, as well as their potential capabilities in the struggle against it, in his posthumously published and most voluminous book, *On the Services and Disservices of the Intellectuals* (1964–1968). Replacing Fanon's phrase 'In the colonies' with Iran, he writes:

> [Iran is a country] where the state has no direct contact with the nation. '[T]he gendarme and the soldier, through their immediate presence, and their frequent and direct interventions do the job [of maintaining the status quo and defending its effects and consequences]. […] This intermediary [of power] understands that he obeys not because he is just an agent thus excused; it is because he himself agrees to it' (SDI2: 28, my translation).[118]

[118] The first sentence is written by Al-e Ahmad and the rest of the paragraph is Al-e Ahmad's quotation from the Persian translation of *Les Damnés de la terre*. Fanon's original French reads: '[L]e gendarme et le soldat, par leur présence immédiate, leurs interventions directes et fréquentes, maintiennent le contact avec le colonisé. […] L'intermédiaire n'allège pas l'oppression, ne voile pas la domination. Il les expose, les manifeste avec la bonne conscience des forces de l'ordre' (2002 : 42).

The Persian translation of the same lines, as well as Al-e Ahmad's first sentence read:

در جایی که ملت با حکومت رابطه مستقیم ندارد. در جایی که رابط قدرت حاکم و استعمارزده، ژاندارم و سرباز است که با حضور خود و با تماس مستقیم و دخالت‌های روزمره و مکرر این وظیفه را انجام می‌دهد [...] این واسطه خوب می‌داند که اگر اطاعت می‌کند برای آن نیست که مأمور است و معذور؛ بلکه برای آن است که خود نیز موافق است.

Al-e Ahmad draws on Fanon where Fanon discusses the violence of the *intermédiaire du pouvoir* (the intermediary of power) who acts as 'the spokesperson of the colonizer and the regime of oppression' (WE: 4). Al-e Ahmad's text appropriates Fanon's racial argument to the Iranian context through the key phrase 'where the state has no direct contact with the nation' to point to the local ranked *gendarme*, as the *intermédiaire du pouvoir*. While Fanon's gendarme and soldier is *l'étranger venu d'ailleurs* (the foreigner), Al-e Ahmad's gendarme is the state's local force of violence with certain 'class-related' implications, rendering him [*sic*] the *comprador* whose will to maintain his [*sic*] social class is attained through preserving the colonial order (SDI2: 79-80). From his consistent Marxist perspective, Al-e Ahmad draws on Gramsci to add the factor of class to what he finds relevant in Fanon on the basis of the commonality of the colonial and racial situation. As Sadeghi-Boroujerdi argues, Al-e Ahmad tenaciously critiqued what he perceived as 'both a colonial and racialized process of state formation that reached its apogee with the first Pahlavi dynast' through a number of projects such as Aryan identity-building, Persian linguistic homogeneity, and coercive westernisation by the westoxicated ruling class who acted in favour of and in line with Western colonialism (Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2021: 181). Fanon, too, does not leave without comment the profits of the colonial situation for certain groups of the colonised, contrasting them with the 'déclassé' peasantry—the only 'revolutionary'—which has 'nothing to lose and everything to gain' (WE: 23).

As mentioned earlier, in the colonised and semi-colonised contexts, reception of Marxist concepts was problematised. In this vein, Fanon is careful in his use of the Marxist concepts for the colonial context, holding that 'a Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched when it comes to addressing the colonial issue', for 'what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to' (WE: 5). Fanon seeks to elucidate his concept of a 'world divided in two' within the colonised context, distinguishing it from other forms of compartmentalised society (WE: 5). This includes Marx's description of a class-based society, wherein religion is depicted as a means to justify class exploitation and the oppression of one group by another. Fanon specifically references Marx's portrayal of pre-capitalist society, observing that in such a context, the serf is led to believe in his essential difference

from the knight, a disparity rationalised by invoking divine right (WE: 5).[119] Fanon then posits that in the colonised context, even such religious justification is unnecessary. Here, the colonisers, through sheer violence and the might of their 'cannons', elevate themselves not merely to the status of a 'ruling class' but to that of a 'ruling species' (WE: 5). In a colonised society, the violence of colonial domination 'dehumanises' the colonised and reduces them to 'the state of an animal' through racialisation and segregation (WE: 7). Decolonisation 'focuses on being, it fundamentally alters being' and 'the "thing" colonized becomes a man through the very process of liberation', writes Fanon, echoing Sartre's concepts of being For-itself, transcendence, and freedom (WE: 2). Moreover, while freedom of the working class or the proletariat in its Marxist sense is freedom from alienation in its Marxist sense, when it comes to the colonised alienated proletariat, these notions conceptually fall short. The concept of freedom which Fanon seeks to elaborate in *The Wretched of the Earth* is a distinct concept of alienation that is "stretched" to suit the colonised context. This is the reason why Fanon insists that 'slogans of national liberation should come first', he writes (WE: 22).

Expanding on the criticism of transplanting those ideals of freedom originating in the colonisers' lands, Fanon contends that the colonised intellectual's pursuit of such political ideals of the 'metropole'—power to the proletariat—still reflects a desire for being 'assimilated to the colonizer's world'. This pursuit, he suggests, is driven by self-interest at an individual level, making it unfitting for the colonial context. He writes:

> The result is the ready emergence of a kind of class of individually liberated slaves, of freed slaves. The intellectual calls for ways of freeing more and more slaves and ways of organizing a genuine class of the emancipated (WE: 22).

In the colonised context, where the masses 'have no intention of looking on as the chances of individual success improve', the question is not that of 'status' but of 'place': 'the colonized wants the colonist's farm. There is no question for them of competing with the colonist. They want to take his place' (WE: 23). These lines resonate heavily with Al-e Ahmad's critique of the westoxicated intellectuals who fail to recognise the situation:

[119] This where Fanon argues 'why a Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched when it comes to addressing the colonial issue', and writes that in the society studied by Marx, '[t]he serf is essentially different from the knight, but a reference to divine right is needed to justify this difference in status' (WE: 5).

> They are educated not in the indigenous environment and for solving the indigenous problems, but in the environment of the "metropole" or through the yardsticks of the "metropole" and for adapting the indigenous environment and its problems to the environments of the metropole and its problems (SDI2: 274, my translation).[120]

The significance of this matter is also evident in the Persian translation of *The Wretched of the Earth*. By examining and comparing the English and Persian translations of the below lines with their original French version, we can discern an appropriation aimed at contextualising this issue within the Iranian setting. So, while the original French reads:

> Ces indigènes se battent sur un mot d'ordre abstrait : 'Le pouvoir au prolétariat', oubliant que, dans leur région, c'est d'abord sur des mots d'ordre nationalistes qu'il faut mener le combat.

It is translated into Persian as:

> این‌ها، این بومی‌ها، برای امری انتزاعی «به قدرت رسیدن پرولتاریا» مبارزه می‌کنند. دستور روز آنان کوشش برای به قدرت رساندن پرولتاریاست. و فراموش می‌کنند که کشورشان به استقلال نیاز دارد و دستور روز مبارزه، مبارزه برای استقلال ملی است.

And the English translation reads:

> These colonial subjects are militant activists under the abstract slogan: "Power to the proletariat," forgetting that in their part of the world slogans of national liberation should come first.

Fanon's 'indigènes se battent' is (rather freely!) translated into English as 'colonial subjects are militant activists', while in Persian the word 'بومی', meaning 'indigenous' is used and 'se battent' is translated into 'مبارزه': 'struggle' or 'combat' which does not connote militant 'armed struggle' per se. The second sentence in the Persian translation is also added to clarify the meaning of the key phrase of the first sentence 'd'ordre abstrait'. While the phrase ' امر انتزاعی', 'the abstract' in English, matches the French 'd'ordre abstrait', the Persian term 'دستور روز' which connotes 'agenda' is added to the second sentence. Similarly, 'd'ordre

[120] روشنفکرانی که نه در محیط بومی و برای حل مسایل بومی، بلکه در محیط «متروپل» یا به معیارهای «متروپل» و برای تطبیق محیط‌های بومی و مسایل آن با محیط‌های متروپل و مسایل آن تربیت شده‌اند.

nationalistes' is not translated into Persian as 'امـر مـلـی' or 'the national', but 'national independence'; and 'dans leur région' or 'their part of the world' is translated 'کشورشان' which means 'their country', rendering the direct translation of the Persian into English as:

> These, these indigenous (people) struggle for the abstract 'ascending to power of the proletariat'. Their current agenda (agenda of the day) is trying to put the proletariat into power. And they forget that their country needs independence, and that the current agenda of struggle, is the struggle for national independence.

The focus on prioritising national independence over class struggle in colonised or semi-colonised contexts, as depicted to some extent in the Persian translation of *The Wretched of the Earth*, does more than just highlight the rift between nationalist and communist-leaning opposition groups in Iran. This translation also illuminates the nature of Fanon's reception in Iran, a subject we delved into in Chapter One. It reflects the manner in which Iranian intellectuals have interpreted and applied Fanon's ideas, going beyond mere metaphorical usage. In particular, the emphasis on the fight for national sovereignty suggests a deliberate choice by the translator. The Persian translator of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Banisadr, seems to have leveraged Fanon's compelling arguments as a means to critique a specific segment of the Iranian Left, a faction characterised by its commitment to proletarian revolution and its sympathies towards the Eastern Bloc.

Based on our discussions so far, both Al-e Ahmad and Fanon associate freedom with the dis-alienation of the colonised on two distinct levels: first, the liberation of the land, and secondly, the liberation of the individual, particularly the mind of the westoxicated. This concept encompasses national liberation as well as the emancipation of the colonised psyche. Simin Daneshvar, the prominent Iranian postcolonial novelist and Al-e Ahmad's wife, summarises Al-e Ahmad's thoughts on freedom in her book *Ghorub-e Jalal* [*The Dawn of Jalal*] (1982). She writes:

> He was authentic, and his turning to religion was based on knowledge and vision, for he had previously examined Marxism, Socialism, and Existentialism to some extent; thus, his relative return to religion and *Imam Zaman* was a way towards freedom from the evil of imperialism and reclaiming national identity; [it was] a way towards human dignity, mercy, justice, reason, and virtue; Jalal ached for such kind of a religion. From

> the Constitutional [Revolution] onward, freedom was for us, from the colonialists' point of view, freedom to exploit and export oil and other resources to the West. But concerning such a freedom, Jalal took exactly the opposite [direction]. To him, freedom was redemption from the evils of the Russian Stalinist Marxism and British and American imperialism. This was the reason why he struggled to break the visible and nonvisible leashes… Jalal had the courage to spit in the face of the exploiters and colonialists and attack the intellectuals in favour of both the people and themselves. Hence, Jalal never sought power. He wanted influence which he had enough on his contemporaries, and on coming generations, as one could expect (Ghorub-e Jalal: 22).[121]

Finally, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how the concept of freedom was theorised in the 1950s and 1960s, and how this notion of freedom contributed to the development of a political theory, let us return to Maleki and examine the key topics he and his colleagues addressed in their writings. As previously noted, Maleki was focused on establishing a foundation for a political system that could simultaneously ensure freedom and social security without resorting to either a capitalist-liberal or a communist framework. In Katouzian's words, he 'played a significant role in politics and society, as an intellectual, a political thinker, activist and organiser, and a communist-turned-socialist, believing in freedom, democracy and social justice, and pursuing these goals through peaceful means' (Katouzian 2018: 8). Perhaps it can be said that Maleki exemplified what Sartre points out in his foreword to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*: that '[t]he global aspirations of Third World "national" thinking belonged to the internationalist traditions of socialism, Marxism, and humanism' (WE: xi).

Drawing on the cases of various Asian and African former colonies, Maleki located Iran at the international intersection of colonialism and the Cold War and tried to elaborate an Iranian

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[121] [جلال] اصالت داشت و اگر به دین روی آورد، از روی دانش و بینش بود، چرا که مارکسیزم و سوسیالیزم و تا حدی اگزیستانسیالیزم را قبلاً آزموده بود و بازگشت نسبی او به دین و امام زمان راهی بود بسوی آزادی از شر امپریالیزم و احراز هویت ملی، راهی به شرافت انسانیت و رحمت و عدالت و منطق و تقوا، جلال درد چنین دینی را داشت. از مشروطیت به بعد، آزادی از دیدگاه استعمارگران برای ما، آزادی استخراج و صدور نفت و منابع دیگر به غرب بود. اما جلال درست برخلاف چنین آزادی گام برمی‌داشت. برای او آزادی، رهایی از شر مارکسیزم استالینی روس و امپریالیزم انگلیس و امریکا بود و به همین علت کوشش داشت در آثارش بندهای مربی و نامربی را بگسلد. [...] جلال این جرأت را داشت که تف به روی استثمارکنندگان و استعمارگران بیندازد و به روشنفکران به نفع مردم و به نفع خودشان بتازد. اما جلال هرگز قدرت نمی‌خواست. نفوذ می‌خواست که به حد کافی بر معاصرانش داشت، و پیش‌بینی می‌شد که بر نسلهای بعدی هم داشته باشد (غروب جلال ۱۳۶۱: ۲۱-۲۲).

democratic socialism through comprehensive critical analyses which he published in the journals of the Third Force—*Nabard e Zendegi* (Battle of Life) and *Elm va Zendegi* (Science and Life). Across the fourteen issues of the former, published between 1955 and 1958, and the nine issues of the latter, from 1959 to 1960, these journals explored various themes. They delved into the issues of colonialism and the anti-colonial struggles in Asian and African countries, the forms of government established in these regions post-independence, the political and economic consequences of the 1953 coup d'état, and the broader concept of socialism. The overarching aim was to theorise a solution that was optimally tailored to Iran's specific needs and context. According to Al-e Ahmad, Maleki's Third-Wordlist socialism 'provided the intellectual circles with fundamental social and political tools to understand socialism, communism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and the Third World'; he was an 'iconoclast' who refused to follow 'New York, Moscow, or Beijing' and their 'native or non-native, local or international' idols (SDI2: 174-175).[122]

This brief introduction sets the stage for a review of a recurring theme in these journals: democratic socialism. This theme unveils notions of freedom that align with those found in republican theory. However, it is crucial to note that my intention is not to suggest that Maleki, Al-e Ahmad or other like-minded intellectuals were directly endorsing republican theories of freedom. Rather, the goal is to identify and highlight the parallels and similarities in the ways they conceptualised and expressed their understanding of freedom. These intellectual-activists' approach to freedom was intertwined with issues like social and economic justice, and they advocated for egalitarian public policies ensuring access to basic resources, thereby enhancing individual autonomy. While they did not label these views as "republican" or address explicitly every foundational aspect of republicanism, as we know it today, their discussions and policy recommendations closely resonate with concepts later articulated by scholars such as Skinner, Pettit, and others as a republican way of thinking about freedom (Pettit 1997 and 2009; Skinner, 1998 and 2009; Bohman 2009).[123] Particularly, they conceptualised freedom as non-domination, contrasting with the liberal notion of freedom as non-interference. In effect, the interpretation of freedom as non-interference is

[122] آنچه امروز به عنوان الفبای سیاسی و اجتماعی ابزار کار محافل روشنفکری است در شناخت سوسیالیسم و کمونیسم و استعمار و استعمار نو و دنیای سوم همه را اول بار ملکی در آثارش مطرح کرده. در خدمت و خیانت روشنفکران، جلد دوم، صص ۱۷۴-۱۷۵

[123] See Laborde, C., & Maynor, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Republicanism and political theory*. John Wiley & Sons.

notably rare in anti-imperial and postcolonial Iranian literature between 1953 and 1979, largely due to the historical complexities and unique societal and economic structures of this period.

My perspective is informed by Pettit's analysis of the links between socialist theories and republican freedom in *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (1997), as well as by more recent scholarly works exploring this nexus. A prime example of such contemporary scholarship is Muldoon's *A Socialist Republican Theory of Freedom and Government* (2022). A brief examination of Muldoon's article will help elucidate my argument further. James Muldoon's work aims to reconnect republicanism with socialism, proposing a theory of freedom and government. He conceptualises freedom as 'collective autonomy and a participatory democratic vision of a decentralised state with parliamentary institutions, the rule of law, worker controlled workplaces, community-directed investment and a political culture of solidarity and public-spiritedness' (Muldoon 2022: 47). While Pettit previously linked socialism's core principles with republican theory (Pettit 1997: 142), Muldoon's exploration in the realm of republican political theory is relatively novel in that it re-reads the ideas of those twentieth-century thinkers—such as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky—that are not customarily read in light of a socialist republican theory of freedom and government. As he points out, his objective is to address the shortcomings and constraints inherent in both socialism and republicanism, and take into serious consideration different aspects of republican and socialist political thoughts for a socialist republican theory of freedom and government (Muldoon 2022: 49).

Elm va Zendegi and *Nabard e Zendegi* primarily delve into theoretical discussions on the principles of democratic socialism and its applicability to Iranian society, resonating with Fanon's insights on the inappropriateness of both Western capitalism and socialism for the newly-independent underdeveloped Third World countries (WE: 39. 55-56). The contributors, including Maleki, adopted an internationalist perspective on political economy, critically examining the challenges in Iran's social, political, and cultural arenas within a broader global postcolonial context (December 1958 [Dey 1337]; May 1955 [Khordad 1334]; July 1955 [Tir 1334]; January 1956 [Bahman 1334]; November 1956 [Azar 1335]). The fundamental aspect of this perspective was sensitivity toward various forms of domination. Such sensitivity for domination, as we discussed earlier, arose from their perception of their situation as semi-

colonised that indicated imperial domination. This sensitivity thus resulted in thinking about freedom from the perspective of social democratic political theories (September 1955 [Mehr 1334]; November 1956 [Azar 1335]; April 1955 [Ordibehesht 1334]; issue year 2 No4, no date).

Among the key subjects recurrently discussed in *Elm* are Land Reform and abolishing the Iranian feudal system.[124] The authors critically evaluate the feudal system of land ownership alongside contemporary alternatives to land proprietorship. They portray the feudal system as akin to the medieval lord-bondman structure, where serfs are subjugated under the control of feudal masters in its well-known historical form. However, they also highlight the complexities that could arise if industrialisation and Land Reform were implemented simultaneously. In such a scenario, the transformation of serfs into landowners, continuing their agricultural practices without essential resources, could present significant challenges.

Before proceeding further, it is important to note that our discussion does not delve into the extensive array of economic and political analyses surrounding Land Reform, nor does it examine the power dynamics within the Iranian ruling elite during the 1950s when these reforms were a central topic of debate. Our focus is specifically on the perspectives of Al-e Ahmad and his contemporaries regarding freedom. We also need to consider that these texts were authored in the post–1953 era, a time characterised by profound political despair following the coup (Mirabedini 2001: 275).

Given that a thorough analysis of all available issues of these periodicals is beyond the scope of this thesis, I will narrow my focus to a particular, extensive article that, in my opinion, encapsulates the theoretical and political stances of its authors, specifically Maleki and Al-e Ahmad. The article in question is entitled *Locating Democratic Socialism in Today's World: Defeat of Socialism or Defeat of Anti-Socialism?*, authored by Manouchehr Safa at the behest of Maleki. Published in the April 1960 issue of *Elm va Zendegi*, this piece offers a representative insight into their perspectives, making it a pivotal point of reference for this discussion.

[124] May 1961 [Khordad 1340]; July 1960 [Mordad 1339], April 1960 [Ordibehesht 1339]; January 1960 [Bahman 1338], 1960 (no month).

The essay effectively captures the core principles of democratic socialism as a political theory, setting it apart from communism and classical Marxism by prioritising individual human freedom. This approach contrasts with other conceptions of freedom that conceptualise it in collective terms, often at the expense of individuality or human dignity. Additionally, the essay provides a comprehensive examination of various models of European democratic socialism. It delves into the central ideas of their leading theorists, accentuating both the distinct features and the common foundational elements of these models.

Moreover, the author explores the relevance of democratic socialism in under-developed nations, particularly Iran, suggesting a localised theory and strategy tailored to specific national contexts. This includes a thorough analysis of Iran's unique social and economic conditions, aiming to comprehend the specific needs of Iranian society and the challenges posed by a feudal system resistant to socio-economic change. In doing so, he draws attention to the deficiencies and defects of the (previously) dominant communist and Marxist ideologies, which often mirrored the Soviet Union's agenda, highlighting the necessity for a more adaptable and contextually appropriate approach. Accordingly, the article criticises the classical concept of a proletarian revolution, advocating for a re-envisioned socialism that integrates freedom and democratic governance. The author argues that this approach is attuned to the requirement of the national liberation of colonised (or semi-colonised) countries and is responsive to the specific needs of a decolonising polity. For a society like Iran, Safa argues, workers should be seen primarily as integral members of the nation, involved in collective governance through organisations that represent their ideals (ibid: 74).

Safa addresses the challenges Iran faces, arguing for a national movement prioritising decolonisation and the establishment of new social relations, including dismantling feudalism and empowering the people (ibid: 72). He critically examines the links between feudalism, colonialism, and semi-colonialism, echoing Fanon's arguments in chapters One and Three of *The Wretched of the Earth*, on the one hand, and Pettit's republican 'ideal of globalized sovereignty', on the other (Pettit, 2014: 154). Safa writes:

> Democratic socialism strongly opposes any form of imperialism that threatens or undermines the independence of nations. It actively combats colonialism and domination in the realm of international relations. […] It holds the conviction that global poverty poses a risk to the welfare of all parts of the world. Therefore,

> democratic socialism advocates for a redistribution of global wealth and supports measures aimed at boosting production in underdeveloped regions, [recognising the interconnectedness of global prosperity and stability] (Elm: 68).

However, since the alien domination menace is present and should be taken seriously, the author, representing the general political viewpoint of the journal, emphasises the need for reform over revolution, specifically because of the danger of falling under foreign domination (ibid: 77). Drawing inspiration from Jules Moch (1893–1985), a French socialist politician, Safa defines democratic socialism as a critical examination of society, freedom to express such criticism, and the will to initiate change for creating a more fulfilling life (ibid: 76). He highlights three fundamental principles of democratic socialism: freedom, equal opportunity, and international solidarity, with a particular stress on the value of freedom. In short, democratic socialism is characterised as a movement deeply committed to upholding human dignity, opposing exploitation of one person by another, and providing equal opportunities for all individuals irrespective of their gender and race (ibid: 79). From the perspective of Safa, Maleki, and Al-e Ahmad, freedom is primarily defined in such terms.

The ideals of freedom, as espoused by Al-e Ahmad, notably influenced the succeeding generation of intellectuals, including Ali Shariati. Al-e Ahmad's concept of *gharbzadegi* or westoxication evolved to represent an Iranian phenomenology of colonial domination. However, understanding how westoxication intersects with various interpretations of freedom requires careful consideration. A Fanonian analysis of Al-e Ahmad's work not only illuminates his perception of freedom but also helps dispel common misconceptions about westoxication. For instance, it clarifies that his notion of freedom does not necessarily imply a regression to pre-modern religious ways of life but rather underscores the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist essence of the 1979 Revolution.

This complexity becomes even more pronounced in the context of Shariati's Islamic thought. In the following chapter, we explore how Shariati built upon Al-e Ahmad's foundations, integrating Islam with Sartre's and Fanon's core ideas to offer an existentialist interpretation of Islam. Shariati's work marks a continuation and expansion of this discourse, bridging philosophical and religious perspectives in the context of the struggle against various forms of domination.

The ideals of freedom discussed above continued to live in the next generation of intellectuals, most notably, Shariati. Al-e Ahmad's discourse of *gharbzadegi* or westoxication also continued to develop, becoming the Iranian version of the phenomenology of colonial domination. However, when it comes to understanding how westoxication relates to the nuances of the meaning of freedom in the contexts which it touches, it requires careful attention. A Fanonian reading of Al-e Ahmad not only shines light on his understanding of freedom but also contributes to avoiding common and possible misunderstandings around westoxication, such as the idea that his notion of freedom is indicative of a return to religion, in order to better comprehend the anti-colonial and anti-imperial nature of the 1979 Revolution and its modifying adjective *Islamic*. These subtle complications are even more serious when it comes to Shariati's Islamic thought. In the next chapter, we see that where Al-e Ahmad stopped, Shariati started, bringing Islam into conversation with Fanon and presenting an existentialist interpretation of Islam.

Chapter Three

Ali Shariati

Introduction

In one sense, Ali Shariati begins where Al-e Ahmad leaves off, bringing Islam into conversation with Fanon and trumpeting the call for resistance against the subjugating triad of capitalism, imperialism, and religious deception. Shariati has been variously described as 'the most conspicuous intellectual personality of Iran in the 1970s' (Mirsepassi 2000: 92), 'one of the most popular Shi'a thinkers' of the twentieth century (Mohsen Milani 1994: 81), 'the French-trained idol of the religious youth who attempted to formulate the beginnings of an Islamic sociology' (Fischer 2003: 83), a dissident whose 'emancipatory theology' inspired 'a generation' (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2016: 25), and 'a shadow that haunts all political and religious life in Iran' during the pre-revolutionary years (Foucault in Afary and Anderson 2005: 207).

In this chapter, I will explore Ali Shariati's conception of freedom by first presenting an overview of his multifaceted and integrative thought, positioning him within the historical and intellectual landscape of the Iranian Revolution.[125] Following this, I will delve deeper into Shariati's role as an *intellectuel engagé* and his societal engagement through his

[125] In positioning Shariati within the intellectual landscape of the 1979 Revolution, it is crucial to clarify that my intention is not to interpret his ideas through the lens of the Revolution's aftermath. As will be elaborated in Chapter Five, my objective is to establish a clear demarcation between Shariati's thought and the post-revolutionary context, distinguishing his perspectives distinctly from other Islamic traditions, particularly those of Ayatollah Khomeini. For an insightful argument on difficulties of reading Shariati in the shadow of the Revolution and the need to revisit Shariati from the (Fanonian) anti-colonial perspective, see Davari, A. (2014). A Return to Which Self?: ʿAli Shari'ati and Frantz Fanon on the Political Ethics of Insurrectionary Violence. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, *34*(1), 86–105.

reinterpretation of Shi'a Islam. This exploration will also cover his intellectual interactions during his years in Paris, highlighting how these experiences played a constructive role in shaping his ontological and theoretical frameworks. In the latter part of this chapter, I will examine Shariati's writings, particularly focusing on his engagement with Fanon and French existentialism. This exploration aims to discern how Shariati's ideas of freedom align with or diverge from the concepts of freedom in Sartrean and Fanonian thought, especially considering their psychoanalytical and non-theological perspectives. I propose that Shariati's writings reveal a nuanced concept of freedom that defies simplistic comparisons with, and cannot be reduced to, those of Sartre, Fanon, or traditional Islamic views. Furthermore, I argue that Shariati did not merely blend Islamic theology with existentialism to present an Islamic existentialism. Rather, he formulated an existentialist Islam—more precisely: a Fanonian existentialist interpretation of Islam—through which his understanding of freedom could be articulated.

Shariati was born and raised in Mashhad, Iran, a city known for its religious significance, into a Shi'a Muslim family. His father was a distinguished Shi'a scholar and founder of the Centre for Propagating Islamic Truths. Shariati began his career as a teacher in 1952. He got his BA in Persian literature from the University of Mashhad in 1958, securing a scholarship for further studies in Paris. In 1959, he moved to Paris and soon began working on his thesis under the supervision of Gilbert Lazard, a French Islamologist, at the Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines of the Sorbonne. He received his Doctorate in 1963 and returned to Iran in 1964, where he was briefly arrested upon arrival. Shariati started teaching at the University of Mashhad in 1966 and delivered public lectures in Tehran and various Iranian universities. By 1971, his lectures, which often criticised the regime, attracted thousands and led to several interrogations by SAVAK, the secret police. Simultaneously, he faced criticism from the clergy for his interpretations of Islam. Forced into retirement in 1974, Shariati was imprisoned for a year, but released after one year at the request of President of Algeria, Houari Boumédiène (1932–1978).[126] He faced continuous pressure from both the regime and the clergy until his

[126] Through his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdel-Aziz Bouteflika, Algerian President Houari Boumédiène requested the Shah of Iran to release Ali Shariati from prison. This request was made when the Shah visited Algeria in March 1975 for the OPEC summit. See Rahnema, A. (2000). *An Islamic utopian: A political biography of Ali Shariati*. IB Tauris. P. 337.

unexpected death in 1977 in Southampton, UK, shortly after leaving Iran. Shariati's intellectual journey is closely intertwined with his political activism.[127]

Al-e Ahmad and Shariati share the same historical background in terms of Iran's domestic and international political struggles.[128] The 1953 coup d'état against Mosaddeq left its mark on the shaping of Shariati's anti-colonial thought and contributed to his solidarity with global anti-colonial movements. He shares both Al-e Ahmad's anti-colonial critique of westoxication as well as his sensitivity to the potential of religion for resisting such a colonial imposition. Nevertheless, whereas Al-e Ahmad gestured towards this idea but did not formulate a religious framework in terms of a political theory, Shariati for his part managed to present his full-orbed, reformed version of Islamic theology. According to *The Palgrave Encyclopaedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism*, Shariati 'called for a rejuvenation of Iran through a radical yet modern embrace of its Shi'a roots in an attempt to liberate it from foreign domination as well as the Pahlavi monarchy' (Byrd 2021: 106). In Byrd's words, Shariati's 'progressive, modernist, and revolutionary interpretation of Islam' was developed as a response to these political events (Byrd 2019: 110). He re-conceptualised certain core Islamic concepts to develop a 'faith of dissent', but never saw it materialise (CW19: 239).

Similar to Al-e Ahmad, Shariati was concerned with 'the destructive effects of colonialism and imperialism' on Third-World societies, including Iran (Mirsepassi 2000: 77). According to Rahnema, Shariati's biographer, Al-e Ahmad and Shariati met several times and discussed, among other matters, Westoxication (which Shariati called assimilation), Fanon's ideas, and most importantly, the exigency of an alliance between the traditional Islamic clergy and non-

[127] Perhaps the most efficient way to navigate his life is through his own account, written less than a month before his death: 'My life, in total, is a series of five-year plans. I have always started something, brought it to its peak, and then seen it collapse at the end of five years; each time starting over: From early adolescence until the August 19, 1953 and the fall of Dr. Mosaddeq and the beginning of dictatorship, five years. From that period to the formation of the secret National Resistance Movement, which collapsed in 1958 and led to our arrest, five years. From 1959 to 1964, five years in Europe. From 1964 to 1969, a particular period of wandering, imprisonment, laying the groundwork, and preparing for university, five years. The period of university conferences and Ershād, five years, until 1972. After that, imprisonment, forced retirement, and suppression, five years' (CW1: 254, my translation).

[128] For an informative yet concise comparison of the backgrounds and ideas of Al-e Ahmad and Shariati, see Khosrokhavar, F. (2020). Third-Worldist Iranian Intellectuals: Shariati and Al-e Ahmad. In Jahanbegloo, R. (Ed.), *Mapping the role of intellectuals in Iranian modern and contemporary history* (pp. 69–93). Lexington Books.

religious intellectuals (Rahnema 2014: 191). They left significant marks on one another's thought; Al-e Ahmad 'was impressed by Shariati's modernist Islamic discourse' and Shariati praised Al-e Ahmad as one of the 'pioneers of "returning to oneself" in the Third World' along with Fanon, Césaire, and Senghor (Rahnema 2014: 192). Al-e Ahmad refers to Shariati in his last book, *On the Services and Disservices of the Intellectuals*, in a note on 'the position of the Iranian intellectual on traditional institutions', confirming that they (Shariati and Al-e Ahmad) 'are on the same path on such problems' (SDI1: 210-211). As discussed in the previous chapter, Al-e Ahmad criticised the Iranian intelligentsia for being 'alienated from their indigenous and traditional environment' and acting in accordance with 'the criteria of the "metropole"' (SDI1: 45).[129] According to him, the "Metropole" is 'the centre of colonialism', while indigenous and traditional environments are 'either colonised or semi-colonised' (SDI1: 46). He explains how these intellectuals fail to address political freedoms and, instead, 'excommunicate the clergy'[130] rather than deliberating the questions and issues of religion and traditions (ibid: 46, 48). He writes:

> [The Iranian intellectual] employs freethinking not against the states, but solely against traditional foundations (religion, language, history, ethics, and customs). For it is difficult to direct freethinking toward the state and its colonial and semi-colonial foundations (ibid: 46).[131]

Shariati addressed Al-e Ahmad's concerns through targeting religious dogmatism and intellectual colonialism. .[132] As mentioned earlier, his thought is customarily scrutinised in

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[129] Al-e Ahmad transliterates the word "metropole" and puts it into quotations mark throughout his book.

[130] Al-e Ahmad uses the Persian word *takfīr* here, literally meaning "excommunication" in English. However, what he means here, I believe, is "rejecting", "negating", or "disapproving" the clergy.

[131] [روشنفکر ایرانی] آزاداندیشی را هم نه در قبال حکومت‌ها، بلکه فقط در قبال بنیادهای سنتی (مذهب- زبان- تاریخ- اخلاق- آداب) اعمال می‌کند. چون بکارانداختن آزاداندیشی در قبال حکومت و بنیادهای استعماری و نیمه‌استعماری‌اش دشوار است.

[132] Al-e Ahmad introduces Shariati as an intellectual who re-examines both religion and its opponents, and quotes from Shariati's *Islamology* (1969): 'For the past half-century, the intellectuals' opposition to religion in Islamic countries, including Iran, is not comparable to the educated Europeans' opposition in recent centuries, who have struggled against religion on the basis of what they themselves have experienced, as well as their knowledge of religion, the Middle Ages, and the church. In contrast, such [Iranians'] opposition to religion falls in the category of their blind imitation of the Europeans… In her/his opposition to religion, our educated today knows neither Islam nor history. She/he knows solely one European language, has translated the European's judgement on her/his religion, and has then copied it' (SDI1: 210-211, my translation).

terms of the Islamic aspect of the 1979 Revolution.[133] However, branding Shariati in this way comes with the risk of presenting a rather distorted image of both his critical theory and his distinctive revolutionary narrative of (Shi'a) Islam, originally shaped through a critique of (Islamic) traditions and political-religious institutions (Byrd and Miri, 2018: 8). Moreover, as Cronin argues, Shariati's adoption of a religious revolutionary ideology must not overshadow his connection to a greater context of the anti-imperial 'global Left' that was 'born of the notion of the unity of the struggles of the oppressed within the imperial metropolises and throughout their empires, formal and informal' (Cronin 2021: 27). Locating Shariati within the greater context of the global 1970s, or the 'Red 1970s', Cronin argues that Shariati's narrative of Shi'a Islam is 'a direct parallel to Catholic Liberation theology' developed in Latin America in the 1960s (Cronin 2021: 47).[134]

Shariati's main themes of concern arose and developed in response to the Cold-War-affected world, and were shared with Al-e Ahmad, Che Guevara, Fanon, Sartre, and Camus—figures with whom he was constantly in conversation. With Iran finding itself at the crossroads between ideologies advocated by the Capitalist nations and the Communist Bloc, Shariati attempted to formulate an authentic alternative framework, reducible neither to liberalism nor to socialism simpliciter, and capable of addressing the questions of the day, arising mostly from Marxian discourse—I expand this theme in Appendix 1, *Space, Time, and the Intellectual:*

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[133] With such a fundamental contextual presupposition, Shariati's thought has been studied from various perspectives. These include studies whose theoretical approach is mainly the intellectual interactions between the East and West, as well as themes of modernity and identity, as seen in the works of Boroujerdi (1996), Vahdat (2002 and 2020), Nabavi (2003), and Kachouyian (2006). Having been dubbed as the "Luther of Iranian Shi'ism" in Boroujerdi's *Orientalism in Reverse* (1990), Shariati represents 'a discourse of Shi'a reformism' (Boroujerdi 1990: 249), seeking to 'revolutionize political Islam' (Kamrava 2008: 40). Nevertheless, more recent analyses of Shariati's thought demonstrate a shift in theoretical perspective, centring on Fanonian phenomenology of colonialism and non-Western-centric critical theory. See, for example, Connell, R. (2020). *Southern theory : the global dynamics of knowledge in social science*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group; Davari, A. (2021). Paradox as Decolonization: Ali Shariati's Islamic Lawgiver. *Political Theory*, *49*(5), 743–773. Davari, A. (2014). A Return to Which Self? *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, *34*(1); Callewaert, T. (2019). Return to Our Own: Revolution, Religion and Culture in Amilcar Cabral and Ali Shariati. In *Future(s) of the Revolution and the Reformation* (pp. 211–236). Springer International Publishing; Saffari, S. (2015). Rethinking the Islam/Modernity Binary: Ali Shariati and Religiously Mediated Discourse of Sociopolitical Development. *Middle East Critique*, *24*(3), 231–250; Saffari, S. (2019). Ali Shariati and Cosmopolitan Localism. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, *39*(2), 282–295.

[134] According to Cronin, although Shariati does not explicitly draw on the Latin American Liberation theology of Gustavo Guttiérez and others, he might have been informed of it through the French periodical *L'Esprit* when he was studying in Paris from 1960 to 1964 (Cronin 2021: 47).

Locating Shariati. This way of thinking, however, developed during his years in Paris and under the influence of those whom he called his 'idols': Louis Massignon,[135] Georges Gurvitch,[136] and Jacques Berque (CW13: 315-343).[137] As we shall see in this chapter, he learned from Massignon the unity of all Abrahamic religions and solidarity with the oppressed; from Gurvitch, plurality of Marxism and definitions of class, as well as political commitment; from Berque, the essence of religion and sociological perspective, along with the conceptual tool to interpret words; and from all three, commitment to advocacy for social and economic justice (Rahnema 2014: 120-126).

This chapter will draw on a variety of portraits depicted by several studies from various perspectives, but will also attempt to sketch a new likeness of Shariati in light of his ontological concept of humanity and freedom. I will argue that, although Shariati shares with Fanon and Sartre an existentialist notion of the human being, his arguments on human freedom are irreducibly theological. He thinks in line with Sartre when it comes to radical

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[135] Louis Massignon (1883–1962), French Catholic scholar and historian renowned for his expertise in Islam and Islamic mysticism. He was a pivotal figure in Christian-Islamic intellectual dialogue, particularly noted for his emphasis on the unity of the Abrahamic religions. Among his students who were deeply influenced by his approach were Jacques Berque, Henri Corbin, Mohammed Arkoun, Louis Gardet, Maxime Rodinson, and Taha Hussein. Massignon's most famous works include *La Passion de Hallaj, martyr mystique de l'Islam* (1922) [The Passion of al-Hallaj, Mystic and Martyr of Islam] and *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane* (1922) [The Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism]. One of his significant articles, which greatly influenced Shariati, is *Salman Pak et les prémices spirituelles de l'Islam iranien*. A comprehensive bibliography of Massignon's articles can be found in Youakim Moubarek's *L'Oeuvre de Louis Massignon*, Vol. 1, published in Beirut by Ed. du Cénacle Libanais in 1972. For a biography of Massignon see Gude, M. L. (1996). *Louis Massignon: the crucible of compassion*. University of Notre Dame Press. See also Waardenburg, J. (2005). Louis Massignon (1883–1962) as a Student of Islam. *Die Welt Des Islams*, *45*(3), 312–342.

[136] Georges Gurvitch (1894–1965), French sociologist of Russian origin. He drew inspiration from philosophers like Hegel and Bergson, as well as from the phenomenological school of philosophy. Gurvitch is best known for his contributions to the sociology of law, the study of social groups and classes, and the nature of social time. He authored a number of influential works on sociology, including *Eléments de sociologie juridique* (1940), The Sociology of Law (1942), *Études sur les classes sociales* (1966), and *Les cadres sociaux de la connaissance* (1966). Gurvitch's *Déterminismes sociaux et liberté humaine* (1955), *Morale théorique et science des mœurs* (1948) and *Dialectique et sociologie* (1962) were translated into Persian, probably before or around 1979, and published in 1980 by Hassan Habibi, one of the authors of the preliminary draft of the post-revolution constitution. See Chapter Five.

[137]Jacques Augustin Berque (1910–1995), French scholar of Islamic and Arabic studies, born in Algeria to French parents. He was the head of the social history of contemporary Islam department at the Collège de France and authored numerous scholarly works on decolonisation and Islamic and Arab cultures, including his early works *Dépossession du monde* (1964), *L'Égypte : Impérialisme et révolution*, Gallimard (1967) and *Le Maghreb entre deux guerres* (1970). For a thorough biography and review of Berque's thought see Whidden, J. (2010). Jacques Berque (1910–1995). In French Historians 1900–2000: New Historical Writing in Twentieth-Century France (pp. 23–37). Wiley-Blackwell.

human freedom and responsibility, but drifts away from Sartre (and Camus) when he deals with the notion of absurdity, based on his receptiveness to theological forms of thinking. Similarly, Shariati shares with Fanon the idea of alienation and its relation to freedom in colonial and anti-colonial terms, with the significant difference that, while Fanon's arguments are in their origin corporeal and psychological, Shariati understands alienation mostly in terms of a theological idea of human dignity and its relation to (various modes of) domination.

Religion versus Religion: A Grand Theory of Freedom

Shariati's radical criticism of religion as an established institution representing a social class constitutes a key argument integral to his thought in general and to his formulation of freedom in particular. What he asserts in terms of a distinction between two nuanced expressions, *irfān*[138] and religion (*dīn*) elucidated comprehensively under the topic which he calls 'religion versus religion'.[139] *Irfān*, the general term Shariati uses to connote 'human

[138] This is the definition of *irfān* in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*: ''*Irfān*, from the Arabic root *ʿarafa*, to know, literally means gnosis. It can be used as a synonym of *maʿrifah*, also translated as gnosis. The difference between these two usages of gnosis, *ʿirfān* and *maʿrifah*, is that while the latter generally denotes a knowledge achieved through spiritual realization and even sometimes a station (*maqām*) on the spiritual path, the former is most commonly used as the name of a particular discipline or science that is concerned with knowledge of spiritual verities and the practice of the spiritual path. The term *maʿrifah* is most widely used in *taṣawwūf* (Sufism) in the Sunnī world while *ʿirfān* has come to be the designated title of the sciences associated with *taṣawwūf* in the Shīʿī world. It can also be said that the former is commonly used in Arabic and the latter in Persian; in general, what is called *taṣawwūf* in the Sunnī world is referred to as *ʿirfān* in the Shīʿī world'. See Naeem, F. (2009). *ʿIrfān*. In The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World: Oxford University Press.

[139] Throughout this thesis, I have chosen not to use any English equivalent for the term *irfān* when it is used by Shariati. He frequently employs *dīn*, *madhab*, and *irfān*, often interchangeably. While *dīn* (connoting 'way of life') and *madhab* ('school of legal thought') are both used as Persian equivalents for religion, they are two distinct terms, both different from *irfān* which is closer to Gnosticism and spirituality. For a definition of *dīn* and *madhhab*, see *The Oxford Dictionary Of Islam: D* (2003). In Esposito J. L. (Ed.), Oxford University Press. Within the context of specific discussions, where Shariati aims to differentiate a particular type of spirituality and religiosity from the conventional understanding of religion, he opts for *irfān*, which closely aligns with the concept of spirituality. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Shariati also makes an effort to define what he means by *irfān* or spirituality, distinguishing it from its various historical forms in the Iranian tradition and from a type of spirituality and devotion disengaged from the socio-political issues of one's society. Sara Shariati, sociologist and Shariati's daughter, uses the French term 'la gnose' for the Persian word *irfān* in the article Fanon, *Shariati et la question de la religion: cinquante ans après* (2016). For a concise yet informative differentiation between *dīn*, *madhab*, and *irfān*, see *irfān, equality, freedom* in Collective Works (Vol 2) (2013). *Revolutionary Self-Transformation*. Shariati Cultural Foundation.

spirituality' in its broadest sense, constitutes one of 'the three basic currents'—the other two being equality and freedom—common to 'all the intellectual schools and experiences that in the course of history have come forward as religion, philosophy, or various other fields of human thought and action', having 'always existed in both the East and the West' (IEF: 97). Religion, by contrast, is a more complex phenomenon, and never singular; there are always two religions opposing one another within any faith, one being emancipatory and the other 'imposing constraints on human thought' (IEF: 102).

Religion versus Religion lies at the heart of Shariati's thought. It reflects a fundamental aspect of his general Islamic worldview; informs his concept of freedom in terms of a constant struggle against any form of domination; brings Shariati, as a Muslim 'insider', into conversation with French existentialism, especially with Sartre and Fanon; builds 'an alliance between the repressed and the liberation ideology of Islam' through its redefined theological concepts (Rahnema 2014: 299); formulates Shariati's critical theory of religion; and demonstrates his divergence from the 'foundationalists of both metaphysical and materialist' lines of thought (Davari 2021: 755). Originally delivered as a lecture in 1970, *Religion versus Religion* argues that there exist two mutually exclusive and fundamentally confronting religions within any particular religion, regardless of both the religion and its historical stage. The thesis is founded on two premises: 1) religion has been a perennial reality throughout the history of humankind[140] and 2) religions have emerged in opposition to an existing religion, not to disbelief or atheism:

> [T]hroughout history, whether it be the history of the Abrahamic religions or the religions of the East or the West—in whatever form it takes—wherever a prophet or a religious revolution appeared in the name of religion, it was first manifested in spite of and in opposition to the existing religion of its own age and secondly, the first group or force which arose against this religion, stood against it, persevered and brought about a struggle, was religion (RVR: 22).

[140] Making a reference to Alexis Carrel, Shariati asserts that 'past history has continuously consisted of societies and these societies were, in a general sense, religiously structured. The pivot, heart and basis of every society was a deity, a religious faith, a prophet or a religious book' (RVR: 20).

Thus, Shariati contends that

> There are two religions in a given moment in history that in their various forms differ from one another. If we want to weigh all of the qualities of these two religions and count their qualities, whatever quality we prove in one way for one of them, we are obliged to negate that very same quality for the other religion (RVR: 23).

In *Ali Shariati and the Future of Social Theory*, Byrd maintains that in 'Religion versus Religion' Shariati discovers 'the same antagonistic dialectic within Islam that the Frankfurt School discovered in both Judaism and Christianity: the dialectic between affirmative and negative religion' (Byrd 2018: 109-110). Criticising Euro-centric counter-religious intellectual trends of the time, Shariati insists that failing to take into account this historical distinction and contradiction brings about both an epistemological error—in that it 'conforms to half of the realities' about religion, leaving the other 'contradictory half' unnoticed—and a methodological error—in that it indicates adopting a universal or 'general opinion about religion' and 'proving it in a general way' in order to deductively apply it to particulars (particular religions) (RVR: 22, 23). Accordingly, acknowledging the dialectics of religion, he critiques religion as a historical power structure, and at the same time, lays the foundation of his particular religious emancipatory normative theory and revolutionary ideology as an alternative to both the Western secular tradition and the conservative Islamic tradition.

Shariati takes three Islamic doctrinal concepts, *kufr* (disbelief), *shirk* (polytheism), and paganism or idolatry to delineate these two mutually negating religions by contrasting them to the notion of *tawhīd*, or absolute monotheism, the principal doctrine of Islam.[141]

[141] According to Shariati's definitions, *Kufr* denotes 'concealing', connoting covering 'the truth of religion by means of another religion', not 'a non-religion', but 'by a curtain of ignorance, malice, self-seeking interests or absolute foolishness' (RVR: 24). In *Ali Shariati and the Shaping of Political Islam*, Kingshuk Shatterjee defines *kāfir* (the person attributed *kufr*) is 'the person who conceals the truth about God and does not believe in Revelation' (2011: 249). *Shirk* or polytheism, 'the oldest form of religion among human societies', stands for worshipping several gods instead of only one God. A *mushrik*, a polytheist, has a religious belief, but might believe in several gods regarding one's fate (RVR: 24). *Bot-parasti* or idolatry, or idolism refers to 'a special form of the religion of polytheism' (RVR: 24). Idolatry per se does not connote Association; it represents a particular form of Association. Multitheism' is the word that is used in the English translation of Shariati's book *Religion Versus Religion* for the expression *shirk*.

Both monotheism (*tawhīd*) and polytheism (*shirk*) are highly nuanced notions in Shariati's critical social theory. In a nutshell, polytheism metaphorically implies submission to any authority (god) but God, while monotheism indicates the opposite. As Shatterjee (2011) maintains, Shariati 'deliberately deviated from the standard connotations of monotheism and polytheism that these words carried, and played with the literal meanings of the terms' (Shatterjee 2011: 92). That is to say, the prefix 'poly' in polytheism conforms to its theological definition of acknowledging multiple gods, but this pantheon of gods radically transcends the conventional definitions and understandings of the term and turns into a political concept. Similarly, Shariati takes *tawhīd* or absolute monotheism beyond its Islamic doctrinal framework, defined as the doctrine of 'the unity and uniqueness of God as creator and sustainer of the universe', and redefines it in political terms (ODI: 317). He argues that monotheism is essentially a political concept in that it is antithetical to domination, in the broadest sense of the term, entailing equality among human beings, or in his own words, 'the unity of humanity, the unity of all races, all classes, all families and all individuals, the unity of rights, the unity of values, and the unity of honours' (RVR: 27).[142]These two contrasting conceptualisations, according to Shariati, have 'moved forward throughout history, side by side and step by step, exactly parallel' to one another and 'never ended with the story of Abraham or with the manifestation of Islam'; rather, polytheism continues to emerge in myriad forms, including in forms clothed in monotheism itself (RVR: 26). Shariati makes his key argument in terms of his emphasis on this continuity between theological and political meanings, and moves from the theological to the political by means of the conceptual tools of *tawhīd* and *shirk*, absolute monotheism and polytheism, elaborated in terms of 'qualities' which are embodied in 'material and this-worldly' phenomena, such as slavery, coercion, and domination (RVR: 26).

Freedom becomes a political ideal in Shariati's thought through his critical analysis of domination, formulated as the religion of *shirk*. Predicating his definition of polytheism on the Quranic verse 'Do you worship those things which you (yourselves) carve?', Shariati contends that *shirk* connotes deifying that which humanity itself makes, be it tangible, such as deities or idols, or intangible, such as race or the social class and status (RVR: 25). He explains:

[142] Translation modified.

> Polytheism means servitude. It means transgression against submission to God. Meanwhile, it means the submission, humiliation, and servitude of humanity before the idols in the broadest sense; that is, that which deceivers and liars have built through ignorance and oppression to invite people to servitude [through] worshipping [those idols]. This is transgression against God's commands, transgression against the great Power of Being and surrendering to "that which you (yourselves) carved", whatever it is: [idols] or a machine, virtues or capital, blood or ancestors, whatever it is in any era; these are idols before Allah, before God (RVR: 30).

'Transgression' in this text is a key term that not only elucidates Shariati's idea of religion versus religion, but also provides a context within which his concept of freedom reveals itself. Here, the English word 'transgression' is chosen to translate the nuanced Arabic expression *tāghut*, which is defined as the 'Quranic term for false god or idol', being also 'applied to tyrannical rulers who arrogate God's absolute power and use it [false god] to oppress people' in the *Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (ODI: 310). Besides, *tāghut* is a catchphrase in the 1979 Islamic Revolutionary discourse, referring to the pre-revolutionary Pahlavi monarchy. Literally meaning 'to go beyond a limit', *tāghut* is close in meaning to the English 'transgression', tyranny, and usurpation. In the English translation of a very eminent Quranic verse, *tāghut* is translated 'false gods':

> Let there be no compulsion in religion, for the truth stands out clearly from falsehood. So whoever renounces false gods and believes in Allah has certainly grasped the firmest, unfailing hand-hold. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing (1: 256).[143]

Accordingly, he contrasts his nuanced concept of the religion of *shirk* with his particular concept of the religion of *tawhīd*, associating *tāghut* (or transgression) with the former, and *enqelāb* or revolution with the latter, two of the most recurrent idioms in the 1979 Islamic Revolution discourse. *Tawhīd* is Shariati's benchmark for assessing power relations in terms of domination. According to Shariati, in any power dynamic where one party dominates another, the dominated essentially becomes a slave to the dominator, a bondman subject to

[143] «لَآ إِكۡرَاهَ فِي ٱلدِّينِۖ قَد تَّبَيَّنَ ٱلرُّشۡدُ مِنَ ٱلۡغَيِّۚ فَمَن يَكۡفُرۡ بِٱلطَّٰغُوتِ وَيُؤۡمِنۢ بِٱللَّهِ فَقَدِ ٱسۡتَمۡسَكَ بِٱلۡعُرۡوَةِ ٱلۡوُثۡقَىٰ لَا ٱنفِصَامَ لَهَاۗ وَٱللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ»

a master other than God. This concept constitutes a central principle in Shariati's philosophy and is crucial to consider when exploring his understanding of freedom.

By employing the term 'religion of *tawhīd*', Shariati emphasises the distinction between two fundamentally opposing religions. He reinterprets monotheism through a lens of Divine Qualities, from which he derives theoretical and practical prerequisites that underpin his grand theory of freedom. This theory aligns with the global discourse against colonialism and imperialism, while simultaneously offering an alternative revolutionary framework rooted in an existentialist theology. It is designed to be accessible to believers, even those not well-versed in the revolutionary ideologies of thinkers like Fanon or Marx (Rahnema 2014: 128-129).

Shariati argues that if God is believed to be 'the Creator' from the monotheistic perspective of 'all Abrahamic traditions', this Creator possesses certain Qualities: 'the Quality of the Creator', 'the Quality of the Divine Will', the Quality of 'the Absolute Awareness', and 'the Absolute' or 'the One Power' (RVR: 26). Therefore, Shariati concludes that belief in the Absolute Oneness or 'the One Power', necessarily and *a fortiori*, entails refusing to submit to any power but God. Polytheistic religion thus refers to any belief system that credits any power other that God with Divine Qualities.[144]

Shariati's notions of absolute monotheism and its opposite inform his concept of freedom in that polytheism is a system which includes any concept or idea that rationalises or validates any form of domination with the aim of preserving an oppressive status quo:

[144] Shariati explains: '[W]hen a group believes that all of this creation, whether human or animal, whether plant or even inanimate, is built by one Power; and that one Force rules; and that other than He, there is no cause; and that all things, forms, colours, types and substances, are built by the One Creator; this world view of Divine Unity and the Unity of God in Existence, logically and intellectually requires the unity of humanity upon the earth. That is, when monotheism announces that all of creation is one empire, in the hands of one Power; and that all human beings emerge from one single Source, are guided through one Will, and oriented towards one way, are made of one type, have One God, and that all powers, symbols, manifestations, values and signs must be destroyed before Him, when a person like myself, who believes in monotheism, looks at the world, I automatically see this world as having a total, living form. I see a Universal, a Spirit, a Power that rules over this physical form. Thus, it is a universal. Also, when I look at all of humanity, as a unified genus, I look at it with one value because it has been created by one Hand and there is one Order. This religion of monotheism, one of the two religions, is based upon the worship of One God; the belief in one Power for all of Creation and all of the fate of humanity in history. As I have said, the unity of God necessarily brings about the unity of the universe and the unity of the human being' (RVR: 26-27).

> We see that, throughout history, human societies are divided into the noble and low, master and slave, abased and enslaving, ruler and ruled, captive and free, a group [descending from an upper] essence, roots, race… and another group which lacks these. A nation which is more virtuous than another nation; a class which is continuously superior to another class (RVR: 33).[145]

These lines resonate with the phenomenon that Fanon calls 'Manicheism delirium' in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and 'a Manichaean world' in *The Wretched of the Earth* to describe the 'compartmentalized' colonial world (WE: 5).[146] Fanon's account of the compartmentalised world, however, gives a particular colonial twist to that which inequality and domination connote: the colonised human being is 'reduced to the state of animal', dehumanised—a crucial element in his social theory (WE: 7). He insists that the 'reference' by means of which one class 'legitimises' its domination over the other is fundamentally different from the references made in non-colonised contexts.[147] Yet, regarding the oppressive role of religion, Fanon and Shariati hold comparable contentions in terms of responsibility and 'the Divine Will'. Shariati, in a more generalised manner, introduces 'the Divine Will' as one primordial reference for justifying domination and coercion: 'it is the mission of (the polytheistic) religion to convince people and make them to submit to their inferior class… essence… race, and even creator', stressing that 'the guardians of a religion have always been alongside the ruling class or controlled them' (RVR: 33). Fanon, in a more specific way, analyses religion in the colonised world:

> Fatalism relieves the oppressor of all responsibility since the cause of wrong-doing, poverty, and the inevitable can be attributed to God. The individual thus accepts the

[145] Translation modified.

[146] Fanon mentions in *Peau noire, masques blancs* that he has taken the expression 'manecheism delirium' from Dide and Guiraud's *Psychiatrie du médecin praticien* (Paris, Masson, 1922: 164).

[147] Fanon writes: 'The serf is essentially different from the knight, but a reference to divine right is needed to justify this difference in status. In the colonies the foreigner imposed himself using his cannons and machines… The ruling species is first and foremost the outsider from elsewhere, different from the indigenous population, "the others"' (WE: 5).

> devastation decreed by God, grovels in front of the colonist, bows to the hand of fate, and mentally readjusts to acquire the serenity of stone (WE: 18).

Regarding fatalism, both Shariati and Fanon draw attention to the individual's responsibility to refuse fatalism; however, Fanon adds another layer to the role of religion in the colonial context: not only the master justifies oppression through the Divine Will in terms of a discriminatory doctrine, but also the master-guardian is 'the other':

> The Church in the colonies is a white man's Church, a foreigners' Church. It does not call the colonized to the ways of God, but to the ways of the white man, to the ways of the master, the ways of the oppressor. And as we know, in this story many are called but few are chosen (WE: 7).

Despite Al-e Ahmad's attention to the complex role of religion in the colonised context, Shariati seems to overlook the cumulative effect of colonialism and religion, missing Fanon's point. Yet, it can also be argued that Shariati's grand theory of religious subjugation addresses, a fortiori, Fanon's point. Shariati explains:

> Polytheism is the doctrine of 'economic monopoly', which is 'truly the opium of the masses… so that the people surrender to their abjectness, misery, wretchedness, and ignorance; and submit to the static situation and disgraceful fate which they and their ancestors have been obliged to have, an inner ideological submission' (RVR: 35).

In this sense, the wretched have internalised not only their wretchedness and inferiority, but also, in Bhabha's words (quoting Malek Bennabi), 'the idea of the inherent superiority' of the oppressor (BSWM: ix). Shariati calls this 'the religion of fear and ignorance', which theorises the discriminatory status quo and negates the responsibility (and even the possibility) of the people to criticise and rise up to change their situation (RVR: 38). Thus, for Shariati, the task of refuting such 'an anti-human-rights religion' *has been* the emancipatory mission of the intellectuals, including the European anti-religious and 'the divinely-appointed prophets',[148]

[148] Shariati asserts: 'The mission which European intellectuals and seekers of liberation undertook in their struggle with the church, the religion of the Middle Ages in Europe resulted in the liberation of European thought after 1000 years of stagnation. They struggled against this deviated religion and religious deviation, that is, polytheism (*shirk*). They developed a resistance movement against a religion ruled by an arrogant despot who, in the clothes of the Prophet Jesus, rebelled against God's Commands. This mission of theirs was a continuation of that very mission which the divinely-appointed prophets continuously undertook against the reactionary,

throughout history, and 'it *is* the responsibility of every committed, conscious and responsible person' (RVR: 60).[149] Moreover, according to Shariati, revolting against oppression, manifest in the 'religion of *shirk*' or polytheism, is so inherently obvious that it transcends the notion of a basic human "right"; it becomes a self-evident imperative (RVR: 63). Thus, *tawhīd* is 'revolutionary' in that it rises against everything but God: 'this religion of monotheism, while it invites humanity to submit before God, in the same way and for this very reason, it invites humanity to revolt against anything that is other than He': the system (RVR: 30). Accordingly, in terms of a critical worldview, *tawhīd* is a revolutionary doctrine:

> A revolutionary religion gives an individual—an individual who believes in it, who is trained in the school of thought of this religion—the ability to criticize life in all its material, spiritual and social aspects. It gives the mission and duty to destroy, to change and to eliminate that which one does not accept and believes to be invalid aiming to replace it with that which one knows and recognizes as being the truth. The particularity of the religion of monotheism is that it does not show indifference (RVR: 31).[150]

The Global Anticolonial Front: A Correspondence

While Shariati acknowledges the influence of Fanon on his thought, he also points out a critical distinction between their perspectives. Shariati asserts that it is unreasonable 'to expect an Iranian intellectual to think and write in the same manner as a Latin American or African intellectual' (CW2: 122). He underscores the difference between being inspired by Fanon's thinking and merely replicating his words. Shariati emphasises that 'while he

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deviated religion which opposed the people, which opposed human rights, which legitimates or justifies the position of those who hold the power, wealth and/or means by which to deceive, which deceives and narcotizes people. The European intellectual did this in order to destroy all idols and all signs of the religion of polytheism although they did not explain things in these terms' (RVR: 59-61, translation modified).

[149] Translation modified. Emphases are mine.

[150] Translation modified.

resonates with Fanon on certain cultural and intellectual foundations, their thoughts diverge in many respects' (CW2: 122). He states:

> From a social standpoint, our goals align. However, our interpretations of various issues, our worldviews, and our perspectives on the world differ. Our common ground lies in our shared opposition to European [colonialism] (CW2: 123).

Religion emerges as their critical point of divergence within the global anti-colonial movement, particularly in the context of shaping postcolonial ideologies and identities. Shariati's formulation of the emancipatory religion as a grand theory of freedom is, as he insists in the lecture series *Islamology*, a mobilising ideology and 'prelude to practice'; however, in the single surviving letter between Shariati and Fanon (CW17: 186), he does not find in his Martinican correspondent unequivocal support for the idea of using religion as means of anti-colonial struggle.[151] Fanon informs Shariati that he does not find his efforts 'incompatible' with his own aim and recognises his approach 'as a great intelligent step towards' his own ideal, for 'Islam harbours, more than any other social powers of ideological alternatives in the third world […] both an anticolonialist capacity and an anti-western character'. Nevertheless, he warns Shariati against the adverse effects that promoting and leaning on a specific religious doctrine could have for the solidarity of the global anti-colonial struggle: 'I think that reviving sectarian and religious mindsets could impede this necessary unification—already difficult enough to attain' (AF: 668, 669).

In response, Shariati argues in *Islamology* that he is not defending a return to religion as such, which connotes endorsing and drawing on 'common and current religious traditions' and forcing them on others; instead, by religion (Islam) he means 'the Islam that recreates humanity' (CW17: 197). Fanon understands Shariati's 'aim' to be 'emancipating a large part of humanity threatened by alienation and depersonalization' in the colonised context, but his understanding of Shariati's 'interpretation of the rebirth of religious spirit' seems inaccurate

[151] The correspondence between Shariati and Fanon is a contested issue. In *Mystical Solidarities: Ali Shariati and the Act of Translation* (2022), Davari and Saffari argue that this correspondence should not be interpreted as a genuine exchange of letters between Shariati and Fanon. Instead, it should be understood as Shariati playing 'the part of an unreliable narrator' (2022: 94). They assert that Shariati enacts what Fanon refers to as a "true lie" in *L'An V de la révolution algérienne*. Nevertheless, whether such an exchange of letters actually occurred or is a manifestation of Shariati's "true lie" does not impact our current analysis of the dialogue between Shariati and Fanon. Instead, it provides insight into how Shariati himself imagined his conversation with Fanon.

(AF: 669), at least according to Shariati's own explanation of the idea. Fanon mentions the 'rebirth' of religion, but the extent to which he is informed of Shariati's incredibly nuanced concept of existentialist religion, as well as his struggle against religion itself (i.e. Religion versus Religion) is unclear. Shariati shares Fanon's concern regarding the 'necessary unification' of the Third World against colonialism and cultural colonialism, but insists that religion, apart from being a faith, is a 'strategy' (CW17:196). Drawing on Fanon, he argues that global colonialism is primarily a 'human problem' rather than a 'political and economic problem', for colonialism 'hollows out human beings and empties minds and emotions before emptying lands and mines' (CW17: 196). He thus contends that the 'inevitable requirement' of the anti-colonial struggle is to start from the colonised people and clear their minds of the dehumanising influences imposed by colonialism:

> Returning to Islam is not just about bolstering spiritual and mystical feelings or fostering religious traditions in societies. Rather, the most significant role and objective in returning to Islam is the pursuit of human development, awareness, and the restoration of human capital that has been plundered and obliterated, reducing us to poverty and dependence on the mere scraps thrown at us (CW17: 197).[152]

Fanon, on the other hand, affirms that Islam can provide 'immense cultural and social resources' against 'aggression and the temptations of venomous and dubious ideas, as well as about methods and solutions coming from Europe'; however, he remains concerned that it could

> divert that nation yet to come, which is at best a 'nation in becoming', from its ideal future, bringing it instead closer to its past. This is what I continue to dread and what makes me anxious about the efforts of the upstanding militants of the Association of Maghrebin *Ulema*—with all my respect for their effective contribution to the struggle against French cultural colonialism (AF: 669).

[152] «بازگشت به اسلام تنها به عنوان یک تلقین احساس های درونی اشراقی و عرفانی و رواج سنتهای دینی در جامعه ها نیست، بلکه بزرگ‌ترین نقش و هدف ما در بازگشت به اسلام، جستجوی تغذیه انسانی است و رشد و آگاهی و ارزش سرمای انسانی است که غارت کردند و نابود کردند و ما را فقیر نیازمند و محتاج لقمه هایی کردند که پیش ما مثل نواله پرت می کنند.»

Fanon's emphasis on a 'nation in becoming' and his stubborn reliance on the very transformative process of decolonisation instead of reviving and leaning on the past consistently recurs in his writings and key arguments. He writes in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

> We should not… delve into the people's past to find concrete examples to counter colonialism's endeavors to distort and depreciate. We must work and struggle in step with the people so as to shape the future and prepare the ground where vigorous shoots are already sprouting. […] National culture is the collective thought process of a people to describe, justify, and extol the actions whereby they have joined forces and remained strong. National culture in the under-developed countries, therefore, must lie at the very heart of the liberation struggle these countries are waging (WE: 168).

Shariati, in response to Fanon, confirms that intellectuals are required to find 'ideologies in harmony with historical and social transformations'; he also affirms that a religious ideology might 'limit their minds into frozen unalterable determined casts'; however, he insists that this would be the case if 'religion remains to be in the form of the current religious dogmas that deny freedom of thought and judgment' (CW17: 198). In fact, that which Shariati calls 'Islam as an ideology' in contrast to 'Islam as an ethno-social tradition' represents his version of Islam that 'destroys the historical, ethnic, and social traditions of a rotten and degenerate society and intellectual casts' (CW17: 198). Sara Shariati in *Fanon, Shariati et la question de la religion* (2016) maintains that the two thinkers do not agree on the 'sense' or meaning that they give to religion, mainly because of the different contexts of the Algerian and Iranian struggles against colonialism (Sara Shariati 2016: 60). She emphasises that according to Shariati 'the truth of religion is the *irfān*, and *irfān*, along with freedom and equality [*égalité*] constitutes one of the three principles representing the eternal aspirations of humanity' (Sara Shariati 2016: 63).[153] Moreover, Sara Shariati argues that Fanon's understanding of religion corresponds to the general sociological paradigm of secularisation of the 1960s (Sara Shariati 2016: 65-66). Fanon explicitly states in *The Wretched of the Earth* that religion in the colonial context consolidates oppression through fatalism by attributing 'the cause' of a people's wretchedness to God (WE: 18). As discussed earlier, Shariati describes this strand of religion—

[153] As mentioned earlier, Sara Shariati uses the French term 'la gnose' for the Persian word *irfān* in this article.

polytheism or religion of *shirk*—as the 'opium of the masses', quoting Marx. The Shi'ism interpreted and depicted by Shariati, on the contrary, calls upon those same masses 'to build their fate brick by brick with their own hands' in the strictly material and worldly sense of the term (CW17: 204).

Nevertheless, both Shariati and Fanon agree that 'another humanity and another civilization' should be founded (AF: 669). Shariati repeatedly quotes Fanon's call for creating a 'new man' through an alternative to both religion and Western-colonial ideas; a 'new way of thinking', as Fanon explains, which is created through and along with the struggle for liberation (WE: 239). Fanon does not interpret Shariati's religion as a constant struggle against religion itself. As we have seen, Shariati understands religion from his specifically Iranian perspective—that which Corbin calls *islam iranien*—and adapts Fanon's thoughts in a manner that informs the reform and renewal of *this* religion, framing it within a grand theory of freedom.[154] Equating intellectuals and prophets in terms of the responsibility they share towards enlightenment as well as discovering religion's 'specific role', Shariati tasks the intellectuals with a trilateral struggle against the three faces of domination: *estebdād* or despotism, *este'mār* or colonialism, and *estehmār* or religious deception.

An Islamic Protestantism

Inspired by Weber, Shariati draws on Christian Protestantism and introduces the idea of an "Islamic Protestantism" to resist 'all the agents of degeneration which, in the name of religion, encumber thought and freeze the fate of a society' (WTS: 51, 54). Therefore, the fate of every society is in the hands of its people, needing to be 'revived and moved' through an Islamic

[154] Shariati delineates his concept of Iranian Islam and the Iranian Muslim as a distinct entity, representing a synthesis that transcends both traditional Islam and historical Iranian identity. He argues that, 'through its reincarnation within the Iranian spirit and the profound revolution it ignited in the nation's conscience and thought, Islam itself transformed, shedding many of its Semitic racial characteristics. Similarly, Iran relinquished much of its ancient, deeply ingrained Aryan racial traits'. Hence, Shariati posits that 'the Iranian Muslim is neither the ancient Iranian nor a Semitic Muslim but represents a new identity forged from this historical and extraordinary union' (Quoted in M.A. Ghanei Rad, *Tabārshenasi-ye Aghalāniyat-e Modern* [Genealogy of Modern Rationality], pp 112-113).

Protestantism developed by the intellectual class. However, since 'there is no universal intellectual informed by common values and standards', a thinker needs to acquire 'their material from their own social life and time' (WTS: 52). Shariati thus stipulates that an intellectual should:

1. 'Extract and purify enormous local cultural resources' to turn the agents of degeneration into means of mobilisation.
2. Enlighten the society about 'social and class conflicts'.
3. 'Bridge' the division between the intellectuals and the masses.
4. In order to ethically arm the people, 'disarm those agents deceitfully armed with the weapon of religion only to exercise power'.
5. 'Disable the agents of backwardness through a religious renaissance', 'save people from opium-like' religion, 'employ [religious] elements as means of revival, enlightenment, movement, and battling superstitions', and 'identify their human identity against Western cultural imperialism' by means of 'one's authentic culture'.
6. 'Turn the imitative, anaesthetic, and obediential spirit of the masses' current religion into an independently reasoning (*ijtihād*), assaultive, dissident, and critical spirit' (WTS: 55-56).

On one hand, this passage—reflecting Shariati's strategy—shines a light on his synthetic approach towards critical sociology as well as his ontological framework, or what he calls his ideology. Shariati's use of the expression *ijtihād* for religious matters is incredibly significant for understanding his intellectual perspective. A strong religious legal term, *ijtihād*—carries the sense of 'independent reasoning', interpreting religious scripture in order to address legal issues.[155] It is a scholarly practice exclusive to the uppermost rank in the hierarchy of ecclesiastics. Accordingly, individuals without official theological education and entitlements

[155] The Oxford Dictionary of Islam defines Ijtihad as: 'Islamic legal term meaning 'independent reasoning', as opposed to *taqlid* (imitation). One of the four sources of Sunni law. Utilized where the Quran and Sunnah (the first two sources) are silent. It requires a thorough knowledge of theology, revealed texts, and legal theory (usul- al-fiqh); a sophisticated capacity for legal reasoning; and a thorough knowledge of Arabic. It is considered a required religious duty for those qualified to perform it. It should be practiced by means of analogical or syllogistic reasoning (*qiyas*). Its result may not contradict the Quran, and it may not be used in cases where consensus (*ijma*) has been reached, according to many scholars. Sunnis believe ijtihad is fallible since more than one interpretation of a legal issue is possible. Islamic reformers call for a revitalization of ijtihad in the modern world' (2003: 134).

are not qualified for such an independent reasoning or exegesis, requiring as it does 'a thorough knowledge of theology', but are restricted to "emulation" (*taqlīd*). By entitling 'the masses' to reasoning instead of imitating or obeying the official religious institutions, Shariati not only democratises a restricted right, but also offers a radical alternative Islamic theology, agile and ideologically capable of addressing any given zeitgeist. This is Shariati's Islam as ideology. He elucidates what he means by Islam as ideology (as opposed to Islam as a formalism) in his series of lectures known as *Islamology*:

> Islam, as an ideology, is not a technical/scientific specialisation. It refers to perceiving a school (of thought) as a faith, not a culture; [it refers to] the perception that understands Islam as a belief, not a set of disciplines; [it refers to] understanding Islam as a historical-intellectual human movement, not as a stock and an accumulation of scholarships; and lastly, [it refers to] Islam as an ideology in an "intellectual's" mind, not as a body of archaic religious knowledge in an ecclesiastic's mind (CW16: 21-22, my translation).[156]

Shariati argues that 'as soon as Islam as "a faith school" was turned into "culture, knowledge, and a set of scholarships", it was stopped from moving, responsibility, social enlightenment, and influencing on fate of the human society' (19-20). Thus, by contrasting faith and culture, Shariati charts a course that transcends religious culture or formalism, embodied in various religious practices such as ceremonies and rituals, towards a school of thought founded on an existentialist-political narrative of Islam. A school of thought, according to Shariati, refers to:

> a harmonious sequence of interrelated philosophical insights, religious beliefs, moral values, and practical methods that construct a meaningful and directed dynamic body

[156] «به عنوان ایدئولوژی اسلام تخصص فنیِ علمی نیست، بلکه احساسِ مکتب به عنوان یک ایمان است، نه یک فرهنگ، احساسِ شناخت اسلام به عنوان یک عقیده است نه مجموعه‌ای از علوم، درک اسلام به عنوان یک حرکت انسانی تاریخیِ فکری است نه به عنوان اندوخته و انباشته‌ای از اطلاعات فنی و علمی، و بالاخره اسلام به عنوان یک ایدئولوژی در ذهن یک روشنفکر، نه اسلام به عنوان علوم قدیمهٔ مذهبی در ذهن یک عالِم!» م آ 16، ص21-22

through a causal relationship. It is a living body whose various organs are nourished by a single blood and live by a single spirit (CW16: 22, my translation).[157]

The above lines demonstrate Shariati's attempt to develop a differentiated Islamic identity, seeking to formulate Islam as an ideology through a critical theory of religion. In this sense, Shariati is forming an opposition from within the religious camp. It is what he famously called a war of 'religion against religion'. Hence, assuming religion to be 'society's zeitgeist', Shariati maintains that the intellectual—required to be mindful of space and time—should not 'imitate the European intellectuals in starting with fighting religion', for it would end in 'people's taking refuge in the most dangerous and backward anti-people agents', namely religious superstitions and institutions (WTS: 52). While the masses need a 'progressive and zealous self-consciousness', the intellectual needs a 'fresh faith', since 'social consciousness' is 'the divine fire that God gives Prometheus', in Shariati's words (WTS: 55, 56). How does Shariati embark on his intellectual journey to develop this 'fresh faith'? By fusing 'radical ideas from Marxist and existentialist traditions of thought with a religious nationalist discourse', as Davari writes (Davari 2014: 86). Beginning with Shariati's understanding of existentialism, I explore and discuss the dynamics of this fusion in the next section.

Shariatian Existentialism

In his will, Shariati introduces himself as an existentialist: 'I am an existentialist, albeit my own particular version of existentialism, not (the existentialism of) repeating, imitating, and translating' (CW1: 237). Demonstrating Shariati's understanding of freedom, this 'particular version of existentialism' is predicated on a critique of both Western philosophy (including existentialism) and the conservative narrative of Islam reflected in the established Islamic theology and jurisprudence. Shariati's 'thesis', fundamentally, maintains that 'man is bound by four forces' or 'chained in four prisons': nature, history, society (over the individual), and

[157] «مکتب عبارت است از مجموعه هم آهنگِ متناسبِ بینشِ فلسفی، عقاید مذهبی، ارزش‌های اخلاق و روش‌های عملی، که در یک ارتباط علت و معلولی با هم یک پیکره متحرکِ معنی‌دار و دارای جهتی را می‌سازند که زنده است، و همه اندام‌های گوناگونش از یک خون تغذیه می‌کنند و با یک روح زنده‌اند.» م آ16، ص22

the self (MI: 99).[158] Thus, in search of a school of thought—or an "ideology" as discussed earlier—to help humanity free itself from these four prisons and become a 'subjectivity', Shariati engages with existentialist concepts of human being throughout his lectures and writings as an essential building block of his liberation theory and critical 'Islamology'. Nevertheless, Shariati's engagement with Sartre's existentialism is both profound and complex. He adapts Sartre's ideas to his own context, thus developing a distinctive existentialist thesis. In the following sections, I will delve into the similarities and differences between Shariati's and Sartre's approaches to existentialism. To gain a deeper understanding of their divergent views within the existentialist framework, I will compare their philosophies with those of two theist existentialists, Blaise Pascal and Gabriel Marcel. This comparison aims to enrich the discussion and provide a more comprehensive perspective on Shariati's existentialism.

Shariati draws a distinction between human existence and human essence, arguing that a human being is not born but 'becomes' a human being by evolving into a 'free self-conscious creator' or subjectivity (MI: 111). He defines subjectivity as the process of becoming self-conscious, becoming conscious of the world, and becoming conscious of one's relation to the world (MI: 108). This process involves the 'being' liberating itself from both its past and its existing circumstances. Therefore, Shariati stresses that 'man can only be a man when she/he liberates herself/himself' from any biological, historical, or social conditions that undermine his/her agency (MI: 99). Accordingly, he posits that human being and freedom are intrinsically linked, with being essentially characterised by transcendence. Consequently, a human being is perceived as both a (material) biological entity and a 'transcendental truth', whose very existence is contingent upon—or a result of—liberation from the aforementioned constraints, to which I shall return shortly (MI: 104).

Shariati shares with Sartre an understanding of (human) being in terms of what Sartre calls two 'radically separated regions of being' in *Being and Nothingness* (BN: lxvii). Yet, the distinction that he (Shariati) perceives between 'non-conscious Being' (or 'Being' [بودن]) and

[158] All references to *Man and Islam* here refer to a compilation of six lectures and one interview by Ali Shariati, originally published in Persian by Sherkat e Sahami-e Enteshar, without a specified publication date. The quotations provided are my translations. An English version of the book was published in 1981.See Shariati, A., & Marjani, F. (1981). *Man and Islam*. North Haledon: Islamic Publications International.

‘being as a subjectivity’ (or becoming [شـــــدن]) is predicated on his interpretation of the Abrahamic narrative of God and creation. To distinguish ‘being’ from ‘being a subjectivity’, Shariati draws on two Quranic expressions for human being, *bashar* and *ensān*, and employs Islamic theological terminology to express an existentialist concept of transcendence: *bashar* is ‘this bipedal animal living at the end of the evolutionary chain of species’, while *ensān* is a ‘subjectivity’ (MI: 100). In other words, human being as *bashar* connotes ‘being’, while ‘subjectivity’ or *ensān* connotes a ‘becoming’.

Although Shariati’s conceptualisation of humanity as a subjectivity or transcendental truth is fundamentally theological, his emphasis on the ontological distinction between ‘all natural phenomena’, including human being as an animal, and human being as a ‘subjectivity’ brings Shariati into conversation with both Sartre and Fanon, as well as with those whom Sartre refers to as religious existentialists (MI: 101; EH: 20). In the framework of Sartrean existentialism, what Shariati refers to as *ensān* can be compared to the *For-itself*—despite their fundamental differences that I shortly discuss. *Ensān* is essentially defined by transcendence, aligning with the *For-itself*’s representing self-consciousness and freedom. Conversely, *bashar* or humankind, along with other animals and material entities, is akin to Sartre’s *In-itself*, characterised by an ‘invariable definition’. Shariati illustrates this through the image of a primitive ape-man who has ‘merely lost his tail and shed some hair’, underscoring the static, unchanging characteristic of *bashar* in contrast to the dynamic and evolving characteristic of *ensān* (MOWF: 98- 99).[159] Drawing on the metaphorical indications of the creation myth of Adam and Eve, Shariati elucidates his idea of humanity in a more concrete way (SI: 89). He writes:

> In this story, Adam represents the whole human species, the essence of the human race, man in his philosophical sense. When Quran speaks of man in the biological sense, it uses the language of the natural sciences, mentioning sperm, drops of clotted blood, fetus, etc. But when it comes to the creation of Adam, its language is metaphorical and philosophical, full of meaning and symbol. The creation of man, that

[159] Originally in the booklet *Irfān, Barābarī, Āzādī* [Irfān, Equality, Freedom], published between 1977 and 1979. Also in Shariati’s Collective Works (Vol 2) (2013), *Khod-sāzī-e enqelābi* [Revolutionary Self-Transformation*]*, Shariati Cultural Foundation.

> is, the essence, spiritual destiny and attributes of the human race, as it appears in the story of Adam, may be reduced to the following formula: The spirit of God + putrid clay = man (SI: 88).

Before proceeding, it is necessary to define what Shariati means by human nature. He employs various terms for this notion, commonly translated into English as 'essence' or 'nature', including *seresht* [سرشت], *nahād* [نهاد] and *fitrat* [فطرت], or as it is more widely known in English-speaking contexts, *fitra*. *Fitra* is a Quranic term that denotes 'the original state in which humans are created by God' (ODI: 109). It is crucial to note that Shariati also employs the term *fitra* in the context of discussing Sartre's notion of existence—specifically, existence as Being that precedes essence (MI: 114). This usage suggests that Shariati's notion of *fitra* is close to what Sartre defines as existence, however, his view of humanity as a dualistic and contradictory entity does not comfortably fit within the Sartrean framework, especially when considered from an atheist standpoint. This difference is also significant as it highlights the unique philosophical underpinnings of each thinker. Yet, although Shariati's conceptualisation of freedom as the act of constantly transcending oneself and making one's essence echoes Sartre, his religiously-informed ontology, which is based on a human nature that he calls the *essence générique* of humankind complicates the comparison (CW24: 201).[160] This *essence générique* is the synthesis of two opposite elements, God's spirit and clay; it is human existence or the non-conscious Being, the *In-itself*. From this perspective and in harmony with Sartre, freedom is the very being of the *For-itself* and humanity is condemned to be free (BN: 631). This interpretation is further illuminated in the following excerpt. Shariati describes clay as symbolising 'lowness, stagnation, and absolute passivity', whereas he interprets the spirit of God as indicative of 'an endless movement toward perfection and infinite exaltation' (SI: 88). He calls this 'dialectic reality' or 'the human situation' and explains:

> The human situation, to use the terminology of existentialism, or the primordial disposition of man (*fitra*)—both terms signifying the dual and contradictory nature of man—can be deduced from the Quran as follows: man is a free and responsible will occupying a station intermediate between two opposites, the thesis and the

[160] *Essence générique* is the equivalent that Shariati uses for «جوهر نوعی انسان».

> antithesis, which exist both in man's nature and in his fate, create motion in him, a dialectic, ineluctable and evolutionary movement, and a constant struggle between the two opposing poles in man's essence and his life (SI: 89).[161]

Thus, according to Shariati, the creation of Adam from clay and the spirit of God in 'Semitic religions' not only symbolises the being /subjectivity dualism, but also reflects the way that these religions conceptualise humanity in terms of freedom (IH: 3, 7). Comparable to Sartre's argument that freedom 'is not a quality added on or a property' of being', but 'very exactly the stuff' of being and 'the foundation of all essences' (BN: 438, 439), from Shariati's theological perspective, freedom is the foundation of all essences because humanity shares with God His spirit.[162] More importantly, 'humanity's willpower [or freedom] is a contingency given to humanity by God at the moment of creation' (CW18: 331). He explains:

> God breathed His spirit into man and made him His trustee, so man on earth is God's successor and relative […] That is to say, God has breathed in man from His own soul, who is the only one and the only being who has absolute will in the universe and can do whatever He wants, even against laws [of physics]. Man is able to be as creative as God, but not as much as He is. Only in terms of similarity can he act like Him in any way he wants, contrary to his own laws and physiological nature. Therefore, the common denominator or kinship between man and God is this authority, the same freedom to be good or bad, to revolt or to obey (IH: 10-11, my translation). [163]

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[161] Further explicating what he means by 'a dialectic reality', Shariati writes: 'From the combination of these two opposites, struggle and motion arise, as a result of which a perfecting synthesis comes into being' (SI: 90).

[162] Vahdat refers to the concept of subjectivity in the works of Shariati, Khomeini, and Motahhari as 'conditional' or 'mediated', positing that their understanding of human subjectivity is indirect, heavily contingent on the divine subjectivity of God (Vahdat 2020: 240). He stresses the shared perspectives among these thinkers regarding this concept, highlighting that it constitutes a source of conflict: a 'constant and schizophrenic shifting' between affirming and denying human subjectivity. This conflict, according to Vahdat, arises because their view binds human subjectivity to the non-negation of God's sovereignty. Additionally, Vahdat argues that, in Shariati's perspective, the notion of agency is not centred on the individual but rather on the collective (ibid: 243). For a counter-argument of Vahdat's account of the relation between individual and collective subjectivity, see Saffari, S. (2019). Ali Shariati and Cosmopolitan Localism. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, *39*(2), 282–295.

[163] «خداوند از روح خود در انسان دمید و او را امانتدار خود کرد، پس انسان در روی زمین جانشین و خویشاوند خدا است. [...] یعنی خدا از روح خودش که تنها کسی است و تنها موجودی است که در عالم اراده مطلق دارد و میتواند هر کاری که بخواهد بکند، حتی برخلاف قوانین، در انسان دمیده. انسان قادر است مانند خدا دست به خلاقیت و ابتکار بزند، اما نه به مقدار او. صرفا از نظر شباهت می تواند مانند او هرجور

Shariati's emphasis on 'free will' or freedom as the essence of human being echoes Sartre's radical account of freedom. To Shariati, 'man is the only creature capable of revolting against nature, the system governing him, even his physical and mental needs, and natural desires and instincts', and choosing is 'an act exclusive to God' (MI: 108).[164] Contrasting the Cartesian *Cogito* with his account of Camus' idea of revolt, Shariati holds that being is contingent on revolt: "I revolt, therefore I am", presenting his existentialist narrative of the creation myth: 'as long as Adam was in paradise and had not revolted, he was not a Man' (MI: 106). He underscores existentialism's 'main point' to be 'Man's being left to himself', for '*ensān* [subjectivity] is the one and only existence in nature capable of choosing' (MI: 107). That is to say, *ensān* [subjectivity] comes into "existence" only if he/she 'revolts' and 'rises against the systems governing him/her, nature, and society'; 'negating something and choosing something else' (MI: 107). Accordingly, he compares such an account of the Fall of Man or Adam's expulsion from 'the consumerist lifestyle in paradise' to Sartre's notion of *délaissement*, again using contemporary concepts such as 'consumerism' to articulate his mythological re-interpretations.[165] Summarising 'the totality of elements that emerge from the story of Adam in the Quran for a comprehensive definition of Adam', Shariati defines

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که بخواهد، برخلاف قوانین و سرشت فیزیولوژیک خودش عمل نماید. بنابراین وجه اشتراک یا خویشاوندی انسان و خدا همین اختیار است، همین آزادی به بد یا خوب بودن، به طغیان یا اطاعت.»

[164] In Islamology, where Shariati seems be theorising an existentialist account of Islam, he shares with Sartre the idea that human beings can go even beyond their physical limitations, or acting against one's instincts, for instance, embracing death for doing what one believes to be the truth, or martyrdom (see Chapter Four). Shariati cites the example of Taha Hussein (1889–1973), who became a prominent author and thinker despite his physical disability, showing how limitations can be overcome in various aspects, including social and economic contexts (CW18: 329). Yet, Shariati's perspective fluctuates between this idea of radical freedom and the influence of social structures, aligning more closely with the later thoughts of Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. For instance, in discussions about women's freedom, as seen in *Fatima is Fatima* and elsewhere (CW1: 234), or youth, he shifts focus to the impact of societal systems and structures (CW1: 235-236), offering a critical analysis that encompasses both individual freedom and the constraints imposed by external social factors.

[165] Shariati's understanding of this notion is very close to Sartre's explanation in *Being and Nothingness*: 'I am abandoned in the world, not in the sense that I might remain abandoned and passive in a hostile universe like a board floating on the water, but rather in the sense that I find myself suddenly alone and without help, engaged in a world for which I bear the whole responsibility without being able, whatever I do, to tear myself away from this responsibility for an instant. For I am responsible for my very desire of fleeing responsibilities' (BN: 555-556).

humanity as a 'dialectical phenomenon' and a 'free will, [being] capable of fashioning his own destiny, responsible, [and] committed' (SI: 95-96).[166]

Shariati contends that such an interpretation of creation and defining humanity through freedom and responsibility is 'the most profound and advanced expression of humanism that exists' (SI: 88). He provides Sartre's famous argument that 'Existentialism is a Humanism' with a theological ground, arguing that such a conceptualisation of human being would yield an Islamic humanism, and one that is fundamentally existentialist. Thus, Shariati translates the existentialist concept of the responsibility of humanity towards itself and its society (including humanity as a whole) into the religious-political notion of 'humanity's prophecy' or mission, presenting a Sartrean reading of a Quranic verse (17: 36). In *The Responsibilities of Being Shi'a*, he states:

> The Qur'an says: "Indeed, all will be called to account for 'their' hearing, sight, and intellect."[167] [Thus] the ears, eyes and hearts are all responsible. That is, the responsibility is on the parts and then on the soul of the human body: "Know that you are all responsible and all of you will be held accountable to his/her subordinates."[168] It is not the responsibility of the leader. It does not belong to the cleric and the intellectual. In this group, everyone is responsible for leading everyone; and this is

[166] Shariati asserts: [M]an is a theomorphic being in exile, the combination of two opposites, a dialectical phenomenon composed of the opposition "God-Satan" or "spirit-clay." He is a free will, capable of fashioning his own destiny, responsible, committed; he accepts the unique trust of God, and receives the prostration of the angels; he is God's vicegerent on earth, but also a rebel against Him; he eats the forbidden fruit of vision; and he is expelled from the garden and banished to this waste-land of nature, with the three aspects of love (= Eve), intellect (=Satan), and rebellion (= the forbidden fruit). He is commanded to create a human paradise in nature, his place of exile. He is in constant struggle within himself, striving to rise from clay to God, to ascend, so that this animal made of mud and sediment can take on the characteristics of God! (SI: 95-96).

[167] « إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْؤُولًا » (Al-Isra 17:36) . English translation by Mustafa Khattab, the Clear Quran, at https://quran.com/17/36.

[168] This is part of a hadith attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, not a Quranic verse that Shariati is reciting here. The original Arabic reads: « ألا كُلُّكُم راعٍ و كُلُّكُم مَسؤولٌ عَن رَعِيَّتِه ». The English translation in the text is a translation into English from Shariati's Persian translation: « بدانید که همه شما مسئولید و همه شما نسبت به زیر دستانش بازخواست می شوید. ». Note that this hadith have various English translations. The complete version of one translation reads: 'Every one of you is a steward and is accountable for that which is committed to his charge. The ruler is a steward and is accountable for his charge, a man is a steward is respect of his household, a woman is a steward in respect of her husband's house and his children. Thus everyone of you is a steward and is accountable for that which is committed to his charge (Bukhari and Muslim)' (Nawawī 1975: 69). See Nawawī, Khan, M. Z., & Bosworth, C. E. (1975). *Gardens of the righteous : Riyadh as-Salihin of Imam Nawawi*. Curzon Press.

exactly what Sartre famously said, which is the greatest highlight of his existentialism, and the basis of his ethics and claim that existentialism is humanism, and a positive and objective philosophy: "Everyone, through every choice he/she makes (because he/she wants all people to follow him/her), makes a general law for all humanity. This is the reason why the responsibility of every single human being in his/her social life is as daunting and heavy as the responsibility of taking the fate of all human beings" (CW7: 239, my translation).[169]

This paragraph not only reflects certain characteristics of Shariati's thought, but also exemplifies his distinctive synthetic approach. Going beyond both the Islamic scholastic theology (*Kalām*) and Quranic exegesis, Shariati develops his own hermeneutic tradition. He seeks existentialist concepts in the Quran and brings Sartre into conversation with Muhammad, interpreting extra-Quranic revelations (hadith) through contemporary philosophies, regardless of their genesis but based on their contribution to his thought. Thus, it can be argued that Shariati re-interprets Islamic mythology so that it conforms to existentialism, not the other way around. Nevertheless, he criticises Sartrean and Heideggerian existentialisms for their materialist foundation, which would result in 'constructing and situating human being within the material nature', thus 'sacrificing humanity' (MI: 114).

This is where Shariati's disagreement with Sartre becomes evident. Shariati acknowledges that existentialism, with its focus on 'human existence' and its emphasis on 'the primacy of man', along with its emphasis on human freedom and responsibility, serves as a framework for liberation. However, he critiques it for its inadequacy in providing a moral or ethical rationale behind choices. According to Shariati, existentialism leaves individuals 'suspended in mid-air' by failing to offer a concrete 'basis' for discerning good from evil (MOWF: 109,

[169] Quotation marks are from Shariati. The original Persian reads:

قرآن می گوید: «ان السمع و البصر و الفواد کل اولئک کان عنه مسئولاً»، گوش و چشم و دل احساس همه مسئولند. یعنی مسئولیت بر جزء جزء و بعد بعد روح اندام آدمی بار است. «کلکم راعٍ و کلکم مسئول عَن رَعیه». مسئولیت مخصوص رهبر نیست. به روحانی و روشنفکر اختصاص ندارد، در این جمع، هر فردی مسئول رهبری همه است و این درست سخن معروف سارتر است که بزرگترین نقطه برجسته و ممتاز اگزیستانسیالیسم او است و پایه اخلاق و ملاک ادعای او که اگزیستانسیالیسم، اومانیسم است و فلسفه مثبت و عینی: .«هر کس با انتخابی که می‌کند (چون دوست دارد که همه مردم از او پیروی کنند و چنان کنند) با هر انتخابش، برای همه بشریت گویی قانونی کلی وضع می‌کند و از اینجاست که مسئولیت هر فرد انسانی در زندگی اجتماعیش به اندازه مسئولیت به عهده گرفتن سرنوشت همه انسان‌ها دلهره آور و سنگین است.» م آ 7، ص 239

111). This absence of a guiding principle for moral decisions is seen as a significant shortfall in existentialist thought as per Shariati's analysis. According to Shariati, the absurdity of choice in (Sartrean) existentialism,[170] does not provide for the 'freed human being': 'Now I am bent on a course of action where I may either sacrifice myself to the people or sacrifice the people to myself, and I am free; which am I to choose?' Shariati poses a question followed by a criticism of European existentialism's 'weak point': '[I]ndividual freedom without a specified direction will be debased and reduced to a veritable cesspool of corruption and filth; with its certain result to be a kind of dirty freedom' (MOWF: 112).[171]

Now, let us revisit Shariati's concept of humanity's *essence générique* and examine it briefly through the lens of two other French thinkers with theistic orientations: Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), whose religious thoughts deeply influenced existentialist philosophers, and Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973), who was a Christian existentialist. Their perspectives on existentialism, imbued with religious overtones, will aid in deepening our understanding of the relationship Shariati establishes between his notion of *essence générique* or *fitra* and religion.

We discussed earlier that according to Shariati, *bashar* or the human species is the invariable component of the 'ape-man': 'the monkey which has not changed since fifty thousand years ago,' although 'its weapon, outfit, and food have gone through change' (MI: 103). In this sense, Shariati's *essence générique* or human existence seems closer to what Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) calls 'wretchedness in man', the animal aspect of humanity or 'what is natural in animals' (Pascal 1995: 37). To Shariati, a human 'becomes' a 'subjectivity' or 'transcendental truth' only through 'acquiring ideal attributes', while the Sartrean *For-itself*

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[170] Note that on the absurdity of choice, Sartre writes: 'It is absurd in this sense-that the choice is that by which all foundations and all reasons come into being, that by which the very notion of the absurd receives a meaning. It is absurd as being beyond all reasons' (BN: 479).

[171] Nevertheless, it is worth noticing here – without overlooking the implications of Shariati's term 'dirty freedom'– that Sartre also criticises existentialism's becoming a 'scandalous' and 'fashionable' doctrine, in *Existentialism is a Humanism*, which is 'being so loosely applied to so many things that it has come to mean nothing at all' (EH: 20). While Sartre suggests that the reason might lie in a 'lack of an avant-garde doctrine analogous to surrealism', Shariati contends that freedom without any objective ground – or 'criteria and purpose' in his words – might turn into 'displacement' and 'absurdity' of Western existentialism, 'whose goal is to go looking for hashish in Nepal' (MOWF: 118) Shariati's sarcastic criticism of spirituality without purpose – he has the hippie movement in mind – is in fact targeted at Sartre's materialist understanding of being as a 'fundamental absurdity' in his *Nausea* (2000: 185).

'becomes' by 'surpassing the world toward his own possibilities', through the freedom which it *is*, regardless of the choice itself. Shariati's humanity is 'the combination', or 'synthesis', of 'two opposites': a 'thesis', 'the spirit of God', and an 'anti-thesis', 'putrid clay', 'the infinite decline' (SI: 90) or, in Pascal's words, 'the wretchedness of a great noble, the wretchedness of a dethroned king', a 'contradiction' (Pascal 1995: 37). Thus, situated between two absolute possibilities, humanity is 'a dialectical phenomenon', Shariati contends, 'compelled to be always in motion', with its 'own self' to be 'the stage for a battle between two forces that results in a continuous evolution toward perfection' (SI: 91, 92). He writes:

> Man is a "choice," a struggle, a constant becoming. He is an infinite migration, a migration within himself, from clay to God; he is a migrant within his soul. The path that has been laid down from clay to God is called "religion" (SI: 93).

Religion or faith, in the broadest sense of the terms, or faith in general, is 'basically an existentialist philosophy', argues Shariati, for religion shares with existentialism 'a reliance on human existence itself' and the idea of calling humanity to stop 'looking to something outside itself: to gods, to good and evil spirits' (MOWF: 108-109). This concept of humanity as constantly evolving toward a divine perfection is far from Sartre's idea of the absurdity of existence. Drawing on the experience of feeling a 'mystical sense' common to humanity, Shariati understands religion or *irfān* as 'an intellectual current arising from the essential nature of man' and his [*sic*] search for the "unseen".[172]

Shariati's phenomenology of faith as 'the representation of humanity's *fitra* [nature][173] to discover the unseen' (CW2: 57) and as means of humanity's transcendence bears illuminating

[172] Shariati explains: 'The most general meaning of the word "*irfān*" is the inner sense of apprehension people have while here in the world of nature, so that whoever is lacking this sense of apprehension has clearly not yet arrived at the specifically human stage. […] This sense of anguish arises because of some deficiency in man's relation to nature. That is to say, man *qua* man experiences needs that nature can no longer satisfy. […] That is what produces a lack, a sense of alienation and exile in us […] To relieve this loneliness and to flee this exile, we look to a world that is not here… the "unseen". Thus, we may succinctly say that *irfān* is a manifestation of the primordial nature of man and it exists as a means of journeying to the unseen' (MOWF: 99, translation modified).

[173] I have used the original term *fitra* [فطرت] for preventing any confusion with the terms 'nature' and 'essence'. By *fitra*, as mentioned earlier, I mean the Quranic term that refers to 'the original state in which humans are created by God' (ODI: 109).

comparison to key concepts in the theist existentialism of Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973),[174] another French philosopher and contemporary of Sartre (though by no means of like mind with him) whom Shariati (very briefly) mentions. Both Shariati and Marcel argue against Sartre's radical idea of the absurdity of existence.[175] That which Shariati describes as 'the sense of deficiency' that humans experience, Marcel terms 'ontological *exigence*' in *The Mystery of Being* (1951). Referring fundamentally to 'the general human condition', this ontological need or '*exigence'* is 'existentially experienced as a non-satisfaction', in Marcel's words, which presents itself as the 'urgent inner need for transcendence', 'a vertical 'going beyond'' toward the 'Absolute Thou'—God as the Absolute source of values and infinite perfection— to differentiate it from the term's material or 'horizontal' sense of going beyond (MB: ix, 39, 41).[176] In relation to the foregoing, stemming from the inner need to transcend or go beyond, seeking the 'unseen' is, as Shariati holds, 'the source' of humanity's 'motion that ensures his evolution' (MOWF: 100). Moreover, comparable to Marcel's concept of the 'absolute transcendence' towards the 'Absolute Thou' (MB: 152), God is humanity's possibility for transcendence in Shariati's understanding of the human-divine relation: 'God exists in man as a potentiality, a possibility, a direction in which man can strive toward God, absolute essence and infinite perfection' (SI: 92). Consequently, religion's 'originality' would be subject to its source. That is to say, religion has 'true originality' if and only if the individual human being is the source of the religious feeling, not, for instance, the human society 'as Durkheim suggests':

[174] It should be noted that Marcel not only recurrently criticises Sartre's key existentialist notions, but also refers to Sartre's existentialism as the 'extreme existentialism' that he 'never accepted' (The Existential Background of Human Dignity 1963: 96).

[175] Marcel writes in *The Philosophy of Existentialism*: 'Nausea is, at bottom, the experience of contingency and of the absurdity which attaches to existence as such' (1964: 54). He describes Sartrean absurdity of being as 'the negative enlightenment', 'a philosophy of non-being', for 'enlightenment is to say light, and absurdity is opacity itself' (1964: 56).

[176] Marcel explains that this feeling of dissatisfaction does not imply going beyond all experiences: 'Let us notice in the first place that the need for transcendence presents itself above all, is deeply experienced above all, as a kind of dissatisfaction. But the converse does not seem to be true, it does not seem that one would be in the right in saying that every kind of dissatisfaction implies an aspiration towards transcendence.' Thus, 'the urgent inner need for transcendence should never be interpreted as a need to pass beyond all experience whatsoever; for beyond all experience, there is nothing' (The Mystery of Being: 39, 47).

> If we search for the religious feeling within the individual human being, i.e. the true essence of human being that is the essence of the individual, religion would gain true originality. For worshipping God exists in humanity's nature[177] and nature's way is right and meaningful, not illusory and absurd. God is a truth in existence that is discovered or sensed by human reason and feeling (CW12: 148-149, my translation).[178]

Shariati once again makes use of the idea of human nature, however, this nature refers to his particular appropriation of the existentialist *In-itself* and *For-itself*; the 'clay/spirit of God' dualism of human being as two symbolic possibilities, subject to human choice. Thus, it can be argued that although this account of human nature is not Sartrean, it remains existentialist to the extent that it understands humanity in terms of subjectivity and freedom. Furthermore, on the one hand, Shariati's religious existentialism seems closer to Marcel's key notions and ideas than to Sartre's existentialism, but he (Shariati) does not make a direct reference to Marcel regarding those concepts but, instead, develops his theoretical framework through a critical reading of Sartre. The extent of Shariati's engagement with Marcel's thought in particular and other Christian existentialists such as Jaspers and Kierkegaard in general is not explicit. However, it seems that he preferred to criticise Sartre in the 1970s marketplace of ideas rather than to repeat and affirm those figures intellectually closer to him. Besides, it can be argued that Shariati sought to accentuate the existential aspect of human freedom in order to synthesise an umbrella theory of freedom which was neither colonial-Western nor retrograde-religious, but rather capable of uniting and mobilising the masses around an existentialist monotheistic ideology in view of a revolutionary praxis.

On the other hand, while differing in approach, Shariati's existentialism shares with Fanonian existentialism several implications of defining humanity through freedom. Unlike Fanon's reflections on lived experience as presented in *Black Skin, White Masks* or his decolonisation themes in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Shariati's existentialism is rooted in a specific

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[177] Here, the word nature is chosen for the Persian word *nahād* [نهاد] which is close to the expression *firta*, the original state of creation.

[178] «اگر احساس مذهبی ما معلول فرد باشد و احساس مذهبی را از فرد انسان یعنی در ذات حقیقی انسان که ذات فرد است بجوییم، مذهب اصالت واقعی پیدا می‌کند. و بخاطر اینکه پرستش خدا در نهاد انسان است و هرچه طبیعت می‌کند، درست و بامعنی است و واهی و عبث نیست. و یا خدا واقعیتی است در هستی که منطق و احساس آدمی آنرا کشف یا حس کرده است.» م آ، ج 12، ص 148-149

theological narrative that aims not for the sacred but the mundane. This aspect will be further clarified through an in-depth examination of Shariati's definition of freedom as humanity's absolute transcendence; that is, liberation from the four 'prisons' of nature, history, society, and the self, as previously mentioned. In the final section of this chapter, based on the key themes in Shariati's critical theory discussed so far, I will delve into his idea of freedom in these more concrete terms and explore the political implications inherent in his phenomenology of humanity.

Freedom

Shariati's discourse on freedom is based on a rejection of any deterministic philosophy, whether religious or secular, that imposes authority over humanity, thereby undermining its autonomy and authenticity. He metaphorically describes determinism as humanity's 'four prisons', illustrating his existentialist interpretation of Islam in concrete terms. This approach allows him to transition from theological-philosophical discussions to political problematisations, engaging with global anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements, particularly with Fanon.

As we will see shortly, Shariati's views on freedom resonate with Fanon's reflections on the liberation of colonised subjects. However, he is mindful of the distinct experiences between Iranians (and Muslims at large) and Black peoples, who, as Fanon notes, suffer 'quite differently' in their bodies (BSWM: 177). Echoing Fanon, Shariati views the struggle for freedom as essential to overcoming alienation. Both theorists advocate for an independent self-consciousness born from this struggle, emphasising action over reaction in their philosophies. Shariati's stress on the responsibility to act and his rejection of any religious notion that hinders human action—such as divine Providence—despite his religious perspective, mirrors Fanon's nuanced critique of negritude (MI: 116). They jointly reject any notion that reduces human subjectivity to being passively shaped by nature, history, or social contexts. Yet, they acknowledge the role of history, society, and power in shaping current human conditions. I will revisit and expand upon these themes in more detail in the next

chapter. But before proceeding, let us first understand 'what' Shariati means by 'four prisons'. Following this, in the next chapter, we will explore the 'how'—the methods and processes by which one can liberate oneself from these prisons.

Freedom from Naturalism

Beginning with materialism, Shariati argues that defining humanity solely within a strictly material framework subjects it to the laws of physics, thus reducing it to mere material characteristics (MI: 113). He contends that a naturalistic view, which perceives humanity as 'one of nature's random (or accidental) creations', inevitably confines human beings to the limitations imposed by nature (MI: 113). In essence, such a perspective relinquishes the freedom of humanity to create and define its own essence. He explains:

> If I am free, if I feel, if I choose, if I create something; I am creating, choosing, and sensing in accordance with the ways that nature has constructed my intellect, my choice, and my creative power. This is thus limiting human freedom to the degree that nature provides for human essence and capacity. […] This restriction sacrifices "my" freedom as a creature capable of thinking as I will, capable of choosing as I will, and capable of making as I will (MI: 113; my translation). [179]

Such a radical definition of freedom compares with Sartre's argument on absolute freedom regardless of both the situation and the choice, thus the impossibility of evading one's responsibility under any circumstances.[180] However, Shariati criticises Sartre for 'not believing in God or metaphysics, hence taking humanity to be different from other creatures in nature' (MI: 114). Likewise, any form of physiological or psychological determinism would negate

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[179] «من اگر آزادم، احساس می‌کنم، انتخاب می‌کنم، چیزی می‌سازم؛ آن‌جوری می‌سازم، جوری انتخاب می‌کنم، و جوری می‌فهمم که طبیعت فهم مرا، انتخاب مرا و قدرت سازندگی مرا ساخته... این محدودیت است که آزادی «من» را به عنوان موجودی آنچنانکه می‌خواهم، می‌توانم بیندیشم و آنچنانکه می‌خواهم، می‌توانم اختیار کنم و آنچنانکه می‌خواهم، می‌توانم بسازم، قربانی می‌کند.» انسان و اسلام: 113 و م آ، ج 25، ص 143

[180] As discussed in Chapter One, Sartre contends that it is impossible to evade one's responsibility, regardless of the circumstances, and even in prison or under the occupation of a foreign power. He wrote in *Paris Alive, The Republic of Silence* published in The Atlantic Monthly in December 1944 that 'Never were we freer than under the German occupation', for it exemplified a condition of 'total responsibility in total solitude'.

humanity as a 'free consciousness', for it conceives it as a 'plaything of sub-conscious' desires, denying 'the Homo Deus depicted by religion', as Shariati contends (MI: 120, 122).

However, Shariati does not neglect the force of 'nature' in affecting the situation in which humanity finds itself, but only to the extent that 'nature' denotes physics. In this sense, nature affects humanity, but humanity is capable of manipulating nature. 'Through his evolution from human to subjectivity', he argues, 'humanity has freed itself' from the dictates of nature by means of knowledge, discovery, and technology: 'Technology is the saviour, which, by means of science, liberates humanity from the myriads of factors that limit human freedom and confine it to the geographical, scientific, and natural causalities' (MI: 125; my translation).[181] Thus, humanity can free itself from 'the first prison', which is nature, through 'acquiring self-consciousness, willpower, and creativity' by means of 'knowing nature, i.e. science' (MI: 128). However, Shariati insists that a materialistic perception of humanity is alienating in that it perceives human being as a pre-determined material phenomenon instead of a responsible consciousness (MI: 113). That is to say, humanity can free itself from nature's constraints through science and technology, but any naturalistic or materialistic determinism regarding humanity alienates it from itself, thus imprisons it. This includes any form of naturalism, including racialisation and gender inequality.[182]

[181] «تکنیک دست نجات‌دهنده‌ای است که انسان را به کمک علم از تمام عوامل بسیار فراوانی که به آزادی انسان فشار می‌آورند و او را در جبر قوانین جغرافیایی و قوانین علمی و قوانین طبیعت می‌فشرند، رها می‌کند.» انسان و اسلام: 125 و م آ، ج 25، ص 154

[182] In his discussions on freedom from naturalism, although Shariati does not explicitly address racism, he dismisses any form of naturalism, including racialisation and gender inequality. He views these as contradictions to human subjectivity and agency, emphasising the idea that human identity and behaviour are not predetermined by nature but are instead shaped by social and historical contexts. Besides, in accordance with his existentialist interpretation of creation, or what calls Islamic humanism, he defines humanity in terms of absolute 'freedom to be good or evil, to revolt or to submit', regardless of gender or skin colour: 'All humans are not just equal, but brothers. The difference between equality and brotherhood is totally clear; equality is a legal term, while brotherhood denotes affirming the equal essence of all human beings; for all humans, regardless of their skin colour, share a single origin. [For the same reason], man and woman are essentially equal… since they have been created from the same essence, at the same time, and by the same One' (IH: 11, my translation).

Freedom from Historicism

Historicism represents another deterministic perspective that, according to Shariati's understanding, subjects humanity to historical circumstances, perceiving it as 'a product made by history', attributing humanity's characteristics to 'a will named history' (MI: 117). Shariati does not contradict himself regarding the situatedness of the individual (or nation), but he insists that a causal relationship between history and humanity—history to be the cause and humanity to be the effect—is erroneous in that it is reductionist and denies humanity its agency. That is to say, the situated nation (individual, or intellectual) needs to be conscious of history in order to transcend it. Shariati makes sure that by rejecting historicism he does not mean that history has no role in what humanity is at present. He makes his point clear in the following:

> [Suppose that] the reason I have such characteristics lies in the history that stretches back to the beginning of time. The Iranian, Islamic, and Shi'a histories have been threaded into a fabric constituting my historical past, stretching to this century. Born and bred at the end of this history, I have attributes given to me by my own history. That is to say, if instead of having been situated at the Iranian-Islamic end of history—which I am now—I were situated at the French Revolution end of history, or Renaissance, the Middle Ages, or today's West end of history, I would have spoken a different language, had different thoughts and emotions, and espoused different ethics. Thus, the former "I" and the latter "I" are two persons, for they have two histories (MI: 117; my translation).[183]

Through this example, Shariati underscores the importance of recognising historical constructs and their influence as essential steps towards 'changing the course of history' or 'taking a leap' (CW2: 252). What he particularly opposes is the concept of historical determinism as proposed by thinkers like Hegel or Marx, along with the notion of historicistic

[183] «من که این خصوصیات را دارم، به خاطر این تاریخی است که پشت سر من تا بدایت امتداد دارد. تاریخ ایران و اسلام و تشیع به هم یک بافتی داده‌اند که تاریخ گذشته مرا ساخته و وارد این قرن شده. من هم که در انتهای این تاریخ به دنیا آمده‌ام، رشد و پرورش پیدا کرده‌ام، خصوصیاتی دارم که همه را تاریخ خودم به من داده که اگر به جای اینکه در انتهای تاریخ ایران – اسلام که الان قرار گرفته‌ام در انتهای تاریخ انقلاب کبیر فرانسه، رنسانس، قرون وسطی، و یا امروز غرب قرار گرفته بودم، یک زبان دیگر، فکر و احساسات دیگر، و اخلاق و روش دیگری داشتم. پس آن «من» و این «من»، دو تا انسان هستند به خاطر اینکه دارای دو تا تاریخ هستند.» انسان و اسلام: 147 و م آ، ج 25، ص 147

reductionism. Shariati argues against the idea that history alone dictates human destiny, emphasising the potential for human agency to alter historical trajectories. This critique of utter historicising indicates two key points: 1) freedom in its Shariatian existentialist sense requires transcending history by acknowledging one's subjectivity and agency, and 2) going beyond history suggests the idea of a new trans-national or universal humanity with a planetary;[184] a common history shared by humanity as a whole.[185] The first point resonates with Fanon's fundamental argument regarding freedom from the historical impositions of slavery and racialisation, where he writes:

> I am not a prisoner of history. I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny.
> I should constantly remind myself that the real *leap* consists in introducing invention into existence.
> In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself.
> I am a part of Being to the degree that I go beyond it.
> (BSWM: 179)

Or,

> The body of history does not determine a single one of my actions.
> I am my own foundation.
> And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate the cycle of my freedom.
> (BSWM: 180)

Neither Fanon nor Shariati neglect the role of history; hence, they emphasise that liberation requires 'uncovering historical agents and the dynamics through which they affect the construction of human beings' intellect, will, emotion, and ethics', in Shariati's words (MI:

[184] I have borrowed the term planetary from Spivak, quoted in Apter, E. (2005). Afterlife of a Discipline. *Comparative Literature*, *57*(3), 201–206: 203; and Connell, R. (2020). *Southern theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science* (1st edition): vii.

[185] Shariati advocates for the creation of a new humanity through revisiting humanity's varied historical knowledge sources. He clarifies that this 'return' is not about reverting to outdated, superstitious, or archaic ways of life, nor is it about embracing a racialised, racist, or supremacist mindset. Rather, Shariati's idea of return focuses on amplifying indigenous knowledge systems that have been sidelined in human and social sciences (CW25: 349). This concept aligns closely with contemporary efforts to decolonise social science. It echoes scholars like Connell (2007, 2020), who advocate learning from marginalised critical theories, including Shariati's, to democratise and diversify social science.

125). Fanon, in the same way, defines freedom as transcending history through historical self-consciousness:

> If the question of practical solidarity with a given past ever arose for me, it did so only to the extent to which I was committed to myself and to my neighbor to fight for all my life and with all my strength so that never again would a people on the earth be subjugated… I can recapture my past, validate it, or condemn it through my successive choices (BSWM: 177).

From Shariati's perspective, historical determinism constitutes a 'prison' which entails that 'my history has created my essence and the way I am. Therefore, I am not in my own hands, for my history is not in my hands' (MI: 121).[186] In this sense, Fanon maintains that historical determinism is 'inauthentic', for it renders humanity as 'the past in a changed value' (BSWM: 177). Thus, history is valid to the extent that it informs the situation and, accordingly, indicates a status quo against which humanity should revolt and free itself. Shariati calls this transcendence a revolt or 'revolution against history' (MI: 127).

Freedom from Sociologism

Shariati defines sociologism as the conviction that individuals or groups of individuals are predominantly governed by their social environment and the prevailing social system. He explains that this encompasses 'social relations, relations of production, ownership systems, and means of production', which align with what is referred to as the 'mode of production' in Marxist terminology (MI: 118). According to Shariati, sociologism undermines human freedom by suggesting that individuals are essentially constructed by autonomous socio-economic forces. However, he is careful to clarify that he does not deny the influence of modes of production in shaping humanity. What he resolutely rejects is any deterministic social theory that contradicts the concepts of human subjectivity and responsibility. Shariati's

[186] «آفریننده چگونگی من، ماهیت من انسان، تاریخ من است. تاریخ من که دست من نیست، پس من دست خودم نیستم.» انسان و اسلام: 121 و م آ، ج 25، 151

arguments seem to be criticising Marx's theory of 'definite relations'.[187] He leverages his concept of humanity's transcendence to form his central argument against any deterministic theory that posits human beings as mere products of history or society. He explains:

> I am not indicating that these determinants do not exist or affect, or humanity has been living its life as it wanted it, chose it, and made it throughout its history. I want to say that human being in its animal form is bound to sociologism, naturalism, and historicism. [Nonetheless,] As it is becoming [human], it gradually frees [itself] from such determinants (MI: 123, my translation).[188]

Again, knowledge is key to human freedom. Quoting Jaspers, Shariati emphasises that human beings transcend from 'socially- constructed beings' to 'constructors of societies' as they gain social self-consciousness through human sciences and philosophy (MI: 127). Shariati's idea of 'ideology', as discussed earlier in this section, as well as his religious re-interpretations and liberation theology, are all founded on this key contention. That is to say, religion is 'one of the powers presented to the individual or imposed on him/her by society'; however, 'humanity today has a choice concerning religion and the social systems that have always governed it': 'humanity can negate [religion], can choose it, or doubt it' (MI: 128).

Shariati's critique of Marxism and religion regarding the question of human freedom lies at the heart of his synthetic critical theory.[189] Like Fanon, he maintains that Marxism needs to be stretched to fit the colonised societies; however, he contrasts its deterministic premise with his existentialist account of freedom. By the same token, he contests the idea that religion, in general, is essentially a source of coercive power depriving humanity of freedom,

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[187] In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* Marx writes: 'In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society –the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness' (1904: 11-12).

[188] «مقصودم این نیست که این جبرها وجود ندارد، یا اصلاً اثر ندارد و انسان همیشه در طول تاریخ خودش، چنانکه می‌خواسته است و انتخاب می‌کرده است و می‌ساخته است، زندگی می‌کرده؛ بلکه می‌خواهم بگویم انسانی که به شکل حیوان اسیر سوسیولوژیسم است، اسیر ناتورالیسم و هیستوریسیسم است، وقتی که در حال شدن است، بتدریج از این جبرها آزاد می‌شود.» انسان و اسلام: 128 و م آ، ج 25، ص 153

[189] See Appendix 1.

proposing instead, as discussed earlier, a new version of Marxian existentialist Islam based on his articulation of the doctrine of absolute monotheism (or *tawhīd*) emphasising human authenticity.

Freedom from the Self

In Shariati's writings, the self is a nuanced, multi-layered concept encompassing both personal and political dimensions. He metaphorically labels the self as one of humanity's 'prisons', arguing that true freedom includes liberation from 'the prison of the self'—revolting against and transcending the self (CW25: 187). But what exactly does Shariati mean by the self? How does he describe the state of being imprisoned by the self? And how one can free oneself from this prison?

Shariati's understanding of the self (and its freedom) is illuminated through two key notions: self-consciousness, which includes human and social self-consciousness, and self-transformation. He defines self-consciousness as acknowledging one's conscience and feelings. This involves uncovering the authentic "I" buried beneath superficial or representational "I"s, and fostering a desire to transform from the "I" that one currently is to the "I" that one aspires to be. It is a process of pausing external distractions to reflect inwardly. Human self-consciousness, as per Shariati, entails recognising oneself as a human phenomenon, akin to Homo Deus, and involves being cautious and intimate with one's own being. Shariati posits that transcendent religion serves as a call to this form of human self-consciousness (CW20: 205-208).

Social self-consciousness, in Shariati's view, involves recognising one's responsibility towards the society and community in which one lives. It is akin to political consciousness in the Platonic sense, entailing awareness of one's historical and social context. This form of self-consciousness means situating oneself within society and contemplating one's duties towards it. It encompasses recognising the responsibility to lead and critically engage with society, and the commitment to strive for its transformation (CW20: 208).

Let us now address our second question: what imprisons the self? The answer is hedonism, self-indulgence, egoism, and absurdity (CW25: 187).[190] It is what Taylor calls 'social atomism', that is seeing 'fulfilment as just of the self, neglecting or delegitimating the demands that come from beyond our own desires or aspirations, be they from history, tradition, society, nature, or God' (Taylor 1992: 58). According to Shariati, the prison of the self is a prison where natural instincts, along with traditional habits and historical and social compulsions, have imposed a freezing and petrifying effect on one's psyche (CW2: 142). This is why, in this context, since 'the prisoner and the prison are one', unlike the other three prisons, humanity faces its greatest challenge in overcoming this internal captivity, rendering it 'the most powerless' against it (MI: 129, 130).

The concept of freedom from the self in Shariati's philosophy does not neatly align with Isaiah Berlin's definitions of positive and negative freedom. While it may appear similar to the positive notion of freedom as self-mastery, and distinct from the negative idea centred around self-fulfilment, Shariati's interpretation extends beyond this dichotomy. It suggests, or at least hints at, a balance between the two, somewhat akin to Taylor's critique of these conceptions in his writings (Taylor 2017: 141).[191] For Shariati, paramount is the idea that freedom from the prison of the self primarily serves as an ethical and political framework. This framework interweaves the notion of self-transformation with the broader goal of collective transformation.

Addressing the third question about the prison of the self: How can one achieve liberation from this confinement? Shariati's approach to self-transformation sharply diverges from atomistic religious asceticism, gnostic piety, and detachment from social dynamics. He emphasises that transformation is not about self-change based on imaginary, hereditary, sectarian, or ethnic values, nor does it adhere to specific Sufistic or pious ethical standards (CW2: 111). Additionally, Shariati distinguishes his view from Marxist perspectives, where

[190] Shariati's presupposition here is that humanity, already freed from the prisons of nature, history, and society, finally confronts absurdity. That is to say, 'in his material life,' he asserts, 'humanity has needs, at first; and then reaches welfare; then absurdity follows welfare; absurdity results in revolt; and finally, revolt ends in asceticism and subjectivism', exemplified in 'Hippism and existentialism' in the West, and 'mysticism' in the East (MI: 130).

[191] See Taylor, C. (2017). What's wrong with negative liberty. In *Liberty Reader* (pp. 141-162). Routledge.

self-transformation is seen primarily as a preparation for political activism. For Shariati, true self-transformation involves developing oneself into a revolutionary, guided by principles of freedom, equality, and *irfān* (CW2: 112). I will delve into this theme more deeply in Chapter Four. For now, let us clarify two key points Shariati makes about the process of liberation.

Shariati highlights the importance of social and political engagement, along with embracing the responsibilities and risks this entails. In this context, freedom from the self is linked with authenticity, resonating with the views of Beauvoir, Sartre, and Fanon (BSWM: 177; ASJ: 63).[192] However, Shariati notes that authenticity does not necessarily comply with reason or rationality, as authentic actions may involve risks that would not eventuate otherwise. Authenticity in this sense thus moves away from what Taylor describes as 'instrumental reason', which focuses on maximizing benefits and success (Taylor 1992: 5). Shariati critiques this reliance on instrumental reason as a factor that imprisons the self. Instead, he advocates for passion and faith, or *irfān*, grounded in responsibility and active engagement. He also clarifies his interpretation of passion to differentiate it from inward forms of spirituality that isolate the individual from social and political life. He explains:

> By passion, I do not mean Sufi or mystic passion; they are prisons, too. By passion, I mean that there should be a powerful force beyond expediency and reason, deep inside my human essence, that burst from within and make me revolt against myself; otherwise, it is impossible through the laws of nature. […] It is neither logical nor illogical; […] it is alogical […] for it is not a matter of reason. It is more potent than logic (MI: 133; my translation).[193]

[192] I specifically have in mind Sartre's definition of authenticity in *Anti-Semite and Jew*: 'Authenticity, it is almost needless to say, consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks that it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate' (ASJ: 65). For a discussion on how Beauvoir relates the notions of engagement with freedom and authenticity, see Varga, Somogy and Charles Guignon, "Authenticity", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/authenticity/>.

[193] «عشق یعنی چه؟ عشق عرفانی و صوفیانه و عارفانه و از این قبیل را نمی‌گویم که خودشان زندانهای دیگری هستند. عشق بدین معنی که، یک نیروی مقتدر، بالاتر از عقل محاسبه‌گر و مصلحت پرست باید که در ذات من، من انسان، در عمق فطرت من، من را منفجر کند و از درون، علیه خویشتنم، مرا بشوراند، و الا با قوانین طبیعی نمی‌شود...آنالوژیک است، که نه منطقی است و نه ضد منطقی، چرا که اصلا از مقوله منطق نیست، نیرومندتر از منطق است.» انسان و اسلام، ص 133 و م آ، ج 25، ص 161

Authenticity is thus an ethical framework, a foundation for not only 'revolting against oneself' but revolting against what one thinks to be unjust or untrue and being so ethically engaged to one's society that one is able to sacrifice herself for the freedom of others (MI: 137). Passion is characterised by unconditionality, expecting no reward, and going beyond existential limits, as Shariati holds: 'Passion is a force, which calls me to act despite my own benefits… to sacrifice my interests, my "being" and my life for someone else's being, for others' being, and for the ideal that I adore, even when I no longer exist' (MI: 134). Moreover, freedom from the Self as authenticity moves from the personal towards the political. It indicates the personal, as Shariati maintains, when, for example, an individual refuses to lie despite being aware of the consequences that might destroy them, without expecting a reward. It indicates the political in that it implies human responsibility toward humanity as a whole, echoing that which Fanon calls 'explicit human reality', arguing that every single act of the individual 'commits' an individual as a human being (BSWM: 60). When one individual liberates him- or herself, humanity as a whole 'transcends itself through' that individual act, in Beauvoir's words (PhW: 110). In view of that, as discussed earlier, Shariati formulates faith as a liberation theory and conceptualises monotheism in such a way that it essentially requires humanity to refuse and resist submission to dominance. Faith, conceived as a social and political theory and defined in terms of resistance and responsibility, provides an ethical and political agenda. Thus, Shariati's humanistic-existentialist re-formulation of (Shi'a) Islam was an attempt to articulate what we might call revolutionary subjectivity, or, as we will discuss in the next chapter, what Foucault called 'political spirituality'.

This chapter has offered an essential overview of Shariati's foundational ideas, situating him within the global anti-colonial movement, examining his version of existentialist Islam, and exploring his conception of freedom to some extent. Thus far we have seen that Shariati's Islamic narrative underscores principles of justice, equality, solidarity, and self-determination, reflecting his distinctive views as outlined in *Religion versus Religion*. In his framework, being a Muslim transcends conventional religious rites and rituals; it is defined by adherence to a set of fundamental values and principles. Moreover, Shariati's Marxian critique, so entangled with his account of religiosity, targets social stratification and class domination. Shariati is in search of a solution for the freedom of a humanity caught within a complex situation:

> Socialism, [while intended to benefit humanity,] inadvertently led to multifaceted tyranny. Democracy, on the other hand, ushered in the era of capital supremacy. The pursuit of freedom paradoxically enslaved people to money and insatiable desires. Even science, often viewed as a tool for human progress, stripped humanity of its dignity and existential values, steering it towards an era dominated by relentless technology and destructive capabilities (CW1: 42, my translation).[194]

Although our examination of Shariati's thought, especially from the perspective of freedom, has progressed, it remains an unfinished task; more analysis is essential to fully appreciate the complexities and broader implications of his philosophy; for instance, his reinterpretation of Islamic concepts and early Islamic figures, for this reinterpretation provides significant insight into his political ideals and his perspective on both political and individual self-determination. In the next chapter, I will bring Shariati into conversation with Foucault, centring primarily on Foucault's concept of political spirituality. This comparative analysis aims to deepen our understanding of both thinkers, exploring the themes of political spirituality and revolutionary subjectivity, and their implications for the concept of freedom in pre-revolutionary Iran.

[194] «... سوسیالیسم او را به استبداد چند بعدی و دموکراسی به حاکمیت سرمایه و آزادی به بردگی پول و شهوت و حتی علم او را به انسلاخ از همه کرامتهای انسانی و ارزشهای متعالی وجودی و سلطه غوآسای تکنولوژی بی‌رحم و قتال افکند...» م آ، جلد 1، ص 42

Chapter Four

Foucault and Shariati: A Conversation

Foucault's Iran: "Point Zero"

> I think we live at a point of extreme darkness and extreme brightness. Extreme darkness, because we really do not know from which direction the light would come. Extreme brightness, because we ought to have the courage to begin anew (FIR: 185).

Foucault said the above words to Baqir Parham, a Paris-educated sociologist in Tehran in September 1978—five months before the Islamic Revolution took place. Foucault travelled to Iran twice—the first time from September 16 to September 24, 1978, and then again from November 9 to November 15 of the same year—as the 'special correspondent' of the Italian newspaper *Corriere della sera* to make sense of the revolutionary situation. Beside the nine articles which were published in *Corriere della sera*, Foucault shared his ideas on the Revolution in a number of interviews and a couple of articles that appeared in the French media.

The Iranian Revolution was significant to Foucault in that it exemplified his idea of questioning principles and doubting accepted truths; a 'point zero' of political thought located between a social and political 'dead-end' and a 'different way of thinking about social and political organization' which 'takes nothing from Western philosophy' and its 'juridical and revolutionary foundations' (FIR: 186). It was Foucault's interest in different methods of

resistance against established modes of being that informed his notion of "political spirituality", a term he coined to describe the religious dimension of the Iranian revolutionary movement, and it is this interplay between political spirituality and freedom that places Foucault in a multifaceted and nuanced dialogue with Shariati's intricate conceptualisations of freedom.

This chapter starts with analysing Foucault's Iran writings and then expands into a conversation between the two thinkers. Standing on one side of this dialogue is Foucault, who distances from the existentialist concept of freedom and does not present a normative theory of freedom. Instead, as we will shortly see, he perceives freedom as a practice of self-transformation underpinned by a network of interconnected principles that form the bedrock of his philosophy (Oksala 2005: 174). For Foucault, the notions of the subject, truth, and freedom are intricately and inseparably intertwined, and political spirituality can only be understood in the context of this specific notion of freedom.

On the other side is Shariati, who conceptualises freedom in existentialist terms. He offers his distinct religious lexicon and intertwines freedom with his particular ideas of revolutionary self-transformation and revolt, as well as a nuanced notion of subjectivity that is deeply enmeshed with resistance. As discussed in the previous chapter, Shariati views spirituality as a perpetual struggle against various forms of domination, exploitation, and subjugation. For Shariati, freedom is intrinsically linked to the human responsibility to revolt against domination.

Foucault and Shariati, obviously from divergent perspectives, converge at a pivotal intersection of resistance, revolt, subjectivity, and freedom: a point best described as political spirituality. This convergence provides a compelling reason to shift our focus from Fanon to Foucault. As we will see, Shariati's perspectives help shine some fresh light on Foucault's notion of political spirituality, a topic that remains one of his more controversial contributions. Conversely, exploring Foucault's other arguments that inform political spirituality offers insight into Shariati's views. Through this intellectual dialogue, both thinkers' conceptualisations of freedom gain their full significance.

Foucault opens the first of his articles with an account of a striking event that shook parts of Iran upon his arrival in Tehran. On the 16th of September 1978, an earthquake with the magnitude of 7.7 on Richter scale occurred in Tabas, a desert town in east-central Iran, and surrounding villages. The largest tremor ever recorded in Iranian history, it claimed the lives of twenty-two to twenty-five thousand people. In the historical town of Tabas alone, fewer than two thousand people survived out of a populace of around thirteen thousand. Ten years prior to this disaster, the earth had trembled in the same region. Foucault might have taken these earthquakes as a metaphor for the political and social situation of the country, but more importantly, he found in the responses to them a shared characteristic that pointed to the deep gap between the nation and the state, especially the person of the King, Mohammad-Reza Shah Pahlavi. According to Foucault, the way people rejected government aid and organised themselves through religious institutions and 'under the direction of a cleric' to rebuild the town, is a harbinger of a new leading role that religion would play in a colossal political transformation: Islam was 'facing the government and against it' (FIR: 190).

Foucault tries to shed light on the complex revolutionary state of affairs and the reasons for what he characterises as the 'immense revolt of the people against the shah' (FIR: 191). He draws on contrasts and paradoxes that might explain the prevailing discontent in pre-revolutionary Iran: the army against the people; the 'oil wealth' versus poverty; 'bare-chested' people and the machine guns acquired by the oil revenue.[195] The Pahlavi regime embodies a "dependent dictatorship"; Mohammad Reza Shah's father, Reza Shah, became Iran's monarch 'with only foreign support' (FIR: 197);[196] the army only protects the rulers and

[195] Foucault's depiction of the situation is also highly affected by what had happed a few days prior to his arrival in Tehran; the September eighth 'Black Friday massacre' in Djaleh square in Tehran where, as he describes, 'machine guns and perhaps bazookas were fired throughout the day' at a crowd participating in a peaceful demonstration (FIR: 190). Foucault builds his narrative on several contrasts and oppositions regarding the army which he finds too apparent to ignore. The peaceful demonstration on the Black Friday, where the crowd threw 'gladiolas at the soldiers' but in response they were received with bullets; the oil revenue that belonged to the people but instead was spent to build 'the fifth largest army in the world' that has never 'liberated anything' and had no role in 'molding the nation' in wars of, for example, independence and thus does not 'identify with Iran' but 'protected its rulers and stood guard side by side with foreign troops, around the foreign concessions' (FIR: 192).

[196] Reza Shah rose to power following the 1921 Persian coup d'état with the help of Edmund Ironside, then a General of the British Army and the commander of British forces in Iran (Ullman, 1973/2019: 385; Katouzian, 1979: 538; Keddie, 1978: 313, Brysac, 2007: 99). For a detailed account of the 1921 coup d'état see Richard Ullman's *Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-1921*, *Vol III* (1973). In the report titled *The Shah Is a Hundred Years Behind the Times*, Foucault again mentions foreign domination and the Pahlavis' dependency on the West: 'The father placed himself under English domination in order to stave off the Russian threat. The son

stands 'side by side with foreign troops , around the foreign concessions' (FIR: 192); and through this political earthquake an 'entire century in Iran—one of economic development, foreign domination, modernization, and the dynasty, as well as its daily life and its moral system—is being put into question' (FIR: 220-221). Colonisation and imperial domination, with oil—'the evil'—at its centre help Foucault to make sense of the 'history of the present' rejection of the system (FIR: 258). In harmony with Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati, Foucault understands Iran's position as a 'neocolonial' one currently 'within the orbit of the United States' (FIR: 220). The regime, he contends, has 'the same form and comes from the same age as all the colonial regimes that have subjugated Iran since the beginning of the century' and asks: '[H]ow could we not understand that the Iranian people see in the Pahlavis a regime of occupation?' (FIR: 198).

The dictatorship of the Shah is thus seen as the 'direct instrument' of 'dependency' and domination (FIR: 222). Hence, as discussed in previous chapters, Iran was seen by Foucault as a Third World country that was never formally colonised. Foucault argues that although the oil industry and the two World Wars affected Iran, the very fact that it was never directly colonised saved the country's social structures from being 'radically destroyed' during the 'long period of dependency' (FIR: 220). The regime, as he reports, is hence perceived to be 'responsible' for this state of dependency that Al-e Ahmad called *Westoxication* and that same regime is now challenged by the very social structures that survived to 'resist'. Political parties, according to Foucault, were not 'real forces' of resistance. Weakened by Pahlavi's "dependent dictatorship", the Leftist parties—such as the Tudeh Party—were 'tied to the USSR' and the nationalist ones—such as the Mosaddeqist National Front—were incapable of being significant actors in the political scene 'without the permission of the Americans' (FIR: 221). Thus, there remained the old social structures: notably Islam, which constituted the uniqueness of the Iranian Revolution for Foucault in that it exemplified (and inspired) that which he termed 'political spirituality' as the foundation of a 'perfectly unified collective will' which could not be explained in conventional terms.[197] He writes:

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substituted American political, economic, and military control for the English presence and for Soviet penetration' (FIR: 196).

[197] Foucault writes that this revolutionary movement 'has no counterpart and no expression in the political order' since it has neither a distinct leader nor any particular political ideology (FIR: 221). However, Ayatollah

> This political will yearns for the end of dependency, the disappearance of the police, the redistribution of oil revenue, an attack on corruption, the reactivation of Islam, another way of life, and new relations with the West, with the Arab countries, with Asia, and so forth… This political will is one of breaking away from all that marks their country and their daily lives with the presence of global hegemonies. Iranians also view the political parties—liberal or socialist, with either a pro-American tendency or a Marxist inspiration—or, it is better to say, the political scene itself, as still and always the agents of these hegemonies (FIR: 221-222).

Perhaps because of the way he relates the Iranian Revolution to his ideas—and specifically his idea of freedom—Foucault prefers not to call this phenomenon by its customarily known expression, revolution. Revolution in 'the literal term', he explains, denotes a 'way of standing up and straightening things out', while what is happening in Iran is

> the insurrection of men with bare hands who want to lift the fearful weight, the weight of the entire world order that bears down on each of us, but more specifically on them, these oil workers and peasants at the frontiers of empires. It is perhaps the first great insurrection against global systems, the form of revolt that is the most modern and the most insane (FIR: 222).

Foucault finds this movement thought-provoking in that it is located outside the already-known 'calculations of politics'; a choice between this or that political ideology and system—Marxism and capitalism; a 'point zero'; 'a movement through which blows the breath of a religion that speaks less of the hereafter than of the transfiguration of this world' (FIR: 223). Foucault is talking about political spirituality, when a political movement, a revolt, meets self-transformation. This is a key term in Foucault's engagement with Iran, as we shall shortly see. He writes:

> I do not feel comfortable speaking of Islamic government as an "idea" or even as an "ideal." Rather, it impressed me as a form of "political will." It impressed me in its effort to politicize structures that are inseparably social and religious in response to

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Khomeini, according to Foucault, who is now known as the leader of the Revolution and founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, is 'the focal point' of the collective will to overthrow the Pahlavi regime.

> current problems. It also impressed me in its attempt to open a spiritual dimension in politics (FIR: 208).

Here is where Foucault meets Shariati, whom he describes as 'the invisible Present', 'the ever-present Absent', and 'a shadow that haunts all political and religious life in Iran today': Islam not simply as a religion but an 'entire way of life' in a very particular sense (FIR: 207,241).

In the article titled *What Are the Iranians Dreaming About?*, first published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* in October 1978, only four months before the Iranian Revolution took place, Foucault coins the controversial term "political spirituality" in order to designate the 'force' that drives 'barehanded' and 'unarmed' individuals to sacrifice themselves and 'confront an appalling, terrible regime' (FIR: 207). He raises two interrelated questions regarding an Islamic government as the collective 'political will': 1) the dialectical relationship of Iran and Islam and the question of the future of this relationship, and 2) the 'point' of Iranians' 'searching' for 'political spirituality'. Foucault perceives (Shi'a) Islam in the Iranian context as a religion 'derived' from Islam that has provided its followers with 'infinite resources to resist state power' (FIR: 208). Given that, he poses a question about the possible consequences that such a 'political will' for an Islamic government might have for the people-state relation: '[S]hould one see a reconciliation, a contradiction, or the threshold of something new?' (FIR: 208). It seems that four decades of an Islamic government in practice has provided a clear answer to Foucault's question. Stephanie Cronin in her *Social Histories of Iran* (2021) concisely portrays the post-revolutionary situation concerning the fate of the political will for an Islamic government, in a passage worth quoting at length:

> Khomeini was a figurehead, a caretaker, his aura of mystical other-worldliness seeming to remove him further from the milieu of day-to-day politics, his position transitional, the long-term survival and secure establishment of clerical rule unimaginable.
>
> For all these reasons, the risks and dangers of supporting the new clerical authorities remained opaque until it was too late. Revolutions have rarely produced democracies, at least in the short-run, and the Iranian revolution was no exception. [...] Eventually the best organized, coherent and ruthless element of the revolutionary coalition, that of Khomeini and his supporters, won and imposed itself on its opponents.

> The resulting disillusionment was intense, partly as a result of the extravagance of the hopes raised, and has resulted for many participants in a rejection of the entire revolutionary movement, the emergence of an apparently pathological regime condemning the revolution itself as pathological, its pathology hidden beneath a rhetoric of liberation. The revolution has thus been disowned. The depth and speed of disillusionment was extraordinary.
>
> All revolutions have a utopian dimension and therefore all inevitably disappoint, some even betray. Iran after the revolution, however, lacked a honeymoon period of utopian promise (Cronin 2021: 52-53).

Although history seems to have answered Foucault's question in terms of reconciliation/contradiction—that which Foucault witnessed to some extent—it has left the third part, 'the threshold of something new', open for rumination. The 'threshold of something new' lends itself to a consideration of Foucault's second question regarding the 'point' of searching for political spirituality—apart from political spirituality itself which Foucault elsewhere calls the 'force'—in that together they indicate the idea of creative resistance to power.[198] As Julien Cavagnis argues, Foucault defines political spirituality precisely as the opposite of the 'government of the mullahs' (Cavagnis 2012: 57).[199] Moreover, neither Shariati nor Foucault takes spirituality to be synonymous with religion. Foucault argues that spirituality and religion are two distinct notions: 'Spirituality is something that can be found in religion but also outside of religion… [It] isn't necessarily bound to religion, even though most religions comprise a dimension of spirituality' (PS: 123). Accordingly, he finds Shariati's theories 'the inverse and converse' of the idea of an Islamic government which entails incorporating 'traditional structures of Islamic society' and Islamic 'legalism' into political life, contending that the Shariatian Islam 'would allow the introduction of a spiritual dimension into political life, in order that it would not be, as always, the obstacle

[198] Regarding the 'force', Foucault explains: 'So, what is that force that involves both a fierce, obstinate will to rise up, renewed on daily basis, and the acceptance of sacrifice, the very sacrifices of the individuals themselves who are willing to die? It's clear that we shouldn't be looking for it in a political ideology like Marxism, nor in a sort of revolutionary ideology in the Western sense of the term, but elsewhere' (Political Spirituality as Will for Alterity 2020: 122).

[199] See *Michel Foucault et le soulèvement iranien de 1987 : retour sur la notion de « spiritualité politique »*, Julian Cavagnis, Cahiers philosophique 2012/3. pp. 51-71.

to spirituality, but rather its receptacle, its opportunity, and its ferment' (FIR: 207).[200] Later in an interview entitled *Political Spirituality as the Will for Alterity* (2020), Foucault explains his understanding of the reason why a significant number of revolutionary Iranians had adopted a religious vocabulary: 'they're just explaining in the only vocabulary remaining to them a certain unease with respect to the current situation' (PS: 123). Spirituality is noticing and asserting 'a certain unease' and revolting against a certain 'situation' by means of a transformative 'practice', according to Foucault, which, in the Iranian context, manifests itself through the religious vocabulary redefined by Shariati who struggled to rearticulate freedom and political life in terms other than existing Western political philosophy. It refers to 'the "exit" status' as Karen Vintges puts, which 'constitutes an ethical self-transformation as conscious practice of freedom' (Vintges 2011: 99).

There are significant resonances between Foucault's idea of spirituality and what Shariati refers to as *irfān*.[201] Shariati customarily uses the expression *irfān* in Persian to make a distinction between his idea of religion and common perceptions of the term. As discussed in the previous chapter, he also uses the terms *irfān*, faith, and religion interchangeably, which suggests that he is in fact pointing to the one element that they do not necessarily have but *can* have in common: spirituality. Shariati also emphasises that *irfān* is the 'origin, spirit, and (in the case of all religions, including Christianity) essence' of all religions (MOWF: 119). However, he insists that by *irfān* or any of these terms he does not mean 'that hallucinatory philosophical metaphysics' found in 'daydreaming philosophers, passionate Sufis, and superstitious priests' (IEF: 51, my translation).[202] Human beings, from Shariati's phenomenological perspective, find in themselves 'the pure religious feeling' which is in fact the representation of 'the combination' of two intrinsic 'desires': desire to 'know' and desire

[200] It is also worth noting here that by Islamic government, according to Foucault's observations, 'nobody in Iran means a political regime in which clerics would have a role of supervision or control' – an observation consistent with various historical resources (FIR: 206).

[201] For a discussion on Shariati's ideas of *irfān*, Gnosticism, and spirituality, see Chapter Three. See also Jahanbegloo, R. (Ed.). (2020). *Mapping the role of intellectuals in Iranian modern and contemporary history. Lexington Books*, and Jahanbakhsh, F. (2001). *Islam, democracy and religious modernism in Iran, 1953–2000 : from Bāzargān to Soroush*. BRILL. Jahanbakhsh defines Shariati's notion of *irfān* as 'transcendental love' (2001: 124).

[202] Shariati's original word is 'ruhāni' (روحانی), literally meaning 'spiritual' in Persian. It is both a noun and an adjective. When used as noun, it means 'priest', 'clerical'; someone who belongs to the clergy class.

to 'transcend'. 'Philosophy and science' embody the former, and 'ethics' the latter. Shariati understands ethics as spirituality in that it connotes a sense of responsibility and sacrifice:

> [Ethics] implies adoring and admiring beauty, benevolence, human values, and that which encourages and explains sacrifice, selflessness, willingness to lose one's life for one's belief, devotion to high ideals, bravery, honour, and martyrdom. Ethics is the driving force of Man's perfectibility (IEF: 47, my translation).[203]

From Foucault's perspective, '[a]ll of the great political, social, and cultural disruptions couldn't have taken place in history without originating in a movement of spirituality' (PS: 124).[204] Thus, that which Shariati calls 'perfectibility' can be compared (from a very limited perspective) to what Foucault understands in terms of the disruptive act of 'becoming other than what one is, other than oneself', both originating from the force of spirituality.[205] Foucault delineates what he means by the expression:

> [Spirituality is] a certain practice by which the individual is displaced, transformed, disrupted, to the point of renouncing their own individuality, their own subject position. It's no longer being the subject that one had been up to that point, a subject in relation to a political power, but also the subject of a certain mode of knowledge [*savoir*], subject of an experience, or subject of a belief (PS: 124).

Revolutions, accordingly, would not materialise without the essential element of spirituality since the will to spirituality is basically the will 'to be other than what one is,' in Foucault's words (PS: 126).[206] This will needs 'a concrete, precise form'; a form that can be organised

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[203] «اخلاق یعنی عشق و پرستش زیبایی، خیر، ارزش‌های انسانی و آنچه ایثار و فداکاری و جانبازی در راه عقیده و از خودگذشتگی در پای آرمان‌های بلند و قهرمانی و شرافت و شهادت را تحریک و توجیه می‌کند و نیروی محرک تکامل اوست.»

[204] Beaulieu (2010) holds that Foucault 'chose to ignore' the religious meaning of the term 'spirituality' in Shi'a tradition by 'assimilating spirituality into a mere transformation of the self and others' (Beaulieu 2010: 803).

[205] Foucault says: 'It seems to me that that possibility of rising up from the subject position that had been fixed for you by a political power, a religious power, a dogma, a belief, a habit, a social structure, and so on— that's spirituality, that is, becoming other than what one is, other than oneself (PS: 124).

[206] Foucault maintains that 'revolutions without spirituality are the exception' in that 'at the very heart of the revolutionary will' lies the idea that a given situation will not change 'if one doesn't change oneself'. However, there is only one exception to this spiritual revolutionary will for "becoming other", which is the French Revolution since it 'didn't borrow anything from traditional spiritual reference'. He explains that the French Revolution was 'a social reorganization… in which it was thought that a good system of parliamentary representation was the way to resolve problems, that a sufficiently wise and well-suited philosophy could really allow people to cease being subjects in the way they had been, by becoming subjects of universal

'into a political movement'; and in the case of Iran, the 'Islamic faith' is 'the only thing' capable of providing that will with a form—a political movement—as perceived by Foucault (PS: 126). Shariati provided for Iranians' will for alterity the form it needed by incorporating the political ideas and ideals of his times into traditional sources of spirituality. He did not simply politicise Shi'a Islam, but presented Islam as an inherently political movement in its early days when the political and the metaphysical were inseparable. Shariati gave Islam an existentialist reinterpretation to make it into a 'tool' for resistance and the will for alterity.[207] That this tool is allegedly 'the most archaic in a civilization' does not distress Foucault; the problem to him is 'knowing what the value of the tool is in relation to this will [for alterity] (PS: 128). In this context, resonating with Shariati's idea of the distinction between religion and spirituality, as well as his fundamental 'religion versus religion' argument, Foucault asserts:

> It's certain that religions are both a sort of shelter for these forms of spirituality, these practices of spirituality, as well as their restrictions. They prescribe in what way one should become other than oneself, towards what one should go, what new status one will have, and so on. In fact, religions establish a certain codification for spirituality (PS: 124).

It must be noted here that there are two key assumptions underlying Foucault's concept of political spirituality: 1) that spirituality and philosophy were identical or nearly identical in ancient ways of thinking; and 2) that 'the role of philosophy is to prevent reason from going beyond the limits of what is given in experience' and 'to keep watch over the excessive powers of political rationality' (EW3-P: 328).[208] In the Foucauldian sense, spirituality creates the

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reason' (PS:127). However, Foucault then contradicts himself and discovers a spiritual layer in the French Revolution. Thus, the French Revolution, he asserts, was 'the first and the only revolution that recognized its own spirituality' (PS: 128).

[207] I have borrowed the term "tool" from Foucault's interview about his idea of political spirituality (2020), where he asserts that '[t]his movement of spirituality uses the tools at its disposal, and the problem isn't knowing if the tool is religious or not; the problem is knowing what the value of the tool is in relation to this will [for alterity]' (PS: 128).

[208] Although the expression 'political rationality' seems to be the opposite of 'political spirituality', spirituality in this distinct sense is not necessarily the opposite of rationality but a form of resistance, that might be 'insane' (FIR: 222). Moreover, Foucault maintains that 'it is senseless to refer to reason as the contrary entity to nonreason' (EW3: 328). See also Foucault's arguments on philosophy and spirituality in the *Hermeneutics of the Subject* (2005: 25).

possibility of thinking at 'point zero' and creatively questions the 'validity' of the principles rooted in the Enlightenment that have led to 'two grand and painful experiences': industrial capitalism and socialism (FIR: 184). The Iranian intellectuals, Foucault believes, are not ignorant of the consequences of Western political rationality and this is the reason why they search for an exit based on different grounds—as he himself does. He seeks to 'abandon every dogmatic principle' (FIR: 185), emerging from 'Western rationalist thought' that—as he shows throughout his works—divides, regulates, and creates truths in structural relations of power (PS: 132). Political spirituality is a technique of resistance against the structures of such political rationality and the systems of power that it has nurtured. It is a 'possibility', in Foucault's words, that the West has 'forgotten since the Renaissance and the great crisis of Christianity' (FIR: 109); it is 'the will to discover a different way of governing oneself through a different way of dividing up true and false' (Burchell et al. 1991: 82).

Resistance, Revolt, and Subjectivity

Foucault's articulation of political spirituality in terms of 'governing oneself' and 'dividing true and false' with reference to different grounds rests on what he calls 'the general theme' of his research: 'the question of the subject' (EW3-P: 327). Is the subject radically free (in a metaphysical or existentialist sense) to govern itself? Foucault is not a philosopher of consciousness or experience as formulated by phenomenology; rather, he is a philosopher of concepts, following Gaston Bachelard and Georges Canguilhem, pointing to structures (or discourses) which rule consciousness (Downing 2008: 7). Contrary to the existentialists who deal with the subject in terms of consciousness (*For-itself*), Foucault locates the subject in the complex power relations in which it is 'placed', highlighting the links between power relations and 'the rationalization of society' (EW3-P: 327, 329).[209] Moreover, instead of theoretically engaging with power, he investigates forms of power relations through looking into the 'struggles' against them; and instead of theorising rationalisation in general, he creates a

[209] Foucault asserts in *The Subject and Power* (1982) that the main theme of his research has not been power, but the subject. He also argues that in addition to power relations, the human subject is placed in 'relations of production and signification' (EW3-P: 326-327).

history of 'specific rationalities'. Being a philosopher of concepts, Foucault historicises specific rationalities that are constructed around concepts such as madness, illness, crime, or sexuality by means of archaeological and genealogical methodologies and calls them 'modes of objectification' that 'transform human beings into subjects' (EW3-P: 326). Sciences, various practices that 'divide' the subject either from others or from itself, and the ways the subject learns to recognise itself (and turn itself into a subject) are all considered by Foucault modes of objectification. The human subject is in fact governed through these rationalisations or modes of objectification that operate through complex power relations. Power is thus a 'question of "government" 'whose various forms can be revealed through identifying the characteristics that struggles against it have in common' (EW3-P: 341, 329). The question of the subject governing itself, which is also a question of freedom, is inseparable from 'the complicated interplay' of power and resistance (EW3-P: 342).

Foucault's investigations of forms of struggle bring his arguments close to the concerns of both Shariati and Fanon—with reference to what we have discussed in Chapters One and Three—in several ways despite their fundamentally different approaches. Foucault distinguishes six common characteristics shared by several forms of resistance: 1) they are transversal, meaning that they are not limited to a certain context or country; 2) they challenge 'uncontrolled power'; 3) they are 'immediate' struggles in that people resist forms of power exercised on them; 4) they contest the "government of individualization" that forces individuals to tie themselves to certain identities in a 'constraining way'; 5) they question regimes of knowledge that govern the circulation and functions of knowledge; 6) they all refuse scientific, economic, or ideological 'abstractions' that ignore one's individuality and determine 'who one is' (EW3-P: 329-31). These struggles, he contends, are targeted more toward a 'technique' or a form of power that affects 'everyday life' rather than specific institutions, groups, or classes. He explains:

> This form of power that applies itself to immediate everyday life categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects… a form of power that subjugates and makes subject to (EW3-P: 331).

Alongside more recognisable struggles against forms of domination and exploitation, spirituality constitutes a form of resistance against the forms of power that constrain the subject through (imposing on it) forms of subjectivity and submission (to these forms of subjectivity) (Oksala 2005: 12). Thus, in Foucault's words, spirituality connotes 'the subject's attainment of a certain mode of being and the transformations that the subject must carry out on itself to attain this mode of being' (Burchell et al. 1991: 82). Based on the concept of spirituality in this sense, we get closer to the elements in the 1979 Iranian Revolution that Foucault found resonating with his notion of the conscious transformation of one's way of life as a means of revolutionary political transformation. He confirms in a lecture in 1982 what he briefly notes in his Iran reports in 1978 regarding political spirituality as a possibility that the West has 'forgotten since the Renaissance and the great crisis of Christianity' (FIR: 209). In this lecture, Foucault refers to the Protestant Reformation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as a 'struggle for a new subjectivity' without using the term 'political spirituality':

> All those movements that took place in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which had the Reformation as their main expression and result, should be analysed as a great crisis of the Western experience of subjectivity and a revolt against the kind of religious and moral power that gave form, during the Middle Ages, to this subjectivity. The need to take a direct part in spiritual life, in the work of salvation, in the truth that lies in the Book—all that was a struggle for a new subjectivity (EW3-P: 332).

Foucault's fundamental notion in his reports and contemplations of revolutionary Iran was the possibility of a new subjectivity that would become perceivable only through a critical historical analysis of the rationalities that have made us who we are today. We can argue that Shariati's thought can be understood as a 'struggle for a new subjectivity', based on not only the analogous problems regarding religion, but also creativity and self-transformation. Revolt, Shariati writes, means that "I"—the individual—free myself from being drifting along with history; the prison of history that has constructed me the way I am now, with such emotions, such characteristics, such a way of thinking and living' (CW29: 67). However, Shariati's theory of humanity and freedom is normative and his abstract politically-inflected theology is obviously quite different from Foucault's historical approach toward concepts, and any comparison between these two thinkers must be mindful of their specific contexts and concerns, as well as the extent to which they use similar expressions; yet, what they share

regarding freedom and submission is more than a superficially similar mode of expression. Nevertheless, what allows for some degree of comparison is Foucault's own involvement in the ideas of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Shariati calls for a new subjectivity through critiquing both the Western rationalisations—catastrophes that Foucault mentions—and existing Islamic knowledge and tradition. In Foucauldian terms, the existentialist reading of Islam proposed by Shariati and inspired by the Protestant Reformation urged individuals to engage directly (without the need of any mediating clergy) with the truth of the Book—here, the Quran—and revolt against any power that theorised domination, exploitation, and submission to already-defined forms of subjectivity, including all the disciplines that theorised humanity itself.[210] As discussed earlier, Shariati understands human being as absolute freedom; a contingent perfectibility that, according to the Book, should not submit to any power or authority but God. In this sense, he does not weave the spiritual and the political together, but, by new interpretations of *shirk* and *tawhīd* and by (re)defining faith as a revolt against any form of submission based on understanding freedom as the core of human existence, he transforms the spiritual into the political.

From Foucault's perspective—and without overlooking his opposition to abstraction and understanding human being as consciousness in its existentialist sense—freedom is the 'refusal to submit' in the dynamic relationship between the exercise of power and the freedom of the subject; that is to say, power can be exercised 'only over free subjects, and insofar as they are "free"' (EW3-P: 342). Slavery, in this register, is not a power relationship, since one party in the relationship is in chains and deprived of any 'possible mobility' (EW3-P: 342). Power and freedom, according to Foucault, are not 'mutually exclusive' but interdependent: 'At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom' (EW3-P: 342). The "agonism"—the term Foucault prefers to "antagonism" to accentuate the struggle—between power and freedom is woven into the fabric of social life, as is the 'political task' of constantly questioning this agonism and existing power relations (EW3-P: 343).[211]

[210] See Chapters Three and Five.

[211] Foucault uses the expression 'economy of power relations' to emphasise the reciprocal relation between power and freedom. In this sense, resistance seeks to install a new economy of power relation, not to

To Shariati, the 'political task' of constantly revolting against various forms of domination, exploitation, and submission is inherent in the spiritual. According to Shariati's conceptualisation of human being (which is based on his religious ontology), as we discussed earlier, there is both a human nature (*essence générique*)—existence that is the God-soil duality—and free will to choose and create one's essence. Shariati uses the Islamic term *fitrat*[212] for what he means by human nature or "spirit" and contends that 'knowledge, religion, and art' are three related manifestations of this spirit. The catastrophe of humanity today, he insists, arises from differentiating these three manifestations into isolated fields (CW2: 91). That is to say, knowledge without faith, faith without knowledge, and art without faith and knowledge would all degenerate into 'tools of power'. Shariati writes:

> Differentiating knowledge from faith and art has resulted in limiting knowledge to a sober Francis Bacon-ish science—that is, identifying phenomena and the relations between them—that, under the modern bourgeois spirit of the West and only in pursuit of power, has abandoned searching for truth… Religion, by separating itself from knowledge and science, has solidified in the ultraconservative moulds of dogmas and rock-hard, outdated, useless, unconscious, philosophy-less, meaningless, aimless, and stagnant traditions… and art, the language of humanity's deepest wisdom… has separated itself from knowledge and religion […], shamelessly introducing absurd art, absurd play, absurd poetry, absurd sculpture, absurd painting, absurd novel writing, and basically, absurd philosophy! … This differentiation threatens humanity with metamorphosis (CW2: 91, my translation).[213]

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eliminate it. This also the reason why Foucault prefers the term agonism, which suggest developing strategies, to antagonism that connotes enmity and hostility (EW3: 348).

[212] According to the Quran, *fitrat* or *fitra* refers to 'the original state in which humans are created by God' (Esposito 2003: 109).

[213] «آگاهی، مذهب و هنر سه جلوه‌ی خویشاوند روح انسانی که در عمق فطرت و خصیصه‌ی وجودی نوع انسان پنهان است و فاجعه‌ی امروز بشری تفکیک این سه همزاد است. فاجعه‌ای که موجب شد هر یک از این سه خویشاوند، بیگانه از هم، راهی جدا در پیش گیرند و در نتیجه، آگاهی در شکل علم خشک فرانسیس بیکنی که "اطلاع بر پدیده‌ها و روابط میان آن‌هاست" محدود شود و تحت تاثیر روح حاکم بورژوازی جدید غربی، جستجوی حقیقت را رها کند و تنها در پی کسب قدرت رود و در نتیجه، از مسوولیت کشف حقیقت و نجات انسان و آمیزش با ایمان خود را فارغ کند و به خدمت بورژوازی پست مادی درآید و ابزار دست قدرت و سرمایه شود و پادوی بی‌حرمت تکنولوژی و مصرف! و مذهب با جداشدن از آگاهی و علم در قالب‌های متحجر دگم‌ها و سنت‌های جامد و کهنه و عبث و ناخودآگاه و فاقد فلسفه و معنی و هدف و حرکت منجمد شود و از زمان و حرکت تاریخ و منطق تحول و تکامل جامعه‌های بشری و زندگی انسانی و در نتیجه مسوولیت رشد و رهبری انسان باز ماند و ناچار، زندانی معابد غبارگرفته و بی‌جوش کهنه گردد و به انحصار عوام درآید و از دانش و حرکت و پیشرفت بهراسد و به عقب‌مانده‌ترین قشرهای منحط و سنتی و راکد اجتماعی ... تجزیه این سه بعد منجر به مسخ انسان می‌شود.» - مجموعه آثار (2)، ص 91

The 'monopolizing' Western form of knowledge and science, according to Shariati, exclusively serves productionism and consumerism; it destroys human beings' 'social self-consciousness' and 'time-consciousness'; and it alienates them from their selves, the individual human self, by 'distancing them from self-contemplation': thinking about who they are and who they want to become (CW20: 96, 239; CW25: 215). The alienated subject is the metamorphosed human. Shariati does not problematise knowledge in terms of the mode of objectification that Foucault calls *assujettissement*, but Shariati's critique of 'knowledge for the sake of knowledge' or the relation between science, capital, and power echoes Foucault's objectification of 'the productive subject' (EW3-P: 326). The parallels between Foucault and Shariati, despite their very substantial ontological and epistemological differences, reveal themselves in one significant subject: the human "self". Shariati's 'Islamic humanism'—the expression he uses—or existentialist Islam might be something on which they never agree, but they certainly agree in posing the question of "government" in its broad meaning, as Foucault maintains (EW3-P: 341). Shariati argues that despite endless attempts to define humanity (or human being), the four (allegedly) humanist schools of thought—Western liberalism, Marxism, existentialism, and religion—are still unable to solve the problem of "government", stating—with reference to John Dewey— that the present human subject 'is weaker and more unaware than the past human subject in governing itself' (CW24: 41). Going through the history of thought from Greek mythology to existentialism, he contends that although different philosophies developed in response to the existing problems of the eras in which they arose, they could not fulfil humanity's dream of salvation.

> Throughout history, humanity has often been the victim of its own thoughts about saving itself! Through a historical transformation, humanity's dreams of salvation have turned into shackles that have enchained it on the promising road to redemption! (CW24: 61, my translation)[214]

According to Shariati, modern ideologies such as Marxism and liberalism (or capitalism) 'mould' the human being into a 'social object [situated] within a pervasive violent

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[214]« انسان در طول تاریخ، غالباً قربانی اندیشه‌ی نجات خویش می‌شده است! آرزوی رستگاری در یک استحاله‌ی تاریخی، زنجیرساز اسارتش می‌گشته و در طریق امیدبخش رهایی به دام می‌افتاده است!» - مجموعه آثار (24)، ص 61

organisation', both denying humanity as 'a free and creative will' (CW24: 59). Meanwhile, he argues that existentialism, despite its emphasis on freedom and responsibility, not only fails to justify the 'metaphysical will' of human being from within its materialistic worldview, but also refuses to introduce a 'touchstone to distinguish good from evil', rendering the 'gift' of freedom absurd and dangerous (CW24: 72). As discussed earlier, these might have constituted the reasons why Shariati finally decided to synthesise his own version of existentialism; a critical theory that integrated the concrete Fanonian anti-colonial existentialist vision into 'the sacred' in order to formulate a revolutionary "praxis" to go beyond the existing orders.[215]

Shariati's critiques of Western (scientific) rationality—as the foundation of various incarnations of deterministic humanism that negate humanity—resonate with Foucault's definition of spirituality in relation to philosophy in the lecture series *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (1981–1982). Supposing that philosophy deals with ontological and epistemological questions and investigates 'the conditions and limits of the subject's access to the truth', spirituality then refers to 'the set of researches, practices, and experiences' such as 'purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existence' through which 'the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth' (HS: 15). This notion of spirituality is tied to a key motif which is also the locus of Foucault's concept of freedom: *Souci de soi* or "care of the self" as one fundamental 'phenomenon' in the 'history of practices of subjectivity'; that is to say, the historical forms of the relations between the subject and truth in the Western context (HS: 11). In the following section, I will bring the notion of "care of the self" as a spiritual practice into conversation with Shariati's idea of self-formation as a revolutionary ethos, arguing that despite their radically different approaches to the question of the subject, Shariati's and Foucault's understandings of the notion of spirituality converge with regard to the relation between the self and the political.

[215] Shariati defines humanity as 'a free and creative sacred will' (CW24: 59) based on his religious ontology that has been discussed in Chapter Three.

Spirituality and Technologies of the Self

Rejecting 'a priori theories of the subject', Foucault investigates the history of the relations between the subject and truth and focuses on the notion of "care of the self" as a 'moral principle' for living one's life in the final phase of his thought (EW1-EST: 290, 226). Care of the self in this sense refers to certain transformative practices or practices of self-government by the subject in order to resist governmentality and access the truth (EW1-EST: 226; Revel 2002: 59). As discussed in the previous section, according to Foucault, human beings are transformed into subjects through three modes of objectification that produce knowledge—the truth—by means of 'specific techniques' or "technologies'. Similar to his classification of resistance against modes of objectification, Foucault categorises these technologies into four major types: 1) technologies of production; 2) technologies of sign systems such as language; 3) technologies of power; and 4) technologies of the self (EW1-EST: 224-225). These technologies or matrices of 'practical reason', he argues, are interrelated while each of them operates through a particular form of domination—power relations and "truth games"—that train and govern individuals. Addressing resistance against these types of domination and submission to certain forms of subjectivity (*assujettissement*), Foucault investigates the history of the technologies of the self not in theoretical terms but 'in relation to a set of practices' in the Greco-Roman philosophy and Christian spirituality of late antiquity. The technologies of the self, as he explains, refer to human beings' ways of being:

> [They] permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (EW1-EST: 225).

According to Foucault, care of the self or *epimeleia heautou* in ancient Greek philosophy, namely in Plato's writings, Socratic teachings, and in Stoic and Cynic thought, was perceived in terms of spirituality in that it denoted an 'attitude towards the self, others, and the world' developed by the subject through a 'long labor of ascesis' (HS: 10, 16). He suggests that the word root *meletē* connotes both 'meditation and exercise'; that is to say, it implies attending to one's thought but is not limited to thought alone, since it also indicates transformative practice and 'designates a number of actions exercised on the self by the self, actions by which

one takes responsibility for oneself and by which one changes, purifies, transforms, and transfigures oneself' (HS: 11). Moreover, he argues that *heautou* or "oneself" in *epimeleia heautou* can be understood as the soul for two reasons: 1) it points to both the 'subject of the care and object of the care' and 2) it 'entails, opens up, or gives access to a knowledge necessary for good government' (HS: 53, 39). The soul, however, has 'nothing to do with, for example, the soul which, as prisoner of the body, must be set free', Foucault emphasises, it is 'the subject of the action' that 'uses the body, its organs and its tools' (HS: 65).

The significance of "care of the self" to Foucault is that, over the course of history, it lost its place, as a spiritual practical principle, to another principle in the Greek philosophy: *gnothi seauton* or "know yourself". These two principles, according to Foucault, were 'coupled' and 'entangled', serving as a joint foundation for the idea of self-transformation and taking care of the soul for the ancient Greeks. He contends that while *epimeleia heautou* or "care of the self" constituted 'the justificatory framework, ground, and foundation for the 'imperative' "know yourself", the latter 'overshadowed' the importance of the former and problematically became 'the founding expression of the question of the relations between the subject and truth' (EW1-EST: 228; HS: 8-11, 3). Foucault calls this ' inversion in the hierarchy' of these two rules 'the Cartesian moment'; the moment when *epimeleia heautou* was discredited and excluded from modern thought and *gnothi seauton* was requalified philosophically to validate self-evidence and consciousness as the privileged philosophical method to access the truth (HS: 14).[216] That is to say, spirituality was separated from philosophy—at least in Western culture, Foucault stresses—and truth lost its association with the transformation of the subject (Oksala 2005: 173). Here in the context of discussing the Cartesian moment, Foucault identifies spirituality with three characteristics that elucidate the relation between truth and "care of the self":

1) Spirituality is concerned with the subject's (way of) being; that is, the subject has no right to the truth and truth would not be rendered accessible by merely being a subject that, because of having a specific structure of subjectivity, is capable of gaining

[216] Foucault adds that by the word Cartesian he is not referring to Descartes alone as 'the inventor' or initiator of this method of acquiring knowledge and accessing the truth. He contends that 'the modern age of the history of truth begins with when knowledge itself and knowledge alone gives access to the truth' without the subject being required to undergo self-transformation (HS: 17).

knowledge (*connaissance*), which constitutes the truth. The subject becomes capable of truth through transformation and becoming 'to some extent and up to a certain point, other than himself' (HS: 15).

2) The subject may be transformed through different modalities, including love (*ēros*) or work (*askēsis*)—as two major modalities in the Western spirituality. Love or *ēros*, according to Foucault, refers to a 'movement that removes the subject from his current status and condition' and thus becomes capable of truth (HS: 16).
3) Truth, once accessed by the subject, has 'rebound' effects on the subject which go beyond the consequences of the labour of self-transformation. Foucault maintains that for spirituality, the truth 'enlightens' and gives 'beatitude' and 'tranquillity of the soul' to the subject: both '*in* the truth and in *access* to the truth, there is something that fulfils the subject himself, which fulfils or transfigures his [*sic*] very being' (HS: 16, emphasis added).

Before discussing the implications of the "care of the self" for Foucault's idea of freedom, we need to pause here to investigate, from Shariati's perspective, the fundamental notions and expressions—spirituality, the soul, and self-transformation—on which Foucault predicates the above arguments. On the one hand, Foucault's interpretation of spirituality and the soul seem to stand in stark contrast with Shariati's religiously-informed understanding of the terms. As Foucault himself cautions, the hermeneutics of the self should not be confused with 'theologies of the soul' (EW1-EST: 224). On the other hand, Shariati's highly nuanced terminology complicates his conversation with Foucault. As mentioned earlier, what Foucault means by the soul in the context of his historical inquiry has no theological sense. But in the same way that Foucault liberates spirituality from the restrictions imposed on it by religious and non-religious frameworks, Shariati does not limit the concept to the religious context, defining spirituality around an existentialist idea of human freedom and responsibility and in terms of a self-transformative ethos that must resist alienation and metamorphosis. Alienation, according to Shariati, refers to losing one's self-consciousness, which consequently destroys human beings' 'social self-consciousness' and 'time-consciousness', isolating them from their selves, the individual human self, by 'distancing them from self-contemplation' that is thinking about who they are and who they want to become (CW20: 96, 239; CW25: 215). This is what Shariati

means by human metamorphosis: the alienated subject is the metamorphosed human. Shariati maintains that self-formation means 'inculcating a revolutionary way of living life into oneself' as a 'principle' and an 'objective' (CW2: 112); it means 'harmoniously nurturing freedom, equality, and *irfān* (spirituality) in oneself' by means of 'constantly and simultaneously undertaking worship (*ibādat*), work, and social struggle' (CW2: 126).[217] What Shariati means by *ibādat* (worship) does not, in this context, have its conventional meaning the as 'the religious duties of worship incumbent' on the individual (Esposito 2003: 146). *Ibādat*, as he asserts, denotes 'one's link to God as the source of meaning' that requires 'self-transformation' through a 'strict regime' of 'cultivation and refinement' (CW2: 127). Worship is not a private and personal act of saying daily prayers, for example, as means of 'directly approaching God through one's mind', as Shariati holds; worship is 'approaching God through people and society' (CW29: 54); [218] worship is attending to oneself[219] and it is necessarily political (CW29: 40-43; CW2: 128). Self-formation, in this sense, constitutes an act of revolt against both the historically-made "self" and domination, exploitation and submission, which are all various forms of alienation. In a similar vein, uncovering the truth and human salvation do not imply other-worldliness. Salvation takes place on Earth following the choices that one makes through practicing—in Foucauldian terms—*epimeleia heautou* and *parrhēsia*: when the self is central to the political.

Parrhēsia

We have discussed so far Foucault's position according to which, in the absence of any a priori theory of the subject and thus any theory of freedom, he finds the subject 'trapped' in its own

[217] Shariati defines *irfān*, which literally means knowledge, as 'the inner human concern in the natural world, in the broadest sense' and 'the manifestation of the enthusiasm of the human nature (*fitra*) for the unknown' (CW2: 57).

[218] «عبادت عبارتست از نه تقرب فرد مستقیماً از طریق درون ذهنی به خداوند، بلکه گذشتن ذهن و روح فرد از طریق مردم و جامعه به خداوند.» مجموعه آثار 29، صفحه 54.

[219] Shariati writes: 'Worship is an existential question that fundamentally means self-formation (in Persian, literally, self-building); purification, refinement and clearing one's self through consciousness, human will, and by means of a strict and committed regime' (CW2: 126).

history, situated in games of power and games of truth (EW3-P: 329). Nevertheless, the subject is not totally unfree, since power and freedom are not mutually exclusive and at the core of power relations, Foucault contends, there are 'recalcitrance of the will and intransigence of freedom' (EW3-P: 342). Consequently, freedom becomes a matter of practice for Foucault, not an abstract theory. That is to say, freedom is the subject's opposition to various forms of power, including domination, exploitations, and submission to the subjectivities constructed by the regimes of knowledge. In this context, Foucault scrutinises the history of resistance to power by means of elaborating the concepts of the "care of the self" and *parrhēsia* or "fearless speech" in ancient Greek and Roman thought and their various problematisations and historical transformations.

Foucault argues that "care of the self" as governing oneself was considered an imperative for those who sought to govern the city for the ancient Greek philosophers (HS: 74). This imperative, accordingly, requires both a technique and an ethics (HS: 368). *Parrhēsia*, or its Latin equivalent *libertas*, is the 'rule', 'principle', or ethos of saying frankly, openly, and freely everything that one believes to be 'necessary, useful, and true' in both political and personal relationships (HS: 366, 372-3).[220] It constitutes, according to Foucault, the technique and moral principle of taking care of oneself or practicing spirituality through "fearless speech that requires freely expressing one's ideas (*franc-parler*) or critiques regardless of the consequences that truth-telling might have for the person—the *parrhēsiastes*—who utters it. Foucault calls *parrhēsia* a "speech activity"[221] that signifies the committed practice of uttering the truth, which is freed from flattery and rhetoric, in certain situations that requires the speaker's courage (HS: 373; FS: 13). In *Fearless Speech*, Foucault stresses that

> *Parrhēsia* is a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his own life through danger, a certain type

[220] As Foucault contends, parrhēsia is originally used in the Socratic philosophy in relation to the person who seeks to govern (the disciple) and the master who intends to train the disciple for this purpose. In this context, the disciple needs parrhēsia 'to constitute himself as a subject of sovereignty over himself and as a subject of veridiction on his own account' (HS: 372). This form of parrhēsia, or political parrhēsia, is practiced in the Socratic tradition through a personal relationship that exists between the disciple and the master, or the monarch and his advisors (FS: 103).

[221] Foucault points out that he uses the term "speech activity" not John Searle's notion of "speech act" to distinguish the former from the latter in terms of the specific characteristics of the concept of *parrhēsia* and its implications (FS: 13).

> of relation to himself or other people through criticism (self-criticism or criticism of other people), and a specific relation to moral law through freedom and duty (FS: 19).

The way that Foucault problematises the relation between *parrhēsia* and freedom is key to understanding certain subtleties of political spirituality. More importantly, this perspective helps us to elucidate a crucial aspect of Shariati's thought about freedom, where he draws a connection between freedom as an exercise and responsibility. According to Foucault, *parrhēsia* is a political structure that entails exercising one's freedom by binding oneself to the truth (GSO: 71). *Parrhēsia* is also a question of the speaker's attitude—choice and decision—and freedom to act through speaking truth to power (HS: 372). Foucault maintains that there is no *parrhēsia* without freedom and *parrhēsia* constitutes the fundamental link between freedom and truth (GSO: 67). Thus, truth gives rise to the question of responsibility and the way that one binds with truth; that is to say, the speaker must decide between the 'obligation of truth' and the danger of exercising freedom:

> How is [the fact of] binding oneself to the truth (binding oneself to tell the truth, binding oneself by the truth, by the content of what one says and by the fact that one says it) actually the exercise, the highest exercise, of freedom? I think that the whole analysis of *parrhēsia* should basically be developed around this question (GSO: 67).

It should be noted that *parrhēsia*, according to Foucault's analysis, does refer to the notion of freedom of speech as a right and in the sense that we might understand it or use it today; *parrhēsia* is essentially characterised by responsibility, frankness, and courage in the political context, described by Foucault as the 'profession of truth' (GSO: 188).

Foucault's articulation of *parrhēsia*—as 'the obligation of truth' and the fundamental relation between freedom (as the practice of speaking the truth regardless of the perils) and truth—parallels Shariati's political account of the Islamic principle of "Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong" on the one hand, and the complex concept of *āzādegi* in the Persian-Muslim context on the other. In particular, *parrhēsia* can serve as a conceptual tool to shed light on the concrete aspects of Shariati's thoughts on freedom, where he presents freedom as an exercise informed by the bond between the subject and the truth. Therefore, in the following sections, I will first study Shariati's conceptualisation of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong by analysing his re-depictions of four key figures of Shi'a Islam—Abu

Dharr,[222] Ali,[223] Hussein,[224] and Hurr[225]—and his account of the most popularised Shi'a story, the Battle of Karbala, all in terms of fearless speech. In other words, I interpret Shariati through the lens of fearless speech, and understand Foucault's political spirituality in the context of Shariati's political spirituality (or revolutionary subjectivity). This reciprocal approach not only casts new light on Shariati's Islam as a discourse of freedom but also contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the notion of political spirituality.

Secondly, I discuss the notion of *āzādegi* in Persian language and literature to make better sense of Shariati's idea of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong, as one of the manifestations of *āzādegi*, and compare it with Foucault's discussion of the Greek notion of *parrhēsia*. Discussing the similarities and differences of these two expressions, I will argue that *āzādegi* can be understood as practice, similar to *parrhēsia*, which Foucault regards as "the highest exercise of freedom" (GSO: 67). Along with this new interpretation of *āzādegi*, I will also suggest that Foucault's concept of political spirituality, as applied to the Iranian revolutionary context, might be better understood in the light of Shariati's articulation of the linkages between *āzādegi* as a certain human attitude and ethics, spirituality, and the struggle for freedom.

Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong

Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong (*al-Amr bi al-Ma'rūf wa'l-Nahy an al-Munkar*) is a Quranic commandment referring to the collective duty of Muslims concerning their community: 'You are the best community ever raised for humanity—you encourage good, forbid evil, and believe in Allah' (3: 110).[226] In the Islamic scholastic tradition, the doctrine of

[222] Abu Dharr al-Ghifari (d. 652). Persianised as Abuzar Ghaffari, customarily referred to as Abuzar. One of the earliest converts to Islam and the Prophet Muhammad's companion (Esposito 2003: 26).

[223] Ali Ibn Abi Talib (c.597–660). The fourth caliph of the Sunni Muslims and the first Imam of the Shi'a Muslims. Commonly referred to as Imam Ali in Iran.

[224] Also spelled as Husayn Ibn Ali (d. 680). Son of Fatemeh (the Prophet's daughter) and Ali Ibn Abi Taleb. Shi'a Muslims third Imam in the Twelver Shi'asm. Iranians refer to him as Imam Hussein.

[225] Al-Hurr Ibn Yazid Al-Riyahi (d. 680). A general of the Umayyad Caliphate (661–750 CE) army.

[226] *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* defines Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong as: 'Enjoining the right/honorable and forbidding the wrong/dishonorable. Used in the Quran nine times, referring to the

Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong has been problematised in various—and sometimes contrasting—ways. Michael Cook's *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (2000) delves into the diversity and complexity of this doctrine within different Islamic branches and schools, specifically focusing on how these groups delineate the territories where the doctrine is applicable (Cook 2000: 11-12). Cook extends his examination in *Forbidding Wrong* (2003), where he explores the role of state intervention and control based on this doctrine. He compares the implementation of Islamic laws and control mechanisms in various Islamic states, notably Saudi Arabia and Iran, highlighting how these states enforce this religious principle.[227]

However, the primary focus of this research is not on the doctrine of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong per se, but rather on Shariati's interpretation of it as a method for the populace to control and challenge state power. This perspective shifts the doctrine from a mere religious and legal obligation to a tool for political engagement and societal critique, emphasising its potential as a means for empowering people to question and hold their government accountable. Shariati's interpretation is crucial for understanding the interplay between religion, society, and state power in Islamic contexts.

Shariati, like other Islamic scholars, draws from the same foundational sources that inform Muslims of the instantiations of right and wrong: the Quran and what is known as *Sirāh*—a body of narrative histories on the lives, deeds, attitudes, and sayings of Muhammad, his companions, and his descendants (Esposito 2003: 319). However, it is important to note that, from a broad perspective, these interpretations or problematisations are either political or apolitical. The political problematisation of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong refers to speaking the truth to an unjust ruler, while apolitical narratives address right and wrong on a personal level. Given that addressing the controversies and complexities around this topic is beyond the scope of this thesis, in this section, I am going to explore the possibility of

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collective duty of the Muslim community to encourage righteous behavior and discourage immorality, as recognized by reason and the Islamic moral and legal system. Aims to remove oppression from society and instead establish justice. Applied to moral, social, political, and economic facets of life. It is, ideally, the distinguishing trait of the Muslim nation' (Esposito 2003: 41-42).

[227] See Cook, M. (2003). The state as an agent of forbidding wrong. In *Forbidding Wrong in Islam: Vol. Series Number 3* (pp. 65–72). Cambridge University Press.

understanding Shariati's account of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in terms of the Foucauldian parrhesiastic discourse.

Shariati's account of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong, like his interpretations of the Quran and certain distinct figures of early Islam, is radically political. This political account is predicated on two fundamental assumptions: first, the subjects of religion, people, have the agency to interpret the scripture without the intervention of clergy; secondly, religion is timeless; therefore, the instances of right and wrong should be determined by the people contemporary to any given era so that religion stays a timeless guideline the relevant applications of which are ever renewed in changing cultural contexts. Shariati delineates these principal assumptions in his 1972 lecture *Shi'a as a Comprehensive [Political] Party*:

> The language that Islam has chosen for the social responsibility of its followers is the language of a religion that is supposed to be living and leading people through countless conflicts and paradoxes they suffer throughout history and under all social systems. This is the reason why it has picked two broad terms right [*ma'rūf*] and wrong [*munkar*] and has left the instances of each one to the understanding of the people living in any given era and within any given [social] system (CW7: 75, my translation).[228]

The question of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong, according to Shariati, concerns the subject's being conscious of its responsibility towards its society (CW26: 142). He insists that limiting the instances of right and wrong to 'some persistent examples that are specific to the time past' would mean that, as through time human beings would need other rights and suffer other wrongs, religion would lose its contemporaneity (CW7: 76). According to Shariati, one instance of wrong can be replaced by another instance through time; that is to say, colonialism can be replaced with class exploitation and class exploitation can be substituted with fascism (CW7: 77). The greatest of all wrongs, Shariati insists, is 'limiting Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong to the personal and marginal questions and certain

[228] «زبانی که اسلام برای مسئولیت اجتماعی پیروان خویش انتخاب کرده است، زبان مذهبی است که باید در همه ادوار تاریخی و در همه نظام های اجتماعی و در همه درگیری ها و تضادهای بی‌شماری که مردم را رنج می‌دهد، زنده باشد و در نقش رهبری. این است که دو کلمه عام و پرظرفیت معروف و منکر را برگزیده است و یافتن موارد و مصادیق هر یک را، به اجتهاد و فهم مردم هر عصری و هر نظامی... واگذاشته است.» مجموعه آثار7 (*شیعه*)، صفحه 75.

persistent phenomena' such as an individual's appearance, clothing, or drinking alcohol—which is forbidden in Islam.[229] He continues:

> Today, the biggest of all wrongs consists in international imperialism, global Zionism, deception, old and new colonialism, exploitation, despotism, class conflict, cartels, trusts, racism, cultural colonialism, Westoxication, etcetera… For alluding to the margin instead of the principle, addressing the personal [wrong doing] in order to evade the collective, and introducing an insignificant right to misdirect people from a more significant right is betrayal, anyone, who, in the current situation, introduces a less-important wrong other than those wrongs [mentioned above]… is commanding wrong and forbidding right (CW7: 77, my translation. Emphasis in the original text).[230]

What Shariati means by 'the current situation' in 1972—seven years before the beginning of the Revolution—is a situation of domestic oppression, foreign imperialism, and global anti-colonial struggles. In this context, religion, whose raison d'être, according to Shariati, consists in Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong, serves as an ideology that accommodates and goes beyond 'all the slogans and ambitions marked as *responsibility* in the culture of contemporary intellectuals, philanthropists, seekers of social justice, freedom fighters, anti-colonial combatants, and all progressive and revolutionary ideologies of the world' (CW7: 75). In line with his criticism of contemporary Islam, Shariati contends that such a broad and

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[229] According to the Islamic criminal law, drinking intoxicants is a punishable crime with a pre-designated punishment of eighty lashes. See *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (2003), page 123.

[230] «بزرگ‌ترین منکرات امروز... امپریالیسم بین‌المللی، صهیونیسم جهانی، استحمار، استعمار کهنه و نو، استثمار، استبداد، تضاد طبقاتی، کارتل‌ها، تراست‌ها، نژادپرستی، استعمار فرهنگی، غربزدگی... است. به حکم اینکه... پرداختن به امر فردی برای گریختن از امر جمعی و طرح یک حق کوچک‌تر برای جهل از یک حق بزرگتر خیانت است، هر کسی که در شرایط فعلی، به مردم، منکری پایین‌تر از این منکرات را معرفی کند... امر به منکر و نهی از معروف کرده است!» مجموعه آثار7 (*شیعه*)، صفحه 77.

It seems that Shariati is inspired by this Quranic verse that addresses those who command wrong and forbid right as "hypocrites":

«الْمُنافِقُونَ وَ الْمُنافِقاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمُنْكَرِ وَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوفِ وَ يَقْبِضُونَ أَيْدِيَهُمْ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ إِنَّ الْمُنافِقِينَ هُمُ الْفاسِقُون» (9:67)

"The hypocrites, both men and women, are all alike: they encourage what is evil, forbid what is good, and withhold 'what is in' their hands. They neglected Allah, so He neglected them. Surely the hypocrites are the rebellious." (9:67, Translated by Dr. Mustafa Khattab, the Clear Quran. https://quran.com/9/67)

inclusive sense of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong can be found in 'early Islam' and the life and personality of the Islamic figures (CW7: 75).[231]

Shariati re-depicted familiar Shi'a historical figures according to his political narrative of Islam in order to make them and their ways of life relevant and meaningful to the contemporary context. The renewed portraits of these highly respected personalities of early Islam thus spoke the language of those pre-revolutionary activists and thinkers who were struggling against domestic despotism and foreign domination. Figures such as the family and companions of the Prophet Muhammad became characters of Shariati's contemporary Islamic critical theory, exemplifying certain ideas and ideals, including justice and freedom. In this modern depiction of a centuries-old story, Fatemeh, Ali, Salman-e Farsi, Hussein, Abu Dharr, and Hurr were the protagonists who were not afraid to lose their lives battling against the villains who personified deception, oppression, and injustice.

Abu Dharr: the Parrhesiast Socialist

Shariati's fresh reading of the historical circumstances of early Islam accentuates a certain ethos and certain ideas in the leading characters named above, contributing to the Shariatian portrayal of the ideal 'committed intellectual'. Shariati's Abu Dharr, Ali, Hussein, and Hurr exemplified Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong both in words and deeds in various situations. According to Shariati, these committed figures 'chose their social responsibility not as a duty alongside their lives but as a philosophy of life'; they uttered the truth despite the dangers that threatened their lives, and—except for Muhammad and his companion, Abu Dharr—lost their lives in fighting for the truth (CW7: 66). In these narratives, we see parallel characteristics to those Foucault identifies in the parrhesiastic discourse and the parrhesiast in terms of the relation between the speaker of the truth, the truth, and the freedom of the speaker to utter the truth (GSO: 67). Similar to Foucault's analysis of Plutarch's Dion, Shariati's Abu Dharr refuses to keep silent in the face of tyranny, and while he is fully conscious of the

[231] «اسلام نخستین و علی راستین، این حکم را در درجه ای از معنی تلقی می کرده اند و در وسعتی از ظرفیت، که تمامی شعارها و هدف هایی را که در فرهنگ روشنفکران جدید و انسان دوستان و عدالتخواهان و مبارزان راه آزادی و مجاهدان ضداستعماری و همه ایدئولوژی های مترقی و انقلابی جهان، تحت عنوان مسئولیت عنوان شده است، در خود جای می دهد و از آن همه در می گذرد.» مجموعه آثار7 (*شیعه*)، صفحه 75

consequences of his insistence on telling the truth, he addresses the tyrant with the following words:

> If you place your sword here (pointing to his throat) and I see that only one breath would come out of my throat, I will not breathe that last breath in "silence", but to utter aloud the truth that I have heard from my great friend, Muhammad, who told me: "Abu Dharr! Tell the truth (the right) no matter how bitter it is, and do not fear the rebukes!" (CW7: 38; CW3: 236, my translation)[232]

Shariati's engagement with the story of Abu Dharr dates back to 1955, when he translated a biography of this early Islamic figure written by the Egyptian author Abdel Hamid Gouda al-Sahhar (1913–1974). Having introduced himself as 'the believing socialist', Shariati asserts in the foreword to the Persian translation of the book that he has added to the original text to throw light on more aspects of this historical personality. He describes Abu Dharr as 'the most relevant image needed' to address the problems of the time; the time signified by 'the efforts of humanity's awakened conscience to realise justice and economic equality, and to make possible having both faith in God and worldly welfare' (CW3: 229). A few years after Muhammad's death in 632 CE, Abu Dharr revolts against the Islamic establishment when he observes, in Shariati's words, that 'people are being captivated, robbed, and forced into famine once again, this time in the name of [Islam's] God.'[233] Shariati's Abu Dharr does not tolerate 'this new deception, which could make Muslims to suffer poverty, humiliation, and slavery under the banner of religion' and decides to speak out (CW3: 232). According to Shariati, 'Abu Dharr knew that if he kept silent, deception, exploitation, and humiliation could be justified for people', so he feels the responsibility 'to shout it out so that the people know what fate is awaiting them; so that they recognise aristocracy, humiliation, and idolatry in the

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[232] «اگر شما شمشیرتان را بر اینجا (اشاه به حلقومش) بگذارید و من احساس کنم که دیگر یک نفس بیشتر از حلقومم برنخواهد خاست، آن یک نفس آخر را «ساکت» برنخواهم آورد، بلکه به فریادی در گفتن حقی که از دوست بزرگم محمد شنیده‌ام... »! (م آ 7: 38). [که محمد گفت]: «ابوذر حق را بگو هر چند تلخ باشد، و از سرزنش هیچ سرزنش‌کننده‌ای نترس.» (م آ 3: 236)

[233] Abu Dharr was exiled to a small village following his overt criticisms of the establishment of the second caliph and died in dire poverty.

new beautiful clothing of *tawhīd* (CW3: 236).[234] Shariati's Abu Dharr sees 'the unrighteous', refuses to be quiet, speaks truth to the power, and 'loses his life to the truth' (CW3: 242).[235]

Ali: Symbol of Good Government

Similar to this depiction of Abu Dharr, Shariati's Ali and Hussein, two key figures in Shi'a Islam, commanded the right and forbade the wrong in political terms. Ali, son-in-law of Muhammad, Shi'a Muslim's first Imam, and the fourth caliph after Muhammad's death, is one of Shariati's main points of reference. Shariati's analysis and criticism of prevailing ways of practising (Shi'a) Islam, as well as his definition of Shi'ism, is essentially predicated on the figure of Ali (CW26: 136). Very briefly, Shi'ism, according to Shariati, is 'a way of "reading Islam"'; that is, 'a progressive, anti-aristocratic, anti-racist, anti-class, and anti-establishment reading of Islam':

> Shi'ism has been a movement that, from its inception, rose against the deviation of the social path of the Islamic school and its soul, direction, and true vision, preventing the conscious or unconscious penetration of anti-Islamic racial, class, aristocratic, political, and intellectual elements (CW22: 113, my translation). [236]

Shariati's Ali embodies this antagonistic understanding of Shi'ism. Nevertheless, in accordance with his 'religion versus religion' arguments, Shi'ism itself is prone to the elements mentioned in the above-quoted paragraph. Similar to distinguishing between 'the religion of *tawhīd*' and the contrasting 'religion of *shirk*'—as discussed in Chapter Four— Shariati coins the terms *Alavid Shi'ism*, *Ali's Shi'ism*, and *Safavid Shi'ism* to distinguish between the

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[234] *Tawhīd*, here, refers to Islam as the new monotheistic theology that opposed the prevalent polytheism of the time. As discussed in Chapter Four, Shariati conceptualises *tawhīd* in terms of rejecting any form of submission to any authority but God. Moreover, Shariati asserts that Islam in the times of Abu Dharr's life had not been thoroughly delivered by Muhammad. It was a simply a monotheistic worldview, yet enough for constituting a way of life. See *Shariati's Collective Works*, *Book 7*, page 33.

[235] Abu Dharr was not killed. He was exiled following his overt criticisms of the second caliph's establishment and died in dire poverty. See *The Oxford encyclopedia of the modern Islamic world*, Esposito, J. L. (1995).

[236] «تشیع یک نوع «فهمیدن اسلام» بوده است... فهمیدن مترقی و ضداشرافی و ضدنژادی و ضد طبقاتی و ضد حاکمیتی اسلام است! تشیع نهضتی بوده است که از هم آغاز در برابر انحراف مسیر اجتماعی و روح و جهت و بینش حقیقی مکتب اسلام ایستاد و از نفوذ آگاهانه و ناآگانه عناصر نژادی و طبقاتی و اشرافی و سیاسی و فکری ضداسلامی مانع شد...» مجموعه آثار22 (*مذهب علیه مذهب*)، صفحه 113

institutionalised (Shi'a) Islam—which took root in Iran during the Safavid dynasty rule in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—and the Islam that Ali practiced. *Safavid* Shi'ism, he argues, identifies with 'institution' and 'solidified faith', while *Alavid* Shi'ism identifies with movement and 'dynamic faith' (CW9: 43). Foucault does not fail to mention this Shariatian critical distinction between an 'institutionalized' religion and the religion 'preached' by Ali in his 'sermons of social justice and equality' (FIR: 207). However, he, understandably, does not engage further with this argument and, knowingly or unknowingly, misses Shariati's main point: daring to speak truth to power.

Shariati contends that what differentiates *Safavid* from *Alavid* Shi'ism is their approach to the question of "expediency" and "truth" (CW9: 37). Moreover, *Safavid* Shi'ism is the Shi'ism of 'flattery,' while *Alavid* Shi'ism is that of 'courage and [maintaining] the independence of the soul and personality' (CW9: 208). Shariati depicts Ali, the defining figure of Shi'a doctrine, as the symbol of choosing truth over expediency, who regards Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong as a 'responsibility' that constitutes 'the utmost act of worship' (CW7: 253, 75). In fact, Shariati builds his argument on the words attributed to Ali in *Nahj al-balagha*—the collection of his political writings, consisting of sermons, letters, and sayings—where Ali describes 'uttering the word of justice to an oppressive ruler' as 'the most virtuous' instance of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong (Saying 366). In another instance, Ali writes to his children, Hassan and Hussein, using the terminology in an explicitly political sense: 'Do not cease Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong lest the most sinister among you would claim sovereignty over you. Then you would implore [God], but it would not be answered' (Beirut edition 1990, Letter 47: 614-615, my translation).[237]

Shariati's account of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong as the responsibility to speak the truth despite the consequences that such 'fearless speech' might have for the speaker climaxes in his reading of the Battle of Karbala and Hussein (d. 680), Ali's son, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, and the third Shi'a Imam. On the one hand, the Battle of Karbala has given rise to a multi-layered socio-cultural phenomenon and several nuanced concepts in the Iranian context. On the other hand, Shariati's narrative of this historical event addresses and critiques this complex phenomenon, proposing a whole set of alternative conceptualisations.

[237] «لا تَترُكُوا الأمرِ بالمعروفِ والنَّهي عَنِ المُنكَرِ فَيُوَلّى عَلَيكُم شِرارُكُم، ثُمَّ تَدعونَ فَلا يُستَجابُ لَكُم». بيروت 1990: 614-615.

Thus, before continuing with Shariati's idea of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong, a brief historical background is required for contextualising Shariati's narrative and scrutinising the ways that this narrative informs his notion of freedom.

Hussein: the Revolutionary

The Battle of Karbala took place between Hussein ibn Ali, the third Imam of Shi'a Muslims, and the Umayyad Caliphate on 10 October 680 CE—the 10th of Muharram 61 AH of the Islamic calendar known as *Ashura*—in the desert of the same name in modern-day southern Iraq. Outnumbered by the Caliphate Yazid ibn Mu'awiya's army, Hussein was killed along with his partisans following the circumstances recognised as an "uprising" in Shi'a Islam. In the contemporary Shi'a world, the month of Muharram, the events of *Ashura*, and the Battle of Karbala are of exceptional significance. To highlight this significance in (Iranian) Shi'a culture and history, Abrahamian compares the memorialisation of the event of *Ashura* to the traditional Christians' commemoration of Christ's Easter Passion on Mount Calvary (1982a: 5). To Shi'a Muslims, Hussein is a martyr whose martyrdom on the day of *Ashura* is commemorated every year through numerous gatherings, marches, and specific mourning rituals.

In Iran, the annual commemoration of the Battle of Karbala and the events of *Ashura* is not only a cultural phenomenon but also a popular political platform reflected in what is known as Karbala literature and the literary genre of *marthiya* (elegy);[238] Accordingly, it has been the subject of numerous studies inside and outside modern academia from the perspective of various disciplines in terms of both the authenticity of the narratives and their cultural and political implications. Studies of the historical transformations of the Muharram mourning rituals in the Iranian context demonstrate the politicisation of the *Ashura* observances since

[238] For a history of *Ashura* mourning rituals in Iran and Iraq, see *The Mourning of History and the History of Mourning: The Evolution of Ritual Commemoration of the Battle of Karbala*, Hussain, Ali J. (2005). Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, 25(1), 78–88. For a comprehensive history of *marthiya*, see MARTHIYA. In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (pp. VI:602b). Brill. http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/marthiya-COM_0691

the establishment of Shi'ism as Iran's official religion by the Safavids (c. 1501–1736).[239] The politics of the services and the transformations in the form and content of the ceremonies in different eras reveal the complex socio-political dynamics of the Muharram culture in Iran (Abrahamian 1982a; Scot-Aghaie 2004; Ayoub 2011; Dorraj 1997; Hegland 1983). As Foucault also mentions in his 1978 Iran reports, the Muharram mourning services functioned as a medium for criticising the social and political issues of the day in the countless gatherings that took place all over the country, through allegorical recounting of the events of the Battle of Karbala. Mahmoud Ayoub, in *Redemptive Suffering in Islam: A Study of the Devotional Aspects of Ashura in Twelver Shi'ism* (2011) notes that the events of Karbala 'could be studied as a political movement' and writes:

> [T]he Muharram cultus has provided the Muslim world, and especially the Shi'a community, with one of the most dynamic forces in its long history… As expressed in the language of myth and folk piety, it has judged and consoled men and women in every age and place in the world of Islam (Ayoub 2011: 19).

Apart from consolation, detailed accounts of the events of *Ashura* have been providing those commemorating the martyrdom of Hussein every year with a yardstick for judging good and evil through identifying each significant character of the story with a distinct human virtue or vice. Observing *Ashura*, as Dorraj (1997: 515) notes, has created a 'transhistorical paradigm'—that Fischer (2003: xvii) calls 'the Karbala paradigm'.[240] The Karbala paradigm, at least in the Iranian context, has provided the Persian (Shi'a) interlocutors with 'paradigmatic example[s]', metonyms, and metaphors to create meaning, covey messages, or make sense of the ethics associated with various situations (Dorraj 1997: 495). As Hussain has been perceived as a symbol of righteousness, his opponent, Yazid, has symbolised villainy (Dorraj 1997: 495; Fischer, 2003: 7). Similarly, Zaynab (d. 681), Hussein's sister who survived the Battle, embodies patience and resistance; Abbas, Hussein's stepbrother, exemplifies loyalty and altruism; and Hurr, a commander of the opposing army who was eventually killed after he

[239] In *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shi'a Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran* (2004), Kamran Scot Aghaie provides a comprehensive study of the religious rituals of Muharram and their socio-political functions both in the Qajar (1796) and Pahlavi (1925–1979) eras.

[240] Fischer defines the "Karbala paradigm" as the 'foundational story of Shi'asm of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn at Karbala' (Fischer, 2003: xvii).

joined Hussein, represents *āzādegi*, the Persian expression for a specific nuanced concept of freedom that will be discussed shortly.

By the 1960s and 1970s, the Karbala narrative had become an integral part of the political discourse of many Islamist or Marxist-Islamist opposition groups. As Scot-Aghaei explains in *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shi'a Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran* (2004), these discourses characterised Hussein's movement and his persona by 'humanity, the love of truth, selflessness, and adherence to belief and to the holy burden or responsibility' (Scot-Aghaei 2004: 108).[241] Using the terms core-narrative and meta-narrative to investigate and analyse the transformations of the Karbala narrative from the mid-twentieth century, he notes that during the years leading to the 1979 Revolution, the "core-narrative" or 'basic' narrative of Karbala remains the 'justice and piety' of Hussein, while the representation of "self" and "other", as an aspect of the *Ashura* meta-narrative, is transformed in consonance with the political circumstances (Scot-Aghaei 2004: 87-88). The "self" included the oppressed peoples of the (colonised) world, the subjugated Muslims, or the exploited proletariat, and the Pahlavi regime, the imperialist West, or the bourgeoisie embodied the "other" (Scot-Aghaei 2004: 89). The famous case of Khosro Golsorkhi (1944–1974), introduced in Chapter 2, is perhaps one example that best reflects this meta-narrative. Golsorkhi, a journalist, leftist poet, writer, and the translator of Fanon's *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* (1959) was put on trial and sentenced to death for conspiracy to assassinate the royal family. When given a chance to defend himself, Golsorkhi reads one of his poems that depicts Iran as a colonised land and proceeds with a strongly-worded critical statement on the similarities between the ideas of Marx and Ali in terms of poverty and exploitation, 'the conspiracies of imperialism', 'censorship', 'oppression', and 'feudalism and peasantry', opening with a quote from Hussein:

> "Indeed, life is guiding faith and struggle." I begin my word with a quotation from Mawlā [my lord] Hussein, the great martyr of the peoples of the Middle East. I, as a Marxist-Leninist, originally sought social justice in the school of Islam and then found socialism… In Iran, the true Islam has always provided for the Iranian liberation

[241] For instance, Shariati argues that 'a materialistic ideology cannot provide for selflessness and high ambitions, human ethics, revolutionary (transformative) ascetics [*taqvā-ye enqelābi*] (CW7: 22).

movements… Today, as well, the true Islam would provide for the Iranian national liberation movements… The life of Mawlā Hussein is a reflection of our own life in that, taking our lives in our hands, we are being tried for [struggling for] the deprived peoples of our homeland. He [Hussein] was in a minority, and Yazid had a court, an army, an establishment, and power. He [Hussein] took a stand and he was martyred… Nevertheless… Although Yazid occupied a corner of history, what was repeated in the passage of history was the path of Mawlā Hussein and his resistance, not the rule of Yazid. What the people have repeated and are doing [now] is [following] that same path of Mawlā Hussein.[242]

Golsorkhi names Ali, Salman-e Farsi, Hussein, and Abu Dharr as the 'first socialists of the world' whose Islam he 'approves' as 'the true Islam'. Moreover, his choice of referring to Hussein as *Mawlā*—a title to address a highly respected master, teacher, or role model—signifies his conceptualisation of Hussein as a transhistorical image of resistance and risking one's life for what one believes to be the truth. When interrupted by the military court judge during his defence, Golsorkhi states that he is 'defending his people' and refuses to speak in his defence. Golsorkhi's self-identification with Hussein in terms of fearlessly speaking the truth to power can be regarded as an exemplar of the above-discussed Ashura meta-narrative.

Shariati has had a preeminent influence on the above-discussed Karbala meta-narrative. His narrative goes beyond representing the Battle of Karbala as the situational archetype of the battle between good and evil. He weaves the details of the Ashura incident into his existentialist re-reading of Islam and theorises revolt, revolution, and martyrdom in terms of humanity's freedom and responsibility through centring his arguments around the maxim 'every month is Muharram; every day is Ashura; and every place is Karbala.'[243] In this

[242]« ان الحیاه عقیده والجهاد. سخنم را با گفته‌ای از مولا حسین، شهید بزرگ خلق‌های خاورمیانه آغاز می‌کنم. من که یک مارکسیست لنینیست هستم، برای نخستین بار عدالت اجتماعی را در مکتب اسلام جستم و آنگاه به سوسیالیسم رسیدم... اسلام حقیقی در ایران همواره دین خود را به جنبش‌های رهایی‌بخش ایران پرداخته است... زندگی مولا حسین نمودار زندگی اکنونی ماست که جان بر کف، برای خلق‌های محروم میهن خود در این دادگاه محاکمه می‌شویم. او در اقلیت بود و یزید، بارگاه، قشون، حکومت، قدرت داشت. او ایستاد و شهید شد. هر چند یزید گوشه‌ای از تاریخ را اشغال کرد، ولی آنچه که در تداوم تاریخ تکرار شد، راه مولا حسین و پایداری او بود، نه حکومت یزید. آنچه را که خلق‌ها تکرار کردند و می‌کنند، راه مولا حسین است.» بیشه بیدار: از مجموعه شعرها و مقاله‌های خسرو گلسرخی، انتشارات مروارید، ص 199-204.

[243] This is a hadith attributed to Imam Sadiq, the sixth Imam of the Twelver Shi'a Muslims.

narrative, the Battle of Karbala epitomises humanity's perennial struggle against domination, in the broadest sense, which included the global anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, exploitation, despotism, and religious authoritarianism. In the pre-revolutionary context, the Shariatian unorthodox depiction of Hussein introduced him as a revolutionary; and the Shariatian account of his "martyrdom", as Dorraj maintains, is '[p]erhaps the most politicized and systematic exposition of martyrdom' (Dorraj 1997: 512). Moreover, the radical de-temporisation of the event and de-personalisation of the characters in manifestly combatant terms presents Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong—based on a *hadith* attributed to Hussein—as the free practice of uttering the truth, and sacrificing one's life for the truth as martyrdom.[244] The question that arises here is what constitutes the truth.

In the short essay titled *Hussein, the Heir of Adam* (1971), Shariati defines "the truth" as the opposite of 'hypocrisy' through a symbolic dialectical conceptualisation of history and humanity that echoes his "religion versus religion" arguments.[245] In this narrative, Adam, who personifies human unity, gives his place to Cain and Abel, who represent two distinct human contingencies, which are associated with two historical 'currents'. As the first manslayer, Cain signifies the 'current' identified with 'selfishness', 'racism', 'deception', 'oppression', 'tyranny', 'corruption', 'extravagance', etcetera (CW19: 36-37). Abel, on the contrary, is 'the first martyr' characterised by 'the people', '*tawhīd*' or the oneness of God, 'faith', 'love', 'justice', 'freedom', 'suffering', 'genocide', 'prophethood', 'responsibility', 'jihad', 'martyrdom', and 'defeat' (CW19: 38). Hypocrisy is Cain disguised as Abel; the deceitful union of the two hostile streams. In this sense, Shariati presents Ashura as an 'uprising' against what he calls 'the great hypocrisy' or 'the great deception'. The great hypocrisy, according to him, has taken many incarnations and reincarnations, including the 'Caliphate Islam', or that which he calls *Safavid Shi'ism* or the institutionalised Islam that sacrifices the truth for the sake of

[244] "And I did not dissent to be evil, arrogant, corrupt, or oppressive, but rather I have dissented to pursue reform in the nation of my grandfather. I want to command the right and forbid the wrong" (Bihar al-Anvar Vol 44: 329, Mohammad Baqer Majlesi, my translation).

«وأني لم أخرج أشرا ولا بطرا ولا مفسدا ولا ظالما و اِنّما خَرَجتُ لطلب الاصلاحِ فی اُمهِ جدّی، اُرِیدُ اَن آمُرَ بالمعروفِ و اَنهی عَنِ المُنکَرِ.»
بحارالنوار، محمدباقر مجلسی، جلد 44، صفحه 329

[245] See Chapter Three.

or in the name of expediency (CW19: 45). The human subject is thus situated within the antagonism of the truth to hypocrisy, free to either speak out the truth or evade its responsibilities and keep silent in the face of catastrophes (CW7: 69). To elaborate the relation between the subject, the truth, and freedom, Shariati draws on the story of Hurr, a legendary figure in the Battle of Karbala whose name is entangled with the concept of *āzādegi* (freedom). Therefore, in the next section I introduce Hurr and the specific characteristics of Shariati's Hurr as a prelude to discussing *āzādegi* and its connotations.

Hurr: Metonym for Exercising One's Freedom

Al-Hurr ibn Yazid I Riyahi, commonly known as Hurr, was a general of the Umayyad army who was supposed to force Hussein and his companions to visit Yazid and pledge allegiance to him and his sovereignty a few days prior to the Battle. As Hussein decides to confront the Umayyads army on the day of Ashura, Hurr joins him and is killed while defending Hussein. Since Hussein exemplifies righteousness and truth in the Iranian Shi'a Muslim context, Hurr has become the symbol of speaking the truth regardless of the consequences.

Shariati interprets the story of Hurr around three main themes: 1) the relation between freedom and truth, 2) an existentialist theory of the subject that defines humanity in terms of freedom, and 3) human revolution or radical self-transformation as rejecting servitude and recognising one's freedom and responsibility. Regarding the connection between freedom and truth, Shariati's account of the relationship between Hurr, as a human subject, and the truth resonates with Foucault's analysis of the *parrhēsia* of Plutarch's Dion. Foucault argues that the question of *parrhēsia* in Dion's case is a question of 'the obligation of truth'—that is "binding oneself to the truth" and "binding oneself by the truth and truth-telling—and 'the highest exercise' of freedom" (GSO: 67). He explains:

> parresia only exists when there is freedom in the enunciation of the truth, freedom of the act by which the subject says the truth, and freedom also of the pact by which the subject speaking binds himself to the statement and enunciation of the truth. To that extent, it is not the subject's social, institutional status that we find at the heart of parresia; it is his courage (GSO: 66).

Shariati introduces Hurr as 'the outstanding exemplar' of 'amorously sacrificing one's life' for the truth (CW2: 178). In this phrase, the modifier 'amorously' implies a connection or a bond between the subject—Hurr—and the truth on which Foucault puts the stress as the fundamental question regarding the notion of *parrhēsia*. Hurr is bound to and by the truth—the righteousness of Hussein versus the unrighteous establishment—and makes a 'decision' and a 'choice': 'choosing one's way of being at the expense of one's own life' (CW2: 178-179). Shariati's Hurr chooses to side with the truth even though it might bring him death, while he can choose submission to power that would provide him with wealth and security (CW2: 185-6). He is free in the sense that he has had the freedom to choose the truth and he affirms his freedom by speaking the truth, echoing Foucault's elucidation that 'the parrhesiast is someone who emphasizes his own freedom as an individual speaking (GSO: 65). Moreover, Hurr's bond to the truth frees him from 'the chain of servitude', as Shariati puts it (CW2: 183). This liberation, however, connotes a transformation rather than freedom in a negative sense. To highlight this nuance, Shariati compares the Arabic expression *falāh* (and the Persian word *rahāyi* [رهایی]) with *liberté*:[246]

> *liberté* connotes freedom from a restraint, while *falāh* implies an existential evolutionary *liberté*, [which is different from] being freed from a prison. It does not signify removing an impediment, but connotes a kind of growth and blossoming (CW2: 42).

Although it might be argued that freedom in this sense can be understood as the positive freedom of mastery over oneself, nevertheless mastery over oneself does not necessarily put the subject in a situation of life and death regarding uttering the truth and affirming its freedom. The figure of Hurr, as briefly mentioned earlier, is generally associated with the concept of *āzādegi* in the Shi'a Iranian context. This figure is originally based on a very famous saying attributed to Hussein: "If you are not a believer, at least be free." Free in this sentence is the English translation of the Arabic word Hurr, whose equivalent in Persian is *āzādeh*.[247]

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[246] In French in the original text.

[247] In other words, in the context of the Battle of Karbala, this utterance by Hussein means that even if you believe that the current caliphate is righteous – while obviously, I am the son of the Prophet's daughter and I know better than you what Islam is and is not – or, even if you do not believe in the religion of Muhammad – which means the truth – at least be free. Hussein recommends his audience to free themselves from submission to power; to free themselves from letting themselves be lured by money and power; to think for

More importantly, this saying is regarded as the core message of Karbala and guideline for truth-telling. That said, Shariati's Hurr embodies a perfect model of recognising one's freedom to choose through defining humanity in terms of freedom, and at the same time, affirming one's duty to tell the truth through 'revolutionary self-formation'. *Āzādegi*, as discussed at length in the Appendix 2, *Āzādegi* and *Āzādi*: Investigating the Possibility of Comparing Parrhēsia with *Āzādegi*, refers to a state of self-mastery bound with what Foucault calls 'the obligation of truth' (GSO: 69).[248]

Shariati's depictions of Abu Dharr, Hurr, and Hussein make better sense after delving deeper into the nuances of *āzādegi* and *āzādi* (freedom). Moreover, it is crucial to recognise that Shariati's existentialist interpretation of Islam posits that individuals possess absolute freedom to transcend their facticity, irrespective of its nature. This facticity could range from grappling with westoxication or feelings of inferiority, to living under tyrannical rule or battling personal desires, temptations, or fears. Figures like Abu Dharr, Hurr, and Hussein epitomise *āzādegi* in a distinctly political context—they embody freedom through the rejection of and revolt against domination. This represents a revolutionary self-transformation and subjectivity by committing to truth and engaging in praxis. It seems that despite their diverse philosophical underpinnings, praxis emerges as a common ground where Fanon, Shariati, and Foucault find agreement.

In this chapter, I explored aspects of Shariati's philosophy that contribute to his conceptualisation of freedom. However, this depiction, as well as Foucault's notion of political spirituality, diverges notably from post-Revolutionary realities, described by Foucault himself in his open letter to Bazargan in March 1979. It appears that Shariati, often referred to as 'the teacher of the Revolution', inadvertently laid the groundwork for a theocratic dictatorship. This suggests that perhaps no fundamental revolution took place; or, as Arjomand suggests,

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themselves; and to be honest, because if one is honest with oneself, she or he will clearly tell who is right and who is wrong in this Battle. So, being an *āzādeh* person (a liberated person) is considered more important than believing in God or practicing religion.

[248] Shariati defines the obligation to tell the truth with one's readiness to die for the truth: 'The subject is ready to die for the truth. [There are] those who choose bloody death as the only weapon to show their love of the dying truth and to fight for the metamorphosing great values…' (CW19: 189).

‘the turban had replaced the crown’ (Arjomand 1988: 173). In the subsequent and concluding chapter of this study, I will delve into this disparity. My aim is to understand it better by contrasting Shariati’s vision of Islam and freedom with those of Khomeini’s and examining how these two distinct intellectual paradigms are mirrored in the Revolution’s fundamental document, the Constitution.

Chapter Five

Paradox

Introduction

In this chapter, I aim to delve into the discussions among the revolutionaries about the relationship between Islam and governmentality, attempting to decipher their interpretations of an Islamic government and whether their aspirations aligned with the establishment of an Islamic state. The exploration will scrutinise whether there existed a unified vision of political Islam among all revolutionaries or if divergent perspectives were prevalent. Additionally, I will explore the freedoms for which they fought and evaluate whether the outcomes of the 1979 Revolution realised their envisioned ideals. Establishing this distinction is essential for the core argument of this thesis, which asserts that from 1953 to 1979, the concept of freedom was primarily understood as non-domination, confronting both international colonialism and imperialism, as well as domestic authoritarian rule. This framework emphasised that neither form of subjugation could be mitigated or overlooked for the sake of the other. The concept of self-determination thus encompassed a dual notion, signifying independence as national sovereignty and freedom as popular sovereignty. In contrast, the post-revolutionary Islamic statism subjected self-determination to a particular Islamic narrative, which, paradoxically, perpetuated the very forms and institutions of domination that the revolutionary movement initially opposed.

This chapter will unfold in four sections. In the first section, I will initiate the inquiry by examining a dialogue concerning Islam between Foucault and Atoussa, an Iranian woman in

Paris. Drawing on secondary literature that delves into this exchange, I will underscore the persisting disagreements on this subject, emphasising its significance for this research. Subsequently, in the second section, I will broaden the discourse by contrasting the Islamic ideologies of figures such as Shariati, Bazargan, and Banisadr with those of Khomeini and the Khomeinists. Employing the concept of "asymmetric intelligibility"[249] from linguistics, I aim to explain not only the divergence in these two strands of Islamic thought but also the lack of mutual intelligibility between Khomeini's conception of Islamic governmentality and the people's traditional practices and conceptualisations of Islam.

Building upon these discussions, the third section will endeavour to interpret political spirituality within the historical context of the *ancien régime*. Utilising Foucault's 1978 lectures and concepts such as "pastoral power", [250] "counter-conduct", and the "pastoralisation of power", I will explore the freedoms pursued by the revolutionaries through political spirituality. I will argue that Khomeini's conception of political Islam and Islamic governmentality constitutes a continuation of the "pastoralisation of power" from the *ancien régime*, thereby failing to rework the fundamental relationship between the people and the government. This implies that Khomeini's Islamic Republic did not fulfil pre-

[249] In Sociolinguistics, mutual intelligibility is defined as following: 'Two language varieties are said to be mutually intelligible if their speakers can understand each other. The criterion of mutual intelligibility is sometimes invoked to distinguish dialects (mutually intelligible) from languages (mutually unintelligible)' (Swann et al. 2004: 217). Linguists and sociolinguists maintain that intelligibility is not always symmetrical (Gooskens 2007: 453) and sociolinguistic factors also affect the degrees of mutual intelligibility or unintelligibility between two (or two groups of) interlocutors. That is to say, 'mutual intelligibility may depend on speakers' experience, cultural assumptions and willingness to understand' (Swann et al. 2004: 163). Therefore, mutual intelligibility between two linguistically close languages may sometimes be asymmetric, which is 'often caused by social factors' (Gooskens and Heuven 2021: 78). My use of the term, however, is not sociolinguistic. What I mean by asymmetric mutual intelligibility in the specific context of pre-revolutionary Iran and regarding the question of Islam in this context is the difference between two conceptualisations of Islam within a single geographical unit. I liberally use sociolinguistic terminology to argue that while the expression "Islamic government" was popularly used, even by non-Islamists, the seems to be a lack of mutual intelligibility or asymmetric intelligibility between what Khomeini meant by this expression and what people understood from it.

[250] Foucault defines pastoral power in terms of a power that has specific characteristics. It is a type of power focused on the life and welfare of each individual throughout their entire lifespan, aiming to ensure their salvation in the afterlife; so, it not only issues commands but also is also willing to self-sacrifice for the salvation of the people. This, Foucault emphasises, is in contrast to royal power, which demands sacrifices from its subjects to preserve the throne. Moreover, pastoral power requires understanding people's minds and souls, and 'knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it' (Power: 333).

revolutionary ideals of freedom, notably popular sovereignty and democratic self-determination.

Finally, in the fourth section, I will compare the initial draft of the Constitution with the post-revolutionary political system as reflected in the finalised draft, which became the current Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I will be scrutinising three key assumptions characterising the finalised text in order to address the central question of whether it realised the aspirations of those who propelled the revolutionary movement from 1953 to 1979. I will argue that unlike the ratified Constitution, the initial draft better aligns with pre-revolutionary conceptions of freedom and represents a rupture from the old order in terms of republicanism and popular sovereignty. In other words, in the preceding chapters, I endeavoured to offer an interpretation of Shariati and Al-e Ahmad, grounded in their own appeals to inspirational sources and the thinkers they engaged with intellectually. My analysis of Shariati and Al-e Ahmad, in tandem with the ideas of Fanon and Foucault's concept of political spirituality, aimed to comprehend their perception of freedom. More importantly, this approach was taken to avoid oversimplifying their perspectives into a homogeneous, undifferentiated view of Islam.

Foucault versus Atoussa

Foucault's reports on Iran received criticism both upon their initial publication and in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, as it became widely acknowledged as an Islamic Revolution with the objective of establishing an Islamic theocratic state. Was "political spirituality" Foucault's most significant error in reasoning and judgement regarding the form of militant Islam had observed in Iran, as some claimed? If indeed he did commit an error, what precisely was Foucault's mistake, or what did he overlook? The question, however, revolves around not "political spirituality" per se, but the conception of freedom that it represents. As we will explore shortly, the destiny of freedom, at least in the Iranian pre-revolutionary context, hinges on particular understandings of both Islam and political Islam.

In *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, Afary and Anderson mention two articles published in *Le Matin* on 24 and 31 March 1979 by Claudie and Jacques Broyelle and Paul Martin, respectively, in the wake of the Revolution. They called Foucault to 'take responsibility for his ideas' (FIR: 249), or in Keating's terms, for his 'support of the Iranian Revolution' (Keating 1997: 181). The Broyelles stated that Foucault, as a philosopher-intellectual should have said: 'No, I did not want that, I was mistaken. Here is what was wrong in my reasoning; here is where my thinking is in error' (FIR: 249). Similarly, Martin argued that Foucault was 'in error', 'contributed to error', and yet, he refused to take responsibility of 'his errors' (FIR: 120). According to Afary and Anderson, Foucault went 'on the defensive' when he was 'summoned to acknowledge' his errors, as Foucault himself described the situation in a written response to the Broyelles (FIR: 118). These two articles, however, were written when an Islamic state was apparently being established, various opposition groups were being violently repressed, and appeals for human rights and freedoms were being silenced. However, Foucault had been addressed in a short public letter by a woman named Atoussa H that appeared in *Le Nouvel Observateur* on 6 November 1978, which already warned against his approach towards the Iranian Islamic movement.

I choose Atoussa's letter among an array of technical and expert-written criticisms for three reasons: First, the clarity and soberness of its main objection or argument, which questions Foucault's understanding of Islam. Secondly, through this central argument, I critique Foucault's approach to Islam in Iran's pre-revolutionary context. Thirdly, I will expand this argument to distinguish between what I call Khomeini's Islam and Shariati's Islam, for which I use Foucault's term "political spirituality".

Atoussa is an Iranian woman, living in Paris, who is 'profoundly upset', as she asserts, 'by the untroubled attitude of French leftists toward the possibility of an "Islamic government" that might replace the bloody tyranny of the shah' (FIR: 209). She names Foucault who, she believes, 'seems moved by "Muslim spirituality"' (FIR: 209). Atoussa's letter is written in plain French, without any philosophical or polemical flourishes. She rings a bell of caution that Islam has another face of which the 'Western liberal Left' must be wary; that 'religious fanaticism' is also a possibility and a danger (FIR: 209-210). Atoussa gives a few examples of the Islamic legal system that have complicated, if not blocked, its negotiations with difficult questions such as sovereignty, autonomy, freedom, and democracy. One week later, Foucault's

response to Atoussa is published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* on November 13, 1978. Foucault, for his part, tries to explain what he believes to be Atoussa's 'intolerable […] misreading' (FIR: 210). On the one hand, Atoussa is obviously irritated by Foucault's use of the expression "spirituality" for Islam and tries desperately to remind Foucault of one of the many faces of religion that can hardly be characterised in terms of spirituality, namely 'religious fanaticism' (FIR: 209). On the other hand, Foucault reminds Atoussa that he has already 'pointed out several elements that did not seem' to him 'to be very reassuring' (FIR: 210). Atoussa draws an example from the Quran in order to give Foucault 'an idea of what the "spirituality" of the Quran, applied to the letter under Ayatollah Khomeini's type of moral order, would mean':

> Clearly, the man is the lord, the wife the slave; she can be used as his whim; she can say nothing. She must wear the veil, [...], women should behave or else be punished.
>
> Spirituality? A return to deeply rooted wellsprings? Saudi Arabia drinks from the wellspring of Islam. Hands and heads fall, for thieves and lovers. […] We know what it [Islamic government] is (FIR: 209).

Foucault, in response, finds in Atoussa's reading a reductionist approach toward Islam, for

> It merges together all the aspects, all the forms, and all the potentialities of Islam within a single expression of contempt, for the sake of rejecting them in their entirety under the thousand-year-old reproach of "fanaticism" (FIR: 210).

The first thing that seems evident in this dialogue is that Atoussa and Foucault are not referring to a singular idea or truth when they talk about spirituality or Islam. Atoussa objects to Foucault's use of the term "spirituality" for Islam and finds it to be in contrast to the legalist aspect of Islam—Islamic *fiqh* or jurisprudence—and the potential threat of an "Islamic government" to rights and freedoms. From this perspective, Afary's and Anderson's book can be seen as an expanded version of Atoussa's letter, as its subtitle, 'Gender and the Seductions of Islamism', suggest. Foucault, evidently from a different perspective, explicates his 'obligation' to know the 'content' of the 'expression' "Islamic government" and the 'forces' that drive it and convince people to risk their lives for it (FIR: 210).

So, is Atoussa's reading of "spirituality" a misreading, as Foucault believes it is? Is Atoussa's distress irrelevant, or as Ghamari-Tabrizi contends, 'guided by her 'Orientalist prejudice' and

‘proclivities’ (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2016: 114-115)? Did Foucault ignore Atoussa’s concerns about women’s rights and human rights, as Afary and Anderson maintain, because of his very own ‘Orientalist subtext’ (FIR: 19) and because his ‘reading of Islam was in fact “Orientalist”’ (FIR: 39)?[251] Exploring, or at least attempting to explore, these questions navigates us through the complexities of the Islam versus freedom conundrum, a prominent issue before and soon after the formation of the Islamic Republic. This exploration is crucial as it reveals a fundamental contradiction: the ideals that fuelled the Revolution versus the realities that emerged in its aftermath.

According to Afary and Anderson, Foucault ‘made an abstraction of Islam and Shi’ism’ without paying careful attention to ‘the fact’ that the Islam he encountered in Tehran was but one narrative of Islam (FIR: 39). Conversely, Babak Rahimi, in his review of Afary’s and Anderson’s book, describes both Atoussa’s and the authors’ perspective as Orientalist based on the same argument of reducing ‘the revolution to a fanatical movement’ (B Rahimi 2006). In the above cases, making an abstraction of Islam seems to constitute an author’s Orientalist perspective. Meanwhile, each of these abstractions, whether they are in truth Orientalist or not, seem to be weaponising Orientalism, which, in this specific context, seems more like a polemical than a critical conceptual tool. This tool, in order to work, has to be reductionist in terms of Islam and, at the same time, ignore certain elements in Foucault’s Iran writings that clearly eliminate the possibility of his Orientalist reading of Islam. So, except for Afary and Anderson, who seemingly approach political readings of Islam as a more or less monolithic phenomenon, it seems that others who describe Atoussa’s (and Afary’s and Anderson’s) understanding of Islam as Orientalist are also discounting the very multiplicity of Islam, including political Islam, that they wish to accentuate. The discourse surrounding the essence of Islam, however, remains an ongoing and unresolved scholarly contention. This is primarily due to the complexities inherent in ascribing a singular narrative with the definitive status of truth, particularly when the subject in question—in this case, a religion—is characterised by a multifaceted and intricate history.

[251] Cavagnis does not agree with Afary and Anderson that Foucault has sublimated an imaginary Orient – sublimation d’un Orient imaginaire – (Cavagnis 2012: 56).

Nevertheless, as much as one may disagree with Afary and Anderson on their presentation of pre-revolutionary re-workings of Islamic thought,[252] one may agree with Atoussa that Islam could not be reduced to spirituality and that this proposed 'cure' could, in practice, become 'perhaps worse than the disease' (FIR: 210). Forty-five years after the Iranian Revolution and Islamic government, the question of political spirituality in the revolutionary context proved, indeed, to be a cure worse than the disease. I argue in the following sections that although Foucault's notion of political spirituality was not an error as his critics contend, it favoured one potential narrative of Islam over others—as many Iranian revolutionaries, including Shariati and Bazargan did—for many reasons I have already mentioned and to which I shall return in due course. This means that although Foucault did not overlook the multiplicity of Islam, he did not lay enough emphasis on its fundamental variations. He acknowledges the difference between an Islamic government and Shariati's Islam, where, for example, he describes Shariati's Islam as 'the inverse and converse' of the notion of the Islamic government. However, he pays less attention to the essential difference between Khomeini's Islam and Shariati's Islam and makes the deadly error of not seeing Shariati as the negation of Khomeini in the light of his own arguments, especially his 1978 lectures. Khomeini's conception of Islam, which informed his theory of Islamic government, should not have been read through the lens of Shariati's Islam. However, Foucault was not alone in this. Excluding Shariati's fervent rejection of clerical Islam and the clergy as agents of domination, it seems that many of those who strategically or non-strategically supported Khomeini either did not distinguish between these two political interpretations of Islam, overlooked the fundamental differences, or misunderstood Khomeini.[253] In fact, as Azimi (2008) notes, 'Khomeini was greatly helped by the fact that few had any clear idea about what was specifically meant by Islam or what an Islamic polity might actually involve'; and 'Islamic symbols and idioms had come to dominate the revolutionary discourse and process, but their meaning was by no

[252] For instance, Afary and Anderson write: 'The Islamist tendency and even many Iranian leftists of the time shared something of Foucault's peculiar "Orientalism," in the sense that they also privileged an idealized, pre-modern pat – the period of early Islam – over modernity' (FIR: 36).

[253] Supposing that Khomeini never changed his political position. Some scholars argue that Khomeini changed his position according to the situation and under the influence of his entourage. For instance, see Ghamari-Tabrizi, B. (2016). *Foucault in Iran*. University of Minnesota Press. P 101. See also Siavoshi, S. (2007). *Ayatollah Khomeini and the Contemporary Debate on Freedom*. Journal of Islamic Studies (Oxford, England), 18(1), 14–42. Siavoshi contends that Khomeini's concept of freedom, along with the interplay between Islam and freedom, is multifaceted and allows for a range of interpretations.

means clear or uncontested' (Azimi 2008: 346-7). This ambiguity or lack of mutual understanding is a crucial issue that must be addressed since what was at stake was the question of freedom. In other words, Atoussa's perception of Islam was more aligned with Islam as a corpus juris,[254] carrying direct implications for both individual and political liberties, rather than embodying a liberal spirituality or serving as a socio-political critique. Thus, in the following section, borrowing the terms "mutual intelligibility" and "asymmetric intelligibility" from linguistics to lay out the problem that is symbolised by the Foucault vs. Atoussa case, on the one hand, I draw attention to this phenomenon per se. On the other hand, I delve more into the fundamental difference between Khomeinist Islam and spiritual Islam. The necessity of differentiating between the idea of political spirituality in the context of the Iranian revolution and the broader understanding of an Islamic government is crucial for grasping the concept of freedom within the scope of this study, since it emerged that spirituality in politics was seen by intellectuals such as Shariati as a moral compass, steering politicians towards honesty and ethical conduct—comparable to Foucault's discussions on the government of the self and others—while also safeguarding against the domination, deception, or oppression of the populace. In contrast, some clerics viewed the function of Islam as mandating adherence to Islamic teachings in every aspect of both public and private life.

Khomeini versus Shariati: Corpus Juris vs. Political Spirituality

While the plurality of Islam might appear as a self-evident fact, our discussion in the previous section demonstrates that, at least in the revolutionary context, differences were discounted, and their nuanced implications were overlooked. In this section, my primary argument advocates for adopting a pluralistic understanding of Islam when investigating the Islamic component of the Iranian Revolution. From this perspective, the divergence between Foucault's notion of political spirituality—along with the perspectives of many Iranian intellectuals—and Islam as a corpus juris brings to light two radically different ideas of

[254] Corpus juris is Latin for "body of laws". Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines corpus juris as 'a comprehensive collection of the law of a judicial system or of a country or jurisdiction'. *In Merriam-Webster.com legal dictionary*.

freedom. The term "Islam*s*" thus refers to various conceptualisations of Shi'a Islam, not solely the two major Islamic sects, Shi'a and Sunni. Subsequently, I make use of Foucault's notion of counter-conduct (and its relation to political spirituality) to better delineate the asymmetric intelligibility or the lack of mutual intelligibility between legalist Islam and spiritual Islam.

In his Iran reports, Foucault does not fail to take notice of the plurality of Islamic narratives even within Shi'a Islam. However, he focuses more on the specificities of Shi'a Islam as a doctrine that 'gave to its people infinite resources to resist state power' rather than a legal system to which the term "Islamic government" could refer (FIR: 208). Shi'ism, he affirms, is a 'form of Islam that, with its teaching and esoteric content, distinguishes between what is mere external obedience to the code and what is the profound spiritual life' (FIR: 255). What he means by 'codes' seems to be what he understands as 'traditional Islamic practice' that 'for centuries has regulated everyday life, family ties, and social relations with such care' (FIR: 205, 200). Moreover, Foucault quotes a 'religious authority's' explanation of Islamic government with 'respect to liberties':

> With respect to liberties, they will be respected to the extent that their exercise will not harm others; minorities will be protected and free to live as they please on the condition that they do not injure the majority; between men and women there will not be inequality with respect to rights, but difference, since there is a natural difference (FIR: 206).

In his response to Atoussa, Foucault emphasises that he has already 'pointed out several elements' that did not seem to him 'to be very reassuring' (FIR: 210). But, as Afary and Anderson rightly maintain, Foucault does not delineate those elements clearly, and more importantly, he seems to be more concerned about repeating the 'basic formulas for democracy' that one knows 'where they have led' in the West (FIR: 90). Apparently, rather than clear insights into the question of rights and freedoms, Foucault is more interested in some alternative for the existing formulas of government—'formulas from everywhere and nowhere', he writes—something which is not only a cause of resistance but also a source for 'political creation' (FIR: 207). In this sense, political spirituality indicates, in Leezenberg's words, a 'non-secular, or non-secularist, form of modern political agency or subjectivity' (Leezenberg 2018: xviii).

Nevertheless, this is only one side of the story; Foucault's interest in the creativity of an Islamic idea of government meets a counterpoint: Ali Shariati's politico-spiritual thought. It is essential to notice how Foucault describes Shariati's 'dream' or movement: it is 'the inverse and converse' of an Islamic government (FIR: 207). The specificity of this particular movement, according to Foucault, is that it 'would allow the introduction of a spiritual dimension into political life, in order that it would not be, as always, the obstacle to spirituality, but rather its receptacle, its opportunity, and its ferment' (FIR: 207). These arguments appear in the article entitled "What are the Iranians dreaming about?", where in its last paragraph, Foucault consolidates his observations and analyses under the term "political spirituality" as a forgotten possibility (FIR: 207).

Foucault does not specify to which of these two differing movements his notion of political spirituality as a forgotten possibility refers. This seems to be a question for his readers. On the one hand, it can be argued that since he describes Shariati's political theory as the 'receptacle' and 'ferment' of spirituality, political spirituality refers to Shariati's narrative of Shi'a Islam and is thus the inverse of the Islamic government. On the other hand, Foucault's preoccupation with the Islamic vocabulary and organisation of the uprisings eclipses the juridical aspect of Shi'a Islam. As discussed in Chapter Four, he uses the 1968 earthquake as a representation of political resistance under religious leadership. He writes:

> The earthquake had been an opportunity to use religious structures not only as centers of resistance, but also as sources for political creation. This is what one dreams about [*songe*] when one speaks of Islamic government (FIR: 207).

Foucault makes it 'clear' that by Islamic government 'nobody in Iran means a political regime in which the clerics would have a role of supervision or control', preferring to call it 'the political collective will' (FIR: 206). In hindsight, an asymmetric intelligibility, a lack of mutual intelligibility between two distinct groups, becomes apparent regarding the concept of an Islamic government. The first group includes Foucault, influential revolutionary figures he engaged with—most notably Ayatollah Shariatmadari, Banisadr, Ahmad Salamatian, and Bazargan—and numerous Iranian revolutionaries seeking to reclaim their political agency. [255]

[255] Bazargan arranged a meeting between Foucault and the Grand Ayatollah Kazem Shariatmadari, another prominent clerical figure and senior to Khomeini before and after the Revolution, in Qom. Shariatmadari was among those top clergies in Iran who disagreed with Khomeini's idea of the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist.

The second group comprises Khomeini and the proponents of clerical rule. In Ferdows, the small town hit by the earthquake, people relied on 'the traditional structures of Islamic society' and 'collected funds', 'arranged a water supply, and organized cooperatives' under 'the guidance of a religious leadership' to reconstruct their city (FIR: 207). Mosques were centres of resistance both in Ferdows and the revolutionary situation that Foucault witnessed in Iran. What Foucault sees in the collective will of the people is a 'distrust of legalism' that favours 'fidelity' and 'faith in the creativity of Islam' rather than 'obedience' (FIR: 206). Is this Foucault's error of judgement? Yes, if Islam is defined and understood in terms of obedience and legality—the theory of *velāyat-e faqīh* or Khomeini's Islam;[256] and no, if it is defined and understood in terms of fidelity and creativity—Shariati's Islam. Shariati's Islam, however, lost the battle to Khomeini's Islam, which was equipped with the juridical and executive powers of the governance of the *faqīh*, or the Islamic jurist.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the question of the sovereignty or Guardianship of the Jurist in the Shi'a doctrine is beyond the scope of this research. Prominent Islamic scholars and theorists of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) such as Davoud Feirahi (1964–2020), Mehdi Hairi Yazdi (1923–1999), and Muhammad Mojtahedi Shabestari (b. 1936)—all having both academic and Islamic qualifications—have already scrutinised this theory in terms of Islamic governmentality.[257] What is important for this research is, on the one hand, the question of the intelligibility of this notion, and on the other hand, its philosophical and political implications for the question of freedom. This section engages with the former in order to

After the Revolution, Shariatmadari was placed into house arrest. For a more detailed recount of Foucault's meeting with Shariatmadari by his son, Hassan Shariatmadari, see Afary and Anderson (2005), *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*: 81-85. See also Macey, D. (1993). *The lives of Michel Foucault*. Hutchinson: 409.

[256] The term *velāyat-e faqīh* (also Romanised as *velāyat-i faqīh*, *walāyat-i faqīh* and also *wilāyat-i faqīh*) has also been translated into "Sovereignty of the Jurist", "Mandate of the Jurist". "Governance of the Jurist" is Hamid Algar's translation of Khomeini's treatise, which is used in this study.

[257] For a theoretical critique of this theory, see Hairi Yazdi, M. (2022). Guardianship of the Jurist. In: A Philosophical Treatise on Muslim Politics. Philosophy and Politics - Critical Explorations, vol 21. Springer, Cham. For a comprehensive history of the development of this concept in Shi' Iran see Arjomand, Saïd Amir. *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam : Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning To 1890*, University of Chicago Press, 1992. See also Mavani, Hamid. (2013). *Khomeini's Concept of Governance and its Critique*. In Religious Authority and Political Thought in Twelver Shi'ism (pp. 192–224). Routledge. For a political history of Iran and the relations between the Shi'a clergy and the state since the rise of the modern state see Arjomand, S. A. (1989). *The Turban for the Crown : The Islamic Revolution in Iran*. Oxford University Press, USA.

accentuate the fundamental divergence between Khomeini's understanding of the Islamic state and liberal-democratic non-statist Islamic political theories. I will return to this subject in the coming sections to discuss the latter in more depth and explore the Khomeinist concept of freedom.

In order to investigate Khomeini's idea of *velāyat-e faqīh* or the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist, the primary source is his own essay *Governance of the Jurist* (1970), in which he theorises Islamic government in terms of the unity of the legislative, executive, and juridical institutions of government, or 'divine law governing people':

> The fundamental difference between Islamic Government, on the one hand, and constitutional monarchies and republics, on the other, is this: whereas the representatives of the people or the monarch in such regimes engage in legislation, in Islam the legislative power and competence to establish laws belongs exclusively to God Almighty. The Sacred Legislator of Islam is the sole legislative power. No one has the right to legislate and no law may be executed except the law of the Divine Legislator (GJ: 29).[258]

Khomeini does not seek to justify the legitimacy of Islamic law; instead, he draws on an implicit social contract between Muslims and Islamic laws. Muslims, he argues, have consented to this body of laws and accepted the obligation to obey it. This consent and obedience—or, this social contract—does not legitimise but 'facilitates' the rule of Islamic law (through an Islamic government) and gives sovereignty to people (GJ: 29).[259] According to Khomeini, this consent stands in stark contrast to constitutional monarchies or republics where laws are made by representatives and 'imposed' on people.

This sense of government goes beyond the type of Islam that, according to Foucault, 'for centuries has regulated everyday life, family ties, and social relations with such care' (FIR: 200). The creativity of Islam, or *ijtihād*, belongs exclusively to the *faqīh*—the Islamic jurist—in

[258] There exist several copies of the English translation of *Governance of the Jurist*. The copy used in this thesis is prepared by The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works. See Khomeini, R. (2005). *Islamic government: governance of the jurist*. Alhoda UK.

[259] See Akhavi, S. (2007). Shiite theories of social contract. In *Shari'a: Islamic Law in Contemporary Context*, 137-155.

the political theory of the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist. In other words, using Foucault's main themes of his 1978 lectures, this is not 'pastoral functions taken up in the exercise of governmentality', it is the exercise of governmentality through pastoral functions to "conduct" people (STP: 197).[260] What I call asymmetric intelligibility concerning the idea of Islamic government arises from the theoretical difference between Islamic government as political spirituality and Islamic government as the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist. Political spirituality, as Cavagnis argues, can be defined as 'non-normative religiosity' (Cavagnis 2012: 55).[261] Based on this definition that encapsulates what was discussed earlier, we can formulate the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist as normative religiosity, armed with and guarded by governmental institutions and their apparatuses of law enforcement.

Nevertheless, it seems very unlikely that the evident resemblance between Christian pastoral power and Khomeini's normative political religiosity escaped Foucault's attention. On the one hand, Foucault uses two Shariatian expressions, *Safavid Shi'ism* and *Alavid Shi'ism*, to emphasise the oppositional role of religion in Iran despite 'the changes that occurred in the nature of religion due to the proximity between Shi'ism and state power' from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century (FIR: 186). On the other hand, he sees 'similarities' between Shi'a Islam and some European religious movements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[262] It should be noted that the history of these European religious movements constitutes a major theme of Foucault's 1978 lectures at the Collège de France—the same year that he visits Iran. It has thus been argued that Foucault's reading of Iran was shaped by

[260] Foucault defines governmentality as a system encompassing a range of elements including institutions, procedures, analyses, reflections, calculations, and tactics. This complex system of power enables the exercise of a specialized and intricate form of power directed towards populations – people (STP: 108). According to Foucault, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, 'pastoral functions were taken up in the exercise of governmentality' and government began to 'take responsibility for people's conduct' (STP: 197).

[261] 'religiosité non normative'.

[262] In his interview with the Iranian sociologist Baqer Parham in Tehran, Foucault explains these religious-political movements: 'These were great popular movements against feudal lords, against the first cruel formations of bourgeois society, great protests against the all-powerful control of the state. In Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, before they adopted a directly political form, all such movements appeared as religious movements. Take for example the Anabaptists, who were allied to such a movement during Germany's Peasant Wars. It was a movement that rejected the power of the state, government bureaucracy, social and religious hierarchies, everything' (FIR: 187).

the main two themes on which he focused in the *Security, Territory, Population*—the 1978 lecture series—i.e. counter-conduct and 'the art of not being governed' (Leezenberg 2018: vi; Whyte 2018: 4; McCall 2013). Let us also not forget that Foucault's perspective on religion, as insightfully noted by Carrette, is informed by his critical analysis and characterised primarily by an '"absence" of a transcendent and normative religious ideal' (Carrette 2000: 152)

In *Security, Territory, Population* Foucault suggests the term "counter-conduct" to distinguish these European movements, such as Anabaptism, from acts of "disobedience" or "dissidence" (STP: 200).[263] These 'anti-pastoral struggles' or 'pastoral counter-conducts', he argues, developed in different forms, including 'mysticism' and 'doctrines of the Church', and constituted new ways of 'doing things and being', 'relating to God', 'morality' and 'civil life' (STP: 204). Drawing on Foucault's comparison between religious-political counter-conducts in his dialogue with Parham, the notion of "political spirituality" embraces the notion of counter-conduct.

Now, returning to the earlier question of Khomeini's Islam, it remains to be determined whether his doctrine of the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist or his explication of Islamic "conduct" truly indicates political spirituality. Besides, taking into consideration Shariati's efforts to free Islam from the domination of the clergy and promote a 'non-clerical Islam'—following the lead of Mosaddeq's policy of 'non-oil economy'—Foucault should have either avoided mentioning Shariati, Khomeini and "political spirituality" in a single article, or, differentiated between the two in terms of his own notions of "conduct" and "counter-conduct".[264]

I conclude this section with a historic open letter to Khomeini that clearly differentiates between political spirituality as a form of counter-conduct and political pastoral power and

[263] Foucault suggests a few terms to describe these movements and at the same time describe what he has in mind in a negative way. For example, he rejects the expression "revolt of conduct" because he insists that the word "revolt" does not 'designate much more diffuse and subdued forms of resistance'. In a similar vein, he explains that the word "disobedience", also fails to capture fundamental characteristics of these movements, including 'productivity, forms of existence, [and] organization'. He also rejects "dissidence" on the basis that it 'has often been employed to designate religious movements of resistance to pastoral organization' (STP: 200).

[264] In *Shari'a : Islamic law in the contemporary context*, Amanat maintains that 'Shariati's notion of "Islamic Protestantism" was 'the only way to liberate society from the impasse of "traditional Islam"' (Amanat and Griffel 2007: 120). See also Cavagnis, Julien. (2012). *Michel Foucault et le soulèvement iranien de 1978 : retour sur la notion de « spiritualité politique*. Cahiers philosophiques, 130(3).

exemplifies concerns around the relations between politics, spirituality, and freedom regarding the proposed form of the Islamic Republic for the post-revolutionary government. The letter, entitled "Why do I disagree with an Islamic Republic?" was published in *Āyandegān* newspaper on 15 January 1979, around two weeks before Khomeini's return to Iran from his exile in France and one month after Foucault left Iran.[265] The author of the article was Mostafa Rahimi (1926–2002), Juris Doctor from the Sorbonne, author of books on political rights and freedoms, and translator of several volumes by Sartre, Camus, Beauvoir, Georges Gurvitch, and Brecht, among others. The main arguments of the letter develop around Foucault's notion of political spirituality and the question of governmentality. Quoting the final paragraph of Foucault's article *A quoi rêvent les Iraniens?* [What are the Iranians Dreaming About?],[266] Rahimi critiques the idea of an Islamic government—including an Islamic Republic—and the role of the clergy in politics. Similar to both Foucault and Shariati, he acknowledges that what constitutes 'the defiant power of Shi'ism' is 'its anti-governmental and oppositional potency', reminding Khomeini and his readers that during the Safavid reign, when 'this revolutionary force was tainted with political power', it lost its spiritual advantage (Rahimi 1979).[267]

Concerned about the implications of theocratic rule for individual and political freedoms, Rahimi problematises the notion of an "Islamic Republic" and strongly criticises presenting this notion as 'the collective will of the people': 'Revolution belongs to all Iranians' who did not necessarily have a 'religious ideology'. In other words, he implicitly stresses the strategic alliance between diverse non-religious ideologies and the clergy against the establishment. The clergy thus needs to acknowledge this strategic alliance and abstain from 'privatising the

[265] The letter was written on 31 December 1978 and published on 15 January 1979, No.3264, Year 11.

[266] First published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* on 16-22 October 1978. This is the first time that Foucault uses the term "political spirituality". See Chapter Four.

[267] Rahimi introduces himself as a 'Shi'a' Muslim who 'believes that without the element of spirituality, the sustainability of society is impossible'. However, except for certain points of agreement with Khomeini – which are Khomeini's speeches against the Shah's regime, (American) imperialism, (Chinese and Russian) Communism, 'the Zionist state of Israel', and in solidarity with Palestinians—he strongly advises him against installing the clergy as the governing elite. These lines resonate with Foucault's arguing that 'power would eliminate any distinction between Christianity and Islam regarding politics', where he warns against 'losing' the power of Shi'a political spirituality—the power, as we mentioned earlier, exemplified by the response to the earthquake that, according to Foucault, had turned 'religious structures' into 'the foundation of a political creation' (DE: 693).

public' matter of government. Moreover, Rahimi contends that the Islamic Republic as a political system would be the 'government of some people'—the clergy as a 'social class'—over people, which would thus fail to incorporate 'spirituality and ethics' into politics. National sovereignty, he argues, is the 'right' that was 'earned' by the public through the Constitutional Revolution of 1906; therefore, any form of "guardianship", be it 'the guardianship of the monarch' or 'the guardianship of the Islamic jurist' is unconstitutional (Rahimi 1979). Rahimi tacitly suggests that Khomeini's prospective power would essentially perpetuate the Shah's authoritarian rule, indicating that the primary motivation behind the people's uprising against the Shah was to liberate themselves from such paternalistic domination. Considering that Rahimi's intellectual pursuits included French existentialism and Fanonian existentialism, it is noteworthy to understand his perspectives within this framework.

Let us now briefly return to Khomeini's theory of the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist and the question of sovereignty and compare them with Shariati's political theology. My point here is to accentuate the irreconcilable differences between their seemingly analogous terminologies in terms of national sovereignty vis-à-vis Islam. Khomeini equates guardianship of the jurist with guardianship of a minor: 'There is no difference between the guardian of the nation and the guardian of a minor in terms of position and responsibility'—both are matters of 'rationality'. Guardianship, he maintains, means 'government and conducting the affairs of the state and implementing the laws of the holy creed' (GJ: 51).[268] Shariati, as we have discussed in earlier chapters, regards the clergy as a distinct social class, criticises the phenomenon of institutionalised religion in his 'religion versus religion' argument, and argues for the primacy of individual free will and freedom to interpret and practice religion in line with his existentialist Islam. Although both Khomeini and Shariati present (Shi'a) Islam as an essentially political religion and theorise the struggle against domination in terms of monotheism or *tawhīd*, their divergent ontologies of human existence render two radically different concepts of freedom. To Shariati, Islam is a critique of domination—internal or

[268] «ولایت فقیه» از امور اعتباری عقلایی[1] است و واقعیتی جز جعل ندارد؛ مانند جعل (قرار دادن و تعیین) قیّم برای صغار. قیّم ملت با قیّم صغار از لحاظ وظیفه و موقعیت هیچ فرقی ندارد. مثل این است که امام(ع) کسی را برای حضانت[2]، حکومت، یا منصبی از مناصب، تعیین کند. در این موارد معقول نیست که رسول اکرم(ص) و امام با فقیه فرق داشته باشد.

external to Islam. To Khomeini, Islam is a critique of everything that is external to its codes of conduct, and domination is meaningless when it comes to Islamic conduct.

Rahimi's conception of freedom is reminiscent of the republican concept of liberty as outlined by scholars like Skinner and Pettit: freedom as non-domination, where domination signifies being subject to alien control, following Pettit's definition. In light of this conception, he contends that the government of the clergy violates the individual right to sovereignty, 'enslaves the public', and subjects them to the arbitrary interference of the sovereign-guardian—or 'the goodwill of the sovereign'. Moreover, he maintains that the notion of an Islamic republic is an aporia in that Islam, as a pre-determined set of laws and regulations, is inconsistent with the political freedoms of a sovereign republic and democratic self-determination; that is to say, 'universal suffrage in the existence of a priori conditions would restrict the freedom of voters'. Rahimi stresses the disjunction between democratic rule and 'the veto power of the clergy in the legislature, executive, and judiciary institutions' and its inconsistency with the notion of political spirituality that is interwoven with resistance and struggle against power (Rahimi 1979).

Perhaps the most important point that Rahimi made in his open letter to Khomeini is the reason why the revolutionary movement took on a religious momentum. Rahimi argues that under the Shah's regime, religious discourse was, to some extent, permitted a voice. This license, he suggests, enabled Islam to 'break the oppressive political silence', effectively becoming a channel through which opposition to the regime could be expressed. As Amizi (2008) notes, 'largely as a consequence of the regime's suppression of secular political organizations, religious activists had been able to take advantage of the absence of organized rivals' (Azimi 2008: 345), and Rahimi was not the only person reminding Khomeini of this reality. Reza Baraheni (1935–2022), [269] Shahrokh Meskoob (1926–2005), and Nasser Katouzian (1931–2014) are among those who wrote about the reasons how and why Islam came to the forefront of the revolutionary movement.[270] Soon after the Revolution, Baraheni

[269] Reza Baraheni, prominent Iranian poet, novelist, literary critic, and political activist. Among his mostly renowned books before and during the 1979 Revolution is *The Crowned Cannibals: Writing on Repression in Iran* (1977).

[270] About a year before the triumph of the revolution, Baraheni had discussed how the revolutionary movement adopted a religious form and language. According to him, 'A truly revolutionary motivation carries

criticised the monopolisation of the Islamic discourse, censorship of other Islamic and non-Islamic ideologies, and advocated for democratic self-determination: 'The Iranian people did not revolt because someone had robbed them of their religion; they revolted because one person or one government had taken away their independence, freedom, and democracy' (Baraheni 1979: 198).[271]

Similarly, fewer than two months after the Revolution, Meskoob wrote in his diaries on 10 March 1979 about Khomeini's monopolisation of the Revolution, criticising his attacks on 'Sunnis, nationalists, and democrats', and his 'reiteration that this Revolution was neither nationalist nor democratic, it was only Islamic' (Meskoob 2001: 73). Katouzian, one of the authors of the post-revolutionary draft constitution, adhered to the idea that the Islamic government (or republic) was the outcome of the Revolution, not its cause. Katouzian explored the reasons why various opposition groups rallied around Khomeini to topple the Shah and argued that, ultimately, the revolutionaries' collective consciousness was driven by a vague aspiration to establish an Islamic republic—a result of the Revolution, not its initial cause (N Katouzian 2000: 526).

These points represent only a fraction of the multitude of printed material produced during the revolutionary days. They extensively scrutinised Khomeinist Islam, portraying it as a negation of their ideals and even as the replication of the same old authoritarian power structure. In the following section, I will integrate the earlier discussions in previous chapters with what I have addressed so far in this chapter, particularly focusing on the disparity between Khomeini's Islam and Islam as political spirituality. As we have established that Foucault's concept of political spirituality is useful for distinguishing between these two strands of political Islam, I will draw on a related notion, "pastoralisation of power", to demonstrate in the subsequent sections how Khomeini's regime falls short of representing pre-revolutionary conceptions of freedom.

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a dynamic persona and presents itself prominently in every circumstance. This time, this motivation has crystallized in the face of religion' (Baraheni 1979: 86).

[271] He reminded his readers that 'until January 1978, religion was not the central focus of the struggle in its own name. There was a coalition of religious and non-religious intellectuals striving to overthrow the monarchy in defence of democracy, drawing inspiration from the Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The movement revolved around anti-colonialism, opposition to the monarchy's dependence on colonial powers, and the fight against repression' (Baraheni 1979: 208).

Pastoralisation and Sacralisation of Power

Foucault speaks of 'the pastoralization of power in the Soviet Union' in his 1 March 1978 lecture at the Collège de France. He defines this expression as 'being conducted' by a power through a 'pastoral practice of salvation' and a 'pastoral system of obedience' (STP: 201). Pastoral power, according to Foucault, is concerned with the "government of souls", which later lent its techniques to the "art of government" of nations. Pastoralisation of power is a form of political authoritarian power based on pastoral models of salvation, command, obedience, terror, system of truth, observation, and examination. It is in fact in this context that Foucault ultimately introduces the term "counter-conduct"—instead of "dissidence"—which, according to him, better conveys 'the active sense' of the anti-pastoral revolts of conduct. Foucault uses the example of Solzhenitsyn, the Russian poet, [272] as the embodiment of counter-conduct against pastoralised power. The quoted paragraph below illustrates how he elucidates, in negative terms, what he signifies by this term: the agents of counter-conduct confront the political power that purports to guide its subjects toward salvation and say to them:

> "We do not want this salvation, we do not wish to be saved by these people and by these means." The whole pastoral practice of salvation is challenged. It is Solzhenitsyn. "We do not wish to obey these people. We do not want this system where even those who command have to obey out of terror. We do not want this pastoral system of obedience. We do not want this truth. We do not want to be held in this system of truth. We do not want to be held in this system of observation and endless examination that continually judges us, tells us what we are in the core of ourselves, healthy or sick, mad or not mad, and so on" (STP: 204).

Another example of counter-conduct, according to Foucault, is the Anabaptist movement. What Anabaptism, Solzhenitsyn, and the Iranian Islamic movement (in its entirety) all have in common is the presence of religion or a form of spirituality associated with political counter-

[272] Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008) was a Russian novelist, historian, and winner of the 1970 Nobel Prize in Literature. He was a vocal critic of the Soviet regime and is famous for his works such as *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962) and *Gulag Archipelago* (1973). Solzhenitsyn wrote *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* after he spent eight years in a labour camp for criticising Stalin in 1945.

conduct. Therefore, if Foucault's reports on Iran and his concept of political spirituality are interpreted through the lens of "pastoralisation of power" and revolts of conduct, as Jessica Whyte aptly suggests, counter-conduct would imply 'the art of not being governed' (Whyte 2018: 4).

However, this is a very broad statement that encompasses the entire Iranian Islamic movement in its most general sense. So far, this chapter has suggested categorising Shariati's religious dissidence as political spirituality or counter-conduct. While this contrasts with Khomeini's juridico-political religiosity, both share the characteristic of being a form of counter-conduct.[273] The Khomeinist Islamic government might manifestly exemplify the notion of pastoralisation of power after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as much as it can eclipse certain characteristics of the *ancien régime*. Despite what the expression might initially suggest, I will attempt to explain both the Shah's and Khomeini's forms of governmentality as examples of pastoralised power. To do this, first, I revisit through the lens of the pastoralisation of power, an aspect of the Shah's governmentality discussed in Chapter Two: the White Revolution alongside the Resurgence Party. This enables us to 1) provide a better understanding of pre-revolutionary objectives concerning freedom; 2) formulate political spirituality as a form of counter-conduct aimed at challenging such power; and 3) examine Khomeini's governmentality in terms of those objectives.

Next, I demonstrate that Khomeinist thought not only preserved the *ancien régime*'s power relation between the government and the governed but also sanctified the pastoralised power by adhering to a specific theory of Islamic governmentality centred around Khomeini's theory of sovereignty: the Guardianship of the Jurist. Subsequently, I explore how these ideas are reflected in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, a pivotal text that defines the relationship between the government and the people and reflects post-revolutionary theories of freedom.

[273] In other words, Khomeini's opposition to the Shah's westernisation policies through Islam should also be viewed as a form of counter-conduct. However, this counter-conduct was driven by a vision of government and freedom distinctly different from Shariati's concepts.

Muhammad-Reza Shah's White Revolution: Pastoralisation of Power

In Chapter Two, we discussed the White Revolution and its crucial role in the making of the 1979 Revolution. Here, I focus on another phenomenon that provided an ideological framework for the White Revolution: the formation of the state's Resurgence Party of the Iranian Nation, the Rastākhiz Party, in 1975, as Iran's single political party.[274] In this section, I investigate the corresponding discourse of the Resurgence Party, which I call the Resurgence discourse, in order to argue for conceiving the *ancien régime* in terms of pastoralisation of power. My goal is to articulate accurately what we have discerned: specifically, to define the nature of the Shah's authority and its significance in shaping the concept of freedom. By juxtaposing this with an alternative perspective, that is, Khomeini's interpretation of freedom, the nuances of pre-revolutionary freedom become clearer, highlighting both essential considerations and potential pitfalls. If the Shah's regime can be characterised as the pastoralisation of power, then Shariati's version of Islam, referred to as political spirituality, acts as a counter-conduct to that form of power. Consequently, this raises a critical question: Does the pastoralisation of power imply that liberation from it equates to freedom from domination? If this is affirmed, and it is demonstrated that Khomeini's rule similarly perpetuates the pastoralisation of power, then it follows that Khomeini's vision of Islam and its associated concept of freedom markedly diverges from Shariati's understanding of liberty.

The Resurgence Party announced that 'it distinguished itself from previous parties by being a large political organisation aimed at mobilising people towards the Great Civilization',[275] and 'assist[ing] the Great Guide (Rahbar) and Great Leader (Farmandar) in completing his White Revolution'.[276] Like the White Revolution, the Resurgence Party has been scrutinised and criticised by intellectuals, political activists, and historians of Iran since its inception.[277] The

[274] The Shah had previously asserted in his book *Mission For My Country* (1961) that he would not implement a one-party political system, for he considers his role as King encouraging multiple parties. He writes: 'If I were a dictator rather than a constitutional monarch, then I might be tempted to sponsor a single dominant party such as Hitler organized or such as you find today in Communist countries' (1968: 173).

[275] Rastākhiz Newspaper, Number 279, 4 April 1976, p 13.

[276] Quoted in Abrahamian, 2008: 150.

[277] The impact of the party on the development of revolutionary discourse and convergence of various opposition groups has also been extensively studied. Abrahamian (1982a), for instance, maintains that the Shah's Resurgence Party sought to 'transform the somewhat old-fashioned military dictatorship into a totalitarian-style one-party state' (Abrahamian 1982a: 441). Amanat (2017) describes the Resurgence Party as

Resurgence discourse is best reflected in myriads of journals published by the party in order to establish a theoretical and ideological foundation for the Shah's single-party politics and his White Revolution policies.[278] In an article entitled *The Philosophy of the Iranian [White] Revolution*,[279] the idea of revolution was presented as the 'intervention' of the Shah in the organisation of all social, economic, and political forces, whose 'mission' is to 'save' the nation from 'degeneration and collapse' (1977: 9). The Shah was frequently addressed as the "sagacious leader of the revolution", guiding the nation towards "progression", "well-being", "evolution", "refinement", and "salvation". He was the "commander" of the country's resurgent development, responsible for every aspect of the social and political life of his people—from governing land ownership and industrialisation of agriculture to political education of the entire population and "granting" them democratic government.[280]

These themes strongly resonate with Foucault's idea of the 'pastoral practice of salvation' (STP: 201), particularly in how state power extensively controls every aspect of social life alongside its ideological framework. In the White Revolution and Resurgence discourse, the Shah—the sovereign—and the state were used synonymously and interchangeably (Mahdavi 2014: 48). The Shah was not portrayed as a 'figurehead monarch', but rather, as Theda Skocpol maintains, 'a practicing patrimonial absolutist' (Skocpol 1994: 245). Echoing Skocpol, Mahdavi describes the Resurgence discourse as a 'neo-sultanic ideology', which 'demonstrated the regime's patrimonialism and arbitrariness under the guise of

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a 'monopoly over the political process' and an 'instrument of control' – along with SAVAK – with the aim of including all Iranians among its membership (Amanat 2017: 653). It was, in Parvin Amini's words, 'the final attempt by the Shah to consolidate his political base', 'reposition his authority', and form a 'totalitarian state' (Amini 2002: 131-146).

[278] In addition to the Party's newspaper, these journals included *Andisheha-ye Rastākhiz* or *Resurgence Thoughts*, *Workers' Resurgence*, *Youth's Resurgence*, *Rural Resurgence*, and *Inflight Resurgence* for the Iranian expatriates (Abrahamian 2008: 151).

[279] Published in the second issue of *Resurgence Thoughts* in November 1977.

[280] On the one hand, political parties were dismantled after 1953, and political agency was reduced to the political agenda of the Resurgence Party and its definition of democracy. On the other hand, the state claimed responsibility to preserve and expand democracy in conjunction with revolutionary law and order, which defined the limits of liberties. The Resurgence Party was thus analogised with a family whose specific role was to 'provide social, political, and philosophical education – 'albeit the philosophy of the Revolution' (Rastākhiz-e Javān, 100: 3) – for its members, presumably all Iranians, and teach them the 'democratic way of life' (Andisheha-ye Rastākhiz, No2, 1976: 33-38). In Ansari's words, the Shah desired 'to be the monarch of an egalitarian and democratic society, populated by liberated, economically prosperous peasants, eternally grateful to their liberator' (Ansari 2001: 12)

modernization and Westernization' (Mahdavi 2014: 49). The 1979 Revolution was a revolt against the Shah's monopolised power that, in Amanat's words, 'inadvertently paved the way for a popular revolution as the only alternative to his autocratic conduct' (Amanat 2017: 741).

Foucault's concept of the pastoralisation of power delineates a form of power that, despite its ostensibly benevolent intentions of leading subjects to salvation, often results in the diminution of individual subjectivity and agency. When analysing the Resurgence discourse through this lens, we uncover the core issues that the revolutionaries opposed, their aspirations for freedom from domination, and their calls for a transformation of the political landscape. These primarily included the lack of actual political participation and genuine political agency, which the pastoralised power denied.

Furthermore, from this perspective, political spirituality can be seen as a broader concept of counter-conduct or resistance against established norms. More importantly, Foucault's use of political spirituality to describe the Islamic movement, albeit without distinguishing between liberal and normative/legalist Islam, focuses on the protest against a particular form of governance rather than the intricacies of power struggles in forming a new political order. This interpretation is supported by Leezenberg (2018: viii), who accentuates Foucault's emphasis on the opposition to a specific government style rather than the details of the ensuing political shifts.

The following section delves into Khomeini's concept of Islamic governmentality and its implications for the concept of freedom, examining whether they aligned with the pre-revolutionary expectations and aspirations for liberation from pastoralised power.

Guardianship of the Jurist: Sacralisation of Pastoralised Power

The Islamic Republic operates as a theocracy, with its Constitution and political institutions formed in line with a specific interpretation of divine law. The introduction of the absolute Guardianship of the Jurist as the state's supreme authority has left very little room for political freedoms, while other freedoms, including religious and individual freedoms, are defined and limited by the new charter (Schirazi 1997; Arjomand 2009; Saikal 2019). The rights of the citizens have been redefined under the Islamic corpus juris, leading to the criminalisation of

many social and individual freedoms. In this section, my objective is to examine Khomeini's *raison d'état* with reference to his political theory of the Guardianship of the Jurist to put forth the argument that the Islamic Republic is not a rupture from the old regime's pastoralisation of power, but rather a continuation of it. Contrasting the question of public sovereignty with the absolute sovereignty of the *faqīh* or guardian-jurist, I will demonstrate how Khomeini's contractarian approach to governmentality and his positive doctrine of freedom appropriated republicanism only to reinstate total conduct and reinforce collective control.

Khomeini's discourse against the old regime developed around the questions of legitimacy and sovereignty, or as we will shortly see, the right to power and its relation to knowledge. On 1 February 1979, Khomeini delivered a historic speech upon his return to Iran from his exile in France, which, apart from marking the final stage of the Revolution, reflected these fundamental notions and their linkages in his political thought. He declared the Shah's government and the parliament illegitimate and announced his intention to appoint a new legitimate government. Three days later, while the Shah's last premier was still in office, he appointed Mehdi Bazargan as the prime minister of the provisional government. Similar to that speech, Khomeini's announcement underscored his assumptions regarding the sources of legitimacy for political power.[281] On the one hand, he was (self-)sanctioned by his religious knowledge, and on the other, by his popularity, which granted him the right to exercise power (Lahidji 2010: 9).

In his 5 February speech, Khomeini emphasised once more that his power to appoint Bazargan was 'vested in him by the holy canon' and through the right that he was given according to the law. Apparently, by 'law', he meant both 'the nation's consent' and the Sharia law. Using

[281] The appointment letter reads: 'Based on the recommendations of the Revolutionary Council, and the canonical and legal right arising from the approximately unanimous and decisive majority vote of the Iranian nation and the trust in the leadership of the movement as expressed in the huge assembly and numerous massive demonstrations of the people held all over Iran and by virtue of the trust (confidence) in the unwavering faith that you have in the sacred religion of Islam and the knowledge that we have of the history of your Islamic and national struggle irrespective of your party relationship and affiliation to a specific group, I hereby invest you with the power to form a provisional government that will be responsible for managing the country's administrative affairs, in particular, the holding of a referendum based upon the public vote of the nation regarding the change of the country's political system into an Islamic republic and the creation of a constitutional assembly made up of popularly chosen representatives who will draft the constitution of the new system and the election of the parliamentary representatives of the nation according to the laws of the new system' (Sahifeh 6: 50).

the terminology of Islamic jurisprudence, he stressed that this government was not an 'ordinary one', but a 'canonical government'—Sharia law—and obeying it was thus incumbent upon people.[282] By proposing 'a republic based on Islamic law' (Katouzian 2009: 341), Khomeini addressed people's natural right to sovereignty while accentuating their consent to transferring it to a lawful—Sharia law—supreme authority, who was approved by the canon law as a grand Islamic Jurist. In other words, he contended that the right to power derived from one's knowledge of the divine law, which required public consent in order to become a legitimate political power.

However, the relation between democracy and public consent remained blurred in Khomeini's thought. On 11 February 1979, the Revolution triumphed following the army's declaration of neutrality, issued in order to prevent a civil war (Katouzian 2009: 323).[283] In less than two months, Khomeini officialised his 'lawful' and 'legal' right to be the head of the new Islamic government through a referendum held on 31 March. Although the notion of an Islamic republic was not yet clarified and the sole alternative remained the monarchy, the people voted 'yes' to the Islamic Republic (Katouzian 2009: 328). Contrary to Bazargan who insisted on democratic self-determination, Khomeini persistently rejected the idea of democratic rule as being un-Islamic.[284] To him, "republic" meant 'people's vote' or consent—

[282] *Sahifeh-ye Imam* (English) Vol 6: 54. In this speech, Khomeini asserts that Bazargan's government must be obeyed and rebellion against it is against the divine law: 'This government is no ordinary one; it is a canonical government. Opposition to this government is opposition to the canon laws and is tantamount to rebellion against religion. Rebellion against religion is meted with a heavy punishment in our laws and jurisprudence. I warn those who might entertain such an idea to sabotage it and, God forbid, stage an uprising against this government; I declare that the punishment of those elements in Islamic jurisprudence is very heavy. Rebellion against this government is rebellion against God and rebellion against God is atheism' (Sahifeh 6: 54).

[283] According to The New York Times, the announcement stated: 'With due consideration to the circumstances, the army's Supreme Council held a meeting today at 10:20 A.M. and, in order to prevent, further anarchy and bloodshed, decided to announce the army's neutrality in the present political crisis and ordered the troops to return to their garrisons.' See Gage, N. (1979, 12 February). *Army Withdraws Its Support For Bakhtiar; Iranian Prime Minister Reported To Resign.* Section A, Page 1.

[284] Responding to journalists' questions, particularly during his time in Neauphle-le-Château, Khomeini frequently claimed that Islam is democratic. See, for instance, Dialogue (November 1978), Sahifeh 5: 69; Interview (November 26, 1978), Sahifeh 5: 119; Interview (January 6, 1979), Sahifeh 5: 344; Interview (January 12, 1979), Sahifeh 5: 420; Interview (January 15, 1979), Sahifeh 5: 455. However, it is important to note that Khomeini's concept of democracy does not align with the Western notion of democratic self-determination. This disparity is why Khomeini's proclamations about a democratic republic might appear contradictory to his later ideas. Notably, after returning to Iran, he consistently denounced the idea of democratic self-determination in its Western or global sense. For some of his assertions against democratic rule, see Speech (March 1, 1979), Sahifeh 6: 245; Speech (March 9, 1979), Sahifeh 6: 308, 316; Speech (March 6, 1979).

manifested through the referendum—and "Islamic" meant the sovereignty of the Islamic law. Thus, the Islamic republic embodied 'the nation's choice', as he insisted before coming to power,[285] and frequently referred to it in response to criticisms after establishing an Islamic state.[286]

Khomeini's theory of Islamic governance is reminiscent of contractarian theories of governmentality and arguments on the general will, the social contract, and the primacy of 'civil liberty', or positive freedom, over 'natural liberty', or negative freedom (Rousseau 2002: 167).[287] Although Khomeini did not explicitly predicate his theory on contractarian concepts, his *Governance of the Jurist*, as Akhavi argues in *Shiite Theories of Social Contract* (2007), 'bears centrally—though negatively—on social contract ideas' (Akhavi 2007: 144). However, one of his disciples, a cleric named Nimatullah Salihi Najafabadi, later formulated the rule of the guardian-jurist in terms of social contract and based on popular sovereignty (Akhavi 2007: 145). Although Akhavi maintains that Najafabadi went 'beyond Khomeini's position' regarding the relationship between the rule of the jurist and popular sovereignty, it seems that Najafabadi only made explicit what Khomeini had already indicated more or less implicitly in his speeches and remarks during the Revolution. According to Akhavi, Najafabadi infuses majority vote—what in Islamic tradition is known as a person's or people's 'oath of allegiance'—into Khomeini's Guardianship theory, founding the rule of the jurist on a 'contract between the people and the *faqīh*' (Akhavi 2007: 148). In Akhavi's words,

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Specifically on freedom in the Islamic republic and freedom in Islam see Speech (June 13, 1979), Sahifeh 8: 104.

[285] See, for example, Letter (November 2, 1978), Sahifeh 4: 246; Interview (December 14, 1978), Sahifeh 5: 235; Interview (December 7, 1978), Sahifeh 5: 178; Interview (January 12, 1979), Sahifeh 5: 419; Interview (January 14, 1979), Sahifeh 5: 435); Address (January 28, 1979), Sahifeh 5: 530.

[286] See, for example, Speech (April 19, 1979), Sahifeh 7: 53; Speech (April 22, 1979), Sahifeh 7: 75; Speech (April 24, 1979), Sahifeh 7: 95; Speech (May 6, 1979), Sahifeh 7: 171; Speech (May 18, 1979), Sahifeh 7: 319-320; Speech (May 20, 1979), Sahifeh 7: 343; Speech (May 23, 1979), Sahifeh 7: 407; Speech (May 29, 1979), Sahifeh 7: 483; Speech (June 15, 1979), Sahifeh 8: 146-149; Speech (June 25, 1979), Sahifeh 8: 249; Speech (June 15, 1979), Sahifeh 8: 381; Speech (July 21, 1979), Sahifeh 9: 165;

[287] Emphasising the distinction between natural liberty and civil liberty, Rousseau asserts that while natural liberty is 'limited only by the powers of the individual', civil liberty, by the social contract, is 'limited by the general will'. Moreover, Rousseau holds that civil liberty is in effect moral liberty since it 'enables man to be truly master of himself; for the impulse of mere appetite is slavery' (Rousseau 2002: 167).

> This breathtaking conversion of an elitist doctrine into a principle of popular democracy ends by reversing the words of the famous adage *vox populi vox Dei*, "the voice of the people is the voice of God," to read instead "the voice of God is the voice of the people" (Akhavi 2007: 145).

Nevertheless, Khomeini's insistence on a referendum targeted the problem of popular sovereignty in order to legitimise and consolidate his 'legal right' in addition to the canonical right to power that he already possessed since he was a *faqīh* or *mujtahid* (qualified jurisprudent) and *marja'-i taqlīd* (source of emulation).[288] His adherence to the fundamental pact between the guardian-jurist and the people as the second source of legitimacy resonates with what Rousseau calls 'unanimous consent' in the contract between the sovereign power or collective being and the individual subjects. One major difference with Rousseau, however, is the possibility of revoking the contract. While Rousseau insists that 'there is in the State no fundamental law which cannot be revoked' and the citizens can legitimately break the social contract by a 'solemn agreement' (Rousseau 2002: 226), Khomeini's theory of government, which is centred around the exclusive legitimacy of the Islamic law, renders public consent irrelevant and revoking the contract illegitimate. Moreover, Khomeini secured this assumption through rationalising the power of the *faqīh* as the sole legislator and lawful sovereign. The governing guardian-jurist, he argued, is required to meet certain qualifications, including 'general qualifications like intelligence and administrative ability' and two 'essential qualifications' that are 'knowledge of the [Islamic] law and justice' (GJ: 31). In summary, as Amanat (2007) states, the ruler must be 'the most learned (*a'lam*), the most judicious (*a'dal*), and the most pious (*atqā*)' (Amanat 2007: 122). In the wake of the 1979 Revolution, these qualifications were incorporated into Iran's new constitution, introducing the Guardianship of the Jurist as the country's supreme principle.[289]

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[288] *Mujtahid* is the agent noun for *ijtihād* or 'exegesis in jurisprudence'. For English equivalent of such technical terms, I have mostly relied on Daryoush Mohammad Poor's English translation of Hairi Yazdi, Mehdi, & Poor, Daryoush Mohammad. (2022). *A Philosophical Treatise on Muslim Politics* (1st Edition 2022, Vol. 21). Springer International Publishing AG.

[289] Article 5 (1979 edition) states that 'the sovereignty of the command [of God] and religious leadership of the community [of believers] is the responsibility of the jurisprudent who is just, pious, courageous, knowledgeable about his era, and a capable administrator, and is recognized and accepted by the majority of people as leader.' Including Article 5, Chapter Eight of the constitution addresses the details of this new element of the country's leadership. Articles 109 (1979 Edition) states:

The precondition of being a *marja'* or 'source of emulation' indicates the undisputable authority of the most competent guardian-jurist or the "Supreme Leader".[290] Khomeini bestowed upon himself and his successors an unprecedented political power based on his (Shi'a) canonical right and his absolute canonical authority vested in him by his knowledge of "the sacred legislator". He defined sovereignty as a "trust" and the sovereign as a "trustee", who, according to his innovative interpretation of one *hadith*, referred to the *fugahā* (jurists, plural for *faqīh*) or Islamic *ulamā* (scholars). As 'trustees of God's decrees', he argued, these *ulamā* had the right 'to implement God's ordinances, to execute the penal provisions of the law, and generally to conduct and administer the affairs of the Muslims' (GJ: 75). Khomeini provided the guardian-jurist with 'the right to dispose of people's property and life independently', as well as the power to 'unilaterally revoke religiously legal contracts it has entered into with the people in cases where the contract is detrimental to the interests of the country'.[291] Obedience, accordingly, was incumbent on the people as per the divine decree (GJ: 30).

Khomeini rationalised an Islamic *raison d'état* and encouraged his disciples to regard themselves as the 'leaders of humanity' and the relays in the reciprocal relationship between the divine law and the state (GJ: 86). He argued that not only the divine law demanded the establishment of a political authority that could enforce it, but also

> the nature and character of Islamic law and the divine ordinances of the shari'ah furnish additional proof of the necessity for establishing government, for they indicate that the laws were laid down for the purpose of creating a state and administering the political, economic and cultural affairs of society (GJ: 20).

'The qualifications and attributes of the leader or members of the Leadership Council are as follows:

1. Scholarly qualification and piety for issuing religious ruling (fatwa) and serving as the *marja'*;
2. Political and social insight, courage, power and sufficient administrative abilities for leadership.'

[290] For a concise yet insightful study of emulation and legal authority in Shi'a Islam see Amanat, A. (2007). From *Ijtihad to Wilayat-i Faqīh: The Evolution of Shiite Legal Authority to Political Power*, in *Shari'a: Islamic Law in Contemporary Context*, Abbas Amanat and Frank Griffel (eds.), Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, pp. 120-136.

[291] Khomeini also claimed that the *faqīh*'s command and decrees stood 'even above divine commands such as prayer, fasting, the hajj pilgrimage and almsgiving' (Sahifeh 20: 451-452, quoted in Hairi Yazdi 2022: 187).

According to Khomeini, the guardian-jurist is the sole holder of authority to rule over 'human society'. He is a trustee—'Fuqaha execute as a trust all the affairs for which Islam has legislated' (GJ: 47)—responsible for 'the public welfare' and 'subordinating individuals to the collective interest' of the society (GJ: 53). However, what Khomeini means by the collective interest, diverges from the Rousseauian sense of the term despite some resemblances. In Khomeini's thought, the collective interest of a (Muslim) society—which he also refers to as 'the welfare of the people'—must conform to the interests of Islam, whose trustee is the *faqīh* or guardian-jurist, whose authority connotes that his decrees and definition of the interests of Islam and Muslims represent the truth.

The concept of the *faqīh*, as theorised by Khomeini shows parallels with Rousseau's idea of the legislator at the moment of founding a state. Rousseau's notion of the legislator, or lawgiver, primarily deals with the challenge of establishing a durable and harmonious set of rules for a polity, spanning generations. He argues that such laws cannot be crafted by ordinary humans, but require almost divine intervention, asserting that 'gods would be necessary to give laws to men (Rousseau 2002: 180). In Rousseau's view, it is initially the god-like leaders of republics who establish institutions, which then shape future leaders. To him, Jewish and Islamic communities exemplify what he means by directing enduring institutions whose laws are 'dictated' by great legislators—or prophets—'in the origin of the nations'. Rousseau describes the legislator as a spokesperson of 'divine authority', whose 'sublime reason […] soars beyond the reach of common men' (Rousseau 2002: 183). Rousseau's figure of the legislator mirrors Khomeini's rationale for founding an Islamic state governed by the Book. [292] Nevertheless, a significant theoretical difference exists between Rousseau's concept of the legislator and Khomeini's notion of the *faqīh*. Khomeini's Islamic legislator embodies a

[292] A similar discussion is also found in Shariati's thought, albeit with fundamental differences existing between Khomeini and Shariati. In *Paradox as Decolonization: Ali Shariati's Islamic Lawgiver* (2021), Arash Davari scrutinises Shariati's solution for Rousseau's 'paradox of founding' in the post-colonial or de-colonising context. Davari analyses one of Shariati's most controversial series of lectures, *Ummat va Imāmat* (1969), arguing that Shariati 'proposes to resolve the problem of enduring colonial domination by citing a fabricated French professor, a foreigner, as an authoritative source', who is in fact Shariati himself. His aim is to help his audiences decipher this fabrication and overcome complexities surrounding decolonising self-determination. Davari argues that Shariati is in fact theorising 'the paradox of politics as decolonisation' (Davari 2021: 743).

confluence of legislative, judicial, and executive powers. In contrast, Rousseau firmly advocates for the separation of these powers.[293]

Khomeini's guardian-jurist is, as Amanat notes, 'answerable to no source but God' (Amanat 2007: 133), so the question of public sovereignty gives way to the question of obedience. Concerning freedom, this means that people are free—in the positive sense of the term that Rousseau delineates in his social contract arguments—so long as they conform to the interests of Islam, which outlines the collective interest of the society or the general will. 'Law is actually the ruler', Khomeini argued, and 'Muslims and the people in general are free within the limits laid down by the law; when they are acting in accordance with the provisions of the law' (GJ: 46).[294]

Khomeini's political Islam was in stark contrast with emancipatory, liberal, and democratic Islam of Shariati, Bazargan, and Banisadr. Besides, as Akhavi demonstrates in *Shiite Theories of Social Contract* (2007), his innovative doctrine of the Guardianship of the Jurist marked a 'sharp departure' from the traditional Shi'a exegetes (Akhavi 2007: 147).[295] As mentioned earlier, Khomeini's theory *velāyat-e faqīh* has been criticised not only by non-clerical scholars but also by his *faqīh* and *mujtahid* (jurisprudent) peers. So, before concluding our discussion of the sacralisation of power, it would be helpful to briefly examine one of these critiques

[293] According to Rousseau, 'the legislator is in all respects an extraordinary man in the State'; and more importantly, the 'office' of the legislator, 'which constitutes the republic, does not enter into its constitution; it is a special and superior office, having nothing in common with human jurisdiction; for, if he who rules men ought not to control legislation, he who controls legislation ought not to rule men; otherwise his laws, being ministers of his passions would often serve only to perpetuate his acts of injustice; he would never be able to prevent private interests from corrupting the sacredness of his work' (Rousseau 2002: 181.).

[294] This points to another key difference between Rousseaian contractarianism and Khomeini's idea of the Islamic social pact regarding the question of tyranny and despotism. Given that, according to Rousseau, sovereign power is the collective being and sovereignty is the exercise of general will through the agreement between the collective body and the individuals, the social contract is broken 'as soon as the government usurps the sovereignty', which means that it is no longer the embodiment of the general will (Rousseau 2002: 216). In this scenario, citizens, who have been morally bound to obey the general agreement because they were in fact obeying their own will, are no longer morally bound to obey the tyrant or the despotic sovereign, but might be 'forced' to do so.

[295] Akhavi analyses Khomeini's innovative interpretations of one hadith (*maqbulat Umar ibn Hanzala* or "the accepted [tradition] of Umar ibn Hanzala) and one Quranic verse ("*God commands you to return trusts to their owners, and when you judge among the people to do so equitably. Noble are the counsels of God, and God hears all and sees everything. O ye who believe, obey God, obey the Prophet, and those in authority among you*." 4:58-59), based on which he justified his theory his *Governance of the Jurist* (Akhavi 2007: 145-147).

made by the jurisprudent and philosopher Mehdi Hairi Yazdi.[296] Hairi fundamentally refutes the theory of Islamic Republic under the Guardianship of the Jurist as being contradictory, incoherent, ambiguous, illogical, irrational, and 'even inconceivable in terms of logical and philosophical assessments' (Hairi 2022: 186). Through an argument that resonates with Mosatafa Rahimi's open letter to Khomeini, he criticises the notion of an Islamic republic and calls into question the credibility of the referendum of 1 April 1979, arguing that

> in the social contract of the government of the Islamic Republic, its agents imposed on the people of Iran this regime by resorting to religious sentiments, which was a fallacy of the kind of "establishing something based on a cause which is not the cause" (*waḍʿ mā laysa bi-ʿillat ʿilla*), and through a populistic referendum based on ignorance. […] [Thus], as per my '*ijtihādī* opinion, this referendum and the regime for which it has been held are totally devoid of any legal and jurisprudential validity and it is entirely nullified (Hairi 2022: 187).

As a liberal-democratic Muslim jurisprudent with a firm belief in individual autonomy and freedom, Hairi describes the Islamic Republic as a 'logical contradiction' with no 'religious validity'. He writes:

> [The Islamic Republic] cannot be legal and legitimate with any criterion because such an evident contradiction cannot be accepted by human reasoning faculty ever. And this is a rule in jurisprudence [§the rule of *mulāzama* or concomitance] that whatever is condemned and rejected by reason is equally condemned and rejected by religion (Hairi 2022: 186).

While Hairi insisted that the 'voluntary' and 'non-oppressive nature of sharia' was 'incompatible with the oppressive nature of state' (Badamchi 2022: 12), Khomeini argued that 'in order for law to ensure the reform and happiness of man, there must be an executive power and an executor' (GJ: 18). Since establishing an Islamic state required above all

[296] In the Prologue to Hariri's book, *A Philosophical Treatise on Muslim Politics: Wisdom and Governance* (2022), Meysam Badamchi presents an overview of Hairi's political philosophy and his approach towards Islamic jurisprudence and its relation to the state. Badamchi reviews Hairi's *Wisdom and Governance* and critiques his reading of Rousseau's Social Contract. According to Badamchi, '*Wisdom and Governance* represents a Muslim work of social contract, and Mehdi Hairi Yazdi should be considered as a liberal-democratic thinker, at least in terms of Rawlsian liberalism' (Badamchi 2022: 12).

overthrowing the monarchy—which was supposedly supported by the West and perceived as its puppet [297]– Khomeini tied his *raison d'état* to the problem of national sovereignty, that in the wake of the Second World War and the 1953 coup d'état, had engrossed intellectual circles. [298]

The changes in the political discourse between the revolutionary takeover and the ratification of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic demonstrate the transformation of Islamic discourse. The militant non-normative Islamic cause—advocated by Shariati, Bazargan, and Banisadr—was marginalised by Khomeini's totalitarian conception of Islam as a pre-determined set of rules and regulations and his depiction of the Islamic government as a sacred political institution.[299] Meanwhile, establishing an Islamic state took centre stage as the collective will of the people and the telos of the Iranian Revolution. On the one hand, Khomeini's theory of freedom was strictly limited to his interpretation of Islam and Islamic conduct. On the other hand, as the country's guardian-jurist and Supreme Leader, Khomeini was constitutionally authorised to incorporate his religious legal opinions into Iran's corpus juris and govern the post-revolutionary political scene. Although, in theory, the competence of the guardian-jurist could be contested on the grounds of injustice or oppression, Khomeini

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[297] Khomeini characterised the Shah as *taghut* – usurper or tyrannical – and called for defying his administration: 'It is the duty of all of us to overthrow *taghut*; i.e., the illegitimate political powers that now rule the entire Islamic world. The governmental apparatus of tyrannical and anti-popular regimes must be replaced by institutions serving the public good and administered according to Islamic law' (GJ: 92).See Chapter Three for Shariati's interpretation of this term in his political theology.

[298] It must be noted that unlike the anti-colonial Third-Worldist transnationalism of Shariati, Bazargan, and Banisadr that was inspired by and resonated with the Fanonian discourse, Khomeini's transnationalism referred to the Islamic concept of *ummah*, 'the entire Islamic community, without territorial or ethnic distinction' (GJ: 22). What Khomeini meant by 'the Islamic homeland' in the *Governance of the Jurist* signifies another fundamental discord between his approach to revolution and freedom and other opposition groups that espoused Islamic concepts. The following two quotes demonstrate the relation between independence, the *ummah*, and Islamic governmentality: 'The ordinances pertaining to preservation of the Islamic system and defense of the territorial integrity and independence of the Islamic *ummah* also demanded the formation of a government' (GJ: 22); and, 'In order to assure the unity of the Islamic *ummah*, in order to liberate the Islamic homeland from occupation and penetration by the imperialists and their puppet governments, it is imperative that we establish a government (GJ: 24).

[299] For example, 'Sacred revolution' in Message (September 20, 1979), Sahifeh 10: 42-43; Message (August 13, 1980), Sahifeh 13: 93; Message (February 11, 1981), Sahifeh 14: 64; IRGC to safeguard the 'sacred covenant', i.e. the Islamic government in Speech (August 18, 1981), Sahifeh 15: 97; 'sacred system', i.e. the Islamic Republic and also 'the defeat of the Islamic Republic and Islam is one of the biggest cardinal sins that must be avoided' in Message (April 1, 1983), Sahifeh 17: 364.

suppressed even his fellow *fuqaha* (jurists)—most notably Ayatollah Shariatmadari and later Ayatollah Montazeri—who criticised his rule or challenged his authority.[300]

Khomeini inherited an already-pastoralised political power of the state, preserved it, and consecrated it.[301] Khomeini's Islamic government followed the trajectories of the *ancien régime* and maintained certain techniques and institutions of power. Although the Revolution transformed certain political and social orders and ended Iran's monarchical rule, it preserved its *raison d'état* and its apparatuses of control. That is to say, the totalitarian idea, structure, and function of the Resurgence Party was preserved, but its name was changed to Hezbollah—Party of God.[302] The position of the monarch as the political leader and governing institution of the country was maintained, but its formalities were changed. The Shah's notion of 'Great Civilization' was sustained but its terminology changed into salvation of humanity. The same way that the Shah referred to the referendum to legitimise his policies and powers, Khomeini used the referendum not only to legitimise his government through national consensus, which he perceived as 'pledging allegiance to God', but also to sacralise it.[303] It was a 'formality', as Amanat notes, to 'sanctify the birth of an Islamic republic (Amanat 2017: 736). Moreover, Islamisation of the country required 'revolutionary institutions' that, according to Banisadr—Iran's first president after 1979—were addressed as 'sacred' and implied 'the return of the *ancien régime* in a new form' (Banisadr 1981: 53). Khomeini's

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[300] See Qubādzādah, N. (2014). *Religious secularity : Shiite repudiation of the Islamic state*. Oxford University Press.

[301] For arguments on the similarities between the pre- and post-revolutionary governments see Azimi, F. (2008). *The quest for democracy in Iran : a century of struggle against authoritarian rule*. Harvard University Press; For a detailed analysis of the shared elements of the two systems see Arjomand, S. A. (1989). *The Turban for the Crown : The Islamic Revolution in Iran*. Oxford University Press, USA.

[302] See Khomeini's Speech (August 17, 1979), Sahifeh 9: 257, which reads: 'If we had been revolutionary, we would not have allowed these people to assert themselves. We would have banned all the parties. We would have banned all the "fronts" except a single party and that is "Hizbullah" – the Party of the Oppressed.

[303] See Speech (November 12, 1978), Sahifeh 4: 433, which reads: 'The Islamic government we are talking about, that is, the government we want is one which the people desire and one to which God, the Blessed and Exalted, could say that these people who pledged their allegiance to you had pledged their allegiance to God. It should be a governing body allegiance to which is allegiance to Allah. In wars, when an arrow is shot, God will say: "When thou threwest (a handful of dust), it was not thy act, but Allah's," [*Surah al-Anfal* 8:17] meaning that the hand that threw the dust was God's hand. The government that we want is one which is the shadow of God and is the extension of His hand; a government that is divine. The government that we want is such a government. Our wish is for a governing body to come to power that will not transgress against divine laws.'

Islamic state, in Azimi's words, 'purported to embody the sacred and to promote commitment to "true" Islam' (Azimi 2008: 415). In his post-1979 speeches and sermons, Khomeini sacralised many institutions of the Islamic Republic, including the revolutionary movement, the parliament, the responsibility of the Guardian Council, the seminaries, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the Reconstruction Jihad Organisation, the defence (force), as well as the freedoms that this new regime of truth sanctioned.[304]

In addition to the post-Revolution remarks made by Khomeini, one of the significant historical documents that shed light on the preservation of the pre-revolutionary pastoralised form of governmentality and sacralisation of power is the constitutional debates of the Assembly for the Final Review of the Constitution (AFRC). In the final section of this chapter, I will delve into these debates to analyse this process and its implications for individual and political freedoms, as well as its role in further complicating the interplay between independence and liberty. Additionally, I will compare the preliminary draft of the constitution with the finalised draft and draw attention to the substantial difference between the two in order to argue that pre-revolutionary notions of freedom are in fact reflected in the first draft, although not in the final draft of the constitution.[305]

Islamic Governmentality: Freedom and the Question of Sovereignty

After unsuccessful negotiations with Khomeini for a constituent assembly to deliberate the new Iranian constitution, the Assembly for the Final Review of the Constitution (AFRC) was formed in August 1979 to revise the proposed draft. Following Khomeini's approval of the idea and a general election—boycotted by the majority of secular nationalist and leftist opposition parties for not reflecting the general will and lacking 'democratic character'— the

[304] See speeches on February 4, 1979; April 22, 1979; October 1, 1981; May 28, 1984; February 11, 1985.

[305] The earliest draft constitution was written by Hassan Habibi in Paris prior to Khomeini's return to Iran. According to Banisadr, Habibi's draft was nothing more than a translation of the French Fifth Republic Constitution (Banisadr's Memoir, 2001: 62). For a concise history of the early drafts, their reception by Khomeini and other prominent revolutionary figures, and the role of various political groups in shaping the final draft, see Siavush Ranjbar-Daemi's *Building the Islamic State: The Draft Constitution of 1979 Reconsidered* (2013). Iranian Studies, 46(4), 641–663.

seventy-two representatives of the AFRC were tasked to deliberate the draft of the proposed constitution within two months—later extended to three months (Ramazani 1980: 182). In his message to the AFRC, Khomeini emphasised the vital importance of adhering to Islamic principles in all aspects of the constitution. He cautioned that any deviation from these principles would undermine the republican nature of the state and stressed that only the clergy—the *fugahā*—possessed the requisite expertise to determine whether the constitution was per Islamic laws, thereby discouraging interference from other representatives. Comprising fifty-one clerics, twenty male laymen, and only one woman (Siavoshi 2017: 107), the AFRC extensively revised the early drafts of the post-revolutionary constitution and implemented Khomeini's theory of the rule of the guardian-jurist by introducing Article 5, which did not exist in the first and second proposed drafts.

The original draft was written by four lay (-religious) jurists:[306] Abdolkarim Lahidji (b. 1940), Juris Doctor from the University of Tehran and co-founder of the Iranian Committee for the Defence of Freedom and Human Rights (1977–1980);[307] Mohammad-Jafar Jafari-Langroudi (1923–2023), Islamic jurist (mujtahid) and Juris Doctor from the University of Tehran; Amir Nasser Katouzian (1931–2014), Juris Doctor from the University of Tehran; and Hassan Habibi (1937–2013), Juris Doctor from the Sorbonne and translator of Louis Massignon, Henri Bergson, Henri Corbin, and Henri Lefebvre. According to Lahidji, the authors defined the juridical and political structure of the new system and designed the institutions of government based on the 1906 Iranian Constitution and the Constitution of the Fifth French Republic, 'without overlooking the fundamental cultural, social, political, and economic differences between Iranian and French societies' (Lahidji 2010: 53). Following some revisions suggested by Khomeini and the Revolutionary Council, the second draft was published in June 1979 and handed over to the AFRC for finalisation.[308] These revisions added an Islamic tone

[306] According to Banisadr, the preliminary draft was written by Nasser Katouzian, Fathollah Banisadr, Hassan Habibi, Ahmad Sadr Haj-seyed-Javadi, Abdolkarim Lahidji, and Jafari-Langroudi. See *Moghaddameh va matn e pish-nevis e ghanun e asasi* [Preamble and Text of the Draft Constitution], https://banisadr.org/ketab/moghadame_ghanone_asadi.pdf.

[307] Mehdi Bazargan was another co-founder of the ICDFHR and its chairman from 1977 to 1979.

[308] According to Banisadr, the second draft was prepared by Yadollah Sahabi, Karim Sanjabi, Morteza Motahhari, Ezzatollah Sahabi, Abolhassan Banisadr, and Dr, Sehhat from Mellat-e Iran Party and two Justices from the Supreme Court. See *Moghaddameh va matn e pish-nevis e ghanun e asasi* [Preamble and Text of the Draft Constitution], https://banisadr.org/ketab/moghadame_ghanone_asadi.pdf.

to the original text and accentuated Islamic standards but did not yet include any article vesting sovereignty in the guardian-jurist.[309] Katouzian, who had penned the original draft, criticised several articles of this draft in terms of what he called 'dissonant grafts' in the national pact. He censured several ambiguous additions that potentially restricted civil and individual freedoms, contending that such a constitution would fail to 'reflect people's true demands and the legal spirit governing social conscience' (N Katouzian 2000: 231).[310]

Nonetheless, dominated by the Islamic Republican Party (IRP), the AFRC significantly altered the second draft of the constitution and defined the political philosophy of the Islamic Republic based on Khomeini's doctrines.[311] Prominent figures of the Islamic Republic Party presided over the assembly as the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, and as Siavoshi rightly notes, 'their control over setting the agenda and managing the debate further paved the way for the inclusion of the institution of the rule of the Islamic jurist into the final draft' (Siavoshi 2017: 108).[312] As Khomeini had stated in the *Governance of the Jurist*, the *fugahā* (jurists) were granted the authority to be 'responsible for all affairs' and 'the authoritative guides of the

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[309] It should be noted that the amendment to the Constitution of 1906 had already granted the Islamic jurists the power to supervise legislature in order to ensure the compatibility of any legislative proposal with Islamic law. Following this tradition, some of the clergy asserted that the rule of *faqīh* would remain a supervisory role and thus would not '"damage the spirit of democracy" and as such would be compatible with the will of the people to determine their destiny through their elected representatives' (Ramazani 1980: 183).

[310] Katouzian writes that what he was trying to do was to reconcile Islam with republicanism, insisting on the supremacy of *vox populi* and democratic governance. See *Gami be souye edalat* [A Step towards Justice] (2000). Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, University of Tehran.

[311] For a concise review of the role of the Islamic Republican Party during the first months of the Revolution, see Saffari, Said. (1993). *The legitimation of the Clergy's right to rule in the Iranian constitution of 1979*. British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 20(1), 64–82. In this article, Saffari explores the political views and affiliations of the AFRC representatives, their connections to the IRP, and their arguments in the constitutional discussions on the question of the Guardianship of the Jurist or Article 5. Emphasising on the role of the IRP as the Khomeinist faction of the AFRC, he concludes that 'without the leadership of the IRP, the Assembly of Experts might have produced a radically different constitution, without any mention of *velāyat-e faqīh*' (Saffari 1993: 65).

[312] For a comprehensive study of the role of Ayatollah Montazeri, one of the most influential figures in post-Revolution Iran, and his political views as the Speaker of the AFRC, see Siavoshi, S. (2017). *The Post-revolutionary State and Montazeri: The Bearer, The Agitator*. In Montazeri: The Life and Thought of Iran's Revolutionary Ayatollah (pp. 103-149). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Focusing mainly on Montazeri's political life and his views regarding the rule of the clergy, Siavoshi provides an engaging account of the politics of the constitutional assembly and the conflicts between the Khomeinist-Islamists and liberal-democratic-Islamists.

people' within a few months of the Revolution (GJ: 51). However, although the majority of the AFRC consisted of the Khomeinist-Islamist clerics and the outcome of the referendum appeared to support Islamic rule, the constitutional debates reveal the challenges of justifying the absolute sovereignty of the guardian-jurist and addressing certain theoretical paradoxes of Islamic governmentality.

The opponents of Article 5 presented a counter-argument that transferring popular sovereignty to the guardian-jurist would deprive people of their fundamental right to self-determination. However, those who supported the article based their arguments on the ideological character of the Islamic system, which indicated its responsibility for guiding the nation towards perfectibility and salvation (MPAFRC: 570).[313] They contended that in such a system, the right to sovereignty belonged exclusively to the *faqīh*, and thus, the leader was meant to govern all three branches of government (ibid: 571). Some even rejected the idea of separation of powers (ibid: 568). Furthermore, some of the fierce proponents of Article 5 argued that the leadership was not electoral and that the leader's power was given to him by God (ibid: 535), while others held that, according to the principles of Islam, all power was given to the *faqīh* from God and also people (ibid: 563). However, one of the members went even further to state that the term popular sovereignty was a foreign term and had no place in Islam (ibid: 524). Similarly, another member argued that the right to legislation did not belong to people (ibid: 523). The *faqīh* was supposed to "control" governmental procedures to prevent wrongdoing since he knew what was good for society (ibid: 509). Despite these arguments, they insisted that the dominating power of the *faqīh* and his appointees did not connote the dictatorship of the clergy. Eventually, after three months of heated debates, the final draft portrayed the Revolution and its objectives in a completely different light from that presented in the initial draft, with a drastic shift in perspective. In Abrahamian's words,

> The final product was a hybrid—albeit weighted heavily in favor of one—between Khomeini's *velayat-e faqeh* and Bazargan's French Republic; between divine rights and the rights of man; between theocracy and democracy; between *vox dei* and *vox populi*; and between clerical authority and popular sovereignty (Abrahamian 2008: 163-164).

[313] Minutes of Proceedings of the Assembly for the Final Review of the Constitution (AFRC). See Bibliography.

Article 5 overshadowed the entire institutions of government and left minimal space for political rights and freedoms. The principle of checks and balances gave way to the presumed piety, righteousness, and knowledge of the guardian-jurist supreme leader. Public sovereignty was subjected to national sovereignty, and national sovereignty was bound to Article 5 and the absolute authority of the guardian-jurist. Individual rights and freedoms as well as civil rights, women's rights, and human rights were re-conceptualised and re-defined in accordance with the limits set by a very narrow interpretation of Islamic laws and principles. The principle of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong, which in the works of Shariati and Bazargan was conceived as a bottom-up parrhesiastic act of speaking truth to power, was transformed into a top-down policing institution responsible for Islamic guidance and safeguarding public morality. In short, that which Khomeini called the "sacred legislature" sacralised politics and constitutionally circumscribed democratic self-determination for which the revolutionaries had fought since at least 1953.

Freedom and a Tale of Two Constitutions

Given the circumstances mentioned above and the significant changes made to the first draft of the constitution, particularly the inclusion of the Guardianship of the Jurist (Article 5) and a dominating jurisprudential interpretation of Islam that limited popular sovereignty and individual freedoms, it is questionable whether the final draft truly reflects pre-revolutionary notions of freedom. Reflecting on the pre-revolutionary conceptions of freedom explored in earlier chapters, the preliminary draft seems to mirror these ideas more closely. Conversely, the constitution's final draft represents an entirely different manifesto of the new political order, as it places greater emphasis on Islamic principles and government. In this section, I will compare the ideas of freedom presented in these two drafts, aiming to highlight the differences between the preliminary and final versions.

As mentioned earlier, the second and final drafts of the constitution elicited criticisms upon their publication for public review.[314] Lahidji and Katouzian, two of the authors of the original

[314] See, for example: Tehran-e Mosavvar (June 22, 1979). 37(22); Āyandegān (June 21, 1979), 12(1381).

draft, have criticised the constitution and expressed concerns about its inconsistencies and contradictory assertions. According to Lahidji, the final draft eroded popular sovereignty and violated the national pact established during the Revolution. He characterised the political philosophy of the Islamic Republic as a religious-sectarian oligarchy that not only ensured the right to power for a specific professional class (i.e., the clergy) but also a particular sect within that class—the supporters of the Guardianship of the Jurist doctrine (Lahidji 2010: 66-67). Lahidji emphasised that not only according to the Constitution, 'the guardian-jurist has absolute domination and authority over all three branches of government', but also 'he is considered to be above the law, and even above the Constitution' (Lahidji 2010: 65).

Unlike Lahidji, Katouzian based his critiques of the post-revolutionary Islamic discourse on Islamic thought. During the first few months of the Revolution, his essays aimed at reminding his readers of the uprising's roots and objectives and to contrast them with the unfolding monopolistic discourse. Katouzian was intellectually close to Shariati, and his concept of spirituality in politics echoed Foucault's political spirituality. While he endorsed governmentality informed by the three fundamental principles of faith—*tawhīd* (oneness of God), *nabuwwat* (prophecy), and *ma'ād* (Returning or Resurrection)—he firmly rejected the second draft constitution's implementation of jurisprudential Islamic governmentality. Moreover, through criticising Rousseau's ideas regarding national sovereignty and freedom, he insisted on protecting civil liberties and human rights against an all-powerful state and its institutions (N Katouzian 2000: 30-34).[315]

Before proceeding, it is essential to pause and recall the conceptual frameworks employed in this discussion. I employ the Anglophone approach here that typically examines the concept of freedom through three major theoretical lenses: Isaiah Berlin's distinction between positive and negative freedom, the concept of Republican freedom represented by Pettit and Skinner, and Gerald MacCallum's unified triadic relation approach, which offers an inclusive perspective on varying interpretations of freedom. As outlined in the introductory chapter of

[315] Mostafa Rahimi also made the same point in his book *The Principles of Republican Government* published in 1979 when the second draft was published. See Rahimi, M. (1979). *Osul-e Hokumat-e Jomhuri* [The Principles of Republican Government]. Amir Kabir.

this thesis, the Anglophone perspective serves as a structured approach to navigating the diverse Francophone contemplations on liberty.[316]

Several studies have analysed the Constitution of the Islamic Republic regarding its stance on rights and freedoms (Schirazi 1997; Siavoshi 2007; Khalili 2007; Nick Pay 2016, 2017). These studies have identified significant shortcomings, ambiguities, and inconsistencies within the document from different but related perspectives. For instance, Khalili (2007) has distinguished four categories of freedom in the finalised draft, however, his classification can ultimately be condensed into Berlin's concepts of positive and negative liberty.[317] Positive liberty, which, according to Khalili, concerns the ontology of the state as the system of intervention and control, includes principles such as the Guardianship of the Jurist (Article 5), the institutionalisation of the principle of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong (Article 8), inseparability of freedom and independence (Article 9), subjecting all the articles of the Constitution to Islamic criteria (Article 4), banning conspiracy and acting against Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran (Article 14), and reliance on the public vote for the country's administration (Article 6). Nevertheless, Khalili argues that the interweaving of religious and political concepts has eventually obscured positive and negative conceptions of freedom (Khalili 2007: 20). Similar to Khalili but from a different perspective, Nick Pay, in *Republican Islam* (2016), scrutinises the articles of the Constitution and points to its contradictory elements through the republican theory of freedom. He draws on the works of Pettit and Skinner to demonstrate how shifting authority to ecclesiastical entities violates the republican

[316] As discussed in the Introduction, the French tradition prominently features philosophers such as Rousseau, Marx, Sartre, and Nietzsche, whose influences are profoundly evident in the works of Fanon and Foucault. Foucault, in particular, markedly distances himself from classical conceptualisations of freedom, especially in his rejection of the presupposition of an autonomous subject and his refusal to present a normative theory of freedom. We discussed that in this context, the Anglophone frameworks not only facilitate a structured exploration of the concept but also provide a common language for comparing different philosophical understandings of freedom that inform legal formulations.

[317] Following is Khalili's categorisation:
1. Freedom *from* servitude and slavery, which means being free from interfering constraints;
2. Freedom *to*, which pertains to the reason why human beings need to be free;
3. Negative freedom, which allows individuals or groups to pursue self-realisation without external interference;
4. Positive freedom, which involves a balancing act between desires and possibilities. This type of freedom involves controlling and governing the desires of individuals within a society to ensure that everyone is free to pursue their goals without interference from others (Khalili 2007).

foundations of popular sovereignty and non-domination (Nick Pay 2016: 5). Nick Pay argues that at least 'in theory', these inconsistencies leave no space for 'concepts of constitutional liberty and freedom based on the republican doctrine of state' (Nick Pay 2016: 6).

Considering the findings and arguments of existing scholarship, I will thus briefly explore post-revolutionary ideas of liberty through the lenses of positive, negative, and republican theories of freedom insofar as they contribute to a better understanding of pre-revolutionary notions of freedom, demonstrating how the incontestability of the Khomeinist theory of political Islam indicates asymmetric arbitrary power and domination. To do this, I draw on three general fundamental principles that arguably overshadow all the articles of the Constitution and any subsequent interpretation of the constitutional clauses. Demonstrated in the preamble to the finalised Constitution, these general, axiomatic, principles are:

1. The rule of Islamic laws (Article 4) and the role of government to implement and enforce them;

2. The principle of the Guardianship of the Jurist that dominates all the institutions of government as well as foreign and domestic policies and politics; and

3. The primacy of preserving the Islamic political system that equates the state with the government.

Compared to the first draft, these principles are interconnected overarching doctrines that provided an entirely new foundation for the Constitution and shifted the paradigm and domain of individual and political freedoms. The first of the above principles primarily circumscribes individual and collective freedoms to the boundaries defined by Islamic law. From the perspective of Berlin's arguments in his *Two Concepts of Liberty*, the rule of divine law and the role of the government to implement and enforce it indicate a more positive conception of liberty in that it connotes more presence of interference, control, and governance of individual and public life. It also means that a negative conception of freedom, that is, freedom from external interference, is acceptable so long as it is limited to the circumscribing sphere of Islamic law.[318] Nonetheless, given that the rule of divine law was not

[318] In her article, *Ayatollah Khomeini and the Contemporary Debate on Freedom* (2007), Sussan Siavoshi explores two seemingly contradictory ideas of freedom presented by Khomeini. However, Siavoshi argues that these ideas actually reveal a complexity in Khomeini's thought that should not be dismissed. Her main point is to highlight the potential usefulness of Khomeini's negative statements about freedom and his emphasis on

an alien concept in Iranian society, it seems that what constitutes a sharp departure from the more familiar forms of the rule of divine law is its institutionalised power to interfere in more areas of individual and collective life. In other words, the existence of more liberal and culturally flexible, or culturally informed, Islamic conceptions and practices in Iran prior to the rise of Khomeini is too significant—and, of course, complex—to be overlooked.[319] Even though Khomeini's framework appears to fulfil the criteria of the impartiality of laws, that is, the "rule of law" central to a republican conception of freedom, it still presents as alien and arbitrary. This is because the laws cannot be contested by the governed or other *mujtahids* who hold religious authority equal to Khomeini in jurisprudence and Islamic exegesis. Even within the sphere of jurisprudential Islam, as discussed earlier, Khomeini marginalised and suppressed other *mujtahid*s or sources of emulation who contested his reading of Islam (Qubādzādah 2014: 151). That is to say, although he insisted that the rule of impartial Islamic laws meant freedom from domination,[320] his insistence on his own understanding of Islam and the Islamic government ultimately rendered his power arbitrary. The point, however, is to accentuate the divergence between Khomeini's Islamic doctrine and those other (pre-existing) forms of religiosity and the positive or negative conceptions of freedom associated with them. The first principle thus indicates the predomination of normatively articulated positive conceptions of freedom over negatively defined freedoms in Khomeinist ideas of Islamic polity and the governance of such polity.[321]

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the nation's support for the reformist faction in Iranian politics. It is important to note that Siavoshi wrote this article in 2007, prior to the events that followed the 2009 presidential elections in Iran. In retrospect, it is clear that drawing on Khomeini's discourse to push against the authoritarian faction was ultimately unsuccessful.

[319] This complexity is more evident in questions such as women's rights. Women's legal rights in Iran were subject to Islamic laws well before the 1979 Revolution in matters such as inheritance and family laws. The establishment of the Islamic Republic reversed some reformations initiated during the Pahlavi reign, consolidated the patriarchal domination and Islamic laws regarding women's unequal rights, making it harder to challenge these issues since it now implied challenging the state.

[320] For example, see Statement (February 8, 1979), Sahifeh 6: 99; Speech (February 19, 1979), Sahifeh 6: 176; Speech (March 27, 1979), Sahifeh 6: 416; Speech (March 29, 1979), Sahifeh 6: 386.

[321] Here, I have used two expressions that need more clarification: Khomeini's Islamic doctrine and Khomeinist ideas. Khomeini's doctrine refers to his political theory as elaborated in his *Governance of the Jurist*. By Khomeinist ideas, I mean the discourse that drew on and promoted Khomeini's notion of the Guardianship of the Jurist. This distinction is important when, for instance, Khomeini's comments on the meaning of freedom are in question.

Moreover, the first principle draws on a particular narrative of divine law (and its implementation) to divide both the society and each individual within the society into what Berlin calls 'higher' and 'lower' selves (Berlin 2002: 179). This discourse of 'higher' and 'lower' selves dominates both the transcript of the constitutional debates and the final draft. We find in these texts certain key expressions such as "self-realisation", "true self", and "real freedom" that indicate a positive theory of freedom. In this discourse, both the individual and her society are subject to a pre-determined set of rules and regulations that externally limit their freedoms so that they can be driven towards 'true liberty' and self-realisation. The true higher individual or collective freedom, as Berlin notes, is identified with 'the pursuit of some ideal purpose', some 'true goal of man', that justifies interfering with the 'empirical self'—that acts according to desires and thus is not its own master—and coercing its interests (Berlin 2002: 180). This positive formulation is evident in the preamble to the Constitution:

> [Governance] is the manifestation of the political ideal of a nation with a common faith and perspective that must be organised so that in the process of its intellectual and ideological development it can carve out its path toward its ultimate goal (movement toward God). […]
>
> In the flow of its revolutionary evolution, our nation was cleansed of the dust and rust of the reign of decadence; it cleansed itself of the intellectual alien impurities. It returned to the authentic Islamic worldview and intellectual positions. Now it is determined to establish its exemplary model society (iswa) based on Islamic criteria. On these bases, the constitution's calling is to actualize the ideological premises of the uprising and to create conditions where one can be raised with the exalted universal Islamic values. With respect to the Islamic content of the Iranian Revolution, which was a movement for the victory of all the oppressed people over their oppressors, the constitution prepares the ground for continuing this revolution at home and abroad.[322]

In addition to defining freedom in terms of 'development' and pursuit of the 'ultimate goal' of humanity, the above text echoes Berlin's characterisation of positive freedom in that

[322] Emphasis added.

freedom is predicated on conceiving the true self as a 'social 'whole' of which the individual is an element or aspect: a tribe, a race, a Church, a State, the great society of the living and the dead the yet unborn' (Berlin 2002: 179). Accordingly, Berlin contends that this 'true' self is imposed upon the members of the society, for 'their own sake', as 'its collective, or 'organic', single will' so that both the society and its members achieve their 'higher' freedom (Berlin 2002: 179). The quoted paragraphs above draw on similar presumptions, stressing the collective will of the nation and the ultimate goal of an Islamic entity. On the one hand, political self-determination is defined above as freedom from 'intellectual or social tyranny', 'economic monopoly', and 'handing over the destiny of people to themselves'.[323] On the other hand, the collective will of the society is stated as raising individuals according to 'the exalted universal Islamic values'. The result is thus a positive theory of freedom: collective control over the affairs of the individual and social entity so that this entity achieves its true goal. According to the authors of the constitution's final draft, this is an 'ideological interpretation' of governmentality.

The same section of the preamble then addresses the question of governance and the *raison d'état* of the Islamic government, which brings us to the second principle: the Guardianship of the Jurist and its powers that we have discussed earlier at greater length. It is stated that 'according to ideological interpretation [of governmentality]',

> in establishing political institutions and organs that are the basis of the society, the pious will take on the responsibility of governing and administering the country, in accordance with the Qur'anic verse, "My servants, the righteous, shall inherit the earth" (21: 105).
>
> Legislation that projects the criteria for the administration of society proceeds on the course of Qur'an and the sunna (tradition).
>
> Consequently, serious and meticulous supervision on the part of just, devout, and committed Islamic scholars is a necessary and definitive affair.

[323] Article 2. 6. c: The Islamic Republic is a system based on belief in: the exalted dignity and value of man, and his freedom coupled with responsibility before God; in which equity, justice, political, economic, social, and cultural independence, and national solidarity are secured by recourse to: negation of all forms of oppression, both the infliction of and the submission to it, and of dominance, both its imposition and its acceptance.

> The objective of government is to foster the human being in the direction of the divine order, in accordance with the Qur'anic verse, "And to Allah is the final goal (of all)" (24: 42), in order to prepare the grounds for the expression and blossoming of aptitudes for the purpose of manifesting the theomorphic dimensions of man ("Comport yourself after the conduct of God"). This objective cannot be attained unless all segments of society actively and extensively participate in the developmental process of the society.[324]

These lines define freedom in terms of self-mastery and self-realisation, which can be achieved only within a state whose *raison d'être* is to ensure that every member of the society is liberated from her lower irrational desires or is not enslaved by her own wishes. In the case of Islamic governance, as discussed earlier, the *faqīh* is the only legitimate political authority that safeguards the Islamic order of the state through his meticulous supervision. This means that the Constitution may well endorse certain inalienable individual freedoms, but as Nick Pay notes, they 'seem to have been systematically conditioned to such general and vague notions as 'not being against the principles of Islam' or 'not posing a danger to national security' (Nick Pay 2016: 250). The first and second general principles—that all laws must be 'in accordance with Islamic criteria' and the sovereignty of the *faqīh*—are then bound to the question of national security, which brings us to the third principle: equating the state with the government—a specific form of government, the Islamic Republic.

Here, I draw on the distinction between state and government from the perspective of political sciences to discuss how ambiguity or absence of this distinction affects civil and political freedoms, at least in the Iranian context. This, along with a brief look at the Islamic Republic's power structure, allows us to argue that the final version of the Constitution not only fails to reflect pre-revolutionary conceptions of freedom but also constitutionalises the very form of governmentality against which the revolutionaries revolted. According to Devetak (2017), state, or modern sovereign state, refers to 'an abstract entity comprising a government, a population and a territory' (Devetak et al. 2017: 171). This entity possesses 'a collective personality, making it immortal and independent of political systems that govern it (van Creveld 1999: 258, quoted in Devetak et al. 2017: 171). From this perspective,

[324] Emphasis added.

government constitutes one of the necessary components of statehood—the others being population, territory, and recognition by other states—not the state in its entirety (Devetak et al. 2017: 172). In the case of the Iranian Constitution, this distinction is either ambiguous or absent. The following articles demonstrate how the expression "the principles of Islam" (or "the Islamic criteria") is used as the equivalent for the Islamic Republic and the government, which are both used as the equivalent of the state:

- Article 3.11: (National defence for) safeguarding the independence, territorial integrity, and the Islamic order (Nezam, system) of the country.
- Article 26: (Formation of and participation in social and political associations provided that they) not violate the principles of independence, freedom, national unity, the criteria of Islam, or the basis of the Islamic Republic.
- Article 27: Public gatherings and marches may be freely held, provided arms are not carried and that they are not detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam.
- Article 100: (Regarding local Councils) not violate the principles of independence, freedom, national unity, the criteria of Islam, or the basis of the Islamic Republic.

The unclear distinction between the state and the governing body of the state is perhaps demonstrated best in the articles related to the armed forces: the conventional army and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC):

- Article 143: The Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran is responsible for guarding the independence and territorial integrity of the country, as well as the order (Nezam) of the Islamic Republic.
- Article 144: Islamic Army: Faith in the objectives of the Islamic Revolution.
- Article 150: The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps is to be maintained so that it may continue in its role of guarding the Revolution and its achievements.[325]

[325] Numerous studies have been conducted on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). For a concise yet informative analysis, see Forozan, H., & Shahi, A. (2017). The military and the state in Iran: the economic rise of the Revolutionary Guards. *The Middle East Journal*, *71*(1), 67-86.

In addition to Article 143, Article 144 was added to the final draft mandating that the Army must be an Islamic Army, 'i.e., committed to Islamic ideology and the people, and must recruit into its service individuals who have faith in the objectives of the Islamic Revolution and are devoted to the cause of realising its goals'. To further secure the Islamic government, Article 150 was added to the second draft, authorising the maintenance of the IRGC, which was 'organised in the early days of the triumph of the Revolution', with unspecified duties that were and are 'to be determined by law'.

However, among the most ambiguous articles that maximise state control is Article 168, which, on the one hand, affirms the existence of political crime and, on the other, states that political crime also needs to be defined according to Islamic law.

- Article 168: […] The definition of political offences will be determined by law in accordance with the Islamic criteria.

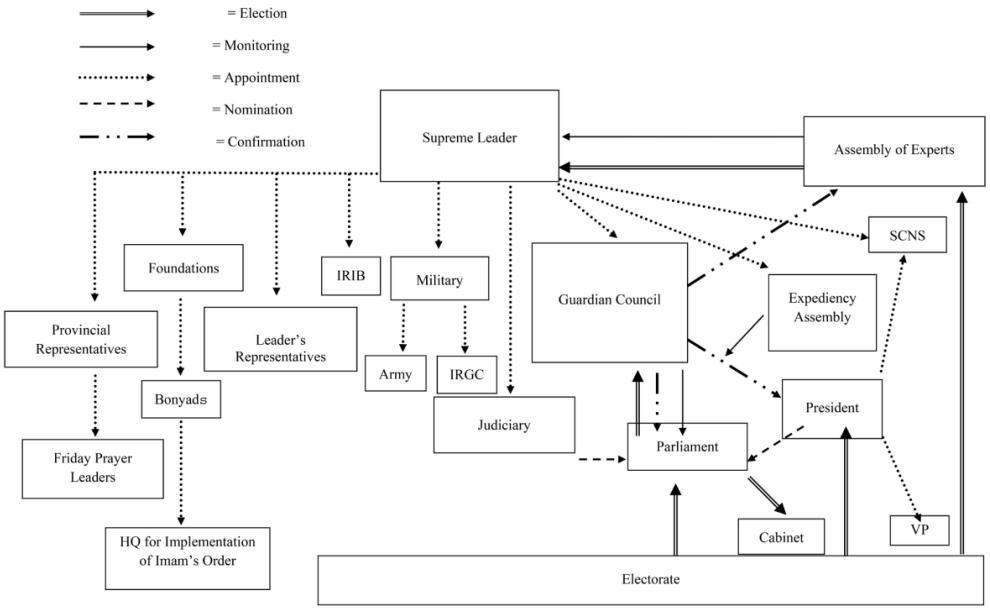
Until 2016, political offences were not defined. During this period, any activities within the realm of politics or civil society that the Islamic Republic deemed a challenge to its authority were broadly labelled as crimes against national security. Prior to being formalised into written law, political crimes entailed questioning the Islamic government, thereby challenging Islam and its fundamental principles, which could be interpreted as an act of waging war against God. So, it seems that Article 168 articulates in theory what has been observed in practice: it proposes the comparable significance of Islamic law or Islam in a broader sense, Islamic governance, and the Islamic state in the post-revolutionary context.

This context primarily developed due to Khomeini's direct association of Islam with the Islamic Republic as a form of government during the referendum in late March 1979 to abolish the old regime and determine the political system.[326] Khomeini had declared that anyone who did not vote for the Islamic Republic was rejecting Islam (Sahifeh 6: 376).[327] As discussed earlier, this implied that Khomeini's interpretation of Islam was the only valid one, thus disregarding both 'control of the people, *voluntas*' and *res publica* as 'the source of

[326] The referendum was held on 30 and 31 of March 1979. The result was officially announced on 1 April 1979.

[327] 'You must know that those who say "no" to Islamic republic are saying "no" to Islam. We, who are saying we want Islamic republic, want to say "yes" to Islam' (Sahifeh 6:376).

sovereignty' necessary to republicanism (Nick Pay 2016 : 4-5). Furthermore, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic outlines a power structure that encompasses the three assumptions of the rule of Islamic law, the sovereignty of the guardian-jurist, and equating government and state, bounding individual, civic, and political rights and freedoms to the security of the state. Researchers such as Boroujerdi and Rahimkhani (2018), Alamdari (2005), and Buchta (2000) have extensively studied the mechanisms through which power is centralised in the hands of the Supreme Leader, through specific institutions that ensure a closed circle of power. The diagram below, taken from Boroujerdi (2018), illustrates the power structure of the Islamic Republic and its implications for popular sovereignty. Note that, besides the institutions under the authority of the Supreme Leader, the Guardian Council, whose members are also appointed by the leader, functions as a gatekeeper for prospective candidates across all electoral institutions.



Structure of Power in Postrevolutionary Iran. Source: Mehrzad Boroujerdi, Kourosh Rahimkhani. (2018). *Postrevolutionary Iran* (First edition.). Syracuse University Press. P. 37.

Based on our discussions so far, it seems that there is a form of systemic domination in place. While the Constitution allows the government to exercise control over its citizens through the rule of law, which appears to be non-arbitrary, the fact that this law is based on one specific interpretation of Islam makes it questionable. This means that the Constitution can be seen

as a means of domination that operates on a systematically arbitrary basis, as Blunt (2015) points out (Blunt 2015: 19).

In concluding this chapter, I will analyse the initial draft of the Constitution to demonstrate how it addressed freedom in terms of non-domination. I will also explain how the systemic domination present in the final draft of the Constitution significantly contradicts the concepts of freedom that existed before the clergy took dominating power.

Pettit defines republican freedom as a conception that requires both the absence of domination by others and security against interference on an arbitrary basis. Moreover, what marks arbitrariness, according to Pettit, is the failure of power to align with the interests of the people. (Pettit 1997: 51). The central question of republican freedom is whether power can be challenged and checked, not the extent of interference. Freedom as non-domination is customarily distinguished from freedom as non-interference by means of slavery and its specific features; that is to say, the freedoms that a slave or a free person—a citizen of a free state—is entitled to have.

Moreover, there are different sources and sites of domination that identify different modes of domination (Blunt 2015). According to Pettit (2012), there are personal sources of domination and social sources of domination. Slavery, for instance, exemplifies a social institution dominating its subjects, constituting what is called structural or systemic domination (Hayward 2011; Laborde 2010; Pettit 2012). The next key element of domination is the institutional normative conception of domination as the capacity to impose social relationships and set their status without reference to the dominated agent's interests (Blunt 2015: 8).

In this section, I will delve into the first draft of the Constitution concerning three main themes. The first theme is the extent of the rule of Islamic law and the way the proposed draft addresses different rights and freedoms in situations where there are or are not Islamic alternatives. The second theme concerns the question of popular sovereignty and republican approaches to governmentality. This theme also sheds light on the anti-imperial and anti-colonial spirit of the proposed draft and the balance between freedom as democratic self-determination and national sovereignty or independence.

The first article of the draft Constitution serves as a preamble that summarises the principles of the post-monarchical Islamic republic and contextualises the rest of the articles. It asserts:

> The Iranian Revolution recognises the overthrowing of the despotic order as a means to struggle against cultural, political, and economic colonialism. It aims to establish a cultural revolution grounded in humanism and human responsibility, fostering a monotheistic order, national unity, piety, and development of human faculties. Additionally, it seeks to eradicate the moral effects of capitalist corruption. In pursuing these goals, the revolution draws upon the rich heritage of Islam and the advancements of human knowledge and culture.

In addition to the above article that mentions the Islamic heritage as one source of knowledge, seventeen articles out of 160 mention Islam and Islamic principles in different capacities. Articles 5, 6, 29, and 44 have a moral tone that values spiritual-ethical conduct and justice. For instance, Article 5 asserts that 'the Iranian Revolution seeks political spirituality in all administrative and political practices and moralising legal and economic relationships'—Note the expression "political spirituality" here that is reminiscent of Foucault's and Shariati's moral approaches to politics. Apart from these articles that invoke Islamic virtues and ethical conduct, Article 7 quotes two Quranic verses on the subject of deliberation to address public self-determination through local councils. It should be noted that the Iranian government is officially referred to as the Islamic Republic. However, upon collectively reading Articles 1 to 7, it becomes apparent that the adjective "Islamic" signifies the political spirituality mentioned in Article 5. This connotation is evidently distinct from what "Islamic" implies in the finalised draft.

Article 14 outlines the Islamic Republic government as one 'founded on democratic principles and inspired by transcendent teachings of Islam'. Meanwhile, Article 15 specifically designates Twelver Shi'a Islam as the state religion and, along with Article 90, mandates that the president must adhere to and promote this faith. However, unlike the finalised Constitution, these articles do not restrict presidential candidacy to men. In addition to recognising various branches of Islam, both the initial and final drafts of the Constitution acknowledge Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity but do not extend recognition to other faiths such as the Baha'i faith, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Furthermore, Article 118 restricts cabinet ministers to being Muslim.

One notable distinction from the final draft is the manner in which Islamic principles are integrated into the legislature and judiciary. Article 78 specifies that the national assembly is prohibited from enacting laws that contradict axiomatic principles of the canonical laws of Shi'a Twelver Islam. Although this article does not explicitly outline these axiomatic principles, both Lahidji and Katouzian, two of the authors of the first draft, contend that the drafters intended "principles" to refer solely to the three Islamic principles and nothing more (Lahidji 2010: 55; N Katouzian 2000: 233). Articles 151, 153, and 154 align with the Constitution of 1906 and introduce five Islamic *mujtahids* (sources of emulation) to the Guardian Council to ensure the compliance of laws with those principles. Article 98 also grants this authority to the President of the Republic.

While the initial draft takes a minimalist approach to integrating Islam into the legal system, confining Islamic laws to foundational principles, it is still notably deficient in safeguarding women's rights. The requirement that laws approved by the parliament undergo scrutiny by the *mujtahids* of the Guardian Council to ensure compliance with Islamic laws implies that women are essentially bound by what is dictated in the scripture. This holds true for matters such as *Qisas* or "retaliation in kind", where sacred scripture takes precedence over secular law. Consequently, this has implications for women, perpetuating the inferior status of women in areas such as marriage, divorce, child custody, inheritance, and appearing as a witness in court, alongside the imposition of restrictions such as the prohibition of women judges and, as later enforced by the Islamic Republic, the mandate for veiling (Moghaddam 2002: 1151). The only possibility left for women within this framework and in limited areas of civil law such as Family Law is a narrow window provided by legal procedures like a power of attorney. Yet, even when a man, with benevolence and egalitarian intentions, grants a woman her rights in marriage through a power of attorney, she is still subject to his dominance. From the perspective of republican freedom, the woman's status is akin to that of a slave, experiencing either the presence or absence of non-interference from her master. According to Pettit, this situation exemplifies a form of domination (Pettit 2014: xv).

Considering that during the composition of the initial draft, there were active debates regarding the interpretation of an Islamic government and its connection to the concept of popular sovereignty, both the first and the Islamically inflected second drafts aimed to articulate a republican state and uphold popular sovereignty through a combination of

presidential system, parliamentary structure, and deliberative local councils. Unlike the final draft, the first and second drafts make no reference to the relation between popular sovereignty and God's sovereignty and predicate the powers of government on people's right to sovereignty that must be exercised through elections, referendums, freedom of expression, political parties, and unions. However, as highlighted earlier, the authority of the president was significantly curtailed later on with the introduction of Article 5, which vested ultimate power in the guardian-jurist and placed all three branches of government under his scrutiny and control.

In the initial draft, placing emphasis on the territorial integrity of the state as a representation of national sovereignty (Article 3), Article 12 declares that 'national sovereignty is a collective possession of the entire populace, intended to serve the public interest. No individual or group is entitled to claim it for themselves.' Additionally, Article 16 underscores the 'inviolability of the republican foundation, whether in its entirety or in part'. Universal suffrage is granted to all Iranians aged eighteen and above, irrespective of gender, social status, religion, or political views. Additionally, akin to Article 27 in the final draft, peaceful assemblies are authorised (Article 30), and individuals have the right to form political parties or associations, with an obligation to uphold the principles of 'independence, freedom, popular sovereignty, and the foundations of the Islamic Republic (Article 31).

The distinctions we discussed earlier concerning the responsibilities of the Iranian army and its relationship with both the state and the government become more evident when we compare the relevant articles in all three drafts. As shown in Table 1, the first and the second drafts make a distinction between the state and the government, purportedly the Islamic Republic. However, the final ratified draft equates the state, defined as a sovereign state, with the government operating within that state, which is the "order" or "system" [نظام] of the Islamic Republic.

First Draft (Article 131)	The Iranian National Army shall be responsible for safeguarding independence and defending the homeland and the state.[328]

[328] My translation.

Second Draft (Article 121)	The Iranian Islamic Republic Army shall be responsible for safeguarding the country's independence and territorial integrity.[329]
Finalised Draft (Article 143)	The Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran is responsible for guarding the independence and territorial integrity of the country, as well as the order of the Islamic Republic.[330]

Table 1: A comparison of three constitutional drafts in terms of their provisions on the army, and the relationship between the Islamic government and the state.

Up to this point, my examination has been confined to the texts of draft Constitutions and, to some extent, the constitutional debates that gave rise to Iran's Constitution following a revolution that brought an end to monarchical rule and established a republic. Numerous factors have been left unexplored, including what is known as "realpolitik", the role of terror initiated shortly after Khomeini's consolidation of power, the involvement of the international community, the seizure of the American embassy in Tehran in October 1978 and its impact on constitutional discussions, as well as the populist rhetoric of the Islamists and their use of Islam to advance their agenda and consolidate power.

The primary aim of this chapter has been to illuminate certain intellectual aspects of this Revolution, particularly those related to the question of freedom. I sought to underscore the significant distinction between what Foucault aptly termed "political spirituality" and Khomeini's conception of Islam and governance. Additionally, I aimed to demonstrate that the new establishment diverged from the aspirations of the multitude who fuelled the Revolution but did not desire another dictatorship. The intention was to reveal that, ultimately, the anti-imperialist discourse of the post-revolutionary revolutionaries served as a pretext for ascending to power.

While the preliminary draft of the constitution largely demonstrates a republican conception of freedom, the final draft is articulated more in terms of Islamic governmentality. This means

[329] Translated English text extracted from Central Intelligence Agency (1979), *Text of Draft Iranian Constitution Published.*

[330] Official translation.

that although the final draft has seemingly preserved the central argument of the first draft concerning liberty as non-domination, it has enveloped it in a specific theory of Islamic governmentality to the extent that it has resulted in a systemic violation of the requisites of republican freedom. For Shariati and Al-e Ahmad, liberation from colonialism and imperialism was seen as the foundational step towards creating a political system that would truly benefit its citizens. This system would provide essential resources for implementing social justice, empowering them to exercise democratic freedoms effectively.[331] Their vision was for a government that ensured a level of social welfare sufficient to secure independence and dignity, freeing individuals from reliance on the benevolence of others.[332] In their time, they referred to this concept as democratic socialism. Were they alive today, they might likely refer to it as republican freedom.

[331] I am referring to Chapters Two and Three, especially Maleki's and Al-e Ahmad's advocacy for a social democratic model of government, as well as Shariati's emphatic viewpoint on the intricate connection between social welfare and freedom. I also draw on insights from Mostafa Rahimi's book, *The Principles of Republican Governance*, written contemporaneously with the drafting of the constitution. See Rahimi, M. (1979). *Osul-e Hokumat-e Jomhuri* [The Principles of Republican Government]. Amir Kabir.

[332] I particularly have Pettit's of republican freedom as elaborated in Pettit, P. (2014). *Just freedom: A moral compass for a complex world*. WW Norton & Company.

Conclusion

From the perspective of freedom, there is a term that aptly captures the intricate web of historical events and ideological pursuits spanning the period from the 1953 coup d'état to the 1979 Iranian Revolution: "domination". This means that the fervent struggle for freedom by the revolutionaries during this transformative era can be encapsulated as the rejection of domination. This research has approached the history of the 1979 Iranian Revolution from the perspective of resistance and revolt, aiming to uncover both what the revolutionaries rejected and what they aspired to achieve. Central to this study has been the assumption that their primary pursuit was freedom. Thus, seeking freedom, both from certain constraints and towards specific goals, forms my initial premise and stands as one of the two main hypotheses underpinning this research. In essence, it has posited that the Iranians revolted in a quest for freedom—a liberation from existing conditions to enable new possibilities.

The second hypothesis of this study concerns the interplay between ideas and practice, posing two critical questions: First, how did Iranian intellectuals conceptualise freedom? And second, how did these ideas translate into post-revolutionary practice? These questions require acknowledging diverse approaches to examining the making of the Revolution. Thus, this research has drawn on the findings of multiple histories of the Revolution but has tried to keep a critical eye on certain interpretations, including those studies that analyse it through the prism of Islamism or varying degrees of fundamentalism, and those that see it primarily through the lens of anti-Westernism. The findings of the current research support the argument that while both of these approaches contribute to our understanding of the pre-revolutionary conceptualisations of freedom, they are prone to overlooking a diverse array of ideas whose ultimate goal was not simply the rule of Islamic law, as it was established and exercised by Ayatollah Khomeini and the post-revolutionary Khomeinist faction.

This research has tried to investigate conceptions of freedom between 1953 and 1979 by means of MacCallum's single concept of freedom as a triadic relation between the agents, the impediments or barriers, and the goal(s) to do (or not do) or to become (or not become) something(s).[333] Between 1953 and 1979, the agents of freedom were primarily the Iranian people, represented by intellectuals and various opposition groups that influenced and participated in the Iranian Revolution. These agent-representatives are characterised by their diverse perspectives and contributions to revolutionary discourse, particularly regarding the concept of freedom. Collectively, they formed the opposition to the Pahlavi monarchy, categorised into three main groups: political parties (the Tudeh Party, the National Front, and the Liberation Movement), clerical opposition (mainly Ayatollah Khomeini and Morteza Motahari), and guerrilla organisations (the Organisation of the Iranian People's Guerrilla Freedom Fighters, the Organisation of Iranian People's Freedom Fighters, Marxist *Mojahedin*, and other small Islamic and Marxist groups).[334] All the figures discussed in this study either co-founded, belonged to, or were close to at least one of these opposition groups. Within the realm of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, historians widely agree that Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati significantly influenced the intellectual landscape in the aftermath of the 1953 coup d'état. Consequently, despite not witnessing the realisation of the Revolution, these two prolific writers and influential players emerged as central figures in this study. Shariati and Al-e Ahmad represent two pieces of the puzzle of freedom in this timeframe, but two major ones. This thesis undertook an extended examination of their perspectives on freedom through delving into the formation of their own intellectual frameworks. Although this study has touched on rival conceptions of freedom, resolving this puzzle in its entirety would require that each of the above opposition factions receive thorough attention from the perspective of freedom.

The ideological framework of these agent-representatives of freedom, whom I have often referred to as intellectuals, did not develop in isolation but within a broader entity known as the Third World, mainly characterised by colonial and imperial domination. These intellectuals saw themselves as international thinkers grappling with a shared transnational

[333] MacCallum 1991: 102.

[334] See Abrahamian, E. (1982). *Iran between two revolutions*. Princeton University Press. pp. 450-495

situation. They engaged in ongoing dialogues with their counterparts worldwide—from Latin America to Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and Southeast Asia—resonating with both the colonised nations and the global socialist and Marxist movements that struggled against capitalist exploitation and colonial capitalism. These intellectuals traversed the globe, pursuing studies in Western universities and participating in anti-domination movements in "the metropoles" formed in solidarity with oppressed peoples. They skilfully blended their acquired knowledge and observations with their indigenous methods of resistance. Their struggle for freedom was intricately interwoven with a complex tapestry of global intellectual currents and local traditions. In the case of Al-e Ahmad and Shariati, their thought was deeply influenced by French existentialism and anti-colonial literature, particularly those of Fanon and Césaire, focusing primarily on themes of colonial domination and alienation. Both thinkers conceptualise freedom predominantly as dis-alienation, a nuanced idea thoroughly explored in this thesis. To grasp the nuances and better understand their perspectives, I have placed their thoughts within the post-World War II historical context, marked by anti-colonial wars of independence and the global movement against racism and racialisation. I have contended that any interpretation of Shariati and Al-e Ahmad could not overlook the impact of this historical backdrop and the anti-colonial and post-colonial literature.

The influence of Fanon on Iranian intellectuals is primarily observed in their understanding of freedom and resistance against colonial and imperial domination. Fanon was a notable thinker in post-colonial thought, known for his examination of the psychological and cultural impacts of colonialism. His ideas significantly shaped the intellectual landscape of various anti-colonial movements worldwide, including Iran. More importantly, Fanon's writings provided a theoretical foundation for comprehending the dynamics of colonialism. Iranian intellectuals, particularly Al-e Ahmad and Shariati, resonated with Fanon's representation of the colonised world and the multiple effects of colonial domination. This perspective assisted them in expressing the Iranian experience within the broader context of global anti-colonial struggles. As the prominent advocate of the Westoxication discourse, Al-e Ahmad played a major part in developing the anti-imperial and anti-colonial components of the revolutionary movement. Westoxication extended beyond a simplistic critique of the West, encompassing the broader phenomenon of the colonial-West that exerted dominance over less powerful

nations. Central to the idea of Westoxication was the theme of domination, both in moral and economic terms.

Economically, this domination manifested as colonial capitalism, a phenomenon vividly illustrated by the complex role of the Iranian oil industry in shaping Iran's domestic politics. I have contended that in understanding Westoxication—and also Shariati's thought—the history of the nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry and the 1953 coup d'état in its wake should not be neglected. Westoxication on the moral or psychological level addressed the subjugation of colonised peoples—the agents of freedom—who were collectively viewed as marginalised and oppressed. This interpretation of Westoxication aligns with Fanon's views in *Les Damnés de la terre*, where he critiques colonial capitalism for exploiting colonised territories not only for their natural resources but also as markets for consumption, thereby creating a new form of global class division, operating on alienation. Al-e Ahmad, too, contended that colonial relationships emerge when there is a decline in mutual agency and reciprocity across intellectual, religious, and economic interactions, leading to alienation and loss of agency for one of the parties involved. This alienation, central to his thesis, signifies a loss of identity and self-determination due to colonial influence. He described Westoxication as a condition where individuals and societies, overwhelmed by Western influence and values, lose their authentic selves and develop an inferiority complex. Remember Fanon's observations of colonised peoples seeking to assimilate into the coloniser's culture, thus losing their cultural uniqueness and falling into a form of pseudo-democracy that superficially adopts Western models without embodying their true freedoms.

Fanon, Al-e Ahmad, and Shariati delve into the complex dynamics of an individual's status within a society and a nation's standing among other nations. Central to their inquiry is the determination of whether an individual, a group of individuals, or a nation experiences domination. Shariati was not hesitant to synthesise various ideologies and theories, such as Islamic theology and French existentialism, if he believed the amalgamation could effectively address contemporary challenges. Shariati's existentialism, intertwined with Fanonian views, emphasised human freedom in a way that transcended both colonial-Western and regressive-religious limitations. He sought to create a unifying theory of freedom that could mobilise people around an existentialist, monotheistic ideology for revolutionary action. However, his approach contrasted with Fanon's focus on lived experiences, leaning more towards a

theological narrative aligned with anti-colonial humanism. Moreover, he found certain Marxist arguments too pertinent to ignore and similarly valued existentialism for its emphasis on radical human freedom. Shariati reinterpreted the figures of Iranian Shi'a heritage, recasting them as symbols of resistance against domination in light of the social and political issues of his time. His grand theory of freedom allowed for critical analysis of power relations affecting individuals, groups, or nations as agents of freedom. This theory was founded on his basic formulation of domination: wealth, power, and hypocrisy. The agents of freedom were all those peoples who were trapped within this "evil trinity" that could take on several forms such as capitalism and colonial exploitation, the Shah's despotic power or colonial domination, and religious deception that justified the tyrannical rules.[335] Shariati, while a religious intellectual, initially positioned himself against the clergy, criticising an institutionalised religion where the clergy, as a social class, enjoyed privileges stemming from their position. In his critical theory, Shariati identified the clergy as one of three pillars of domination, alongside despotism and exploitation. He argued that the clergy often allied with the other two pillars, deceiving people into accepting their oppressed status rather than encouraging resistance.

The second variable of MacCallum's triadic concept of freedom is thus clear. From the viewpoint of Al-e Ahmad and Shariati, the agents of freedom were the wretched of the Earth: the colonised, oppressed, exploited, and deceived, who sought freedom from multiple constraints and conditions related to colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism. They articulated these conditions as foreign domination and influence, systematic dehumanisation and psychological colonisation, dependent dictatorship of the Pahlavi regime, imposed modernisation and westernisation, arbitrary interference and lack of political participation, economic exploitation and inequality, and religious subjugation, which was mainly theorised by Shariati. Let us summarise these impediments to freedom as reflected in the influential intellectual discourses of the 1960s and 1970s.

Since the 1953 coup d'état, a primary objective was liberation from Western powers' cultural, economic, and political domination, that is, Westoxication. As an intellectual discourse, it highlighted the need to break free from Western cultural influences and economic

[335] Rahnema 2008: 216; Byrd 2021: 110.

exploitation, which were seen as eroding Iran's indigenous culture and national and popular sovereignty. Along with issues around the nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry, Chapter Two of this study delved into the Shah's modernisation and Westernisation policies that were enforced through dictatorial means. The White Revolution and the Resurgence Party, as the country's single political party, exemplified this. I argued that the Iranian sense of alienation needs to be scrutinised in association with the White Revolution's top-down approach to modernisation and westernisation, which stifled political participation under the guise of progress. Al-e Ahmad's stance against this form of domination highlighted the need for cultural and intellectual revival, exploring resistance strategies across various ideologies, including Islam and the local ethos prevalent in traditional communities. This approach underscores his pursuit of freedom through transcending the constraints of colonialism, advocating for a dual liberation encompassing both national sovereignty and individual consciousness—essentially, a liberation of both land and mind. Al-e Ahmad's discourse on Westoxication can be understood as a phenomenology of semi-colonisation and a pathology of domination and national depersonalisation. In this light, the Shah's arbitrary power was regarded as the greatest obstacle to achieving political liberty and practising the right to national sovereignty.

This brings us to MacCallum's third variable: the goal of freedom—something to do (or not do) or to become (or not become). Embedded in the intellectuals' struggle for freedom, there was a concrete aim to resist economic models that perpetuated global inequality and exploitation, especially those that benefited Western capitalist interests at the expense of Iranian resources and labour. In essence, the agents of freedom in the context of the Iranian Revolution and its intellectual underpinnings sought freedom from external domination and internal authoritarianism, both of which were seen as impediments to genuine self-determination and socio-economic justice.

In the context of the Iranian 1979 Revolution, the aims of freedom might seem more complicated than the other two variables. The revolutionaries did know what they did not want. However, these aims were multifaceted, reflecting the diverse aspirations of the intellectual and revolutionary agents involved in the Revolution. They were also deeply intertwined with the socio-political and historical context described above. Yet, there are questions that need to be answered: What did the revolutionary intellectuals aim for? What

form of government did they want? Supposing that they wanted an Islamic government, what was it that they imagined? To what extent does Khomeini's Islamic Republic match the fundamental aspirations of those who are thought to be the intellectual founders of the Revolution? Or, even more simply, did they pursue substituting one authoritarian regime with another authoritarian regime?

As representatives of the agents of freedom, the intellectuals studied in this research sought cultural dis-alienation in order to reclaim national sovereignty and practice popular sovereignty. They wanted freedom for democratic self-determination, that is, establishing a political system based on democratic principles where the people had the right to participate in governance and making decisions that affected their lives. Both Al-e Ahmad and Shariati maintained that achieving democratic self-determination necessitates a fundamental self-transformation, transitioning from subjects under domination to autonomous individuals capable of forming an independent collective. While Al-e Ahmad offered a psychopathological analysis of the impacts of subjugation, Shariati re-envisioned Iran's Shi'a heritage, formulating a concept of revolutionary subjectivity.

As discussed in Chapters Two, Three, and Four, they envisaged a republican form of government founded on the principles of protecting the rights and freedoms of all its citizens and ensuring social and economic justice. This aim involved ensuring that any master, either a foreign power, a political leader, a religious authority, or the powerful owners of capital, did not dominate citizens. These aims of freedom were deeply interconnected, reflecting a comprehensive approach to liberation that encompassed political, cultural, social, and psychological dimensions. They illustrate a collective aspiration for a society where freedom is realised not just as independence from foreign domination but also as the establishment of just, equitable, and democratic structures that affirm the dignity and rights of every individual. The 'Third-Way' solution that Al-e Ahmad and his mentor, Khalil Maleki, theorised was a Third-Worldist social-democratic form of government to address a more equitable distribution of resources and an economic system that served the collective welfare of all citizens rather than benefiting a privileged few.

However, the agents, impediments, and aims for freedom that we have just observed stand in stark contrast to what took place after the Revolution. Following the 1979 Revolution, Shariati was initially hailed as the main ideologue of the Islamic Revolution, a claim that has

recently been critically re-evaluated.[336] In order to address the inconsistency between pre- and post-revolutionary conceptions of freedom, I presented in Chapter Three a comprehensive overview of Shariati's thoughts, particularly focusing on his concept of freedom. This background is crucial to understanding not only his unique perspective on freedom but also this non-negligible discrepancy. Accordingly, in Chapter Four, I explored Foucault's notion of political spirituality, analysing it alongside Shariati's fundamental ideas and all his references to the question of freedom. I argued that this conversation between Foucault and Shariati helps us to contextualise and thus better understand one of the most controversial episodes of Foucault's intellectual life—the Iran reports and the introduction of political spirituality. Moreover, I argued that political spirituality could be used to distinguish between different strands of Islamic thought, namely, between Shariati's and Khomeini's. Accordingly, the stark differences between Shariati's interpretation of Islam and the post-Revolution order, or the rule of Islamic law based on Khomeini's narrative of Islam and Islamic government, are then brought to the fore in Chapter Five.

In Chapter Five, I built on the divergence between Shariati's existentialist Islam and Khomeini's normative Islamic governmentality as outlined in his political theory of the Guardianship of the Jurist. These contrasting perspectives have significant implications for the concept of freedom, which is evident in the different drafts of the post-revolutionary constitution. To analyse these implications, I employed the theoretical framework and methodology of this research to compare the initial draft of the constitution with its final version, focusing specifically on their respective treatments of freedom. This comparison aimed to shed light on how the evolution from the initial to the final draft reflects the shift from a broader, more inclusive understanding of freedom, as envisaged in the early stages of the Revolution, to a more constrained interpretation aligned with Khomeini's views.

[336] See, for example, Saffari, S. (2017). *Beyond Shariati: Modernity, Cosmopolitanism, and Islam in Iranian Political Thought* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press, p. 11; Saffari, S. (2015). Rethinking the Islam/Modernity Binary: Ali Shariati and Religiously Mediated Discourse of Sociopolitical Development. *Middle East Critique*, *24*(3), p.237; Saffari, S. (2019). Ali Shariati and Cosmopolitan Localism. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, *39*(2). p.282; Davari, A., & Saffari, S. (2022). Thought/Translation and the Situations of Decolonization. *Philosophy and Global Affairs*; Byrd, D. J., & Miri, S. J. (2017). *Ali Shariati and the Future of Social Theory: Religion, Revolution, and the Role of the Intellectual* (1st ed., Vol. 115). BRILL. P.8.

Suppose we accept Isaiah Berlin's assumption, which posits that notions of freedom are intrinsically linked to perceptions of self and humanity. In that case, we can understand Shariati's concept of freedom as stemming from his view of what it means to be human. Shariati's interpretation of humanity and freedom points to a political theory that fundamentally opposes subjugation under any religious or political authority, such as the Guardianship of the Jurist. Human freedom cannot be compensated for any transcendental value, and humanity should not be forced toward salvation, as Khomeini contended. It must be remembered that Shariati's political theory is fundamentally predicated on his conception of freedom, just as Fanon's existentialist perspective on humanity underpins a political theory aimed at eradicating systemic domination. Shariati's existentialist approach, informed by Fanonian ideas, advocates for a conception of human freedom that surpasses both colonial-Western influences and conservative religious constraints. His goal was to forge a comprehensive theory of freedom that could rally people around a revolutionary, existentialist, monotheistic ideology.

Furthermore, Fanon, Al-e Ahmad, and Shariati emphasise the necessity of equitable social structures that ensure equal access to resources and fair participation in political decision-making. This aspect of their thought aligns them with republican political theories. Viewed from this angle, the initial draft of the constitution laid the groundwork for social infrastructures typically associated with socialist governance. It also aimed to safeguard the basic liberties of citizens, embodying republican principles as much as it reflected socialist values. This dual focus in the first draft of the constitution demonstrates an attempt to blend socialist and republican elements in shaping the foundations of governance. Let us not forget that Iranian constitutionalists of the early twentieth century had already deliberated on constitutionalism and freedom as the rule of law, as they had come to terms with the compatibility of Islam with democratic self-determination.

However, there is an ongoing debate on the role and nature of Islam during the formation of the Revolution. Was this Revolution Islamic in the sense that its primary goal was establishing an Islamic state? This research has provided multiple examples to support the hypothesis that Islam was a vehicle of the Revolution, not its ultimate goal. It also aligns with the views of scholars of Iranian intellectual history, suggesting that the roots of the 1979 Revolution must be traced back to at least 1953 rather than beginning in 1962 with Khomeini's speech against

the Shah; that anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism were the common threads that unified diverse revolutionary ideologies.[337]

It was also argued that the Revolution aimed not for the kind of salvation defined by Khomeini or interpreted in the constitutional discussions but for freedom from a dependent dictatorship. Dependency signified Iran's semi-colonial status, while dictatorship represented the lack of political participation and democratic self-determination. In cases like Shariati's, where there was a strong emphasis on spirituality and the need for revolutionary self-transformation, self-determination took on an additional meaning. This secondary connotation echoed what Al-e Ahmad referred to as the decolonisation of the colonised or Westoxicated minds. It held that in order to effectively combat imperialism and colonialism, colonially dominated peoples needed first to overcome their inferiority complex and self-perceptions shaped by colonialism. This, however, did not imply an incapacity for democratic self-determination; rather, it highlighted that the battle against colonial domination needed to be waged on two fronts simultaneously: the self and the nation. The revolutionaries sought to free themselves from both external control and internalised colonial mindsets, striving for a holistic liberation that encompassed both national sovereignty and personal empowerment.

I attempted to demonstrate that Khomeini's conception of Islamic governmentality paradoxically preserved the very aspects of the *ancien régime* that the revolutionary movement sought to negate. There have been arguments that the 1979 Revolution is incomplete, with its original goals, particularly self-determination and genuine republicanism, still unfulfilled.[338] These discussions also touch on the relationship between Islam and politics in our present time. It seems to be the right time to recall Foucault's insightful question that he posed in his most controversial article on revolutionary Iran: 'In this will for an "Islamic

[337] See, for example, Keddie, N. R., & Richard, Y. (2006). *Modern Iran roots and results of revolution* (Updated edition.). Yale University Press. p. 320; Abrahamian, E. (2001). The 1953 Coup in Iran. *Science & Society (New York. 1936)*, *65*(2). pp. 182–215.

[338] See Alessandrini, A. C. (2018). Foucault, Fanon, Intellectuals, Revolutions. In J. K. Watson & G. Wilder (Eds.), *The Postcolonial Contemporary: Political Imaginaries for the Global Present* (1st ed., pp. 31–54). Fordham University Press. p.47; Delkhasteh, M. (2007). *Islamic discourses of power and freedom in the Iranian Revolution, 1979-81*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.p.15.

government," should one see a reconciliation, a contradiction, or the threshold of something new?'[339]

Forty-five years after the moment when it was still possible to view the Revolution as the threshold of something new, the political climate in Iran suggests a contradiction rather than a reconciliation between (Shi'a) Islam and state power. The election of President Mohammad Khatami in 1998 was a strong manifestation of the public's desire for reform. However, the near-total quashing of the reformist movement after the 2009 presidential elections dramatically affected this fragile relationship. At best, the persistent unrest and dying calls for reform indicate that the revolutionary aspirations for a system that desired to harmonise religious principles with democratic values and self-determination remain unachieved. While religious factions within the opposition aim to liberate Islam from the arbitrary governance of the Islamic government, non-religious groups are advocating for a complete separation of religion and state.

The 2009 post-election uprisings and the Green Movement focused on asserting the right to popular sovereignty and reviving the republican component of the Islamic Republic. During this time, freedom was primarily associated with democratic self-determination or even bound with it existentially, reflected by the enduring slogan "either death or freedom". The most recent phase of the uprisings that sparked by Mahsa Amini's death in custody in 2022 is notably driven by women advocating for autonomy and individual freedoms. There is much to explore in this field, not only in terms of continuities and changes in perceiving freedom but also in terms of the relationship between forms of resistance and practising freedom. Moreover, this thesis paves the way for more in-depth investigations of the transformation of the meaning of freedom over the past four decades.

If we agree with those who contend that the 1979 Revolution is an unfinished project, then, unlike the revolutionaries of the 1970s, who primarily sought freedom from dependent dictatorship and overlooked, for instance, the significance of resolving the question of women's equal rights and individual liberties vis-à-vis Islam, today's revolutionaries are championing these previously less prominent issues. Using the terminology that echoes the

[339] FIR:208.

core notions of republican freedom, women are leading a movement that is fundamentally rejecting alien control, inspecting myriad forms of domination, and reclaiming citizenship. The *Woman, Life, Freedom* movement evokes a question that Foucault raised in 1979, soon after post-revolutionary disillusionments: 'Is it useless to revolt?'[340]

[340] Title of Foucault's article published on May 11–12, 1979 in Le Monde. Foucault in FIR: 263.

Appendix

1. Space, Time, and the Intellectual: Locating Shariati

Shariati is a synthetic critical theorist, frequently drawing on early and mid-twentieth century Marxist, existentialist, and anti-colonial theories. At the same time, through a critique of these theories he presents his own narrative of Islam (and Shi'a Islam in particular). This renders his intellectual legacy a rich yet complex constellation of ideas to explore, weaving together theological and philosophical strands in an intricate pattern that is not always straightforward to trace. In fact, Shariati identified himself and other Iranian intellectuals as heirs to the European intellectual tradition, a legacy tracing back to the Enlightenment (CW31: 268). This may seem contradictory for a thinker focused on decolonising Iran's intellectual tradition. In Shariati's works, there is a clear call for a 'return to self' and Islamic heritage, yet his thoughts are profoundly shaped by his French mentors (CW4: 18). He not only acknowledges this influence but frequently highlights his French connections.

Shariati's main themes of concern arose and developed in response to the Cold-War-affected world, and were shared with Al-e Ahmad, Che Guevara, Fanon, Sartre, and Camus—figures with whom he was constantly in conversation. With Iran finding itself at the crossroads between ideologies advocated by the Capitalist nations and the Communist Bloc, Shariati attempted to formulate an authentic alternative framework, reducible neither to liberalism nor to socialism simpliciter, and capable of addressing the questions of the day, arising mostly from Marxian discourse. In this section, I will navigate through Shariati's writings in light of his theoretical synthesis, or what he calls 'ideology', and his political engagements, or what he calls 'strategy', showing how his strategy might have modified his ideology (similar to Al-e Ahmad), and arguing that he tailored Islamic theology to fit existentialism. This leaves him not with a straightforwardly theistic re-formulation of existentialist concerns—although he does often refer to Kierkegaard—but with a uniquely Shariatian one.

Shariati's 'ideology' and 'strategy' are intertwined with his understanding of the intellectual and with the fundamental question of universality. He questions the universality of any given ideology and strategy, holding all such positions to be basically subject to 'specific conditions

of [any] social transformation' (WTS: 4). In other words, social transformations do not occur in isolation, but are conceived in relation to a situation, that is the social and historical context: social transformations are the processes through which an old (social) system is replaced with a new one within the context of a given society with specific characteristics at a given moment in history (WTS: 4-5). Consequently, comprehending what Shariati meant by the universal and its opposite—the particular—constitutes an indispensable part of any assessment of his thought, including the present exploration of his idea freedom. In this section, I will thus argue that Shariati's synthetic approach cannot straightforwardly be reduced to a jack-of-all-trades amateurism or what Amanat calls an 'eclectic worldview' (Amanat 2017: 695). Accordingly, through revisiting Shariati's different approaches toward articulating the concept of freedom, I will argue that his understanding of religion (particularly Islam) cannot be straightforwardly reduced to Islamic fundamentalism, as opposed to Enlightenment rationalism, but must rather be viewed as an alternative path toward specific universal values which also inform Fanon's concept of a 'new man' (WE: 239).

Shariati is, above all, an *intellectuel engagé* and his intellectual efforts to formulate a critical theoretical framework need to be investigated in line with his emphasis on practical engagement with social and political life. In this sense, he echoes the French tradition of engaged literature and the committed intellectual, exemplified in Sartre and Camus. On the other hand, however, Shariati's understanding of the situation and its implications resonates with Al-e Ahmad's Westoxication theory in terms of identifying the maleficence of imperial and colonial domination. Arguing that an intellectual should be cautious of the situation, Shariati challenges the idea that concepts are straightforwardly universal and develops his critical sociology around his central theory that concepts have a temporal and spatial situatedness that needs to be taken into account. Shariati contends that any given thesis, developed by a given thinker, has a 'geography' that affects a society in certain ways at a given time; thus, anachronistic misplacement of ideas could have catastrophic consequences (WTS: 32).[341]

[341] Regarding 'time', Shariati gives the example of Francis Bacon to accentuate the temporal significance of intellectual work as critique of the status quo: 'Francis Bacon is an intellectual in his own time… Francis Bacon of today in Europe should talk against the Bacon of yesterday to lead people and knowledge' (WTS: 23).

Shariati elucidates his point through a quite familiar example of such misplacements: the case of Sartre and his ideas. Shariati argues that Sartre's ideas have emerged and make sense in the context of Western Europe and the capitalist 'industrialised West' with its 'specific class system' and specific 'social psychology of post-World War II', and 'within a society having distanced itself from the religious Middle Ages for three or four centuries' (WTS: 18). It follows that, in societies such as 'Asia, Africa, or Latin America that seek to free [themselves] from poverty, deficiency, famine, and ignorance, a Sartre-like 'saviour' or a Sartre-duplicate who repeats his ideas on the problem of 'consumerism', for instance, regardless of the specificities of both the host and the guest contexts would be a 'ridiculous catastrophe', where famine 'massacres' people on the one hand, and 'specific religious views and philosophical worldviews have deprived them of material [aspects of] life' on the other hand (WTS: 19-20).[342] Shariati argues that just as there exists no 'universal pastor', there cannot exist a 'universal intellectual leader' but only an 'intellectual leader of somewhere' and bounded within some time (WTS: 22). An intellectual—such as the Iranian intellectual of Shariati's own day— has 'a mission', 'a responsibility' to 'know oneself', to engage with the society and 'navigate' it, thus she or he cannot be a copy (*copié*) of the original European intellectual, who has 'evolved' through her or his specifically European 'historical and social circumstances' (CW20: 65-66). Nevertheless, Shariati's arguments on spatial-temporal anachronism might seem paradoxical with regard to his own extensive intellectual borrowings from French existentialism, from Marx, and from and Fanonian anti-colonial discourse. Indeed, he drew upon 'diverse political liberation philosophies' and 'freely appropriated' them into his religious theory (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2016: 88-89).

However, Shariati contends that geographical boundaries do not necessarily align with cultural ones, indicating that cultures are in a perpetual dialogue with each other. Consequently, it becomes impossible to segregate and extract specific elements, such as Greek thought, from a composite culture like that of Iran. This viewpoint underscores the intertwined nature of cultural influences and the complexity of identifying distinct cultural origins within any single cultural identity (CW2: 120-121). This indicates that Shariati's

[342] Shariati refers to Sartre's preface to Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* to show the context where Sartre, in particular and the intellectual in general can be considered an effective agent of social transformation and a "saviour".

emphasis on the implications of the geographic origins of ideas and theories should not be understood in terms of East and West identity politics; rather, it is to be taken in the spirit of Fanon's assertion that 'a Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched when it comes to the colonial issue' (WE: 5). This necessitates that problematisation be context-sensitive; particularly in a colonial setting, where, in this example, the proletariat or bourgeoisie cannot be equated with their European counterparts. In this light, as French existentialism evolved in response to issues rooted in the Western historical milieu, Shariati advocates for an 'Eastern existentialism' that acknowledges the unique challenges of non-Western contexts, including the East and specifically Iran. He perceives himself as an intellectual who thinks 'bi-culturally' and possesses a 'dual lexicon', encompassing both Eastern and Western perspectives, while simultaneously introducing concepts that are innovative in both the East and the West (CW20: 150-151).

Shariati locates the 'intellectual' in three overlapping contexts: the local, the trans-local, and the universal. On the local level, he emphasises consistently throughout his writings and lectures that an intellectual's engagement with his or her social and political environment should necessarily be vigilant about the particularities and exigencies of the local context (CW20: 66). However, this does not mean that intellectuals should avoid drawing inspiration from foreign—say, Western—ideas or confine themselves exclusively to their own intellectual traditions. Indeed, it quite plausibly points to the opposite: They need to expose themselves to different perspectives and different worlds. Intellectuals, from Shariati's perspective, are those who engage with their societies 'organically' in the Gramscian sense,[343] by means of 'revolutionary, constructive, and inspiring' social theories in order to 'analyse social defects', 'create self-awareness in people', and 'set a shared aim and ideal' in order to transform and 'mobilise the society' (WTS: 17-18). In this sense, their sharing of such characteristics is universal; however, there is no universal intellectual, nor is there an 'Enlightenment rationality' as a universal reference point lying at the heart of 'the internal logic of a universal History', as Ghamari-Tabrizi notes (2016: 16). This conceptualisation of the intellectual

[343] From Gramsci's Marxist perspective, intellectuals are divided into two groups: organic and traditional. Traditional intellectuals are those 'who have a tradition going back to an earlier historical period', somehow maintaining the status quo, and disconnected from the population. Organic intellectuals are those who actively engage with the society, represent social classes, and whom 'any new progressive class needs to organize a new social order' (Bottomore 1991: 222).

facilitates the positioning of a local context within a broader, trans-local global framework. This includes entities like the Muslim world, the Third World, or colonised nations, unified by shared objectives and common ideas. Such a perspective elucidates how Shariati, despite fundamental differences, could draw inspiration from Fanon. This approach underscores the importance of interconnectedness and shared experiences across diverse global contexts, allowing for a rich exchange of ideas and inspirations across different cultural and political landscapes. This essentially critical approach provides an intellectual, such as Shariati himself, with an opportunity to enter into conversation with a diverse range of philosophies (Western or non-Western) and critically re-evaluate traditions, including religion, without losing sight of the particularities of the society in question.

Shariati's contentions on the issue of locality and universality are more a matter of avoiding what he calls 'false links', rather than implying a Western/non-Western dichotomy. This notion of 'false links' is a central concept in Shariati's philosophy. This refers to the misplacement of ideas in contexts where they lose their original significance. It suggests that awareness of a situation and its demands involves not merely judging an idea as 'true or false'. Rather, it requires examining the idea within a specific historical context to determine if its adoption in a particular society could be detrimental in terms of issues related to domination and freedom (WTS: 34). Shariati uses several examples to explain his concept of false links, arguing that African nationalism is a prime instance of such false links. He asserts that African nations must recognise that replicating the model of European nationalism is not beneficial for them. Instead, what they critically require is a 'great African unity' to oppose colonialism. It is crucial for these nations to acknowledge their 'common fate' rather than seeking a form of African nationalism that may not address their collective challenges and needs (WTS: 33).

Similarly, promoting the 'progressive ideas of figures such as Rousseau and Voltaire' in Algeria—although they were not false, Shariati insists—created 'the biggest of disasters in Northern Africa' (WTS: 33)[344] and 'Nationalism in the Ottoman Caliphate was colonialism's knife to eat out Islam, with its leaders being the British Lawrence and Faisal!' (WTS: 34).[345] By

[344] It seems that Shariati is referring to Fanon's article *Mr. Debré's Desperate Endeavors* in Fanon's *Toward the African Revolution* (first published in El Moudjahid, No. 37, February 25, 1959).

[345] The story of Lawrence is a familiar example of colonialism in the Middle East. T.E. Lawrence, known as Lawrence of Arabia, and Prince Faisal of Saudi Arabia formed a crucial alliance during World War I. Lawrence, a

neglecting the situation and the elements of space and time, 'right ideas' would generate 'false links', as Shariati explains, and 'false links' could legitimise domination in that they 'serve as justifying tools to create made-up relationships, baseless kinships, and fabricated co-existence among the classes, nations, or social groups which ought to stand against one another' (WTS: 34). Such 'pseudo-coexistences' and 'pseudo-relationships' that are based on religious, ethnic, racial, and humanistic 'commonalities', in Shariati's words, remind us of the point that Fanon makes regarding the dynamics of false links in the colonised world and how they serve to 'maintain domination':

> During the period of liberation, however, the colonialist bourgeoisie frantically seeks contact with the colonized "elite." It is with this elite that the famous dialogue on values is established. When the colonialist bourgeoisie realizes it is impossible to maintain its domination over the colonies it decides to wage a rearguard campaign in the fields of culture, values, and technology, etc (WE: 9).

Fanon insists that for the colonised people 'the most essential' and 'the most meaningful' value is 'land' because only land would 'provide bread and, naturally, dignity' for them. This contention does not imply that the concept of 'human dignity' must be rejected in the colonised context because it has its origin in the West, but it does imply that appealing to 'human dignity' as a universal value is yet another tool of suppression in the colonisers' hands, used—and how ironically!—to deny the colonised their own 'human dignity'. Fanon insists that '[t]he famous dictum which states that all men are equal will find its illustration in the colonies only when the colonized subject states he is equal to the colonist'; and it would eventuate only through 'the collapse of an entire moral and material universe'. It will not arise through adopting 'the abstract, universal values of the colonizer' in a colonised situation 'because they have nothing in common with the real-life struggle in which the people are

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British officer with deep knowledge of the Middle East, was tasked to support the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire, aligning with Prince Faisal's leadership. Their collaboration included strategic guerrilla warfare, notably capturing Aqaba, significantly impacting the Ottoman's strength. Despite the initial goal of an independent Arab state, post-war divisions led to Arab disillusionment with Western promises. See Lawrence's autobiography: Lawrence, T. E. (1946). *Seven pillars of wisdom: a triumph*. Cape. See also Anderson, S. (2014). *Lawrence in Arabia: War, deceit, imperial folly and the making of the modern Middle East*. Atlantic Books Ltd; and Rogan, E. (2015). *The fall of the Ottomans: the Great War in the Middle East, 1914–1920*. Penguin UK.

engaged' (WE: 9, 11).[346] Shariati, probably inspired by Fanon's radical criticism in the opening pages of *The Wretched of the Earth*, discusses the idea of humanism in the colonised context as another instance of a false link:

> Humanism is a thesis employed by the world powers ruling the world and the fate of nations to create a deceitful relationship between the coloniser and the colonised human being, to wipe out the sense of antagonism, struggle, and vengeance, and make them into overall mystical-humanistic peace. Of course, it is clear that I am not speaking of the philosophy of humanism; certainly, humanity is a divine truth. But, in whose hands is this divine truth now? When and why is it promoted? (WTS: 35).[347]

Thus, the intellectual should primarily identify 'the historical stage' in which she or he is situated in order to 'enlighten the people' through shining a light on the false links that have entered their thinking (WTS: 40). The environment in which Shariati finds himself is that of 'resisting and surviving intellectual, social, economic, and human assaults to which we are now exposed' (WTS: 5). Ehsan Shariati, sociologist and Ali Shariati's son, affirms in *Le Fanon persan: Lecture de Fanon par Shariati* (2004) that (Ali) Shariati perceives the (Iranian) intellectual to be situated 'at the interference of two extremes: the traditional pole inherited from our past, and the imitation pole, copied from the European civilisation':

> In the Eastern society, Islamic societies as well as our own society, each of these poles has fixed its frame, recognised its values, defined and determined its principles, and selected its official guardians… between these two poles are "misguided intellectuals" who can neither submit to the inherited frameworks and fossilise in its outdated cast…

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[346] Fanon writes in *The Wretched of the Earth*: 'In its narcissistic monologue the colonialist bourgeoisie, by way of its academics, had implanted in the minds of the colonized that the essential values -meaning Western values remain eternal l despite all errors attributable to man. The colonized intellectual accepted the cogency of these ideas and there in the back of his mind stood a sentinel on duty guarding the Greco-Roman pedestal. But during the struggle for liberation, when the colonized intellectual touches base again with his people, this artificial sentinel is smashed to smithereens. All the Mediterranean values, the triumph of the individual, of enlightenment and Beauty turn into pale, lifeless trinkets. All those discourses appear a jumble of dead words. Those values which seemed to ennoble the soul prove worthless because they have nothing in common with the real-life struggle in which the people are engaged' (WE: 11).

[347] اومانیسم تزی است که بوسیله قدرتمندان حاکم بر جهان و بر سرنوشت ملتها استخدام شده تا یک ارتباط دروغین میان انسان استعمارگر و انسان استعمارزده ایجاد کند و حالت تخاصم و مبارزه و کینه بین این دو را از بین برده و تبدیل به یک صلح کلی صوفیانه انسان‌پرستانه کند. البته روشن است که مساله فلسفی و علمی اومانیسم را نمی‌گویم، مسلماً همنوعی یکی از حقایق مقدس است، اما این حقیقت مقدس اکنون در دست چه کسی و در چه زمانی و برای چه کار طرح می‌شود؟

> nor consume the ideological packages coming from the West (Ehsan Shariati, 2004, my translation).[348]

The expressions 'the traditional pole', 'inherited framework', and 'outdated cast' refer to religion. According to Shariati, false links are not limited to the realm of colonialism and imperialism. They can also develop within the context of religion, where there exists a pseudo-relationship based on faith and religious commonalities. Such commonalities, through religious formalism—'fabricated religious rites, rituals, and dictations', in Shariati's words— have created a 'false and superficial unity' between two opposing groups, 'the exploiter and the exploited', that should share nothing but 'enmity' (WTS: 35-36). The reason for the antagonism between these two groups, according to Shariati, stems from the exploitation of one group by the other through religion. The exploiting group has effectively crafted a new religion, one that serves as the religion of the exploitative ruling class, to justify and maintain its control:

> Religion… gradually assumed the form of an ecclesiastical establishment and gave rise to a new class. As part of the ruling class, it formed social ties with the other elements of that class. The unfortunate consequence was that religion and *irfān* were transformed into a superstitious rationale for the exploitation of the people by the ruling class and into an enemy of human growth, the growth of man's primordial nature. *Irfān* became a shackle on the foot of the spiritual and material evolution of mankind. Those spirits who sought freedom necessarily found themselves opposing such a religion; they had no alternative (MOWF: 102).

Shariati's radical criticism of religion as an established institution representing a social class constitutes a key argument integral to his thought in general and to his formulation of freedom in particular which the above paragraph briefly addresses in terms of false links. Thus, it is the intellectuals' responsibility to expose these false links with respect to the

[348] 'Notre intellectuel se trouve aujourd'hui à l'interférence de ses de pôles : le pôle traditionnel hérité de notre passé et le pôle imité, copié pendant ce dernier siècle sur la civilisation européenne. Dans la société orientale, les sociétés islamiques et notre propre société, chacun de ces pôles a son moule fixé, ses valeurs reconnus, ses principes définis, déterminés, ses gardien officiels sélectionnés... entre ces deux pôles, se trouvent des « intellectuels égarés » qui ne peuvent ni se résigner aux cadres hérités et se scléroser dans ces moules dépassés… ni consommer les emballages idéologiques venus 'Occident''. See Shariati, Ehsan (2004) *Le Fanon persan : Lecture de Fanon par Shariati*. http://1libertaire.free.fr/FFanon29.html

conditions of a given context. Shariati often refers to the three elements of domination *zar* (money), *zur* (power), and *tazvir* (religious deception or hypocrisy) in this regard.

2. *Āzādegi* and *Āzādi*: Investigating the Possibility of Comparing Parrhēsia with *Āzādegi*

In the Persian culture and language, the term *āzādi* literally denotes freedom or liberty, while the term *āzādegi* is associated with the concept of freedom. In their broadest sense, *āzādegi* refers to the state or status of being free, and *āzādeh* denotes the person who is characterised with *āzādegi*, literally meaning the person who is free or has been freed. Although these two terms share the same root with *āzād* (free) and *āzādi* as the equivalent of freedom or liberty in a rather modern sense, *āzādegi* and *āzādeh* are highly nuanced cultural concepts, both in contemporary Persian and throughout the history of Persian literature, that refer to a certain quality and attitude in a person. The nuanced meanings of these two Persian notions have consequently created a conceptual confusion in studies of the concept of freedom in Iranian political thought. For instance, Katouzian maintains that the term *āzādi* (freedom) has been 'traditionally equated with licence and chaos' and was perceived as the opposite of *āzādegi*, which 'referred to contentment and otherworldliness' (Katouzian 2009b: 159). In another recent study, Mirsepassi (2019a) uses the term "liberty" for *āzādegi* and "freedom" for *āzādi* in order to distinguish the two concepts (Mirsepassi 2019a: 84). On the one hand, although Katouzian's argument is predicated on ancient Persian literature and the political literature of the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, equating *āzādegi* with 'contentment' and 'unworldliness' reduces it to a metaphysical concept that can be found in the (Iranian) gnostic tradition and neglects the political implications of the term. On the other hand, Mirsepassi's use of liberty for *āzādegi* not only adds to the confusion but also neglects the implications of *āzādegi* for *āzādi* (freedom). Furthermore, *āzādegi* and *āzādi*, unlike freedom and liberty that are customarily used interchangeably in Western philosophical texts, are not interchangeable terms in Persian language in general, and in the Persian political literature in particular. That is to say, a person can be *āzād* or free, but she or he might not necessarily be characterised as *āzādeh* or freed. In a similar vein, a person might not be free as she or he might be in prison but be an *āzādeh* or freed person.

From the point of view of semantics, according to the *Dehkhoda Encyclopedic Dictionary*, *āzādegi* connotes chivalry, magnanimity, gentility, nobility, and honour (Dehkhoda Vol 1: 114). The term also denotes the state of been freed from (something), salvation, and

liberation.[349] *Āzādegi* refers to certain traits or qualities that apply solely to humans; that is to say, an animal cannot be characterised by *āzādegi*. Similarly, if an animal is freed—as a bird might be freed from a cage or breaks itself free from the cage—it cannot be characterised as *āzādeh*, the freed. Literally meaning 'the person who is freed or liberated'—a free man—the adjective *āzādeh* is the opposite of slave or *bandeh* (Dehkhoda Vol 1: 115).[350] The adjective *bandeh*, refers to a person who is characterised by *bandegi*, literally meaning servitude. Similar to *āzādegi*, *bandegi* is a quite nuanced word. Grammatically, *āzādegi* and *bandegi* both refer to a quality and status but they are opposite in meaning. In the Muslim-Iranian context, *bandegi* [servitude] is also a term that defines the relationship between the Creator and the created: a human being is the *bandeh* of God; literally meaning bound to God. From the point of view of pragmatics, this means that a person can be a *bandeh* of wealth (bound to wealth or a slave to wealth), *bandeh* of power (slave of one's desire to acquire power in order to dominate others, or slave of a powerful and dominant person such as a despot), *bandeh* of one's own desires, *bandeh* of attention, etcetera. In this sense, submission to any power relation, including domination and exploitation, in which a person is not the master, is considered a relationship of *bandegi*. Shariati draws on this implication of *bandegi* to articulate *shirk* (or polytheism) as a relationship of submission between a human being and something or someone other than God. As discussed earlier, this politicisation of the notions of faith and heresy in terms of the relation *bandegi*, as submission to anything or anyone other than God, constitutes the foundation of Shariati's political narrative of Islam. Except for this distinct re-interpretation of faith in terms of *bandegi*, Shariati's use of the concept of *āzādegi* does not differ from its common uses in the Persian language. In the following section, I briefly review the scholarly articles that specifically scrutinise the concept of *āzādegi* in classical Persian poetry and non-scholarly essays that address *āzādegi* as the central theme of their arguments. As we will see, the existing literature on *āzādegi* echoes parrhesiatic discourse in terms of the relation between the subject, freedom, and the truth, in the sense discussed above.

[349] Vārastigi, derived from the infinitive vā-rastan and rastan (intransitive), meaning to free oneself from something. The noun of the adjective vārasteh (the person having been freed from or liberated).

[350] Band [بند] literally means tie, rope, lace, string, braid which (figuratively) means bind, chain, tie.

In one of the earliest pieces of research on the concept of *āzādegi*, Mirsadeghi (1960) investigates the connotations of *āzādegi* in the Persian classical literature from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries and identifies the characteristics by which a person would be described as *āzādeh*. According to this study, *āzādeh* could be understood as the Persian equivalent for the English word "noble" (1960: 794). Mirsadeghi categorises the personality traits attributed to an *āzādeh* into positive and negative behaviours—what a person does or avoids doing. Positively, the *āzādeh* person is noble, generous, hospitable, reliable, honest, humble, selfless, kind and considerate, benevolent, pious, brave, cheerful and stoic, wise and cautious, resilient, and candid. Additionally, *āzādeh* is free from religious regulations; she or he might drink wine although it is forbidden in Islam. *Āzādeh* might be underprivileged but is not ashamed of it; she or he never accepts the humiliation resulting from exchanging wealth with her or his *āzādegi*. *Āzādeh* criticises the power, even though she or he might not have any power; *Āzādeh* is forthright and outspoken—she or he has "a long tongue", a Persian metaphor for outspokenness, and refuses to trade her or his tongue for money. Negatively, the *āzādeh* is not greedy and materialistic; she or he does not submit to desires; she or he does not lie; and she or he does not surrender to oppression and coercion. According to these characteristics, Mirsadeghi concludes that from the twelfth century onward, the *āzādeh* seems to have abandoned outspokenness while sustaining other positive characteristics in response to the social and political transformations of the society. That is to say, *āzādegi* starts to be associated with freedom from materialistic desires and seclusion (1960: 802).

Nasrollah Pourjavadi's study (1992) of the concept of *āzādegi* in the thought of the Persian poet Attār of Nishapur (d. 1220) confirms Mirsadeghi's conclusion that from the twelfth century—which is marked by renowned poets such as Rumi and Hafiz—*āzādegi* has connoted seclusion and freedom from all worldly bonds. In *The Wisdom of the Mad* in *the Masnavi's of Attār* (1992), Pourjavadi argues that in the Persian (gnostic) literature, *āzādegi* has had connotations that resemble Stoic philosophy. He writes that *āzādegi*, from Attar's gnostic perspective, means 'the negation of the material world':

> The humanity of the human being depends on *āzādegi*. Those who are attached to the material world are distanced from their human truth. It is living in the present moment, freed from regretting the past and worrying about the future (1992: 5).

Abbas-Ali Vafaei's research (2008) on the concept of *āzādegi* in the poems of Bidel Dehlavi (1644–1720) shows that *āzādegi* continues to suggest freedom from the bonds of "self", "the world", "reason", and "body" in the seventeenth century (2008: 271-276).

Nevertheless, other studies scrutinise the notion of *āzādegi* from the perspective of "protest literature" and political truth-telling during the same period of time. For instance, in *The Landscape of Āzādegi and Protest Literature in Persian Poetry* (2010), Ali-Mohammad Poshtdar historically contextualises *āzādegi* as a prominent protest theme in Persian classical literature. Similarly, focused on the eleventh-century Persian epic, Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh* or *The Book of Kings* (1010), Kobra Mohammadi's *Confrontation of Āzādegi and Tyranny* (2008) suggests an interpretation of the story of Rostam and Esfandiar, which conceives *āzādegi* as the negation of servitude and an ethos that resists despotic rule to the extent that one favours death over submitting to the tyrant (Mohammadi, 2008: 61).

In addition to the studies on the conceptualisations of *āzādegi* in the classical texts, some literary researchers identify certain figures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century "protest literature" with *āzādegi*, perceived as speaking out the truth to power and revolting against oppression and despotic rule. In *Āzādegi and Struggle against Oppression in Farrokhi Yazdi* (2000), Hussein Razmjou studies the poems of Farrokhi Yazdi (1889–1939), a constitutionalist author, revolutionary and politician, in the light of his activities against domestic despotism and foreign colonialism in the late Qajar and early Pahlavi era. Razmjou characterises Farrokhi Yazdi and his comrades as fearless freedom fighters who courageously speak truth to power knowing that it could cost their lives. According to Razmjou, *āzādegi* refers to a spiritual and ethical characteristic identified with 'indifference to material might', 'defying oppressive powers', and 'fighting for freedom'.

In a similar vein, Hakimeh Dabiran introduces Parvin Etesami (1907–1941), the renowned Iranian female poet, as 'the star of *āzādegi*' for her sharp criticisms of the establishment (Dabiran 1995: 315). Dabiran describes Etesami as an *āzādeh* poet who 'fearlessly uttered everything she had in her heart' although 'she knew that she would finally be the target of selfishness and bloodthirstiness of the beast of her time' (Dabiran 1995: 321-322). Etesami critiques the society, criticises the establishment, and advises others to follow her lead. Dabiran takes the analogy in the following verse as signifying Parvin Etesami's *āzādegi*':

‘When it is to speak, fear not and utter what should be said;
The sword in a jacket is a shame on the battle day’
(Quoted in Dabiran 1995: 315; my translation)[351]

During the years between the 1953 coup and the 1979 Revolution, several essays and lectures address the question of *āzādegi* and its difference from *āzādi* or freedom. For instance, in a journal named *Lessons from the School of Islam*, at least three articles discuss the meaning of *āzādegi* from the Islamic point of view. In 1973, Morteza Motahhari (1919–1979), a clergyman and contemporary of Ali Shariati who opposed many of Shariati’s unorthodox ideas, associates *āzādegi* with piety and self-mastery regarding material desires (1973: 7). In a rather short essay titled *Education for Āzādegi or Servitude* (1976), Davoud Elhami discusses *āzādegi* and servitude from a pedagogical perspective. Contrasting Islamic pedagogy with the Sassanid pre-Islamic pedagogy with regard to freedom of speech, Elhami argues that pre-Islamic values and teachings promoted a servile attitude and punished outspokenness, while Islamic teachings educated its followers according to the principles of *āzādegi*, denounced flattery, and encouraged fearless speech. Elhami’s pedagogical approach to *āzādegi* implies that *āzādegi* is actually a matter of practice and exercising one’s freedom. Moreover, The tone and the wording of this article, as well as its depiction of the pre-Islamic Sassanid Iran (224–651 CE) as being ‘colonised’ and ‘oppressed’ suggests a metaphorical use of the Sassanian dynasty instead of the Pahlavi regime. The essay is an implicit invitation to act like an *āzādeh* (person) and revolt against the Shah (Elhami 1976: 44). For similar reasons, another short note is published anonymously in the next issue of the journal on *āzādegi* that defines it as freedom from servility to worldly concerns and ‘luxury’—since the Shah, the royal family, and the royalists symbolised luxury and a luxurious or materialistic way of life (Elhami 1976: 9).

However, the use of the terms *āzādegi* and *bandegi* in Iranian revolutionary literature is not limited to religious intellectuals. In the essay *Āzādegi or Āzādi?* [*Āzādegi* or Freedom?] in 1977, Mahmoud Etemadzadeh (1915–2006), the prominent Iranian writer, literary translator, and political activist who wrote under the pen name M.A. Behazin, points to the links between freedom and truth and uses the term *bandegi* to mean losing one’s mastery over

[351] وقت سخن مترس و بگو آنچه گفتنی است شمشیر روز معرکه زشت است در نیام

one's thoughts and beliefs, or in other words, alienation, or subjugation to another's domination. He problematises equating *āzādegi* with piety, seclusion, asceticism, or any apolitical conceptualisation of freedom. He writes:

> My friend, my dear Iranian young fellow! Freedom and truth are inseparable. Be free and in freedom find your own attainable truth. *Bandegi*, no matter under which name and in relation to whom, blocks the way of [achieving] truth and takes you from yourself. Be good and be free. Strive to be virtuous and embrace liberty. Recognise the freedom of others as equal to your own and advocate for their liberty. This is both your responsibility and your honour (Behazin 1977: 6; my translation).

Beyond his interpretation of *āzādegi*, Behazin's critique of the dichotomous Western-Eastern perception of freedom stands out. He challenges intellectuals who 'fragment human knowledge and cultural heritage by drawing sharp contrasts between the East and the West. Behazin argues that such binary distinctions only foster ethnic or racial self-admiration or serve as excuses for despotism and domination' (Behazin 1977: 10). He firmly dismisses the notion that Eastern *āzādegi* is fundamentally different from, and superior to, Western freedom (*āzādi*), due to cultural differences. Behazin, akin to Shariati yet with distinct views, recognises universal values like the love for freedom and disdain for domination. He interprets freedom as the absence of class domination and critiques the liberal definition of freedom as merely the liberty of 'the working class to sell their labour in a free market' (Behazin 1977: 13). For Behazin, true freedom is the eradication of social, economic, and political domination, actualised through democratic self-determination and contesting power, upheld by the freedoms of expression and assembly (Behazin 1977: 14-15).

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