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*To my mother and the memory of my father
for teaching me the meaning of
fidelity and fortitude*

Rejecting the political, economic, and geographical definitions of this binarism, he used a philosophical language rooted in strong symbolism to designate the two competing *Weltanschauungen*. Employing Heidegger's premise that during each historical era a truth arises that obscures competing truths, Fardid maintained that the historical destiny of the contemporary world is the destiny of the Occident. He declared,

In my view, the present age throughout the world is the age of civilizational traditions and not cultural memoirs. All Islamic countries and indeed all oriental nations, without exception, are situated in a phase of history in which, contrary to their Western counterparts, they can no longer be in possession of their own historical trust. This is due to the fact that since the eighteenth century, Western culture has metamorphosed into *the* [my emphasis] historical tradition or civilization. (Fardid 1974, 19)

Fardid contends that with the advent of Greek philosophy the moon of reality has risen while the sun of truth has gone into an eclipse (Fardid 1971, 33). Since then, he maintains, the Orient, representing the essence of the holy books and divine revelation, has been concealed under a variety of occidental mantles. Conceiving of history of philosophy as a centrifugal motion away from the essential Truth, Fardid envisions the ontological circuits of oriental and occidental philosophy in such a way that the authentic ecclesiastical thought of the Orient has engendered Greek cosmologism and cosmocentrism, which later brought the theologism and theocentrism of the Middle Ages, and finally led to the anthropologism and anthropocentrism of the Modern Age. Fardid charges that during each of these eras the primary subject of contemplation went through a metamorphosis. While the Orient was contemplating the "true and spiritual essence," Greek philosophy was preoccupied with the "world," the Middle Ages with the metaphysical "God," and finally, modern humanity with the individual "self" (Fardid 1974, 34). Fardid's criticism of the Middle Ages concerns the fact that, although the subject of contemplation changed once again from the world to God, this "God" is still understood based on Greek cosmological and metaphysical thought and not on "true" religious thought. For Fardid, then, the West's inception occurs with Greek philosophy and its growth with Renaissance humanism. He viewed this humanism as the historical destiny of the Modern Age. By treating human nature or dignity as its central subject, Renaissance humanism managed to make the *Homo sapiens* the focus of ethics and politics, to say nothing of the arts and historiography. This evolution, Fardid claims, has given rise to a technological, all-encompassing ethos that has

deprived modern humans of morality. Thus, according to his ontological couplet, the Orient is the kingdom of benevolence and compassion while the Occident is the terrain of domination. Persuaded by Heidegger's views on the spirit of historical eras, the philosophy of being, and the imprisoning nature of modern technology, Fardid speaks of gharbzadegi as the interlude between the self and the being. According to him, such humanistically oriented philosophical schools of thought as existentialism or nihilism do not provide a means of escape from the present crisis that is besieging humanity.

Fardid advocates a type of *Geisteswissenschaften*, or a moral philosophy not bereft of theosophical introspection. He argues that humans have three dimensions: scientific, philosophical, and ethical. Although the first two have been prominent in the Western tradition of thought, the last has been conspicuously absent.¹⁶ As such, Fardid reaches the conclusion that *Gharb* (the West) has to be abandoned both as an ontology and as a way of life. He believes that gharbzadegi is, thus, a transitional phase that one has to leave behind to reach to the essence of the West. To undertake this intellectual odyssey, however, one has to become Westernized, not in the sense of becoming alienated from one's own self but in the more subtle sense of becoming cognizant about the adversary. To confront the West, Fardid asserts, one needs to get to the very core of its philosophy and ontology. Getting to know the other became, in Fardid's analysis, a prerequisite for knowing the self.

Fardid's concept of the West was warmly received by an important segment of the community of Iranian intellectuals eager to reassert their own identity during a time of change both in the East and in the West. Although this oral philosopher should rightfully be acknowledged as the progenitor of the term *gharbzadegi*, the person who did the most to popularize this concept was a Bohemian belletrist.

Jalal Al-e Ahmad: The Bohemian Belletrist

Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923–1969) was born into a religious family from northern Iran. At the age of twenty he was sent by his father to the holy city of Najaf in Iraq to become a *talabeh* (theology student), but Al-e Ahmad stayed there for no more than a few months. Upon his return to Iran he enrolled in the Tehran Teachers' College from which he graduated in 1946. Al-e Ahmad then enrolled at Tehran University to pursue a doctorate in Persian literature but quit in 1951 before he had defended his dissertation (Shams Al-e Ahmad 1990, 466). During this

16. For more on Fardid's views on this subject see Parham 1968.

time he broke with religion and joined the ranks of the Marxist Tudeh Party where he soon rose to a high position within the party's publicity department. In 1947, however, he and a number of other intellectuals, led by Khalil Maleki, seceded from the Tudeh Party initially over some internal matters while still remaining faithful to the Soviet Union. After they were denounced as traitors by Radio Moscow, Al-e Ahmad retired from the political arena for a few years. Yet he became involved with politics once again in 1950 when he introduced Maleki to Mozaffar Baqa'i-Kermani and later joined the two as they formed Hezb-e Zahmatkeshan-e Melat-e Iran (Iran's Toilers' Party). Despite playing an influential role during the oil nationalization campaign led by Prime Minister Mosaddeq, Al-e Ahmad and a group of dissident intellectuals left the ranks of this party in 1952 to form an independently oriented Third Worldist party called Niruy-e Sevvom (Third Force). In the aftermath of the 1953 coup Al-e Ahmad severed all his party ties and concentrated more on his literary interests as a teacher, belletrist, translator, and ethnographer while remaining an independent political activist.

The 1940s and the 1950s were, thus, the formative decades of Al-e Ahmad's intellectual life. During this period he became acquainted with the ideas of Ahmad Kasravi and those of such prominent intellectuals as Sadeq Hedayat, Nima Yushij, and Khalil Maleki. From the ideas and life of each of these men Al-e Ahmad learned a different lesson: deism from Kasravi, short-story writing from Hedayat, the new style of poetry from Yushij, and political activism from Maleki. Al-e Ahmad was particularly attracted to Nima Yushij and Khalil Maleki who, like himself, were independent-minded pioneers in their respective roles as poet and intellectual politician. He considered Yushij as a humble literary marvel and applauded Khalil Maleki as the most unique example of intellectualism in modern Iran. The cumulative result of these exposures was that during this time period Al-e Ahmad abandoned religion, experimented with Marxism, and gradually moved toward a more nationalistically oriented ideology. These experiences would leave their mark upon him for years to come.

In the fall of 1962 Al-e Ahmad published a monograph entitled *Gharbzadegi*, which was essentially a report he had prepared for the Commission on the Aim of Iranian Education within the Ministry of Education.¹⁷ The commission was a brainchild of Mohammad De-

17. There is no general consensus about the exact translation of the title of this monograph. *Gharbzadegi* has been rendered into various English translations as "West-struckness," "Occidentosis," "Plagued by the West," "Western-mania," "Euromania," "Xenomenia," "Westitis," "Westamination," and, finally, "Westoxication." In all instances the term *gharbzadegi* was generally meant to convey Iranian society's and its

rakhshesh, leader of Jame'eh-ye Mo'alleman-e Iran (Iran Teachers' Association), who had recently been appointed minister of education in Ali Amini's cabinet. The ten-member commission (which included Ahmad Fardid) discussed Al-e Ahmad's report in its entirety in November 1961 and January 1962 and decided that it was not able to publish this essay because of its overtly critical view of the regime (Derakhshesh 1990). The commission's apprehension about the monograph proved to be rather justified. As soon as Al-e Ahmad managed to publish it in a different venue, the monograph was hailed as an intellectual bombshell. With its blunt style *Gharbzadegi* compensated for nativism's tardy and torpid entry into the universe of Iranian intellectual discourse. As the antithesis of a tongue-tied critic, Al-e Ahmad questioned the basic foundations of Iranian social and intellectual history at a time when the country was undergoing rapid socioeconomic transformations. This quality transformed *Gharbzadegi* into the holy book for several generations of Iranian intellectuals and earned Al-e Ahmad a reputation as the most dauntless and effective rabble-rouser of his time. One prominent writer and literary critic, Reza Baraheni, described the significance of the book as follows:

Al-e Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi* . . . has the same significance in determining the duty of colonized nations vis-à-vis colonialist nations that the *Manifesto* of Marx and Engels had in defining the responsibility of the proletariat vis-à-vis capitalism and the bourgeoisie, and that Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* had in defining the role of African nations vis-à-vis foreign colonialists. Al-e Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi* is the first Eastern essay to make clear the situation of the East vis-à-vis the West—the colonialist West—and it may be the first Iranian essay to have social value on a world level.¹⁸

Although Baraheni's praise may have been hyperbolic, it is true that *Gharbzadegi* performed a variety of important functions for the Iranian intellectual community. First, it depicted the dilemma of a changing society by providing a critical chronicle of a century of Iranian enlightenment. Second, by putting the question of national and ethnic identity once again on the agenda *Gharbzadegi* enunciated a nativistic alternative to the universalism of the Iranian Left that had been so popular in the

intellectuals' indiscriminate borrowing from the West. I prefer "Westoxication" because it most closely resembles Al-e Ahmad's usage of *gharbzadegi* as a medical metaphor denoting a social illness. Throughout this book, however, I continue to use the original Persian term *gharbzadegi* because its use somewhat differs from one author to another.

18. Reza Baraheni, *Jessehnevisi*, 2d ed. (Tehran: Ashrafi, 1969), 465, quoted in Hillmann 1987, 73–74.

previous decade. Third, by providing a passionate eulogy for a passing era and its customs *Gharbzadegi* articulated a Third-Worldist discourse very much skeptical of what the West had to offer. Fourth, it exhorted Iranian intellectuals to reassess their passive and servile embrace of Western ideas and culture and called for an awakening and resistance to the hegemony of an alien culture that increasingly dominated the intellectual, social, political, and economic landscape of Iranian society.

Al-e Ahmad began his defiant monograph with a definition of *gharb-zadegi* as "the aggregate of events in the life, culture, civilization, and mode of thought of a people having no supporting tradition, no historical continuity, no gradient of transformation." His clear intention was to sensitize the Iranian public to the problem of growing "rootlessness" in their country. "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 cause—and, if possible, its cure" (Al-e Ahmad 1984, 34, 27). Al-e Ahmad's concept of *gharb-zadegi* as a contaminating social malady was approached from two angles. The "accident from without" and the "environment rendered susceptible to it" represented, respectively, the foreign and domestic dimensions of the sense of other-ness that Al-e Ahmad addressed. Influenced by Heidegger's views on science and technology (which were somehow conveyed to him through Ahmad Fardid), Al-e Ahmad regarded these instruments of human mastery as the essence of Western civilization. Viewing machinery and technology as a "talisman" to the "Westoxicated," he formulated his basic concern in the following terms:

We have been unable to preserve our own historico-cultural character in the face of the machine and its fateful onslaught. Rather, we have been routed. We have been unable to take a considered stand in the face of this contemporary monster. So long as we do not comprehend the real essence, basis, and philosophy of Western civilization, only aping the West outwardly and formally (by consuming its machines), we shall be like the ass going about in a lion's skin (Al-e Ahmad 1984, 31).

Al-e Ahmad believed that this pandemic could result in the eradication of Iran's cultural authenticity, political sovereignty, and economic well-being. His usage of a medical analogy to symbolize a cultural, political, and economic ailment deliberately emphasized intellectual vigilance. Grounding his discussion in the familiar dichotomy of "us" versus "them" or "East" versus "West," Al-e Ahmad depicts himself as "an Easterner with his feet planted firmly in tradition, eager to make a two- or three-hundred year leap and obliged to make up for so much anxiety and straggling." Later, continuing his comparative reasoning, he writes:

"As the West stood, we sat down. As the West awoke in an industrial resurrection, we passed into the slumber of the Seven Sleepers." In criticizing the *we*, however, Al-e Ahmad first and foremost incriminated those Iranian intellectuals who were looking to the West as an alternative. He viewed these intellectuals as the agents most responsible for creating an environment susceptible to Western ingress and domination. He denounced all notable thinkers of the Constitutional era as follows:

So far as I can see, all these homegrown Montesquieus of ours fell off the same side of the roof. . . . They all had an instinctive feeling that our ancient society and tradition could not withstand the onslaught of Western technology. They all went astray in opting for "adoption of European civilization without Iranian adaptation," but in addition to this vague and unproven remedy, each sought a different cure. One thumped the tub for foreign embassies; another believed one must, in imitation of the West, revive ancient tradition through a religious "reform" like Luther's; a third called for Islamic unity in an age when the Ottomans' ignominy was being trumpeted about the world with the slaughter of the Armenians and the Kurds. (Al-e Ahmad 1984, 58).

Akin to the manner in which the *fokolis* were depicted by Shadman (who is acknowledged in two of the notes of *Gharbzadegi*), Al-e Ahmad used a style of prose based on repetitive rhetorical tropes to incite his readers against the "Westoxicated person." He characterized the latter as one who is effete, devious, comfort seeking, with no specialty, character, belief, or convictions, and who hangs on the words and handouts of the West (Al-e Ahmad 1984, 92–97).

It will be a grave mistake, however, to conclude from the above polemical tropes that Al-e Ahmad himself was immune from Western influences. To the contrary, he was inspired by many Western (primarily European) thinkers and writers. For example, Al-e Ahmad was a great admirer of Jean-Paul Sartre, whom he considered a political and literary "pressure gauge" who stood up to every form of domination (Al-e Ahmad 1966, 91). From Sartre he borrowed the idea of social commitment as a fundamental component of a writer's task. Mohammad-Taqi Ghyasi, an Iranian literary critic, recalls an encounter he had with Al-e Ahmad upon Ghyasi's return to Iran from France in 1964. Asked by Al-e Ahmad about Sartre, Ghyasi responded, "Sartre is now [intellectually] dead; nowadays everyone is talking about Michel Foucault." Upon hearing this, Al-e Ahmad retorted irately "But for us he [Sartre] has just been born" (Ghyasi 1988, 41). Al-e Ahmad's attraction to Sartre, the iconoclastic philosopher who turned down the Noble Prize, embraced the Cuban revolution, and passed out revolutionary news-

papers on the streets of Paris as late as 1968, was not just a matter of personal taste. His preference for Sartre over Foucault was also an unequivocal vote for modernism over postmodernism.

Notwithstanding the fact that Fardid did not think too highly of the Existentialism of Sartre and Camus, Al-e Ahmad viewed it as the first genuine postwar movement bent on calling into question the very foundations of Western thought.¹⁹ It is also true, however, that Fardid's intellectual influence led Al-e Ahmad to develop an affinity for the works of Martin Heidegger as well. In particular, he was attracted to Heidegger's ideas on the nature of technology and materialism in the West.²⁰ Following his lead, Al-e Ahmad purported that the West was not just an imperialist entity but also the heart of technological development, which was to be viewed not as a mere instrument but as a mode of thought. Al-e Ahmad maintained that technology did not allow for an equal exchange among nations because some were exporters of it while others were its importers; some were producers of machinery while others were mere consumers of it. As the first eloquent critic of machinism in Iran, Al-e Ahmad lamented the crumbling of his traditional society at the hands of machines: "As the machine entrenches itself in the towns and villages, be it in the form of a mechanized mill or a textile plant, it puts the worker in local craft industries out of work. It closes the village mill. It renders the spinning wheel useless. Production of pile carpets, flat carpets, felt carpets is at an end" (Al-e Ahmad 1984, 68).²¹ Al-e Ahmad, however, was willingly oblivious to the reality that these "alien" machines also curtailed workers' hardships by reducing their work hours and increasing their productivity. He wanted to put the machine, a monstrous giant, back in the genie bottle and turn it into an obedient servant ready to obey its master at any time. Al-e Ahmad did not discuss

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20. One should bear in mind here that Al-e Ahmad's knowledge of Sartre, Heidegger, and other Western philosophers was quite fragmentary. Al-e Ahmad was not a man of philosophy, nor did he have a thorough grasp of French or German. His rudimentary acquaintance with Western philosophy was mainly acquired through conversations with his friends and colleagues who had studied in the West.

21. For further elaboration on Al-e Ahmad's views on technology, one should consult the series of ethnographic essays he wrote between 1954 and 1960. These anthropological studies deal with how modernization along Western lines is upsetting the natural social relationships in Iranian villages. Like the Russian Slavophile writers of the nineteenth century, Al-e Ahmad maintained that Iran's model for development and modernization should correspond to the country's unique history, character, values, and institutions.

how this could be accomplished, however. In the entire *Gharbzadegi* essay no mention is made of the positive results of technology. His criticism of machinism was later picked up by such other critics as Ali Sharifati, Daryush Shayegan, Ehsan Naraqi, Reza Davari, Morteza Motahhari, and Reza Baraheni, among others.²² What is most troubling about Al-e Ahmad's criticism of machines is his parroting of Heidegger. Whereas Heidegger's criticism of machines was pertinent to post-World War I Europe (with the unbelievable carnage and destruction left behind), one wonders how appropriate it was to criticize "machinism" in the Iran of the 1960s. Al-e Ahmad's preoccupation with the role of machines prevented him from appreciating the complexity of technology and advanced capitalism. Although he did not comment on such 1950s and 1960s debates as the dependency theory, or the North-South controversy, Al-e Ahmad was clearly influenced by the amalgamation of these debates. His theory of *gharbzadegi* could be viewed as a less-systematic version of dependency theory.²³ Sure enough, Al-e Ahmad was not alone in promulgating this type of discourse in Iran.²⁴

The imprint of Western scholars is also present on Al-e Ahmad's two-volume book pointedly entitled *Dar kbedmat va kbiyanat-e rowshanfekran* (On the service and treason of the intellectuals), where he delves further into the history of the Iranian intellectual movement.²⁵ He identified nobility, clerics, landlord/tribal leaders, and the urban middle class

22. It should, however, be pointed out that a number of Iranian intellectuals did criticize Al-e Ahmad's negative view of machines and technology. Referring to Al-e Ahmad, one critic writes: "There are some who are trying to convert opposition to Western bourgeoisie to opposition to a lifeless machine. . . . No! [A] machine, which in the hand of the Western bourgeoisie has caused the subjugation of the Orient, is surely a means of defense in the hand of the Orientals (granted that they make and use it themselves). You cannot fight [a] jet fighter with bows and arrows" (Rahimi 1968, 39). For two more examples of critical responses to Al-e Ahmad see Ashuri 1967 and Mo'meni 1985.

23. For a treatment of the dependency theory as it was articulated by Iranian intellectuals see Mashayekhi 1987.

24. A number of other books that were published more or less at the same time as Al-e Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi* and conveyed the same type of message included Abdolrahim Ahmadi, *Nahamahangi-ye Roshd-e Eqtesadi va Ejtemai dar Donya-ye Mo'aser* (The disharmony of economic and social development in the contemporary world); Majid Rahnama, *Masa'el-e Keshvarha-ye Asiyai va Afriqai* (Problems of Asian and African countries); and Mehdi Bahar, *Miraskhar-e Este'mar* (The heir to colonialism). In addition, the overtly critical works of Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Tibor Mende, and Albert Memmi on colonialism were published in translated forms.

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as the four fountains of Iranian intellectuality. Al-e Ahmad designated the last group as the most logical birthplace of intellectuality and described its members as the “hopes” of Iran’s future intellectual movement. At the same time, however, he was also very critical of this group. Al-e Ahmad criticized secular Iranian intellectuals for their isolation from the masses, their superficiality, their rejection or ignorance of the majority’s traditional beliefs, and the ease with which they were often co-opted by the ruling classes. To rectify this condition he concluded that intellectuals must form an alliance with the clerics who historically have been the second major pillar of intellectuality and dissent in Iran. His encounter with Western thought and the process of modernization compelled Al-e Ahmad to turn toward nativism. Judging from the progression of his ideas as they were explicated in *Gharbzadegi* and *Dar khedmat va khiyanat-e rowshanfekran*, one realizes that Al-e Ahmad came more and more to believe that the preservation of indigenous customs would be possible through a turn toward Shi’ism. Although the above works manifest an eclecticism on the part of their author, who alternatively drew from Iranian nationalism, Marxian economic analysis, and European existentialism, one can discern a strong subterranean religious ambience in Al-e Ahmad’s discourse (Mir Ahmadi 1978). He believed that ever since the advent in the sixteenth century of the Safavid dynasty—who upheld Iran’s sovereignty against the Ottomans in the name of religion—Shi’ism had acquired a special position within the core of the Iranian social psyche. Thus, for Al-e Ahmad Shi’a Islam had become an indispensable component of Iranian identity. As such, he prescribed the revival of Shi’a Islam as Iran’s most effective “vaccine” against the pandemic of *gharbzadegi* and came to consider the clergy as the most qualified “doctors” able to provide this identity-saving vaccine. His high esteem for the clergy stemmed from his regard for the ulema as the only consequential social group in Iran that did not succumb to Western domination. Al-e Ahmad maintained that the clerics have four particular advantages which make them valuable allies to secular intellectuals: they tend to be men of learning by the very nature of their profession; they tend to be radically minded, coming mainly from lower class backgrounds; they tend to be trusted by the masses as guardians of the faith; and, finally, they can be agents for social or political uprising as a result of their ability to speak the language of the masses. Here Al-e Ahmad was referring to the historical role the clergy had performed in such events as the Tobacco Rebellion (1891–92), the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–11, oil nationalization of the early 1950s, and the June 1963 protest led by Ayatollah Khomeini. Al-e Ahmad was so appalled by the indifference shown toward this last event by the secular intelligentsia that he

began to write *Dar khedmat va khiyanat-e rowshanfekran* shortly after it. Al-e Ahmad’s major thesis was that in the previous one hundred years of Iranian history whenever the intellectuals and the clergy have cooperated with one another, they have been able to achieve victory and progress. By the same token, however, their disunity has resulted in defeat and decadence (Al-e Ahmad 1978, 2:52). To facilitate this cooperation he insisted that the intellectuals must reach out to the clergy and the masses and the clerics must abandon their conservative stances.

Al-e Ahmad’s charitable attitude toward the ulema was also extended to the intellectual heritage of the East as well. He believed the Western orientation of Iranian intellectuals must be balanced with a more Eastern outlook. Al-e Ahmad looked in particular to India as an example from which Iranian intellectuals could draw inspiration. This proposition was rooted in several premises. India had both well-endowed religious traditions and strong historical ties with Iran. In addition, India had just fomented a strong anticolonial movement and produced a world-class statesman and thinker, Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948). Al-e Ahmad was impressed by the populist, “man of the people” image of Gandhi and viewed him as a model intellectual who was more committed to his utopian ideals than to any class interests. Al-e Ahmad further praised Gandhi as one who had the most accurate views on Third World independence (Al-e Ahmad 1978, 1:169). Indeed, he went as far as to say that India was the mother of Iran and even suggested that instead of sending students to the West, Iran should start dispatching students to India and Japan. As such, Al-e Ahmad encouraged many Iranian intellectuals and translators to start writing about and translating from oriental languages.²⁶

This suggestion was a legitimate one because most educated Iranians were quite unaware (and still remain so) about intellectual developments in their neighboring countries to the East. Richard N. Frye, an emeritus professor of Near Eastern languages at Harvard University who had been the director of the Asia Institute of Pahlavi University in Shiraz from 1969 to 1974, maintained that “Iranian universities did not teach their students anything about the Far East or even neighboring India, but they were offering courses in the history of Europe and even American history” (Frye 1984). This situation began to be rectified toward the later part of the Pahlavi reign when a handful of professors were recruited to teach courses on Indology and oriental philosophy. For the

26. Daryush Shayegan recalls that on one of the few occasions he saw Al-e Ahmad the latter congratulated him for his two-volume work on Indian religions and philosophical schools of thought (Shayegan 1967), which he liked very much (Shayegan 1989a).

most part, however, secular Iranian intellectuals were quite up to date on European, North American, and even Latin American intellectual and literary trends but remained largely ignorant of what was happening closer to them in such neighboring states as India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, and the Arab world.

Al-e Ahmad deserves credit for making sure that nativism did not remain an excessively scholastic discussion. He managed to make nativism a *de rigueur* component of modern political discourse in Iran. After him, it has been almost impossible for Iranian intellectuals to speak of their cultural conflict with contemporary Western civilization without paying homage in some way to his theory of *gharbzadegi*. Al-e Ahmad's criticism of the role of intellectuals, however, leaves much to be desired. He viewed intellectuals as the promoters of *gharbzadegi* but was not willing to accept that as a social group they were only a reflection of the internal contradictions and incoherence of their own society. He criticized intellectuals while he ignored the fact that in a society such as Iran, which was rapidly becoming urbanized, industrialized, and incorporated into the world capitalist system, new social classes were emerging that demanded a new definition of self. Inappropriately, Al-e Ahmad held Iranian intellectuals solely accountable for all the anguish and misery of their society. It is as if there were no relationship between these intellectuals and their place of upbringing—as if they were weeds that grew at will. Al-e Ahmad's chiding critique puts the intellectuals, rather than social relations, on trial. Perhaps it was in an imaginary debate with Al-e Ahmad that Jean-Paul Sartre declared: "As products of torn societies, the intellectual can be the spokesperson of these societies because (s)he has internalized their fissures. The intellectual is a historical phenomenon. Therefore, no society can blame its intellectuals without accusing itself, insofar as they are the products of these very societies" (Sartre 1972, 41).

Al-e Ahmad's indignation toward the intellectuals should be understood in the context of the puzzling state of mind that besieged this community in the post-World War II era. This was a generation tormented by the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the cold war, de-Stalinization, the Vietnam War, student rebellions, and endemic dictatorships, economic dependency, and nationalist uprisings as well. Al-e Ahmad belonged to a generation that was at once inspired by the West yet politically opposed to it; a generation xenophobic toward the West, yet drawing inspirations from the thoughts of its leading thinkers; a generation dodging religion and traditionalism, yet pulled toward them; a generation aspiring for such modernist goals as democracy, freedom, and social justice, yet skeptical of their historical precedents

and contemporary problems. As Iran's leading intellectual of the 1960s, Al-e Ahmad epitomized this state of mental torment. He was representative of a generation of Iranian intellectuals who became disillusioned with both liberalism and socialism as political alternatives. Al-e Ahmad's disillusionment with liberalism was caused by the fact that despite its vow to safeguard democracy all that the West provided for Iran was (neo)colonialism and support of autocratic rulers. One should bear in mind that Al-e Ahmad flourished as a social critic at the same time that some of the most sensitive minds of the Western intellectual world, men such as Albert Camus (1913–1960), Erich Fromm (1900–1980), Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950), and Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975) and before them Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) and Henri Bergson (1859–1941) were expressing doubts about the merits and the future direction of Western civilization. Similarly, his disillusionment with socialism was the result of Soviet expansionism, the failure of existing socialism to live up to its many promises, and the submissive attitude of the Tudeh Party leadership toward Soviet demands and policies.²⁷

Al-e Ahmad's turn toward religion was equally representative of a broader ideological reversal on the part of many in the Iranian intellectual community. The agnostic, atheistic, and deist ideas of Mirza Fath-Ali Akhundzadeh, Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani, Ahmad Kasravi, Ali Dashti, Taqi Arani, and Sadeq Hedayat were now being abandoned in favor of a more socially minded and activist Islam. Al-e Ahmad adopted an instrumentalist view of Shi'ism as a mobilizing political ideology.²⁸ He was further encouraged by the course of events in India, Algeria, and Vietnam, and in the 1960s European rebellious movements in which the left-wing clerics played a progressive role. One of Al-e Ahmad's major accomplishments was to bridge the gap between mod-

27. In this regard, a comparison of Al-e Ahmad's *Safar-e Rus* (The Russian journey), written in 1964 after a trip to the Soviet Union, bore striking resemblance to Andre Gide, *Retour de P.U.R.S.S.* (1936) and Arthur Koestler, *The Invisible Writing; an autobiography* (1954). In addition to translating Gide, *Retour de P.U.R.S.S.* and *Les Nourritures terrestres*, Al-e Ahmad also managed to translate Fyodor Dostoyevski, *Igorik*; Albert Camus, *L'Etranger* and *Le Malentendu*; Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les Mains sales*; Eugène Ionesco's *Le Rhinoceros*; and Ernest Jünger, *Über die Linie* into Persian.

28. Manuchehr Hezarkhani, an Iranian leftist writer, translator, and close friend of Al-e Ahmad, professed that the scenario Al-e Ahmad saw for the future of Iran was modeled after the Algerian revolution. He recalls a conversation with Al-e Ahmad in which the latter told him: "How come you [leftists] do not understand that the cells of the Communist Party must be formed within the mosques? The Algerians, who were neither Muslims nor as committed Communists as you are, realized this and won" (Hezarkhani 1984).

ern intellectuals and the clergy. On the one hand, he tried to lower the anticlerical tone of the modern intelligentsia by convincing them that the clergy were the only stratum in Iran that did not succumb to Western domination. On the other hand, he tried to convince the ulema that a clergy-intellectual alliance was the only effective way to challenge the tyrannical rule of the shah. It is, thus, not a surprise that Al-e Ahmad's works were read seriously and discussed both on the university campuses and in the theological seminaries. People on both sides of the historical divide were beginning to show an interest in a rapprochement. It was soon to emerge.

4

The Clerical Subculture

Thus they display a paradoxical modernity; the ideas are today's; the attitudes yesterday's.

—Octavio Paz, *One Earth, Four or Five Worlds*

THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT CULMINATED in the 1979 Iranian revolution have been designated by a variety of labels, such as the rise of "Islamic revivalism," "Islamic fundamentalism," and "Islamic resurgence," labels that are grounded in Western history or rooted in its cultural antipathy toward the Muslim world or both. The process leading to and following the revolution has mainly been described as a counter-response by the traditional segments of the Iranian polity to rapid modernization and the idea of progress.

In chapters 4 and 5, however, I contend that what transpired in Iran was much more complicated than the facile speculations that modernization theorists have led people to believe. Examining the ideas, actions, and political platforms of the clerical forces and the religious intellectuals, I argue that what took place was the development of a "religious subculture," which was more innovative, enduring, and popular than its secular counterpart. This religious subculture involved a "politicization of Islam," transforming the latter into the primary agency of political socialization and contestation. In other words, Islam became an ideology par excellence, capable of such functions as granting identity and legitimacy upon and integrating and mobilizing the masses. Politicized Islam, in turn, promulgated the otherness of the state, the West, and the secularists. These acts of othering are to be understood against the background of a declining base of power vis-à-vis the monarchical state, an ideological challenge offered by their secular counterparts, and a response to the received Western philosophical doctrines and political actions.

Finally, I suggest that, as the organic intellectuals of religious classes, the ascendancy of clerics to political power in 1979 can be attributed to